



EUROPE

Early reflections on the approach to preventing and responding to violent and antisocial behaviour at the 2018 World Cup in Russia

Case study

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This case study has been produced as part of an independent research project conducted for Qatar University by RAND Europe on 'Connections between misuse of alcohol, antisocial, violent and destructive behaviour at major sporting events, and promising strategies to minimise the incidence of and harm from these behaviours'.

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Key findings

- This case study offers early reflections on the 2018 World Cup in Russia, in particular on the factors that may have contributed to the relative absence of violence and antisocial behaviour reported at the event.
- There are some limitations to the analysis, due to the recent nature of the event and the paucity of official data that are publicly available. Much of the information in this case study is drawn from interviews with international football policing practitioners, academic experts and representatives from fan associations.
- The available information suggests that the 2018 World Cup was free of large-scale disorder and violent behaviour.
- There are a number of potentially transferable lessons for the organisers of Qatar 2022:
 - **Police cooperation and information sharing in advance of the event:** In the view of experts, international police cooperation and measured policing tactics helped to ensure a largely trouble-free event.
 - **Effective, measured and consistent security arrangements:** Various organisational features were perceived by many fans to have contributed to a positive experience. These seemed to strike a balance between ensuring that necessary security arrangements were put in place and being perceived by fans as reasonable and proportionate. There was clarity and consistency with respect to applicable rules and regulations (relating to, for example, access to stadiums and behaviour), which minimised potential sources of fan frustration.
 - **Providing services for fans:** Services such as the provision of lockers, free public transportation and fan zones made the experience more enjoyable for supporters and facilitated positive behaviours.
 - **Alcohol restrictions and non-criminal justice responses to intoxication:** Organisers put in place some alcohol restrictions, while offering access to alcoholic drinks at stadiums and in designated areas. For fans who did become intoxicated, police and event personnel were able to use approaches such as recovery rooms instead of criminal justice responses, thus avoiding escalation where no other offence had been committed.

1. Introduction

This case study is part of a research project that RAND Europe has been commissioned to undertake by Qatar University, examining violent and antisocial behaviours at football events, the factors associated with such behaviours, and strategies to prevent and reduce their occurrence. In line with the overall aim of the study, here we offer some early reflections on these topics in relation to the 2018 World Cup in Russia.

The 2018 World Cup was preceded by widely published concerns about security arrangements, possible clashes between Russian and foreign hooligans or ultras,¹ policing responses, and other aspects related to the safety and comfort of domestic and international fans alike (Magnay 2018; Roth 2018a; Bakunina 2018; Rich 2017). In the event, however, the predicted issues did not for the most part materialise. Despite a limited number of incidents, the tournament avoided large-scale disorder and violence.

This case study examines in turn the available evidence on:

1. Violent and antisocial behaviour during the 2018 World Cup
2. The effectiveness of policing tactics deployed during the tournament
3. Intelligence-sharing and international cooperation between law enforcement agencies
4. The sale and consumption of alcohol
5. The facilitation of positive crowd behaviour through event organisation.

Our research was based on a targeted document review and five interviews with: researchers working in the field of football-related disorder (referred to as 'academic experts – AE'); representatives of European fan associations (FO); and security practitioners involved in the organization and management of football matches (SO). The document review was limited to media reports and grey literature since no published academic literature on the event was identified. Further details on the methods used and their limitations can be found at the end of this report.

1 The term 'ultra' is often used interchangeably with the term 'hooligan' in the media. 'Ultras' have been defined as 'groups of supporters, mostly of football teams, renowned for their fanatical support and elaborate displays.' Ultra groups may be peaceful and non-violent, but they have been associated with football violence in certain countries in the MENA region. (Rharib and Amara 2014). Elsewhere, 'ultras' have been described as the "most visible 'hard-core' fan groups, but their proclivities to violence vary substantially" (Spaaij and Testa 2016). With respect to hooliganism, there is no precise definition of the phenomenon (Spaaij and Testa 2016, Rookwood 2016) and local context is important for its understanding (Radmann 2014). A broad definition of hooliganism typically refers to transgressions and potential harm caused by football fans (Spaaij 2007). By contrast, narrower definitions of hooliganism refer to a subset of fans (typically young males) and collective violent action predominantly aimed at supporters of the opposing side (Spaaij 2007).

2. Violent and antisocial behaviour at the 2018 World Cup

No official crime data relating to the 2018 World Cup are publicly available; according to one media report, police departments across Russia did not release information relating to their crime prevention and investigatory activities over the course of the tournament.² However, a small number of instances of football-related violence and antisocial behaviour at the tournament were reported in the media. During the match between Argentina and Croatia, there were physical fights between supporters of the two teams (e.g. Luhn 2018b), and there were isolated clashes among England fans (Baynes 2018). Instances of antisocial behaviour³ that did not involve violence were also documented. These included fans using anti-Semitic chants and performing Nazi salutes (Baynes 2018), homophobic chants (Balto 2018), and late-night chanting (Roth 2018b). On the whole, however, instances of violence similar to those in Marseille during the 2016 UEFA European Championship were not reported.⁴

Two security practitioners and one academic expert (SP1, SP3, AE2) noted that the security situation in host cities was helped by the absence of active organised groups of Russian ultras. Two interviewees (SP3, AE2) stated that the Russian authorities communicated with ultras in advance of the tournament that violence and disorder would not be tolerated during the event. One media report quoted the head of a supporters' association for a Russian football club, who had previously been jailed for his participation in the violence which

broke out during the 2016 UEFA European Championship, as saying that police regularly 'dropped in' on football fans who were known to the authorities, and that he had taken part in meetings with police in which fans were told not to participate in any football-related violence. According to this report, some fans were asked to sign a pledge that they would not organize or participate in violence. Furthermore, it was also reported that Russia increased fines for violent stadium behaviour in the lead-up to the World Cup (Tétrault-Farber 2018).

One security practitioner (SP1) expressed the view that Russian government efforts to prevent disorder by ultra groups had been successful and added that the authorities were also effective in controlling the arrival of hooligans from abroad (see Section 4). This provided a further disincentive to Russian ultras to engage in violent behaviour, as the potential threat of provocation from foreign hooligans was minimised. As SP1 noted:

The other message was to the Russian hooligans, that the people who were coming were genuine supporters and not to cause any problems. There was no threat there that the Russian hooligans could feel compelled to respond to. It was important to get those messages across.

The efforts of the Russian authorities to prevent violence and disorder are explored in the following sections.

2 Note, however, that official crime statistics are not available (see also Luhn 2018a).

3 The types of behaviours displayed by football fans that have been characterised as 'antisocial' include public intoxication and racist or homophobic chanting. However, definitions of antisocial behaviour may depend to some extent on the relevant cultural setting. This is explored further in an evidence review produced as part of this research project (Strang et al. 2018).

4 This event is the focus of another case study produced as part of this research project (Strang et al. forthcoming).

3. Policing tactics

According to both published media accounts and our interviewees' descriptions, the Russian authorities organised a heavy police presence in host cities during the tournament. Pre-tournament official announcements promised 'a policeman every 20 metres' (Tétrault-Farber 2018). During the tournament, official accounts reported large-scale deployments of police and other security personnel, although official numbers are not available (Pinchuk 2018).

The large police presence did not appear to result in disproportionate policing tactics. According to one security practitioner (SP1), as well as two fan organisation representatives (FO1, FO2), Russian police generally adopted a relatively tolerant approach towards fans, although some variation across host cities was reported (Roth 2018b). The security practitioner (SP1) stressed that despite the use of a large number of police officers, fans did not seem to find this problematic:

At the semi-final there was massive police presence but... it was very laid back. It was quite passive. I don't think any of the fans took it as being in any way oppressive.

One of the fan organisation representatives (FO2) also noted that in some instances the police were not as visible as expected. The other fan organisation representative (FO1) expressed the view that, overall, Russian authorities managed to ensure a high degree of security in a way that was not seen by fans as disproportionate and did not interfere with their enjoyment of the event:

The organisers managed to find the right balance [with] a high level of security but at the level that was completely acceptable for the fans.

These views are broadly in line the findings from a review conducted as part of this research project, which found some evidence for the effectiveness of various forms of low-intensity and dialogue-based policing in preventing and responding to violent and antisocial behaviour at football matches.⁵

4. Intelligence-sharing and international cooperation

As discussed in a separate case study on the 2016 UEFA European Championship produced as part of this research project (Strang et al. forthcoming), the sharing of intelligence between national police forces in advance of a major international football tournament is an important part of preparations for the event. This exchange of information and its utilisation by security personnel in the host country can help authorities identify potential troublemakers and thus improve readiness for any disturbances or conflict situations. Accordingly, two interviewees (SP1, FO2), as well as media reports, noted the international coordination among relevant stakeholders including national police forces in the run-up to the 2018 World Cup. Efforts included: the use of banning orders; fan vetting and the use of Fan IDs; intelligence-sharing; and on-site support from representatives of foreign police forces.

Use of banning orders

Speaking from the UK perspective, one security practitioner (SP1) noted that because of measures such as football banning orders⁶ and passport controls at airports, UK police were able to ensure that known troublemakers were not allowed to travel to Russia (see also Sawyer 2018). These efforts could then be communicated to the Russian authorities (as well as to Russian ultras, who might have otherwise planned to fight foreign hooligans). Publication of the measures also helped to counter any false narratives from the media about hooligans' plans to travel to Russia and seek out confrontation with local ultra groups. According to the interviewee [SP1], the absence of problem supporters in turn helped

the Russian police to maintain a passive and tolerant stance towards travelling supporters:

We wanted the Russian authorities to know that the people who were going, we thought would behave well. So there was no need to take any sort of robust policing approach and they could be a bit more laid back.... I think in our case it was very clear that no [high] risk supporters were travelling and we could give reassurance about that, because of the banning order operation, the passport operation at airports.

Vetting and the use of Fan ID

Two security professionals (SP1, SP3) discussed a number of measures that were put in place to prevent known troublemakers from attending the tournament. One interviewee (SP3) highlighted the introduction of Fan ID as an important component of the Russian authorities' security efforts. The Fan ID is an identification document that all ticket holders were required to hold, together with a valid match ticket, in order to enter the stadiums hosting World Cup matches. Fans could apply for a Fan ID after obtaining a ticket or receiving a ticket confirmation for a World Cup match. The Fan ID contained the name of the spectator, their date of birth, their gender, the number of their identity document, their citizenship, and their Fan ID number (Fan ID 2018). According to the interviewee (SP3), Fan ID applicants were subject to background checks in their respective countries and authorities verified that the applicant was not on any hooligan lists or subject to a banning order. The interviewee noted that cooperation from international police partners was crucial

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Football banning orders often imposed following a football-related offence prohibiting the subject of the order from attending football matches.

to successfully implementing the scheme with respect to foreign fans.

Another security practitioner (SP1) added that, from the UK perspective at least, because many identified high-risk individuals were prohibited from traveling to Russia, only a limited amount of intelligence about travelling fans was shared with the Russian authorities. However, UK authorities gave briefings to their Russian counterparts about the conduct of national fan groups, potentially problematic behaviour and other related topics. Interviewees (AE2, SP3) also commented on

the importance of international cooperation among police forces. An academic expert (AE2) noted cooperation both in preparing for the tournament as well as when it was underway, with small contingents of foreign police officers working on the ground alongside local police. The interviewee attributed the relative peacefulness of the tournament to this cooperation:

I think that's credit to the forces, the host country, and also the police forces from around the world, that have been cooperating, clearly, with them in advance.

7. Addressing alcohol provision and consumption

As discussed in a separate case study on international football tournaments and alcohol produced as part of this research project (Taylor et al. 2018b), considerations surrounding alcohol-related arrangements form an indispensable part of international football tournaments. This section provides a closer look at how selected aspects of alcohol-related policies were dealt with during the 2018 World Cup. Specifically, this section discusses alcohol-related limitations and prohibitions put in place by tournament organisers, response to minor alcohol-related infringements, and non-judicial response to intoxicated fans.

Limitations and prohibitions on the sale and consumption of alcohol

Tournament organisers put in place a number of rules and arrangements pertaining to the sale of alcohol. In line with previous World Cups, alcohol was available for sale inside stadiums but cities introduced bans on alcohol sales within a certain distance from the stadiums. In addition, the city of Moscow introduced temporary alcohol bans, prohibiting the sale of alcohol on matchdays and on the day before. Alcohol was made available in fan zones, which were cordoned-off areas of public spaces in host cities with refreshments and entertainment amenities for fans.⁷

Measured responses to minor alcohol infringements

Interviewees highlighted two organizational features that, in their view, contributed to the

relative lack of alcohol-related issues. Firstly, a representative of a fan organisation (FO2) pointed out that, in line with the observations about the general style of policing, authorities were relaxed about minor alcohol-related transgressions such as drinking on the street, which is typically not allowed in Russia. The interviewee argued that this helped maintain a friendly atmosphere during the event:

[The police] didn't intervene when people were drinking on the street, and my interpretation would be that this action, or non-action, this has helped improving the general atmosphere and this has helped improving the level of security and safety in the cities.

This view is supported by the findings of an evidence review on strategies to prevent and respond to violent and antisocial behaviour at football events (Taylor et al. 2018a).

Non-judicial responses to intoxicated fans

Another representative of a fan organisation (FO1) noted the use of non-judicial responses to deal with people who were intoxicated and disruptive inside stadiums, but had not committed a serious criminal offence. The interviewee highlighted the fact that instead of being arrested (as long as no serious offence had occurred), fans were either asked to leave the stadium or were held in a special room until they sobered up enough to go home safely or rejoin the other spectators. In the interviewee's view, this strategy dealt with public intoxication effectively while avoiding escalatory tactics.

⁷ The evidence on the impact of fan zones on violent and antisocial behaviour was explored further in an evidence review produced as part of this research project (Strang et al. 2018).

6. The facilitation of positive crowd behaviour through event organisation

As two interviewees (SP3, FO2) noted, there was significant negative coverage in the media before the tournament with respect to what international fans might expect while in Russia (Magnay 2018; Roth 2018a; Bakunina 2018; Rich 2017). However, any anticipated issues largely failed to materialise, with international fans seemingly enjoying the event. Interviewees highlighted a range of aspects and features that they considered to have contributed to the overall positive experience: the competent organisational handling of security; consistent application of rules at stadiums; provision of lockers; free transportation using Fan ID; and the use of fan zones.

Competent organisational handling of security

One security practitioner (SP3) and one representative of a fan organisation (FO1) observed that a wide range of security measures were adopted at the 2018 World Cup. These included searches at entrances to stadiums, with screening involving metal detectors as well as x-ray machines. According to the fan organisation representative, the key to the effectiveness of these measures was that they were implemented in a manner that fans did not find intrusive or objectionable. For instance, there were a sufficient number of entry gates with adequate staffing to prevent queues from forming and the use of screening technology enabled organizers to conduct only light body searches, which fans could otherwise find invasive. The representative of a fan organisation (FO1) noted that:

The Russian organisers managed to find the right balance between safety and security on one side and services on the other.... So it was very comfortable to enter the stadiums. So in this regard it was very interesting because the hosting conditions were perfectly acceptable. The security setup inside the stadium was also perfectly fine.

This was seconded by another security practitioner (SP3), who reported that, based on the information available to him, event organizers managed to deal with large numbers of fans in a satisfactory fashion and avoided fans getting frustrated with unnecessary delays or other inconveniences. The interviewee described 'surge' operations, in which authorities managed high volumes of spectators entering stadiums to ensure that the flow of people remained calm and orderly:

I think there is often a very close link between safety and security operations and fan behaviour. We have seen in the past where surge operations can't cope with the number of people coming through. And people might start thinking they will miss the kick-off. That can sometimes lead to some disorderly behaviour since people may try to force through. The games I saw and the reports I had was that there was a really good flow of people through, that the surge operation was well resourced. So certainly for us that meant that there were no queues on the outside.⁸

Consistent application of rules at stadiums

One fan organisation representative (FO1) noted that another important feature

contributing to fans' experience was the consistent enforcement of security rules and requirements across all the stadiums. This meant that fans knew what to expect irrespective of what host city they were in and conditions for access to stadiums did not change when they travelled from one city to another. This was an improvement over the 2016 UEFA European Championship, where there were differences between stadiums. The interviewee stated that having consistent requirements:

...avoids unnecessary frustration when a fan is travelling to Stadium A and he [is allowed to bring]... let's say sun cream inside the stadium and now not allowed in the Stadium B. So it's frustrating.... This is creating tensions....

Provision of lockers

As another helpful amenity for visiting fans, a fan organisation representative (F01) mentioned the fact that there were numerous lockers available at stadiums in Russia. Since entry to the stadiums was subject to strict requirements and numerous objects were not allowed inside, lockers offered fans an opportunity to store their belongings in a safe place for the duration of a match. One group of fans who may have particularly benefitted from this option were those who travelled on the day of the match, for example coming directly from the airport with their luggage, or planning to leave after the match. It was important that Russian organisers advertised the existence of lockers and fans knew they would be available.

According to the interviewee (F01), as with consistent security rules, this arrangement stands in contrast with the situation at the 2016 Euros, where the existence of lockers was not broadly communicated in advance:

There [were] some really big lockers where you could leave anything.... Any bag, anything could be left there. Which is important because again that otherwise creates frustrations when you make people... when you're making people choose between keeping their bag or missing the game and so on. That creates difficulties.

Free transportation using Fan ID

In addition to the security vetting purpose discussed in Section 4, the Fan ID pass could also be used for free transportation in host cities and to make reservations for intercity travel. This was highlighted by a security practitioner (SP3) as an additional useful feature to facilitate fans' participation at the event. Another security practitioner (SP1) also lauded free transportation as a helpful offer to fans 'in terms of engendering that spirit of cooperation between visitors and hosts'.

Fan zones

One security practitioner (SP1) expressed satisfaction with how fan zones worked and the experience they were able to offer to football fans. This interviewee added that in some instances they needed to be closed as their capacity was full, suggesting that sometimes a larger area could have been used for the fan zones.

7. Conclusions and lessons for Qatar

This case study has reflected on the factors that may have contributed to the relative absence of violence and antisocial behaviour reported at the 2018 World Cup in Russia. In considering the learning opportunities for Qatar, as it plans to host its own World Cup in 2022, the question of the transferability of lessons is approached with care. Russia, like every World Cup host country, has a unique combination of existing security capacity and arrangements, police and security culture, and potential threats to public safety. It is not assumed, therefore, that practices and approaches can simply be transplanted to the Qatari context. The cohort of visiting and local fans may also be different at the 2022 event. Furthermore, the relative size of Russia and Qatar, as well as that of their security forces, are important factors to take into account when assessing the transferability of lessons from Russia. Lastly, little official data and no literature on the 2018 tournament are available. As such the observations should be taken as preliminary and would benefit from further validation through future research.

However, with these points in mind, it is possible to draw the following broad lessons from the Russia 2018 event that could, potentially, be useful for the organisers of the 2022 World Cup in Qatar.

- International police cooperation and information-sharing in advance of a

tournament can facilitate a safe and enjoyable event, in particular by preventing known troublemakers from entering the host country. One possible option for Qatar is to source policing and security from other Arab countries.

- Ensuring that effective, measured and consistent security arrangements are in place can help to keep fans safe, while ensuring that fans perceive these arrangements to be reasonable and proportionate. Minimising potential sources of frustration (such as long security screening queues to enter stadiums) amongst fans can facilitate a positive, cooperative dynamic between fans and event organisers and authorities. Similarly, providing services to fans such as lockers, free public transportation and fan zones made the experience more enjoyable for fans in Russia and encouraged positive behaviours.
- Consideration needs to be given to alcohol-related policies that will be put in place during the event. In Russia, some alcohol restrictions were applied, while fans could purchase alcoholic drinks at stadiums and designated areas. The 2018 World Cup also demonstrated the value of 'informal', non-judicial responses to intoxication, such as recovery rooms, which prevented the escalation of such incidents.

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About this case study and the research project for Qatar University

Qatar has hosted a number of international sporting events and will host the World Athletics Championship in 2019 and the 2022 FIFA World Cup. In preparing for these events, there is an opportunity to learn from research into the prevalence, nature and causes of violence and disorder at other sporting events that have drawn together spectators from a range of countries with diverse cultural and religious characteristics, and to draw on promising practices to prevent and respond to these harms.

Qatar University commissioned RAND Europe to research the current available evidence on these topics to identify insights that may be relevant for Qatar's preparations.

Project aims

The goals of this project were to understand:

1. What has been the nature (types of behaviour, types of perpetrators, victims, location, etc.) and prevalence of antisocial, violent and destructive behaviours among populations watching and attending major sporting events, in particular international football matches?
2. What factors are associated with these behaviours (e.g. alcohol misuse, ethnicity and nationalism, group dynamics) and what is the nature of the association?
3. What approaches have been taken to prevent and respond to these behaviours?
4. To what extent have these approaches proved effective?
5. What specific recommendations follow from the findings that could be used in Qatar in planning for the World Cup in 2022, and where are the opportunities for further research?

Project methods and approach

The project drew mainly on the identification and critical assessment of international literature and media reports as well as interviews with a wide range of stakeholders in Qatar and internationally.

Full details of the methodology for the research can be found in the final evaluation report available at

<https://www.rand.org/randeurope/research/projects/violent-and-antisocial-behaviour-at-football-events.html>

About this case study

A total of six case studies were undertaken to investigate a range of issues relating to safety and security at international sporting events.

This case study drew on two data collection methods. Firstly, a targeted review of online sources relating to various organizational aspects of the 2018 World Cup was undertaken, particularly relating to the topic of potential or actual instances of disorder or violence. During this process, the research team ran a number of Google news searches. The search terms used were: (Russia AND "World Cup" AND fans), (Russia AND "World Cup" AND violen*), (Russia AND "World Cup" AND alcohol), (Russia AND "World Cup" AND polic*). Because the tournament concluded shortly before the write-up of the case study, the review focused primarily on media reports.

Secondly, five telephone interviews were conducted with the following types of key informants: 1) academic experts working on football-related topics, such as policing, disorder and alcohol use (abbreviated in the case study as AE); 2) representatives of fan associations (FO); and 3) practitioners involved in the organization and management of football matches (SP).

The interviews were semi-structured and took approximately 45 minutes. We developed broad interview protocols tailored to each group of key informants, and these served as the basis for each interview. In addition to questions included in the protocol, this approach allowed the team to discuss unanticipated topics that interviewees considered relevant. With the permission of interviewees, all calls were recorded and then transcribed. Data collected through the two data collection processes were triangulated by the research team. Interviews were analysed utilising standard qualitative methods in order to identify salient themes.

This case study is subject to several limitations. Firstly, because the 2018 World

Cup concluded shortly before the preparation of this case study, literature on the topic is limited and confined primarily to media and other popular sources. For this reason, stakeholder testimonies are emphasised as a source of evidence. Secondly, although we report insights from interviewees with first-hand experience of the tournament, no interviews were conducted with stakeholders based permanently in Russia. Thirdly, the case study was unable to draw on any official data pertaining to indicators of interest, such as numbers of violent incidents, arrests or injuries, as these data are not publicly available.

Project results and reports

Details of the other case studies and wider project results are available at <https://www.rand.org/randeurope/research/projects/violent-and-antisocial-behaviour-at-football-events.html>. These are of interest not only to those responsible for preparing for upcoming events in Qatar, but to anyone involved in the safety and management of international sports tournaments.

Contact information

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