EVIDENCE-BASED PREVENTION OF SPORTING-RELATED MATCH-FIXING

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MATCH-FIXING IN GRASSROOTS SPORTS

SURVEY RESULTS IN THE NETHERLANDS

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Gambling-related and non-gambling-related match-fixing

Match-fixing concerns the manipulation of sports competitions. Match-fixing involves intentional arrangements or actions aimed at nullifying the unpredictable nature of a sports competition or any of its particular events in order to obtain an unjustified advantage for oneself or third parties (cf. ISR 2016).

When it comes to match-fixing in the media, it mainly concerns manipulation of matches that can be associated with betting on the outcome of or within the event. This can be described as gambling-related match-fixing. There is also another form of match-fixing that is not related to gambling. This form of match-fixing involves improperly influencing the course or outcome of a match, with the aim of achieving a sporting advantage; sports-related match-fixing. This may involve an in-kind or cash reward, but not as a result of betting on the particular event or outcome. It is important to distinguish between these two forms of match-fixing (Spapens & Olfers 2013, 2015; Van Der Hoeven et al. 2020).

First, the reasons for manipulating a match differ between the two forms of match-fixing. Gambling-related match-fixing involves financial gain by betting on an event in the match or its outcome. Sports-related match-fixing can be based on several motives. It can be about mutual sporting self-interest. An example of this is a 'deal' between two teams about the desired outcome of their mutual match if that suffices for both to qualify for the next round. It may also be intended to favor or disadvantage a third party by intentionally underperforming. Another motive may be that one of the opponents let a game or match go in order to avoid a great effort or to have more time for other matters (Spapens & Olfers 2013).[1]

Secondly, preventing and reducing both forms of match-fixing requires a different approach and division of responsibility from sports organizations and governments. While gambling-related match-fixing requires a joint approach between sports organizations and governments, sports-related match-fixing is in principle purely a matter for the sports organisations. Third, both forms of match-fixing have different backgrounds and consequences. Gambling-related match-fixing concerns the higher levels of competitive sports. Moreover, this often involves persons with criminal connections. Non-gambling-related match-fixing occurs at all levels of competitive sport and mainly involves individuals who are linked together because of sporting competition.

[1] Sports-related and gambling-related match-fixing can coincide. A match whose course or outcome has been arranged to create a sporting advantage can be used to gain financial gain by betting on the match in question (Spapens & Olfers 2013).

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In addition to these differences, gambling-related and sports-related match-fixing have in common that they conflict with fair play. Both forms of match-fixing undermine the uncertainty of the course or outcome of a match, which threatens the credibility of sport.

1.2 Research into the prevalence of match-fixing

More and more information is becoming available about the manner in which and the extent to which these forms of match-fixing occur in the Netherlands. The most large-scale and reliable research into match-fixing in the Netherlands can be found in the report by Toine Spapens from Tilburg University, Marjan Olfers from VU University Amsterdam and forensic researchers from Ernst & Young (Spapens & Olfers 2013, 2015). The qualitative part of this research provides extensive information about match-fixing in five sports: football, tennis, trotting and racing, basketball and boxing. The quantitative part is limited in scope in two respects. First, the survey response group only allows statements about match-fixing in one sport (soccer). Second, the figures in this quantitative section are based on practitioners from the highest levels of amateur and professional football, as well as referees, trainers and sport agents at that level. The figures on the prevalence of match-fixing that are most commonly used in the Netherlands therefore only relate to the highest amateur football leagues and professional football.

The present report provides an update and supplement to the quantitative research part of Spapens & Olfers (2013). It is based on a survey conducted in the Netherlands in 2020, with a larger response group in two additional sports (tennis and hockey), and at all levels of grassroots sports. Moreover, the survey was conducted simultaneously in seven European countries (Belgium, France, Croatia, the Netherlands, Austria, the United Kingdom and Switzerland) with sufficient respondents to make statements about six sports: football, basketball, handball, tennis, hockey and cricket. After the reports on the results in the individual countries, an additional report will be published with an international comparison that can put the Dutch data in a broader perspective. In the present report, this is only possible for a few key figures.

1.3 Research question

The central question addressed in this report is to what extent match-fixing occurs, what the motives and characteristics of match-fixing are and how requests for match-fixing are responded to. In answering this question, gambling-related match-fixing is distinguished from sports-related (non-gambling-related) match-fixing. It is examined, among other things, at what playing levels these forms of match-fixing occur, what compensation is offered, whether there is pressure or threat, to what extent proposals for match-fixing are accepted and how sports associations respond to this.

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2 RESEARCH METHODS

2.1 Sampling method

Online survey
The data for this study was collected through an online survey. This survey has been developed for common application in the seven countries participating in the EPOSM project: Belgium, France, Croatia, the Netherlands, Austria, the United Kingdom and Switzerland.

Tennis, hockey and football
The survey in all participating countries focuses on tennis and football and a third sport. Tennis and football have been selected in a European context on the basis of their popularity in all countries and the signals about match-fixing within these sports. Hockey has been added to this in the Netherlands for three reasons. Firstly, hockey is the sixth largest sport in the Netherlands in terms of club membership and the largest team sport after football. Secondly, just like football and tennis, hockey is known for its club culture, which may be relevant in relation to the occurrence and prevention of match-fixing. Thirdly, fewer signals are known about match-fixing in hockey than in the other two sports, which offers interesting possibilities for comparison.

Creation of the survey
Where possible and relevant, the questionnaires in the EPOSM study have been aligned with previous studies on match-fixing, in particular those by Spapens & Olfers (2013) and Van Der Hoeven et al. (2020). This applies in the first place to the definition of match-fixing that is used, in which a distinction is made between gambling-related and non-gambling-related match-fixing. Second, questions about the prevalence of match-fixing, the underlying motives and the people involved were posed in the same way as in these previous studies.

The questionnaire was submitted to the Royal Dutch Lawn Tennis Association (KNLTB), Royal Dutch Hockey Association (KNHB) and Royal Dutch Football Association (KNVB) with a request for comments on the questionnaire and cooperation in its distribution. Subsequently, one standardized questionnaire was drawn up and distributed among hockey players, tennis players and football players. The only differences between the questionnaires were related to differences in classification and terminology in the hockey, tennis and football worlds, such as the difference between Eredivisie, Hoofdklasse and Level 1 for the highest playing level.

Members panels (hockey and tennis) and social media (football)
The KNHB and KNLTB were willing to send an invitation to participate in the study, with a link to the questionnaire, to their member panels. By clicking on this link, the members of these panels were immediately taken to the welcome page of the survey, after which they could start filling out the survey. The questionnaire was open to these member panels in the months of May and June 2020.

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This was not possible for football. Alternatively, the link to the questionnaire was distributed via social media (LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook), both from the accounts of the researchers and those of the KNVB. This has been done several times in the period from July to October 2020.

2.2 Response groups

A total of 7,497 people were approached via the member panels; 3,097 members of the hockey association and 4,400 members of the tennis association. A total of 965 respondents, including 545 members of the hockey association and 420 members of the tennis association, completed the questionnaire in whole or in part. This is a response of 13 percent for both sports together (18% for hockey and 10% for tennis).

The recruitment of respondents in football via social media resulted in 74 completed questionnaires. Since these respondents were not recruited on the basis of a member panel, the response rate cannot be determined.

Table 2.1 provides an overview of the background characteristics of the response groups.

	Hockey N = 545		**Tennis N = 420**		**Football N = 74**	
Gender	**Man**	72,5%		67,1%		77,0%
	Woman	27,2%		32,6%		23,0%
	Unknown	0,4%		0,2%		0,0%
Age	**mean**	47		51		39
Involvement in sport	**number of years**	28		29		24
Involvement in sport	**Athlete/player**	65,9%		83,6%		74,3%
	Coach/trainer/assistant-coach/team manager	15,6%		2,9%		8,1%
	Medical staff member	0,0%		0,0%		1,4%
	Refereee/assistant-referee/official	9,4%		1,0%		5,4%
	Club board member	2,9%		7,6%		4,1%
	Other	6,1%		5,0%		6,8%
Playing level	**Internationaal**	1,8%	**Level 1**	1,2%	**Internationaal**	1,4%
	Hoofdklasse	7,1%	**Level 2**	4,5%	**Eredivisie**	4,1%
	Promotieklasse	4,4%	**Level 3**	6,2%	**Eerste divisie**	2,7%
	Overgangsklasse	14,1%	**Level 4**	12,9%	**Tweede divisie**	4,1%
	Eerste klasse *(First class)*	23,6%	**Level 5**	17,9%	**Derde divisie**	2,7%
	Tweede klasse *(Second class)*	18,8%	**Level 6**	25,5%	**Hoofdklasse**	6,8%
	Derde klasse *(Third class)*	18,0%	**Level 7**	19,0%	**Eerste klasse**	2,7%
	Vierde klasse *(Fourth class)*	7,7%	**Level 8**	9,8%	**Tweede klasse**	14,9%
	Vijfde klasse *(Fifth class)*	1,8%	**Level 9**	3,1%	**Derde klasse**	24,3%
	Zesde klasse *(Sixth class)*	2,6%			**Vierde klasse**	20,3%
					Vijfde klasse	16,2%

Table 2.1 – Background characteristics response groups

2.3 Validity and reliability

The member panels of the KNHB and KNLTB are a reflection of their total membership base. To assess whether the response groups in turn reflect the member panels of both sports associations,

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both groups (response group and member panel) were compared on a number of characteristics for which data is available.

Table 2.2 shows that both response groups are a reliable reflection of the member panels. The age distribution of the two groups is very similar. Men are somewhat overrepresented in the response groups in both sports. The most important difference concerns the playing in tennis: members of the tennis association who play at a somewhat higher level have responded to the survey more often. If match-fixing occurs more frequently at higher levels of play, it is possible that figures on the prevalence of match-fixing based on the response group among tennis players are somewhat higher than they actually are. For hockey, the response group shows an overrepresentation of young seniors and an underrepresentation of veterans.

	KNHB	EPOSM hockey		KNLTB	EPOSM tennis
Gender			**Gender**		
Man	63%	73%	Man	54%	67%
Woman	37%	27%	Woman	46%	33%
Age category			**Age category**		
0 - 9	0%	0%	18 - 25	7%	3%
10 - 19	3%	2%	25 - 35	13%	12%
20 - 29	17%	13%	35 - 45	16%	17%
30 - 39	11%	10%	45 - 55	23%	29%
40 - 49	32%	24%	55 - 65	19%	23%
50 - 59	28%	34%	65+	22%	16%
60 - 69	7%	12%			
70+	2%	4%			
Playing level			**Playing level**		
Young seniors	5%	11%	1 to 4	2%	24,8%
Seniors	47%	51%	5 and 6	7%	43,4%
Veterans	42%	28%	7 to 9	91%	31,9%
Other	3%	9%			

Table 2.2 - Comparison of KNHB and KNLTB member panels and response groups

With these caveats, it can be stated that the survey, based on the total of 965 respondents, with the distribution according to various background characteristics as presented in Tables 2.1 and 2.2, has been a valid instrument to assess the experiences and views with regard to match-fixing within hockey and tennis clubs.

This applies to a lesser extent to football. First, the social media recruitment resulted in a much smaller response group. Secondly, it is not possible to determine how the response group relates to the total group from which this is a sample. For example, it is possible that football players who have had to deal with match-fixing have been more inclined to complete the questionnaire than football players who have not, while this has been a confounding factor to a much lesser extent for hockey and tennis. After all, in these sports the members' panel is taken as the starting point. And in relation to match-fixing, that member panel is composed completely randomly. Thirdly, the reliability of the respondents in football is less easy to assess. For hockey and tennis, the response group appears to be a good reflection of the member panel. The members of these panels are known to the relevant sports association as reliable participants in research. The background of the respondents who participated in this survey for football via social media is neither known nor verifiable. For example, 6.8 percent of the respondents indicate that they play football at the level of the Eredivisie and Keukenkampioen Divisie, while 0.1 percent of the football teams at the KNVB

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play at that level. If the respondents among football players answered the questionnaire truthfully, the overrepresentation of higher levels of practice should be taken into account when generalizing the findings. It cannot be ruled out (nor can it be verified) that the overrepresentation gives a distorted picture because some of the respondents did not fill in the questionnaire truthfully.

The results among football players are therefore not added to the results among hockey players and tennis players in this report, but are stated separately with the necessary caveats where this may be of significance.

2.4 Comparison with previous research

Compared to the match-fixing survey conducted by Spapens & Olfers in the Netherlands in 2013, the match-fixing survey conducted in the Netherlands in the context of the EPOSM project in 2020 differs in two respects (see Table 2.3):

1. The first difference concerns the target group. While the survey in the EPOSM study was conducted in the Netherlands among athletes, trainers/coaches, medical staff, referees, board members and similar stakeholders at all playing levels (see table 2.1), the Spapens & Olfers survey at the time was aimed at athletes and other involved at the higher and highest levels of practice (football: referees, agents, coaches Professional Football, players topklasse, hoofdklasse en 1e klasse, Jupiler League and Eredivisie; tennis: players and former players; equestrian sports: pikeurs and judges; boxing: elite and youth participants; and basketball: Eredivisie players, coaches/trainers Eredivisie and Eredivisie referees).
2. The second difference concerns the size of the response group by sport. The survey in the EPOSM survey in 2020 resulted in 965 respondents who reflect the member panels of the KNHB and KNLTB. In addition, 74 questionnaires were completed by persons involved in football, but these are not taken into account in this study for methodological reasons for the overall picture. The questionnaire issued by Spapens & Olfers in 2013 was completed by 636 representatives of football (at high playing levels). In the study by Spapens & Olfers (2013), the respondents of the other sports form too small numbers to be able to make statements about these sports as a whole: tennis: n=12; equestrian sports: n=15; boxing: n=12; basketball: n=53.

It can be concluded that the survey by Spapens & Olfers (2013) mainly allows statements about match-fixing in football at the higher and highest level, while the present EPOSM survey in the Netherlands allows statements about match-fixing in hockey and tennis in a broad sense.

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Spapens & Olfers (2013)	N	%		EPOSM-NL (2020)	N	%
Approached (football, tennis, basketball, equestrian sports, boxing)	5547			Approached (hockey and tennis)	7497	
Response total	732	13%**		Response via member panels	965	13%**
Football Basketball Equastrian sports Tennis Boxing	636 53 15 12 12	87%* 7%* 2%* 2%* 2%*		Tennis Hockey	420 545	10%* 18%*
(former) Player Referee Coach Club board member Other		73%* 18%* 6%* 0%* 4%*		(former) Player Referee Coach Club board member Other		73%* 6%* 10%* 5%* 6%*
Playing level:	Referees, sports agents, coaches professional football, players topklasse, hoofdklasse and 1e klasse, professional players of the Eredivisie and Jupiler League			Playing level:	All playing levels, with limited representation of professional athletes	

Tabel 2.3 – Reponse groups comparison Spapens & Olfers (2013) and EPOSM-NL (2020)

* In percentage of response

** In percentage of approached

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3 PREVALENCE OF MATCH-FIXING

3.1 Gambling-related and non-gambling-related match-fixing

Our survey among the member panels of the KNHB and KNLTB shows that 12 percent of the respondents know someone who has been approached to fix a match. No distinction is made here between gambling-related and non-gambling-related match-fixing. There are hardly any differences in this respect between hockey and tennis (see figure 3.1).

In the survey via social media among football players, the percentage was much higher: 24 percent of the respondents indicated that they knew someone who had been approached to fix a match. As argued in the previous chapter, this may be the result of self-selection.

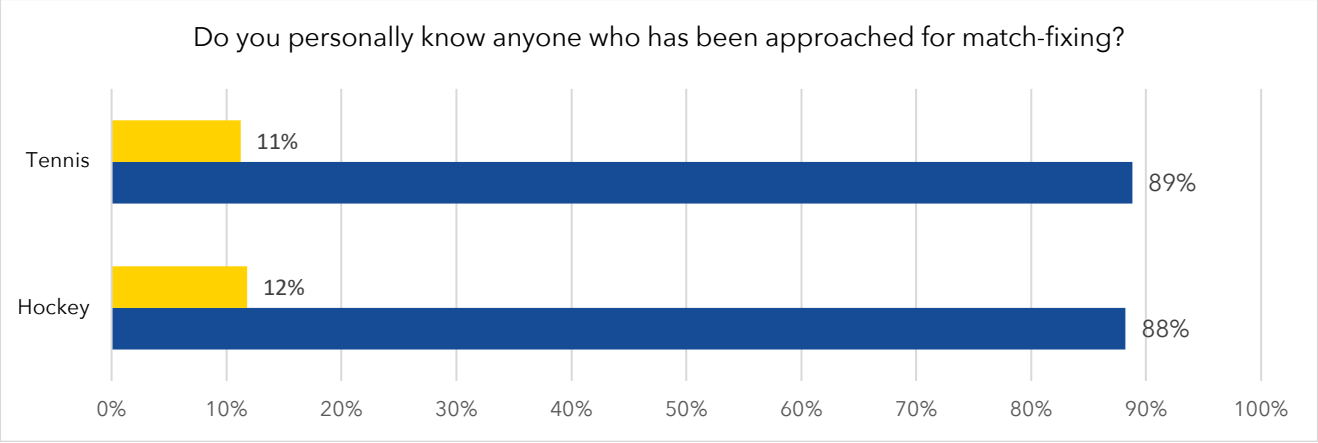


Figure 3.1 – Respondents who personally knew someone who had been approached for match-fixing (N=965)

12% of respondents know someone who has been approached to fix a match

The percentage of 12 percent among hockey and tennis players is lower than what emerges from the EPOSM survey in Belgium, France, Croatia, the Netherlands, Austria, the United Kingdom and Switzerland combined. Of the 5,014 respondents from these countries together, 18 percent indicated that they personally knew one or more people who had been approached to fix a match. It should be noted here that the sampling methods and groups of respondents differ in the countries mentioned and are therefore not easily comparable.

Earlier research by Spapens & Olfers in 2013 showed that 8 percent knew someone who was approached to fix a match. As indicated in the previous chapter, the response group of that survey concerns football players at the higher and highest levels. The lower percentage among this target group may be explained by the fact that non-gambling-related match-fixing is more common at lower levels of practice, while gambling-related match-fixing is more common at higher levels. The following results from our survey in the Netherlands support this statement.

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Of all respondents in hockey and tennis, 7 percent (an equal percentage in both sports) indicated that they themselves had been approached to fix a match (see figure 3.2).

7% of the respondents have themselves been approached to fix a match.

In the survey via social media among football players, this was true for 15 percent of the respondents. In the EPOSM survey in the seven European countries, 8 percent of all 5,014 respondents (and 9 percent of 745 tennis players) indicated that they themselves had been approached about match-fixing.

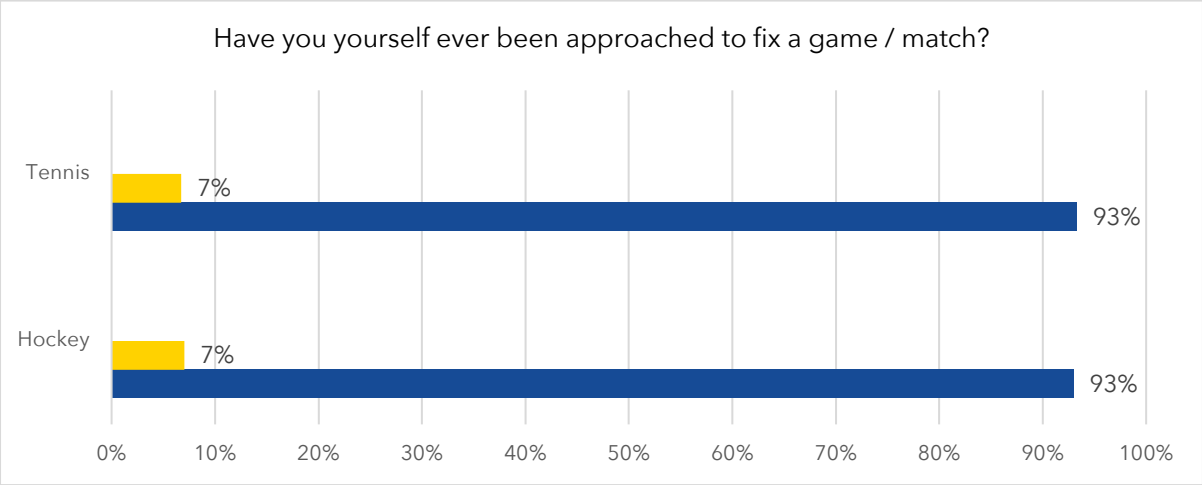


Figure 3.2 – Cases of having been approached themselves in the Dutch sample (n = 965)

35 percent of the respondents in hockey and tennis who have themselves been approached to fix a match indicate that they have experienced this once. For 42 percent, they were approached two to three times; 23 percent say this happened more than three times. In the survey via social media among football players, these percentages are 64 percent, 18 percent and 18 percent respectively.

3.2 Sports-related match-fixing

7 percent of all respondents in hockey and tennis indicated that they themselves had been approached to fix a match. This concerned sports-related match-fixing only.

By far the most cited motive (just over 80 percent of all motives mentioned) behind the particular request to fix a match was to help prevent relegation of a specific club or player, or to help a specific club or player win a championship. To do this, the approached party had to intentionally underperform. This applied to both hockey and tennis (see Figure 3.3).

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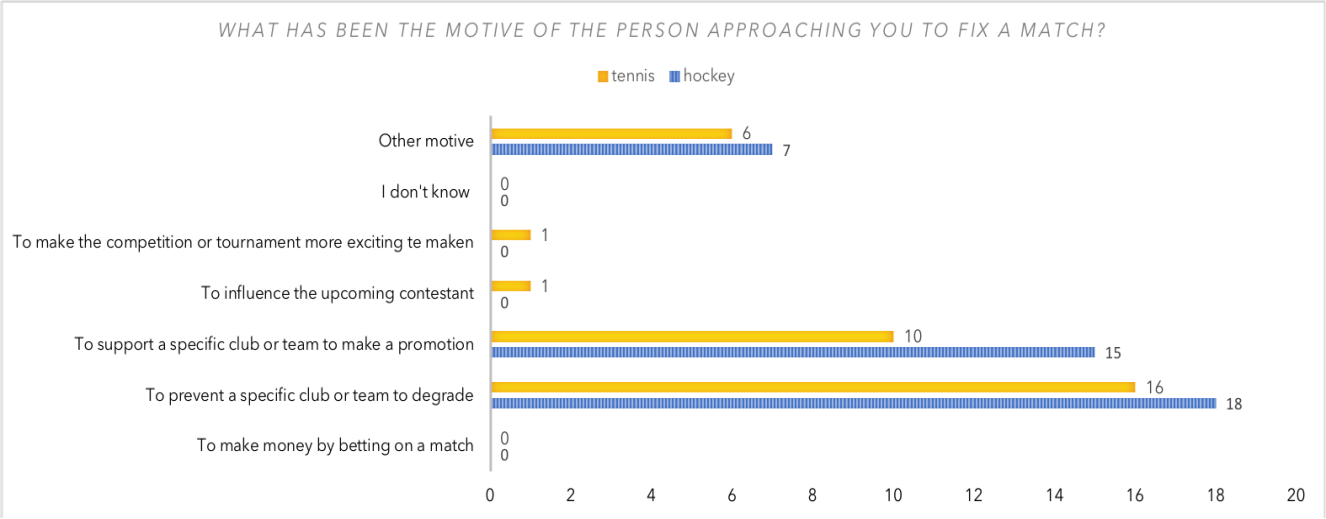


Figure 3.3 – Motives for approaching respondents to fix matches in hockey and tennis

None of the respondents from the member panel of the hockey and tennis association indicated that the motive for match-fixing was to earn money by betting on the match in question. The social media survey of football players also made no mention of gambling-related match-fixing.

> The match-fixing for which respondents themselves were approached related exclusively to sports-related (non-gambling-related) match-fixing.

In the study by Spapens & Olfers (2013), a majority of respondents indicated that influencing the competition was the basis for the rapprochement towards match-fixing, while 20 percent stated that the manipulation was aimed at making money by betting on the concerning match.

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4 CHARACTERISTICS OF SPORTS-RELATED MATCH-FIXING

4.1 People involved

When the respondents were approached for sports-related match-fixing, 77 percent were active as practitioner, 16 percent as referee and 7 percent as trainer/coach/team manager. They were approached by predominantly practitioners (78 percent), coaches/trainers/team managers (18 percent) or club board members (3 percent) to fix a match. Most of these were opponents (71 percent) but also members of their own club (27 percent).

4.2 Playing level

The results of the survey indicate that sports-related match-fixing hardly occurs at the lowest playing levels (in hockey the fifth and sixth class and in tennis levels 8 and 9). However, match-fixing was reported more often than could be expected on the basis of the response group by respondents playing at a level between the upper and lower regions: in hockey, in particular, the transition class and first class (see Figure 4.1); in tennis especially level 4 (Figure 4.2). With regard to the survey via social media in football, the numbers are too small to make general statements (Figure 4.3).

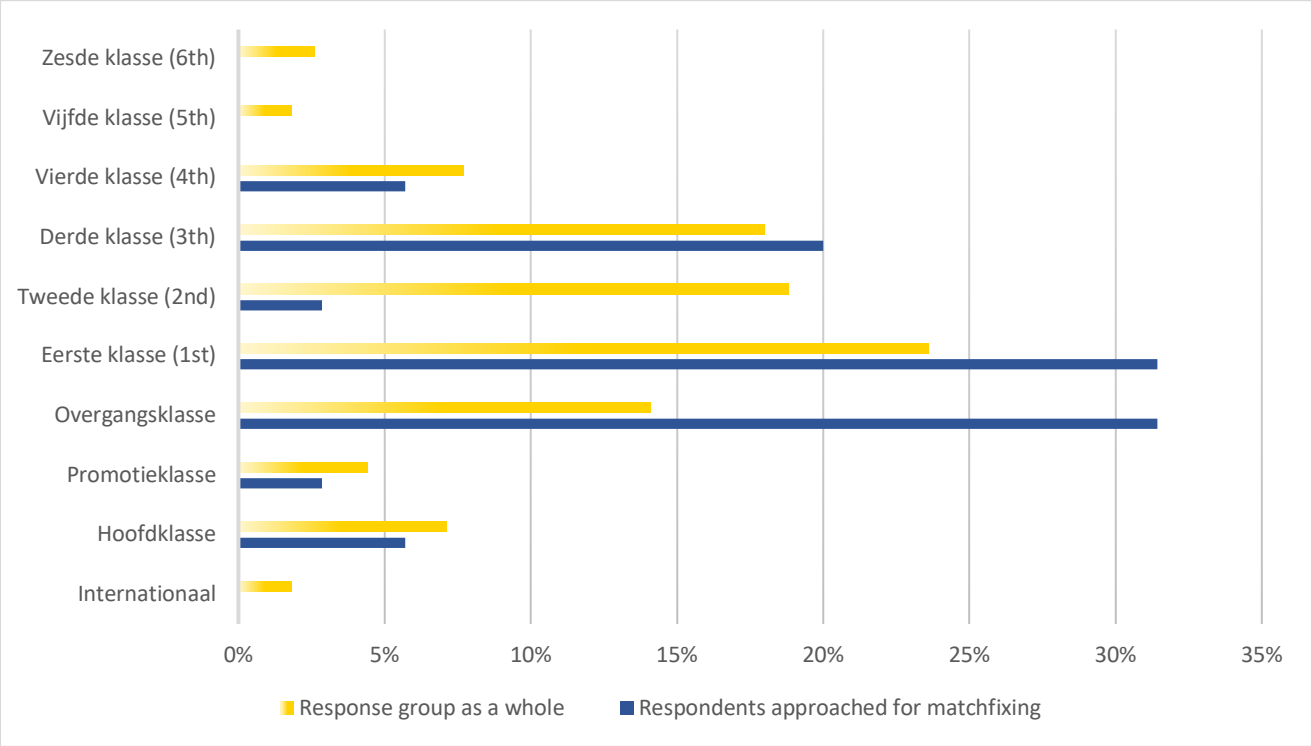


Figure 4.1 – Hockey respondents approached for sports-related match-fixing by playing level (in absolute numbers; n = 35) compared to response group in hockey as a whole by playing level (in percentages; n = 545)

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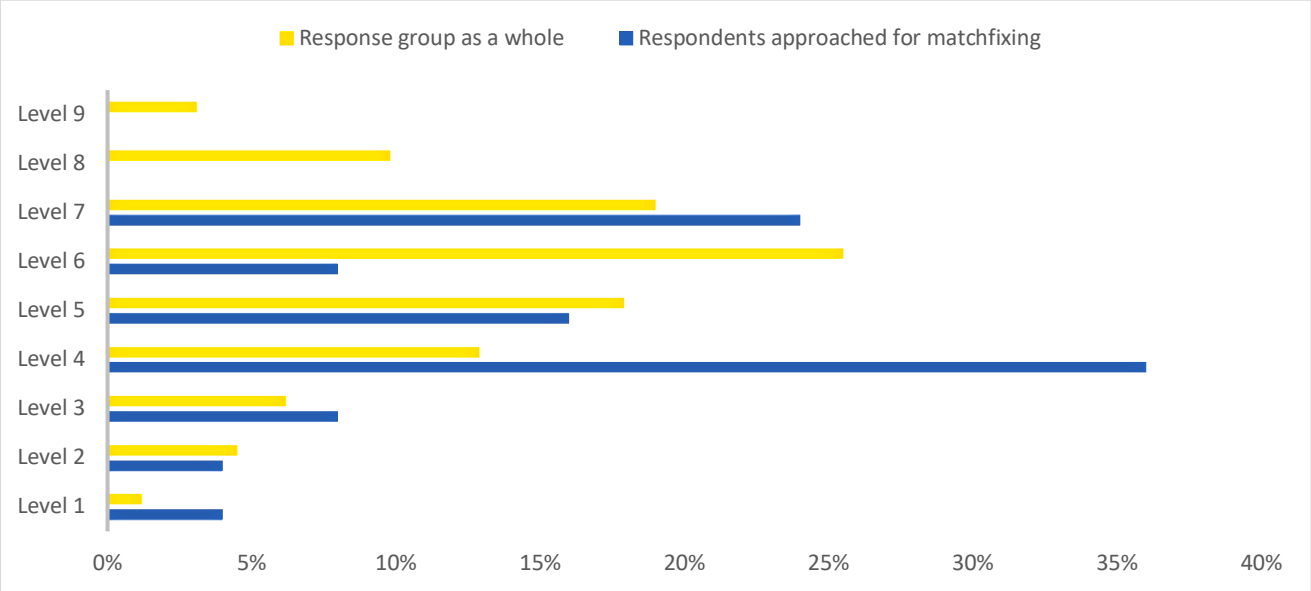


Figure 4.2 – Tennis respondents approached for sports-related match-fixing by playing level (in absolute numbers; n = 25) compared to response group in hockey as a whole by playing level (in percentages; n = 420).

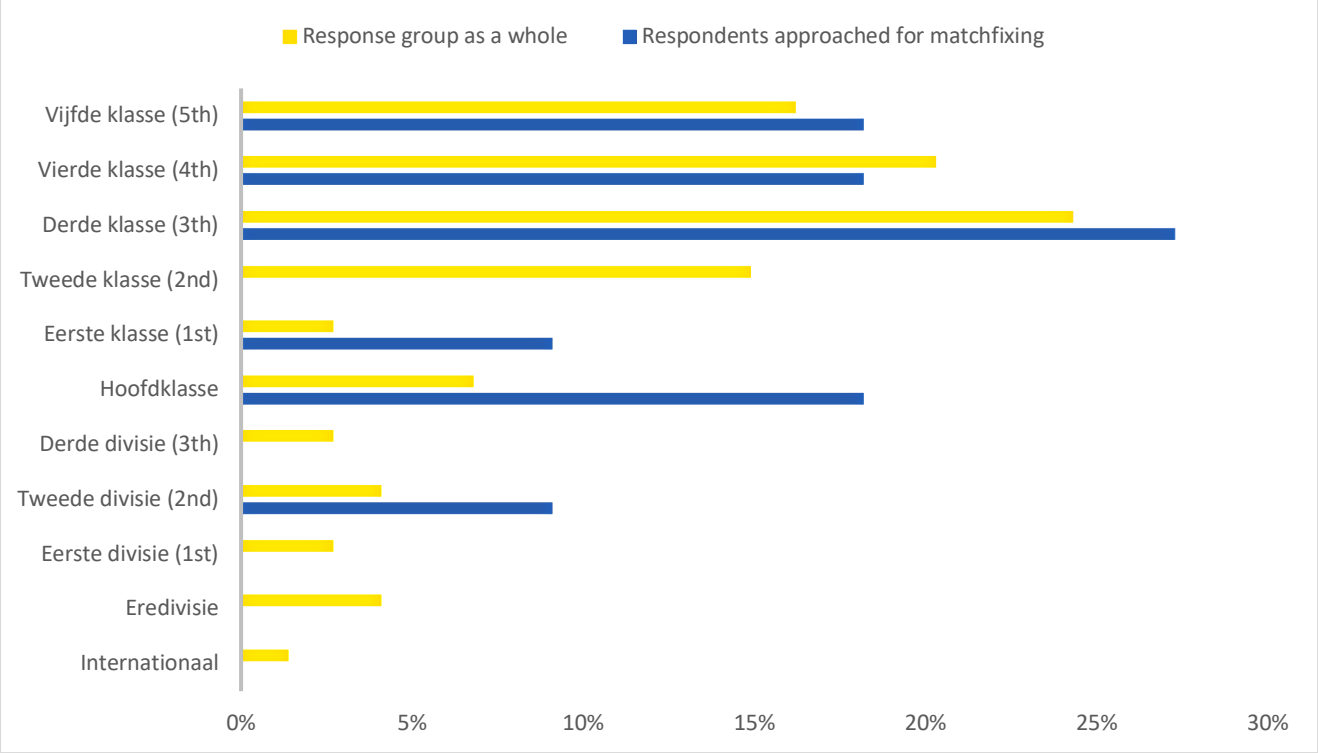


Figure 4.3 – Football respondents approached for sports-related match-fixing by playing level (in absolute numbers; n = 11) compared to response group in hockey as a whole by playing level (in percentages; n = 74).

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4.3 Compensation

In return for fixing a game or match, in 40 percent of the cases a small amount of money and/or a gift in kind was offered. Four respondents in hockey and tennis reported that money had been offered. In three cases this involved an amount less than one hundred euros. One respondent reported a sum of money between one hundred and five hundred euros (see figure 4.1). More often it concerned gifts in kind; 36 percent of the respondents who were approached for match-fixing themselves stated that it concerned a gift in kind, such as paying for a case of beer, wine/beer, drinks or the bar bill.

In 40% of the cases in which the respondent was approached for match-fixing, a gift in cash and/or kind was offered. This involved small amounts of money.

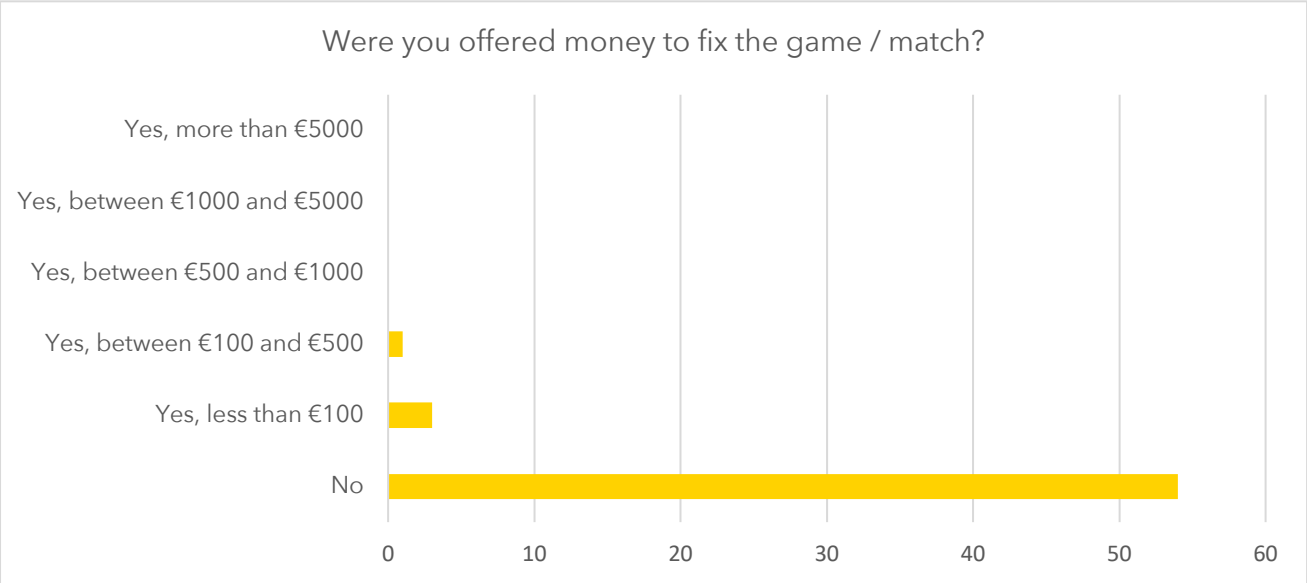


Figure 4.4 – Financial compensation for sports-related match-fixing in hockey and tennis

In the survey via social media among football players, eleven respondents indicated that they themselves had been approached to fix a match. Five of them indicated that money was involved: in four cases less than a thousand euros, in one case between a thousand and five thousand euros. According to seven respondents, other considerations were offered, in particular paying the beer bill and/or other drinks.

4.4 Pressure or threat

Of the 58 respondents in hockey and tennis who indicated that they themselves had been approached to fix a match, seven respondents indicated that they felt threatened or pressured. This was not mentioned in the survey via social media among football players.

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	With pressure or threat	Without pressure or threat
Gambling-related	0	0
Non-gambling-related	7	51

Table 4.1 Nature of match-fixing for which respondents in hockey and tennis were approached

4.5 Consent

Of the respondents in hockey and tennis who indicated that they themselves had been approached to fix a match, just over a quarter indicated that they had agreed to the request. This percentage was more or less the same in both sports. In the survey via social media among football players, almost half agreed to the request.

> 26% of the respondents who themselves have been approached to fix a match agreed with the request.

As the main motivation, the respondents stated that they agreed to the request because of its importance to their own team or as a friendly gesture towards another club or player or the person who made the proposal. Two respondents indicated that they agreed to the request because of pressure exerted on them from their own team. None of the respondents in hockey and tennis indicated that they agreed to the request because of an offer of money or gifts or personal financial problems. In the survey via social media, one footballer indicated that he agreed because of an offer of money or other material compensation.

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5 REPORTING OF MATCH-FIXING

In the survey, respondents were asked whether they had ever reported suspicions of or experiences with match-fixing to anyone. This question was left open as to whether it was gambling-related or non-gambling-related match-fixing. About 60 percent of the respondents in hockey and tennis indicated that they had indeed shared such suspicions or experiences; mainly with teammates, board members of the sports club or the sports association (see figure 5.1 in which the labels show the absolute numbers of respondents).

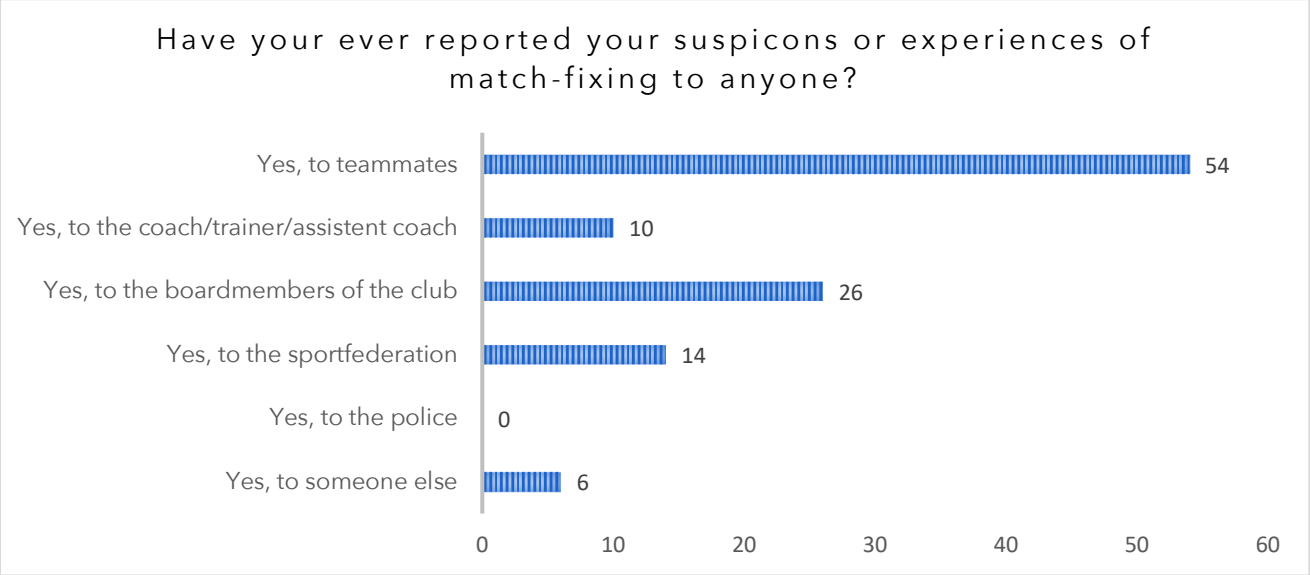


Figure 5.1 Reporting suspicions of or experience with match-fixing in hockey and tennis (in absolute numbers; n = 77; multiple answers per respondent possible)

Of the respondents who are still involved with a sports club in hockey or tennis, 9 percent indicate that their sports club pays attention to gambling-related and/or non-gambling-related match-fixing; 49 percent indicate that the club does not; 42 percent don't know.

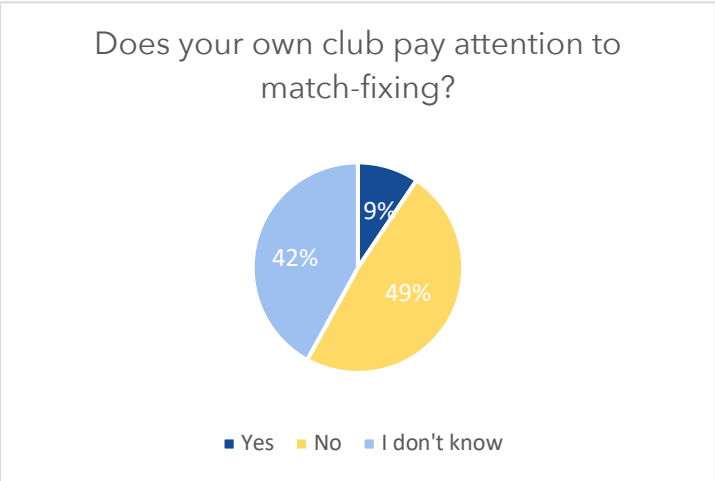


Figure 5.2 Attention paid to match-fixing by hockey and tennis clubs according to respondents (n = 924)

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Insofar as tennis and hockey clubs pay attention to ***gambling-related and/or non-gambling-related match-fixing***, this is mainly done through general instruments, such as a code of conduct/code of ethics or a confidential advisor. Actions specifically aimed at match-fixing, such as giving explicit warnings, prohibiting gambling on matches or reporting suspicious acts to the police are less common.

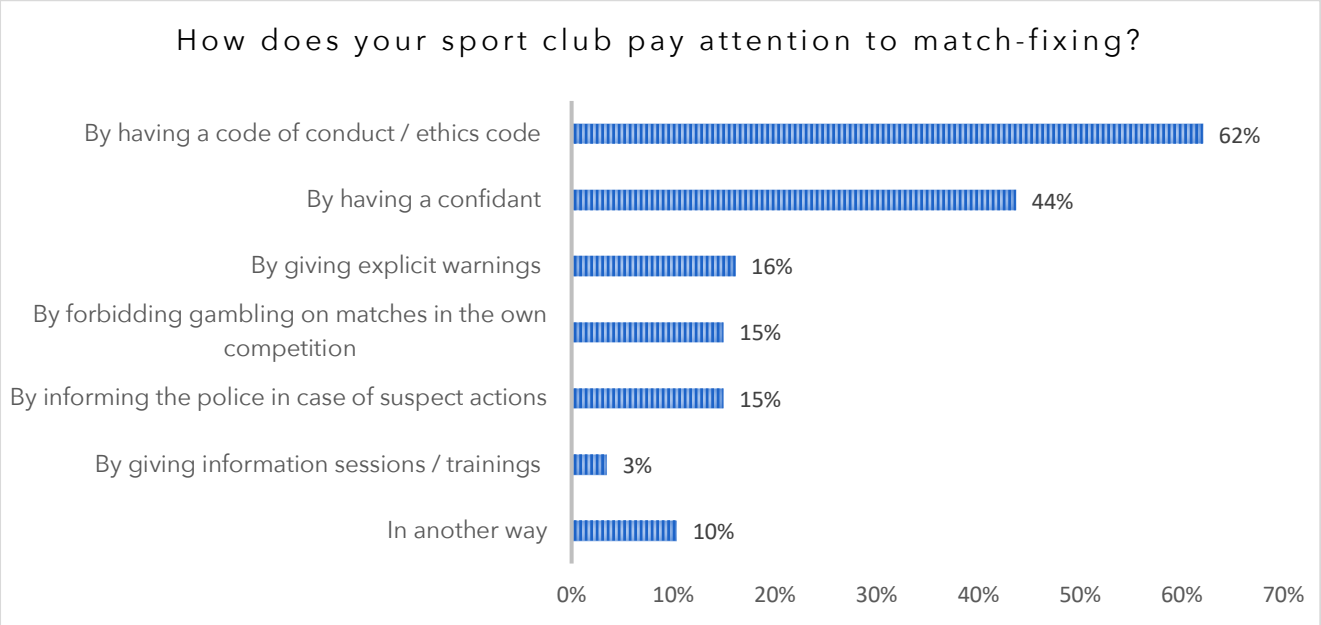


Figure 5.3 How hockey and tennis clubs pay attention to gambling-related and non-gambling-related match-fixing (n = 87)

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6 ASSESSMENT OF MATCH-FIXING

Match-fixing in general – i.e. both gambling-related and sports-related – is not regarded by two-thirds of the respondents as a real problem in their sport in the Netherlands. One third of the respondents see match-fixing as a real problem. Of the respondents, 80 percent consider it unlikely that they can be approached to fix a match themselves.

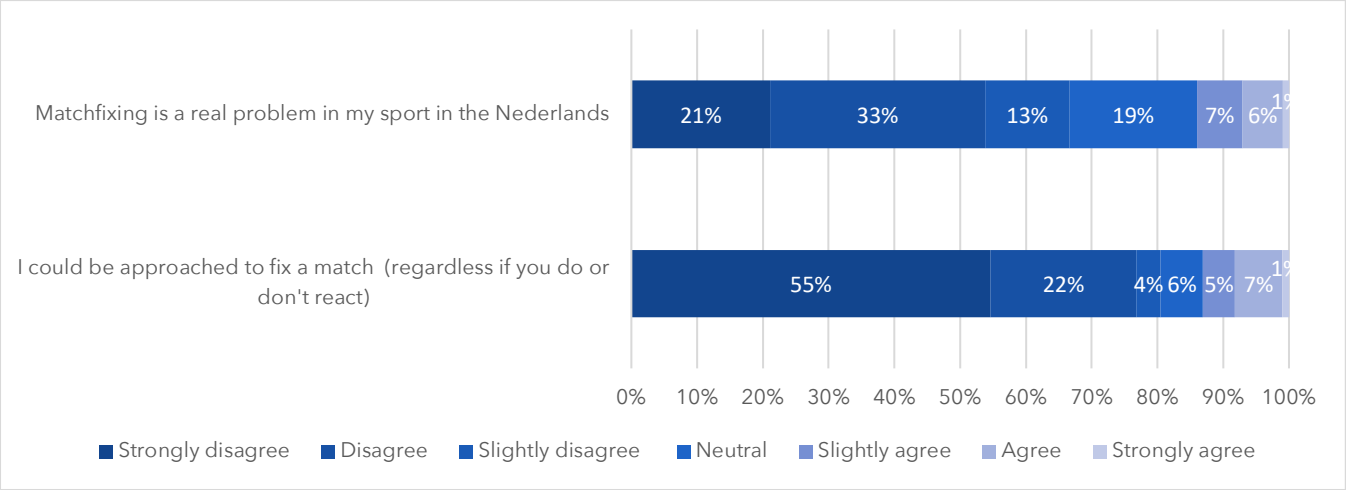


Figure 6.1 Extent of the problem of match-fixing as experienced by members of the hockey association and tennis association.

A large majority of respondents feel uncomfortable hearing about match-fixing in their sports environment. It does not make much difference whether it concerns sports-related or gambling-related match-fixing.

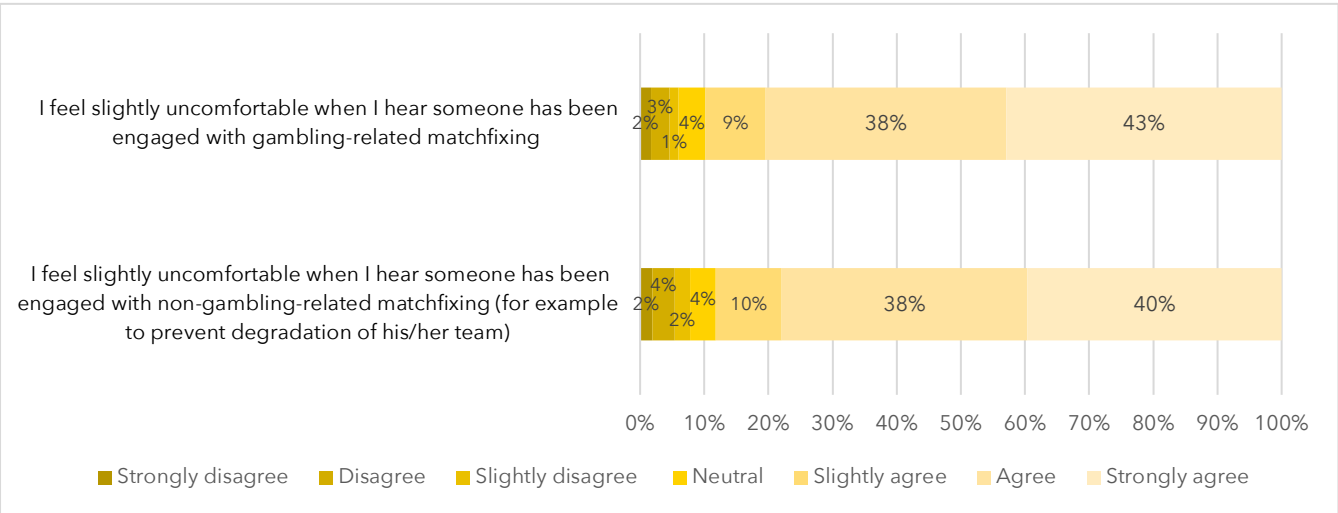


Figure 6.2 How members of hockey and tennis clubs deal with gambling-related and non-gambling-related match-fixing.

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Gambling-related match-fixing is disapproved of by a slightly larger proportion of the respondents than sports-related match-fixing. While 97 percent of all respondents in hockey and tennis find it unacceptable to participate in match-fixing for the purpose of making money by betting on a match, 90 percent find it unacceptable to participate in match-fixing to avoid relegation of their own team.

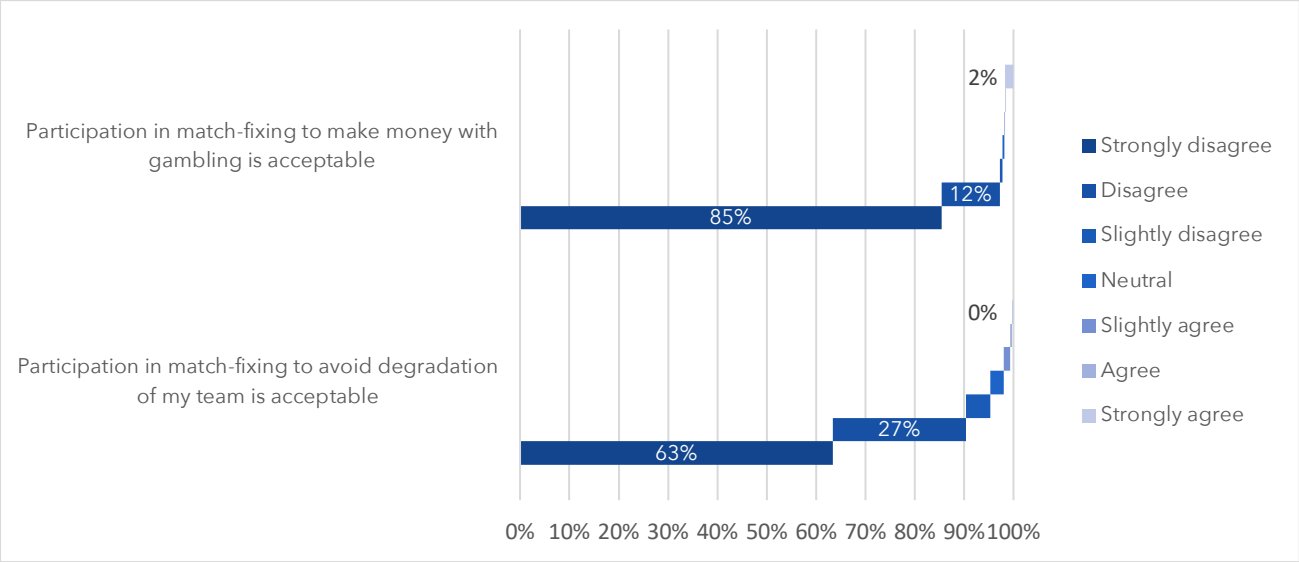


Figure 6.3 Assessment of participation in gambling-related and sports-related match-fixing by members of the hockey and tennis associations

According to the respondents, both forms of match-fixing should be punished. A large majority (87 percent) of respondents say they feel uncomfortable if match-fixing goes unpunished. This applies to both gambling-related and sports-related match-fixing.

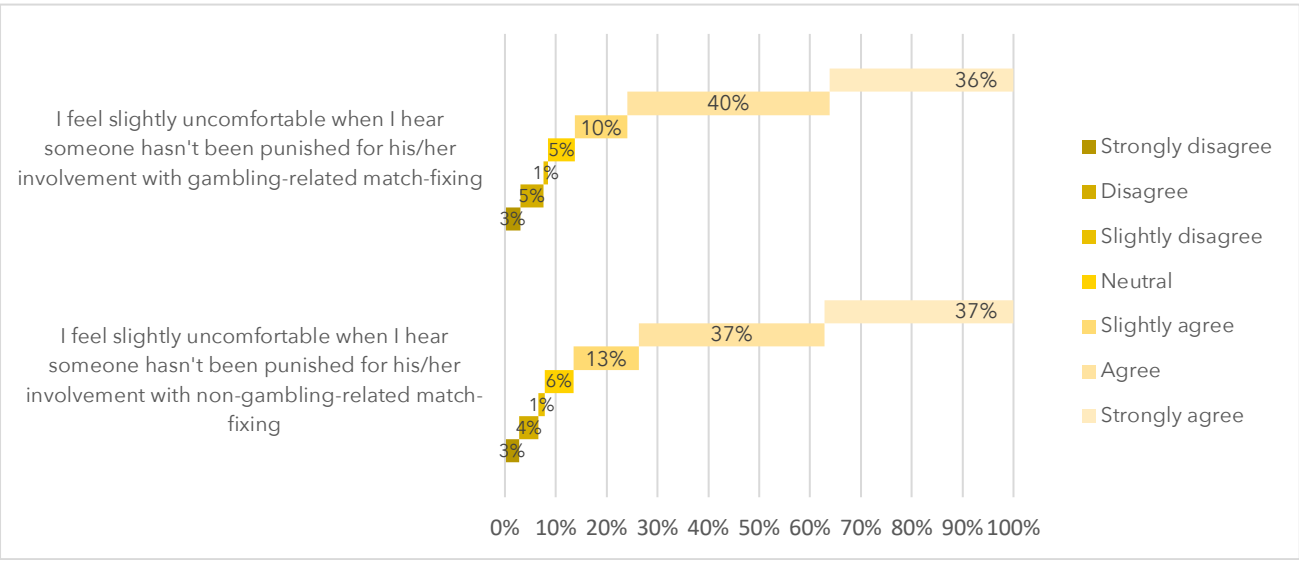


Figure 6.4 Feelings among respondents in tennis and hockey if gambling-related and sports-related match-fixing go unpunished

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Twenty percent of the respondents indicated that they gambled during the past year. In addition, eight of the 965 respondents in hockey and tennis indicate that they have already bet on a match in which they were personally involved. Gambling on your own matches does not fall under match-fixing but can provoke match-fixing and is therefore strictly prohibited under the regulations of many sports associations.

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7 CONCLUSIONS

7.1 Prevalence of match-fixing

- The results of this study show that match-fixing occurs at most levels of grassroots sports. In grassroots competition sports, this is not about gambling-related, but about sports-related match-fixing.

- Of the nearly one thousand respondents in tennis and hockey, 12 percent know someone who has been approached to fix a match. It was not asked what form of match-fixing this concerns. Of the respondents, 7 percent had themselves been approached to fix a match. In all cases, this involved non-gambling-related match-fixing. The main motive was to help another player or club by intentionally underperforming; not to make money by betting on the match in question. That is why this form of match-fixing can be described as sports-related match-fixing.

- Our survey shows no differences between tennis and hockey in the prevalence of match-fixing. Therefore, this study does not indicate that the difference between an individual sport and a team sport is a determining factor for the occurrence of sports-related match-fixing in grassroots sports.

- The percentage of Dutch respondents who know someone who has been approached for match-fixing (12 percent) is slightly lower than the average that emerges from the EPOSM survey among seven European countries (18 percent). Further research into this difference should show whether this is the result of a methodological artefact or a characteristic of Dutch grassroots sports.

- The percentage of Dutch respondents who know someone who has been approached for match-fixing (12 percent) is higher than the 2013 Spapens & Olfers survey showed (8 percent). It cannot be concluded from this that match-fixing was more common in 2020 than in 2013. It is more plausible that this difference is explained by the different target groups under which the study was conducted. In Spapens & Olfers (2013) respondents were mainly involved in football at the higher and highest level, while the results of the present study relate to those involved in hockey and tennis at all playing levels.

- Our research indicates that sports-related match-fixing occurs (much) more often than gambling-related match-fixing. This conclusion is in line with previous research findings (Van Der Hoeven et al. 2020).

- Compared to sports-related match-fixing, gambling-related match-fixing is probably more common at a higher playing level. That is not only a logical consequence of the functioning of the gambling market. This is also apparent from the difference between the results of our survey and those of the earlier study by Spapens & Olfers (2013). While the latter survey among practitioners, referees, trainers and agents from the highest levels of amateur football and

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professional football showed that 20 percent of match-fixing was intended to earn money by betting on the match in question, our research among practitioners of all playing levels has not revealed any mention of gambling-related match-fixing.

- The results of the survey indicate that sports-related match-fixing rarely occurs at the lowest playing levels. The greatest chance of sports-related match-fixing occurs between the highest and lowest playing levels.

7.2 Characteristics of match-fixing

- Of the respondents in hockey and tennis who said they had been approached for manipulating matches, 40 percent said they were offered something in return. Cash amounts were promised only a few times, concerning less than one hundred euros. Gifts in kind are much more common, like a case of beer or paying the bar bill after the game.

- While sports-related match-fixing is infrequent and does not involve a lot of money, such requests to 'fix' a match are sometimes accompanied by pressure or threats. Of the 965 respondents in hockey and tennis, 58 respondents indicated that they themselves had been approached to fix a match, of whom seven respondents stated that this was accompanied by pressure or threats.

- A quarter of the respondents who were approached for match-fixing themselves complied with this request. The main motive for this was that it was in the interest of one's own team or was a friendly gesture towards another player or team. For two respondents, the pressure or threat exerted was a reason to agree to the request.

- Sports-related match-fixing is not kept secret among athletes. More than half of the respondents with suspicions of or experience with match-fixing indicate that they have shared this with others in the team, club or national governing body.

- It seems that sports associations pay little attention to sports-related match-fixing in grassroots sports. To the extent that attention is given to this issue, this takes the form of a code of conduct or ethical code and the presence of a confidential counselor within the club.

7.3 Assessment of match-fixing

- Respondents take both gambling-related and sports-related match-fixing seriously. They find match-fixing unacceptable and would feel very uncomfortable if they learned that match-fixing is taking place in their sports environment or if a match fixer would not be penalized. This assessment and condemnation of match-fixing concerns both gambling-related and sports-related match-fixing, although gambling-related participation in match-fixing is more strongly rejected than match-fixing in order to avoid relegation of one's own team.

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- At the same time, two thirds of the respondents do not consider match-fixing to be a serious problem in their sport in the Netherlands. That is understandable: 88 percent of respondents don't know anyone who has been approached to fix a match; 80 percent consider it unlikely that they themselves will be approached with such a request.

- It is nonetheless striking that 15 of the 58 respondents in hockey and tennis who had been approached to fix a match agreed to the request. It thus appears that members of sports clubs are more susceptible to sports-related match-fixing than would be expected on the basis of their assessment and conviction.

- An important factor here is that sports-related match-fixing usually 'only' involves a case of beer or a friendly gesture towards another player or club. Mutual sporting self-interest in a competition context can also form the basis of a 'deal', whether or not explicitly expressed, about the desired outcome of a match. This occurs, for example, if a tie in a match is beneficial to both parties in a competition or tournament context. Such sporting self-interest creates a grey zone between tactics and manipulation within which differences in perception can arise as to whether match-fixing is involved (Van Der Hoeven et al. 2021).

7.4 Concluding remarks

- Spapens & Olfers (2013) distinguish four forms of match-fixing: gambling-related match-fixing with and without bribery or threats; and non-gambling match-fixing with and without bribery or threat. Like their study, our results show that sports-related match-fixing without bribery or threat is the most prevalent. This conclusion is even more true in grassroots sports than in elite sports.

- Sports-related match-fixing is not widespread. It also has no relationship with crime, which makes gambling-related match-fixing even more problematic. Still, there are good arguments for taking this problem seriously. Like gambling-related match-fixing, sports-related match-fixing undermines the integrity of sports competitions. It occurs relatively rarely, but members of sports clubs are susceptible to it in grassroots sports; precisely because it can coincide with sporting self-interest and seems 'only' a futility compared to the interests that play a role in professional sport.

- The problem of sports-related match-fixing requires a policy that, compared to gambling-related match-fixing, places a stronger emphasis on awareness and information than on control and punishment. Within each sport it is important to discuss to what extent and forms sports-related match-fixing occurs, what the underlying motives are and where permitted tactics turn into unacceptable manipulation.

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