

# [Stadium safety structure development in the uk criminology essay](https://assignbuster.com/stadium-safety-structure-development-in-the-uk-criminology-essay/)

With our entry into the 21st century, the stadium safety issue has been basically solved by a series of complete stadium safety structure regulations in the UK. However, there are many British football fans who still have memorized the traditional football culture, which is the terrace culture (Ruthven, 2011). It is ironic that this terrace culture has brought many tragedies to UK football and UK society, many British football fans are still thinking terrace culture is the true way of watching a football match. Therefore, the Football Supporter's Foundation (FSF) campaign was organized to bring back terrace culture (Kilmore, 2011). The whole process of terrace culture was replaced by all-seater stadiums, which took many authorities' and people's blood and efforts. The whole process of changing is a successful stadium safety reform course. The stadium safety reform faced many issues, which came from both external and internal influences. For example, some issues came from the inaction of some football authorities, the over loyalty of football fans and the neglect of politicians (Ingle, 2005). Fortunately, stadium safety has made their legislation to protect those loyalty football fans' lives and health. Johns (2004) stated that " One of the philosophies of the Football Licensing Authority is 'safety cannot be achieved by means of externally- imposed regulations; those responsible must understand and believe in it for themselves'". Therefore, only if the whole of football industry realizes the significance of safety, then the stadium safety structure can be run effectively. Moreover, it also needs to be updated very often to tackle challenges and to fit the modernist football's changes in the future. This essay is written to answer the question of how the stadium safety structure in the UK developed and what challenges and changes face it in the future?

## Current stadium safety structure in the UK:

Currently, the structure of UK stadium safety is composed by Football Licensing Authority,

Safety Certificate, Green Guide, Safety Advisory Group, Safety Officer, Ground Regulations, Football Association (FA) and Police. Although these elements do overlap slightly, it has completely achieved the safety mission (Football Safety Structure in England, 2005).

## The process of stadium safety development:

The process of football stadium safety development was always with horrible tragedy; almost every little progress was caused by victims' blood and grief. Fortunately, nowadays, a comparatively completed stadium safety structure has been conducted. This comparatively completed stadium safety structure took a long time to complete.

## Inaction of legislation:

The football industry was very hysteretic compared to other industries in the area of safety legislation. In 1840, with the first railway regulation released, government had started to establish a statutory regulation of transport in the UK. Moreover, in the entertainment industry, because some moral concerns to monitor the performance were shown, every single music theatre and hall had been approved by local authorities licensing since the 1880s. In addition, because of two horrible disasters that happened at Victoria Hall in Sunderland in 1883 and at Exeter theatre in 1887 respectively, the fire legislation had been followed in the entertainment industry. Football was seen to be a wholesome pleasure sport, and so dodged the intendance from the moral concerns aspect, and because a football stadium is an outdoor building, so its safety shortage had been ignored by related monitory authorities. However, many issues had appeared about the stadium safety in the football industry (Johns, 2004).

Since the sports codification was released in 1863, the popularity of the football industry had developed rapidly. It was often to see, over 20, 000 fans crowed in a stadium to watch a game (John, 2010). In order to contain as many fans as possible, football clubs began to establish bigger stadiums. The bigger stadium's location was dependent on the cheap land price and proximity to urban areas. This resulted in many stadia's locations that were not suitable and safe. For example, many stadia's entrances were along narrow streets, it was often to find overcrowding and injuries occurred as a result. Moreover, the quality problem of stadium's stands also caused a few accidents. For example, on the 5th of April 1902, the disaster of a collapsed wooden stand caused 25 spectators to die and over 500 spectators injured at Ibrox Park, Glasgow. In the aftermath, the disaster was attributed to the wooden stand's quality but no person was charged regarding the overcrowding at that stand. However, the Ibrox Park disaster was a signal to the Football Association (FA) that they need to protect themselves against litigation from football fans in the accident of future tragedies. Therefore, one legal legacy of the disaster appeared for football industry in the UK. That was that the FA was registered to be a limited liability company (BigSoccer, 2011).

Since the tragedy of Wembley FA Cup final happened in 1923 and over 1000 spectators were injured, people and related authorities began to regard and blame the overcrowding issue. Because some members of Parliament criticised the stadium, they pushed pressures on this issue. The government organized an inquiry, and former Home Secretary Edward Shortt was in charge of the inquiry. Consequently, he stated that there was " abnormally large attendance on special occasions" (Johns, 2004). Subsequently, the chief constable of Birmingham claimed that because the quality of stadium could not be guaranteed and the overcrowding happened frequently, football should establish a safety licensing system like other industries. However, this proposal was laid aside due to FA's uncooperative attitude, but some of this proposal's technical recommendations began to impact the management of football stadium safety (The Time, no date).

In the next 20 years, there were some accidents in football stadia caused by overcrowding. Due to overcrowding only occurring in some particularly significant games and infrequently resulting in injuries to the public, there was no sustained pressure for football stadium safety progress. From the police aspect, police claimed in some regards in stadium safety, but due to the absence of legislation, they took a " laissez-faire" attitude towards safety in the football industry. For example, in 1932, the Chief Constable of Cardiff stated publicly that Ninian Park's maximum capacity was not 25, 000 spectators, but its records were double that maximum number in the past. The Welsh FA only simply warned the club to concern the issue (Johns, 2004). In 1934, a man died in overcrowding at Hillsborough stadium. A local MP of Sheffield made an inquiry immediately to Parliament. The explanation of the accident from the Sheffield chief constable was that some clubs were not complying with the stadium safety advice of police (Hillsborough Stadium, no date). In 1936, there was a fatality at a rugby match in Cardiff, which caused a licensing scheme from Police Federation's. Therefore, the main reason of police inactivity was facing much opposition from the football authorities and government, when they were warning clubs on safety in absence of legislation. In the post-war period, football became the most popular sport for entertainment in the UK. Because of the horrible and grieved memories of war, people enjoyed football match more than before (Johns, 2004). As mentioned previously, the overcrowding situation only happened in some big games, but the attendances of match were very high for every match after the Second World War. Therefore, some crude quality of stadiums could not bear such a high burden and thus caused disaster. In 1946, 33 people died and 400 people were injured at Burnden Park, Bolton. In the official inquiry, Justice Moelwyn Hughes stated that the overcrowding issue had happened again and again, and it had become a frequent type of accident. Consequently, Moelwyn Hughes suggested running a licensing system by local authorities, which should include a penalty for disobeying these regulations. However, the licensing proposal was rejected by the cabinet due to the burden of local authorities, materials shortage in post-war and the absent of legislation. Thus, the proposal of licensing by local authorities was replaced by another Moelwyn Hughes' recommendation, which was a system of self-regulation. The self-regulation was an application for the Football Association that their stadium safety should pass the qualification inspection. (Oddculture, 2011)

" A system of self-regulation in any industry does not work unless its objectives are deeply rooted in the culture of the industry. Football enjoyed no over-riding commitment to ensuring safety". Therefore, in 1952, the Police Federation proposed legislation for the safety of fans like the safety legislation of audiences at theatres and cinemas. This proposal also blamed some inaction reports from the police and the FA (Johns, 2004). In the hooliganism aspect, this emerging problem provided a different channel to deal with the crowd management issue for clubs and authorities. Because of the emerging problem of hooliganism, the 1969 government report claimed that although the self-regulation system's performance was good enough, the 1948 certificates still needed to be updated regularly for inspections (Kurland, 2010). Finally, the FA of England, Scotland and Wales forced their clubs whose stadia's capacity were 10, 000 or more, to accept an annual certificate inspection.

## The first legislation:

The signal of self-regulation's failure was the disaster of Ibrox Park, Glasgow in 1971. There were 66 people dead in this crush of overcrowding. It was the fourth incident of crushing on that stairway in the previous ten years. In 1961, two people had been killed and 44 injured, in 1967 11 people were injured, and in 1969 30 people were seriously injured. The disaster of Ibrox Park caused a controversy about the legislation. Subsequently, Wheatley called a recommended for licensing system run by local authorities (BBC, no date).

In the report of Wheatley, the existing controls were not enough, legislation was necessary. The Safety at Sports Grounds Act was proposed by the Conservative government then it was passed by the Labour government in 1975. This Act built a system of inspection, which was run by local authorities, and also created a series of technical safety criterions in football stadia. Nevertheless, the implementing cost was a huge burden for small clubs. Wheatley thought the issue of overcrowding was not vital enough for smaller clubs in the short term. Therefore, only the clubs that were in the first division of English and Scottish and plus the three international rugby stadiums were included in the initial Act plan. In 1979, the Act would include the Clubs of the English second division. This Act also cared some anomaly, for small stadiums, such as Shrewsbury Town's stadium of division two, which only had 16, 800 capacities, but some large stadiums, such as Sheffield United's stadium of division three, which was 44, 000 capacity, which were not included in this Act. (Sefton Council, 2010)

## Significant changing in 1980s:

On the 11th May 1985, 56 people were killed in a stand fire in Bradford. At that time, the 1975 Safety Act had not covered the Third division, if it was covered the maybe this disaster would be avoided by licensing inspection. After the disaster of Bradford, the Act was conducted to all Football League clubs as soon as possible and the Fire Safety and Safety of Places of Sport Act was passed immediately for preventing another fire disaster. In 1924, the Shortt report had already noted that the danger of fire in wooden stands was another risk in football stadium, apart from overcrowding. After the disaster of Bradford, Mr Justice Popplewell made a report and he stated many questions of hooliganism rather than safety. Popplewell also stated that there were fences built around the football pitch at Bradford, which caused the higher death toll (FireSafe, no date). He also recommended such fences were not effectively addressing hooligan concerns, but instead disturbed the evacuation efforts. Unfortunately, these fences that guarded against hooligans became one of the reasons that caused the Hillsborough disaster (Taylor, 1989).

On the 15th April 1989, such fences contributed to the death 96 Liverpool fans during the match of FA Cup semi-final against Nottingham Forest at Hillsborough, Sheffield. As well as these fences, inadequate policing and signposting were also the main reasons for such a high death toll (Taylor, 1989). After this disaster, senior police officers claimed misinformation and that hooligan should be blamed for this disaster, and some newspapers followed this misinformation. Lord Justice Taylor investigated this accident. Taylor considered the situation of society the anger of Liverpool residents and football fans, and he dismissed such theories held the police responsible for the tragedy (Taylor, 1989).

The result of Hillsborough was the all-seater stadium safety policy, which was applied to the first and the second divisions. This was the recommendations of Taylor's report. Graham Kelly, then chief executive of the FA, thought that " Thatcher despised football, had little or no interest in sport and drove those around her who were interested in the national sport underground. There was no football lobby because she wouldn't give the game room" (Taylor, 1989). Therefore, from Thatcher's personal position, the government was never to allow football to develop along its wrong way. The government insisted to conduct an all-seater stadiums policy to also try and combat the increasing threat of hooliganism (Johns, 2004).

After the Hillsborough disaster, a new department called the Football Licensing Authority was established to monitor the licensing and regulation of stadia. The government also had power to reassess clubs' financial position during the process of stadium safety improvement (Taylor, 1989). Therefore, the Hillsborough not only resulted in the rebuilding of stadiums safety structure, but also for reinventing football clubs themselves. It built a base for the later boom of the Premier League.

## Critical Analysis:

Hillsborough brought a determination to ensure that football did not suffer again and the fans safety was now the highest concern of authorities. Why did British football need to suffer such tragedies to truly realize the significance of stadium safety? There are three main reasons. Firstly, football is not an ordinary industry. The custom of football fans is very traditional, which is dependent on loyalties rather than value for money or safety. Football fans were simply not to change their loyalties of clubs even if their clubs had stadium safety issues (Ingle, 2005). In fact, the terrace culture was an important element to attract them to watch games in the stadium. Secondly, football fans were composed predominantly by the working-class. Generally, some fundamental needs such as health, education and housing are normally concerned by working-class. The issue of football fans' safety was not a fundamental need, so football fans did not push many pressures on the government over this issue. Therefore, there were not many pressures from customers, so government did not need to demand a change (Peter, 1979). Thirdly, The football authorities did not expect the relationship between clubs and local authorities to be close, because the football authorities feared that any regulatory scheme run by local authorities might 'err on the side of excessive caution', resulting in clubs 'being put to considerable expense and being subject to a great deal of official interference' (Johns, 2004). Consequently, this too close relationship would negatively impact the development of football industry. Finally, only by football fans, football authorities and government cooperating together, would the new approach to prevent another tragedy be found as soon as possible (University of Leicester, 2002).

## Challenges and changes in the future:

## Hooliganism:

Hooliganism will be a challenge for British football safety in the future. The issue of Hooliganism is hard to solve because of its specific character. Mr Justice Taylor stated that it is hard to explain the cause of hooligans' misbehaviors and it is hard to recognize hooligans when they have not been previously charged for any misdemeanor. Moreover, according to Taylor's report (1989), hooligans were separated into two groups and almost every normal football fans can be classified in one group, which is depends on the different characters of different groups. For example, the first group is composed by some football fans misbehaving spontaneously in the game because of an external impact. Some worse hooligans are " the new hooligans". They plan their violence for fun and the football match itself is not important to them. The second group would be likely to imitate the first element, which we have just identified. Thus the first group always have follower to misbehave with them (Taylor, 1989).

## Football Supporters' Federation (FSF):

The all-seater policy was established due to the issue of overcrowding. However, the standing terrace culture is not the main reason to cause overcrowding. If standing terrace gets a good management, it also can be very safe like all-seater stadiums. The Football Supporter's Foundation (FSF) campaign is organized for 'Safe Standing' and the FSF petition for Safe Standing had amassed over 5, 000 signatures within a day. Four reasons will be stated below to prove Standing terrace should be reused (Ruthven, 2011).

## Atmosphere of watching

The perception of safe standing with football game is better than all-seater. In the safe standing areas, groups of mates can all congregate together and stand together. But now it is a near impossibility if you cannot afford season tickets. Some supporters escaped from all-steater stadiums because it has 'killed the atmosphere of truly football watching (Ruthven, 2011).

## Prices of tickets

With the more comfortable and better all-seater stadiums established, ticket prices also increased. The high price is even hard to afford for the average football fans to enjoy a game with their whole family. In Germany, the Bundesliga is still keeping the standing terrace, so the tickets prices are cheap. British football fans do not believe that the prices can be as low as the Bundesliga, but they hope the appearance of standing terrace will decrease the British football tickets prices (Kilmore, 2011).

## Choice of fans

The current situation with illegal standing often sees fans who do want to sit to watch the game, but also many fans are forced into seats, when they like standing. In fact, government should make more choice for fans. Some people want to sit and enjoy the game in peace and others wish to stand and generally want to be louder. By creating a designated standing area again, it keeps everybody happy.

## Proven it is available

In fact, some records and evidences have proven that standing terrace is viable for stadium safety. With many fans using the example of the Bundesliga in Germany, who maintains the existing terracing with good managing even safer than the all-seater stadiums. Many English fans think German fans enjoy games better, with much lower ticket prices. the German football authorities improved the fans match day experience better, but the English football authorities only saw the revenue all the time(Kilmore, 2011).

## Conclusion:

A complete safety structure cannot be only achieved by external element, the internal element is also very important. Especially, football is not an ordinary industry. The custom of football fans is very traditional, which is dependent on loyalties rather than value for money or safety. The external element such football clubs and authorities do not have many pressures from internal that football fans on the issue of safety. Therefore, the process of stadium safety development took much longer time than other ordinary industries. Nowadays, the complete stadium safety structure of UK has finished the safety very well, but it still cannot satisfy British football fans' request. Football fans want to get back " the 'soulness' nature of their super stadiums" (Kilmore, 2011). The UK football authority falls into an awkward situation that they are committed to improving the football fans' match day experiences; they have to prevent risks of hooliganism and overcrowding. Therefore, UK stadium safety structure will still need to face many challenges and change in the future.