



# INCREASING GLOBAL COMPETITIVENESS



An analysis of the talent development ecosystem

**FIFA**





Dear friends,

My vision for FIFA in the coming years is to make football *truly* global. A major part of this is to pave the way to a landscape in which 50 national teams and 50 clubs, men and women, around the globe can genuinely compete for the title of world champions. This is easy enough to propose, but achieving it takes commitment.

FIFA's Talent Development Programme is a practical expression of that commitment. It is also a truly ground-breaking initiative and the very first of its kind globally. Over the course of the last year, a team of the world's foremost technical experts has conducted a comprehensive assessment of FIFA's member associations, as well as academies, to gather detailed data about the structures and resources they use to develop their young players.

That data has now been compiled to produce a global snapshot of the ecosystem in which the world's young footballers are developed, while each of the 205 participating member associations will receive its own report with concrete benchmarks and recommendations.

**This global report is part of our commitment, not just to our members, but to all talented players and to all football stakeholders everywhere.**

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We have referred to the talent development “ecosystem” precisely because everything is connected in our sport. We are all connected. Giving every talent a chance requires everyone to play their part. Through carefully considered calls to action, this report shows how each stakeholder can contribute to a richer talent development ecosystem and also benefit from it.

The first-ever 48-team FIFA World Cup and the first-ever 32-team FIFA Women's World Cup are in sight, and we want to see the strongest-possible competition for the crown of world champions. With the guidance of these findings, we hope and believe that our member associations have a better chance of making FIFA tournaments even more spectacular at the global level.

Yours in football,

**Gianni Infantino**

FIFA President

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In line with its Talent Development Programme, FIFA has undertaken a global ecosystem analysis. For many countries, talent development is key to achieving success, which is why FIFA is dedicated to giving every talent a chance. Here, FIFA's Chief of Global Football Development Arsène Wenger and Technical Director Steven Martens provide some valuable insights into the various phases involved in talent development and the importance of receiving a holistic education.

# Talking about talent pathways

Steven Martens in conversation with Arsène Wenger

Steven Martens (**SM**): Arsène, we are here to talk about the various phases of talent development. The first phase is probably knowing who your talented youngsters are. How do you see that one? When do we start with it and what are we looking for?

Arsène Wenger (**AW**): I would say that before talent identification, there is even a prior step of giving people a chance to play. Then you can see who plays well and who doesn't. But our immediate and first target is to give everybody a chance to play. Also, we are looking to develop world-class programmes in every single country. That's our basic target.

**“Our first target is to give people a chance to play.”**

**SM:** After conducting this global ecosystem analysis, our data shows that in the higher-performing countries, the real identification starts at around 11 and a half years old for the boys, and 12, 13 years old for the girls.

**AW:** That's the time where you see if a body responds to the brain, because our feet have to do what our brain wants. At 11, 12 years of age, we know that. Here we see if the players are technically talented or not, meaning you have to welcome the ball. It is important to have a relationship with the ball as if it were your friend, controlling it and bringing it down to the ground, welcoming it into your home and having fun together.

**SM:** At some point, it starts to become fairly obvious who has a little bit more talent than the others. But it's an ongoing process, meaning it doesn't stop there at 12 years old, does it?

**AW:** It never stops. Technical work and technical ability can always be improved. It also improves by the number of touches on the ball we have in training sessions. One of the big problems we have in our sport is that we have a limited amount of time that we can dedicate to training, so we have to use it in the most efficient way. From 12 to 16, the focus changes from “me and the ball” to me, my team-mates and the ball, as well as introducing the aspect of opposition. This means we start to analyse the timing of your movement, the timing of your availability. When you give the ball, can you be available again? All these kinds of things show a player's progression and understanding of a game. We, as coaches, have to equip the player with the tools that enable them to face any single situation in a game in the most efficient way. We have to prepare the players for that.

**“Talent development never stops. Technical work, technical ability can always be improved.”**

**SM:** During your time as a coach, you were always interested in the up-and-coming young players. You've always been a strong advocate of developing players through academies. What, for you, makes a good academy?

**AW:** A world-class development programme. That means absolutely having a long-term vision on what you can do and how to develop the player. I would say as well, a right balance between competition and time dedicated to improving training. We have seen by doing our report that in some countries, you have a deficit of competition and training. But always keep in mind that the development of a player is not linear. It can increase in speed during one period and decrease during another. That's why we, as coaches, have to be open-minded. People can always surprise you. Not everyone develops at the same pace, and not everybody reaches their maximum at the same time. That's why we have to find the key to help the player.

**“We always think the development of a player is linear, but it is not like that.”**

**SM:** That's where I think the academy comes in again, because the coaches' work inspires. If they work in an environment like an academy, they will inspire each other by working together, by having a general vision of the academy, correct?

**AW:** Exactly. And by stimulating each other as well. The academies have to create an environment that

encourages the player to develop, as well create a culture of performance. That means having a clear picture of where I want to go and where I can go. The coach has a big part to play in that, but they have to create that picture, that clarity in where the player can be at the next level.

**SM:** How important for you is infrastructure to an academy?

**AW:** In addition to good pitches helping to create good players, I would say good structures also help to develop human beings. When I create an academy, I have to think, "How can I educate the man or woman inside the football player as well?" I believe that with the responsibility of football today in society, the quality of education, not only of the football player, is absolutely vital. Important aspects that you have to consider are making girls and boys accountable and respectful. We have to give them the love of the game, to play the game above their own ego. I have to serve the game. It's not about only me, the love and respect I have for the game is absolutely vital. This is something which is decided before the age of 17.





**“The responsibility of football in society today is not only to develop football players, but their character as well.”**

**SM:** From that perspective, I come to the coaches. Academies are of course important, but the coaches who work there are key. What makes a good coach for you?

**AW:** A good coach is somebody who has a clear concept of what they want and what they love in the game, is capable of expressing it in an understandable way, and is able to obtain it on the football pitch. They're also someone who loves to help others. This means something more than just going out and coaching a session, they really try to understand who a player is and find the key to helping them. All players have different problems, and we have the capacity to help them solve them. That's why this is a very interesting aspect of being a coach, we have the chance to influence people's lives.



**“Coaches have the chance to influence people's lives.”**

**SM:** A coach can be somebody who makes a difference to the lives of people, not only in the way they play the game. From that perspective, you will often say that the top coaches are working at the top clubs with the top players, but maybe we also need fantastic coaches in the other stages of development?

**AW:** There are different ways of being a coach. When we speak about the top clubs and top teams, these are coaches who are able to use highly qualified technical staff in the most efficient way. It's not the same job and it's not the same ambition. I sometimes read interviews where they ask the player, "Who was the guy who influenced you the most?", and we always expect the answer to be these coaches in Manchester or at Real Madrid. Instead, they say, "Oh, he's a guy I met when I

was 15 or 16, he is the guy who made me, gave me something that was very important." This shows how important the coaches are at this level.

**SM:** Let's move on to training. In our study, we noticed that boys over the course of their playing development, between six and 23 years of age, get significantly more training sessions than girls. We also see a difference across the levels of play amongst the different associations. But the difference between boys and girls is especially big. We talk about training in terms of quantity, but there is also the quality aspect. Do you have any reflections on this?

**AW:** Ideally, we'd combine both. It is true that the girls are behind the boys on that front and we have to close the gap. Personally, I would say I think that will happen naturally, because the girls had a handicap, they started to play at the top level much later than the boys.

**SM:** And thus, fewer girls were being attracted to the game, but now it's growing.

**AW:** Exactly, we now see an explosion of girls' football, and it's absolutely fantastic. Every Women's World Cup is a jump ahead. So they will make up this ground. But it's still true that the quality of the competitions and training sessions, as well as the number of the training sessions, are behind and it is absolutely important that we correct that. I often say, "You can train to train, you can train to compete and you can train to win or to improve". That means, whilst training, you need boys and girls to have a vision in their minds regarding what they will practise and how they can improve by doing that. The coach is responsible for this, to give them a clear vision of what they want to work on. And there's only one solution: to educate coaches.

**“It's vital that we correct the quantity and quality of training sessions and competitions for girls.”**

**SM:** Now let's turn to matches. As you said earlier, in Europe, there are clearly more opportunities to play matches than in other confederations. But we see that, for instance, a 14-year-old boy from one of the top 20 countries in the world will play 44 matches per season, including friendlies. What do you think of that?

**AW:** I must say, personally I was surprised by the number of games he plays. Because if you think that you play for

40 weeks, 44 games for a young boy, you're 14 years of age, the time dedicated to training is too short, since you go to school during the week and play games on Saturday and Sunday. We could do with 25 games and more training, because what is very important is that the player doesn't come up prematurely. I was always promoting young players, yet I got many players at 18 years of age who had huge flaws in their game. No left foot, no ability to head the ball, because they had no time to improve these aspects of their game. After this age, it gets very late to work on these elements, because from 18 onwards, you go into top-level competition and have even less time. No time to work on these.

### **“The time dedicated to training is key in these crucial stages.”**

**SM:** So, let's talk a little bit more about the national teams. We've got an U-17 World Cup with U-17 national teams and we've also got the U-20 equivalents. How important are both of these age brackets, and what is maybe different from the U-17 perspective to the U-20 perspective in terms of player development?

**AW:** The month you were born in and the number of competitions have a big impact. In Europe, you play every year, so all the players have a chance to play. That's why maybe we have to increase the frequency of the U-17 World Cup, to give everybody a chance to play and gain experience.

**SM:** So, what you are advocating here is to say, "Let's organise the World Cup maybe every year, so that in each confederation, teams play qualifiers on an annual basis, meaning national teams will be selected every year." In our research, we discovered that if you are, for instance, unlucky enough to be 16 in the year when the U-17 World Cup takes place, as a boy you are five times less likely to be selected than if you were 17.

### **“We lose quality players due to the lack of annual competitions for national teams.”**



**SM:** So are national teams also important for the coaches, then?

**AW:** Of course, because you can compare. We live in a world of competition. Let's not forget that competition means you only survive if you're better than others. What we always want is to see where we stand. One of the big advantages of sport is that you can always see the result of the quality of your work. The competition gives you that.

**SM:** Players are in national teams, they are selected. At some point, they get to an age where they find themselves, in what I would say, a twilight zone; the transition phase from junior to senior, between 18 and 23. It gets tougher during this phase and many get lost. What are your thoughts on this period?

**AW:** This is what we call the final pathway that you get through competition. It's also the final mental hurdle, and that's where we see the final part, I think, of the development of a player. It is a combination of motivation, stamina and being able to survive disappointment and analyse my own game. That's where I slowly become an adult. Can I bounce back from disappointment? I would say on top of this, to always question "we" in the football world. We currently don't help players in this phase well enough.

### **“The transition phase is the final mental hurdle.”**

**SM:** As educators, coaches, academies and associations, we can all maybe do something to make sure there is good guidance. How do you see that?

**AW:** I see that as giving them progressive difficulties through competition. That means giving them a competition that is adjusted to their level and giving them a chance to improve. At the age of 17, a player has the tools required to be a football player, now it's down to them. But to get further, they need the opportunity to play.

**SM:** When you are a junior in one of the top ten domestic leagues, you have a much smaller chance to play than if you were to play in lower divisions or leagues.

**AW:** Exactly. That's why maybe the clubs who educate football players today, and in a few years, this will be the same for the girls, have to plan progressive difficulty



through competition. Is it to play one year in a lower league? Or one or two years in another country in a top-level league, and then come back as a better player, closer to the elite level? In the past, we did it through training and competition, now it is mainly through competition. Because this is the phase where competition is further shaping you.

**“We can give guidance through competition that is adjusted to the players’ level and that gives them a chance to improve.”**



**SM:** Many players do not make it due to the sheer competition that exists. This leads us to think about the importance of solid education to prepare people for life. Let’s come back to that, because we’re now discussing the phase where not all players will make it to the next footballing level.

**AW:** Yes. I am convinced that it’s the modern responsibility of football. We have to help to build the character, but as well help to provide education. If I’m ten years old today, that means I retire in 2075. Can you tell me what kind of job you will do in 2050 or 2060? Nobody knows. But we can prepare people to adapt, and that’s why I believe that football has a huge responsibility today. I think some unions of football players are now conscious that they have absolutely to invest a lot of time and money in educating potential football players to deal with the challenges that arise if they are not successful.

**SM:** Yes. And also taking care of their well-being because, well, we also shouldn’t underestimate the pressure that is on top athletes, whether they make it or not.

**AW:** If you look at the numbers of stressed players between 16 and 20, it’s nearly an appalling 50 per cent. It

was the pressure; they invest all their time and energy into becoming a football player without knowing whether they will make it. The coaches are gradually becoming more conscious of the required mental guidance, involving psychologists, at clubs and academies. But of course, as you know, it happens more in Europe.

**“Talent development is development as a human being and not just as a football player.”**

**SM:** Again, our research shows that certain academies do it, but also that there are quite a lot of academies, national teams and associations not doing it. So again, it’s a call for action to focus on that.

**AW:** I think it’s an important part of it.

**SM:** Okay. We are doing all this work to help associations and clubs. We all want more players to get a chance. But who, at the end of this long-term journey for both us and the global football community, is going to benefit from the programme?

**AW:** Basically, everybody. Especially regarding happiness in the world, we can contribute a little bit to making people happier, having a life where they enjoy playing, and for the best of them to have a big career. You can influence the world. I would also say that’s maybe the most exciting and the most inspiring thing. I played as a professional, but I played as well in my village. And I was happy in my village when I played football. Because we are with friends who can share something together. Also, let’s not forget that football has become so important that everyone in it has a political responsibility as well. They can influence the world.

**SM:** Any final thoughts or recommendations based on what we have done and what we are going to do?

**AW:** I would just say that we are here to help you. We love football, you love football, so let’s achieve something together, so that we’ll make history. I would also say, as you said at the start, Steven, we want to give everybody in the world a chance to experience the joy of playing football at their appropriate level. It is an unforgettable experience and we want to help you to do that.

**SM:** Fantastic. Arsène, thank you very much for this interview.







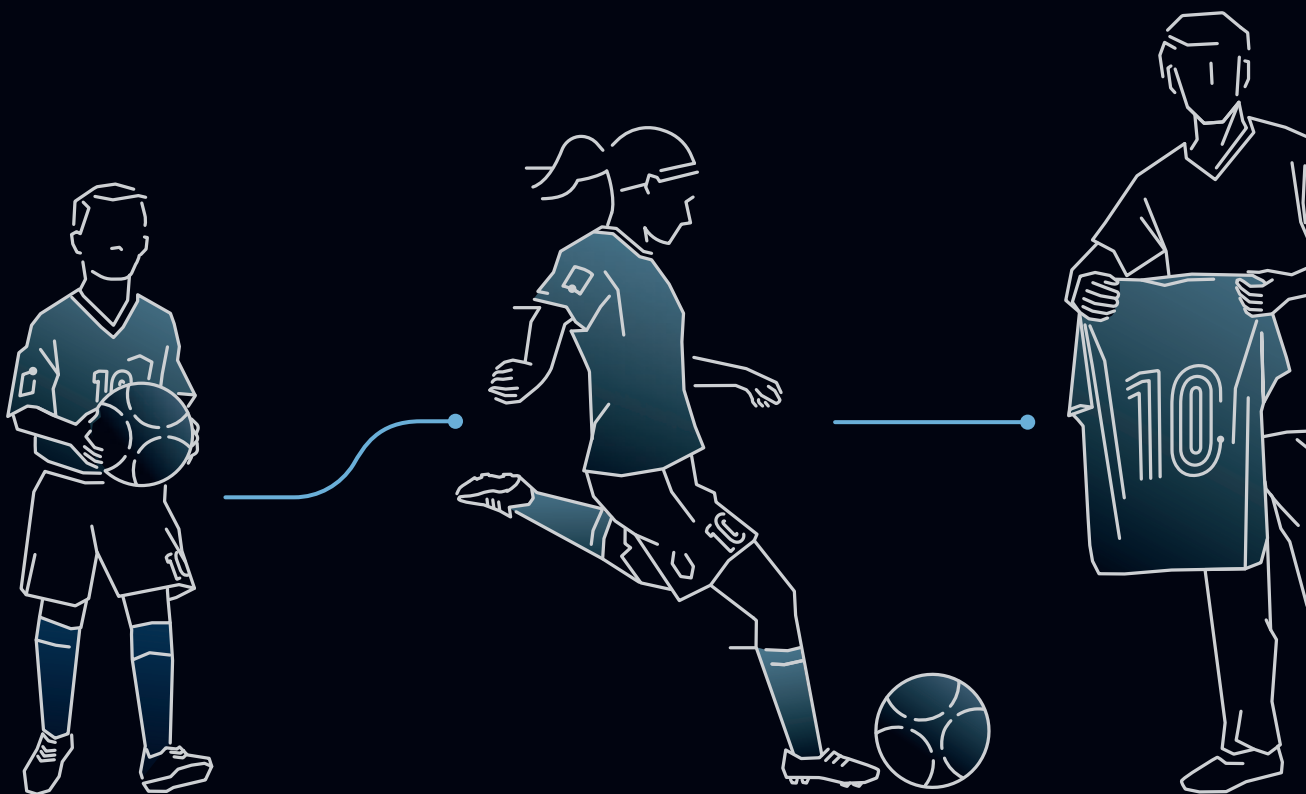


# GIVE EVERY TALENT A CHANCE



**A call for action**

**FIFA**







# Global football

## Not all talents get a chance



Football development lies at the heart of FIFA's overarching mission to make football *truly* global. To have a significant impact on the development of the game, it is crucial to have a full understanding of the current global ecosystem:

- ⌘ Is there a competitive balance globally?
- ⌘ Is there a financial disparity between domestic leagues across the globe?
- ⌘ Are opportunities for players balanced across the globe?
- ⌘ Are countries reaching their full potential?







# Competitive imbalance

It is FIFA’s long-term ambition to see at least 50 national teams and 50 clubs from all continents competing at the highest level. Over the years, it has become clear that there is a competitive imbalance, with European football dominant across international competitions.



100%

of the national teams that qualified for the semi-finals of the last four FIFA World Cups were from CONMEBOL or UEFA

56

different countries participated in the last four FIFA World Cups

**Only 32 different national teams** reached the knockout stage



81%

of the national teams that qualified for the semi-finals of the last four FIFA Women’s World Cups were from Concacaf or UEFA

34

different countries participated in the last four FIFA Women’s World Cups

**Only 20 different national teams** reached the knockout stage





## Financial disparity

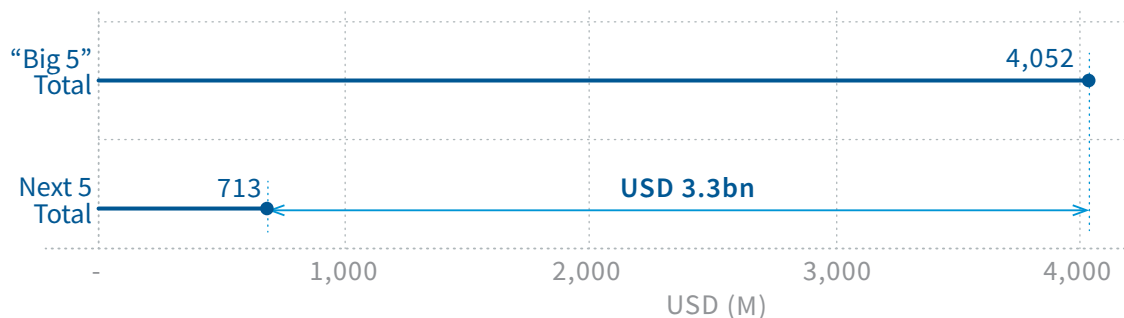
Pre-COVID-19, elite clubs and associations around the world were enjoying a period of stable growth, albeit with a clear disparity between Europe and the rest of the world. However, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has been devastating for both clubs and associations across the globe. A new financial era is dawning for modern football, and it is an era that must be met with caution to ensure the game is protected for the future.

# 469%

In 2020, the **gap** between the combined **transfer spend of clubs** affiliated to the associations that are home to the “big 5” leagues on the one hand, and clubs from the other five associations that make up the top ten on the other, was a staggering USD 3.4bn (**469%**).

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### Top 10 MAs by transfer spend in 2020 (USDm)



# 4x

In 2020, the total transfer spend of **clubs residing in UEFA** was over **4x** more than the combined spend of clubs in the AFC, CAF, Concacaf, CONMEBOL and the OFC.



## Inconsistent playing opportunities

The opportunities for young boys and girls to participate in organised competition varies across the globe. The absence of regular and consistent playing opportunities, both domestically and internationally, puts players in certain age groups and countries at a distinct disadvantage.

# 60%

Almost **60%** of male players in the top 30 domestic leagues across the globe come from countries ranked 1-20.

Distribution  
of players in  
the top 30  
leagues

**11%** Top 51-100

**30%** Top 21-50

**59%** Top 20

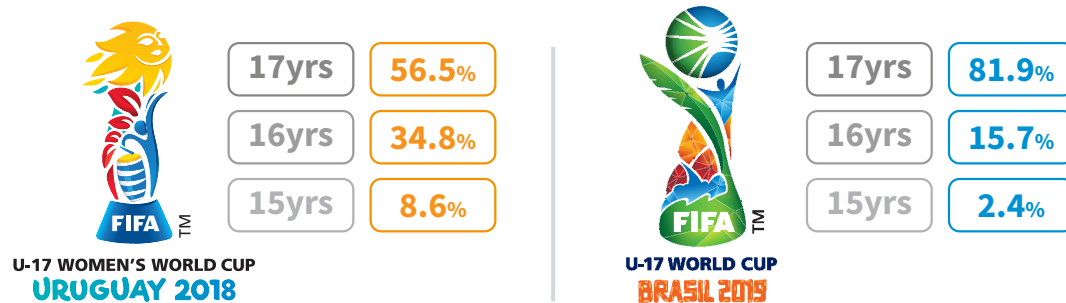
# 3x

European youth national teams can play **up to three times** as many games as other teams globally across all age groups.



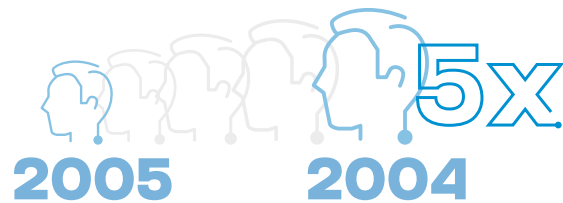


In some regions, many talented boys and girls miss the opportunity to play due to international competitions taking place only once every two years.

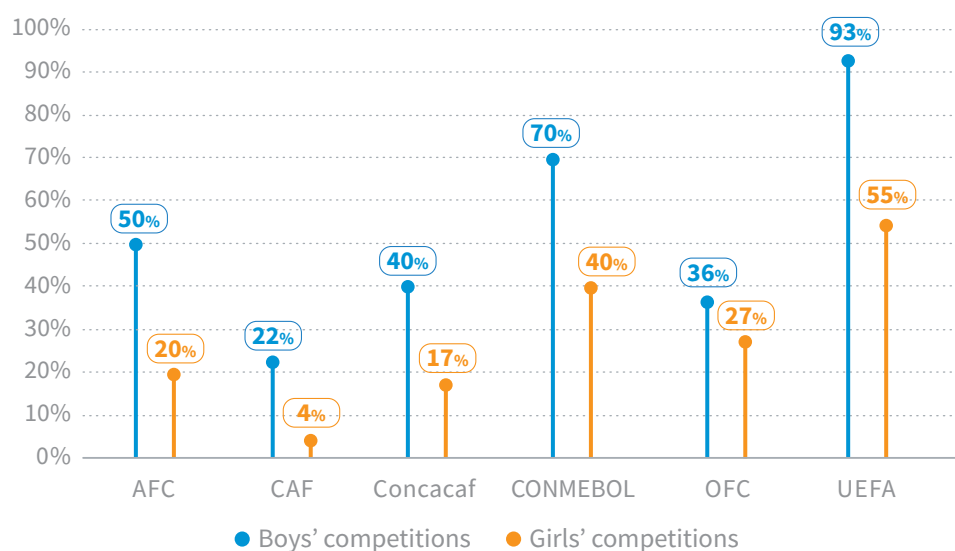


Age profile of last U-17 World Cups

The **chance of playing** in a FIFA U-17 World Cup is **five times higher** for a male player born in an even year than for a male player born in an odd year.



**Only one third** of all countries offer two or more **female youth competitions** at domestic level (Forward Programme criteria).



Percentage of countries per confederation that organise boys' and girls' competitions in at least two age categories

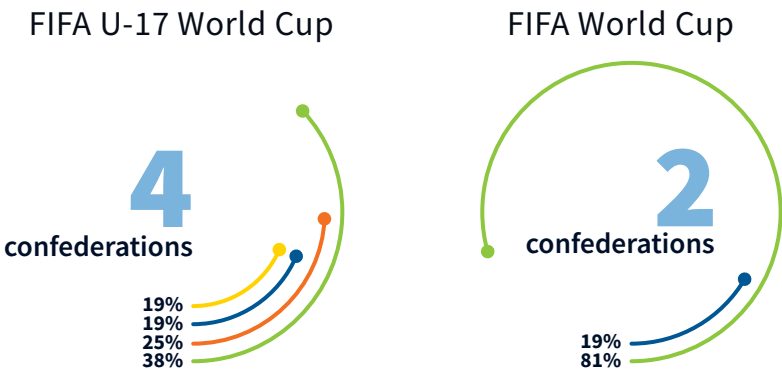


# Countries not reaching their full potential

To reach its full potential, each association must be aware of how it needs to support its talented boys and girls. A clear pathway from youth to senior football is key for future success. With so few countries able to manage this transition, what are the contributing factors?

Many countries are **unable to transfer youth performance** into senior success.

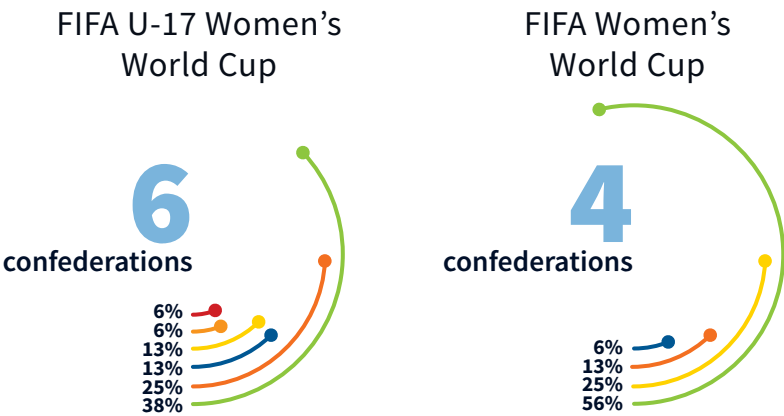
## Men's competitions



% of semi-final appearances in the last four World Cups per confederation by men's U-17 and senior national teams

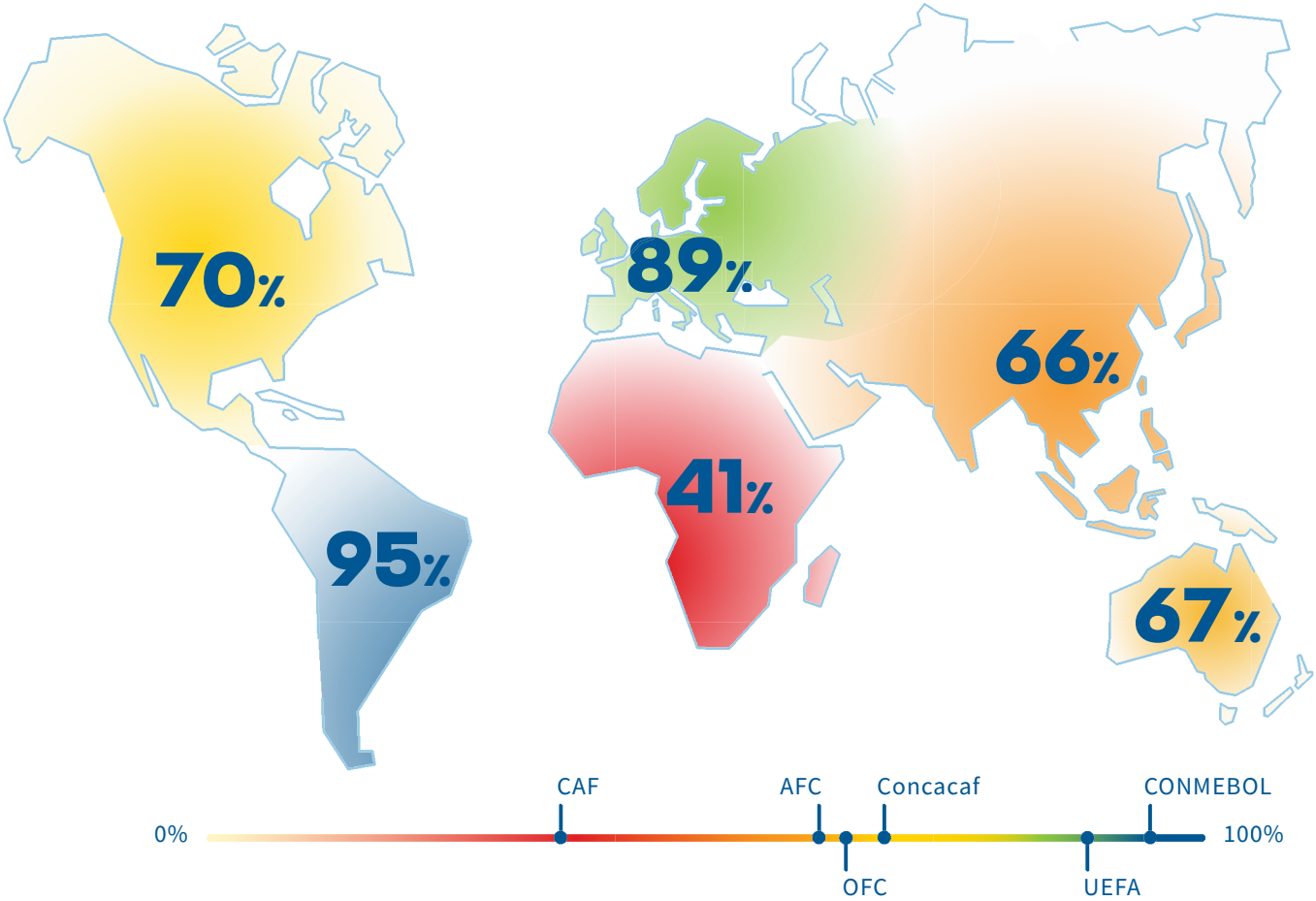
CAF AFC OFC Concacaf UEFA CONMEBOL

## Women's competitions



% of semi-final appearances in the last four World Cups per confederation by women's U-17 and senior national teams





This data represents the fulfilled FIFA Forward technical development criteria (criteria 1-8, article X) in 2019.

# Give every talent a chance

Youth development enables each MA to reach its full potential

It is clear that much more can and needs to be done to make football truly global at the highest level. At the heart of this is a dedicated approach to talent development. Long-term commitment in this area leads to structural results.

The data clearly shows that talent development has a positive impact upon later success, both domestically and internationally. A concerted effort from all stakeholders (FIFA, confederations, associations, leagues and clubs) to influence the key factors of talent development could lead to a higher competitive balance. As shown in the forthcoming sections, the top MAs appear to be supporting talent development throughout the pathway to a greater extent. However, it is clear that there is still work to be done to truly give every talent a chance.

**“Everything is connected in our sport. We are all connected. Giving every talent a chance requires everyone to play their part.”**

*FIFA President*







# Development of talents

## Identification of talents

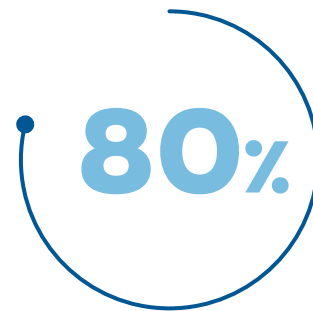
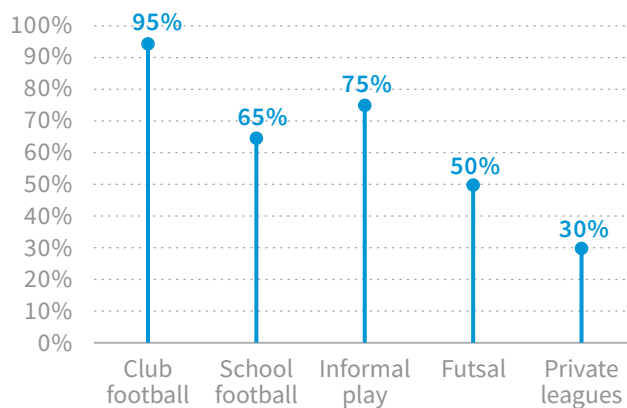




## Access to football

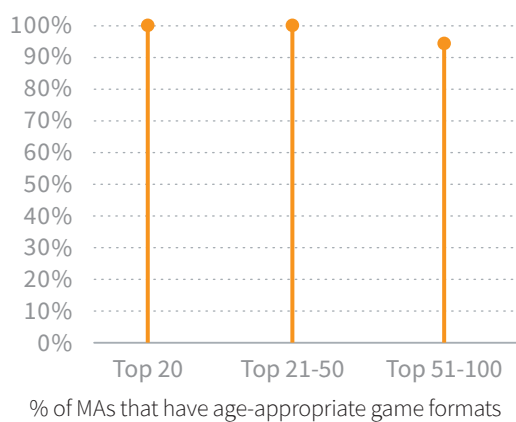
Offering continued chances to play, train and fall in love with the game at every stage is crucial to the growth and development of football.

**Access routes into football in the top 20 MAs**



Percentage of the top 20 MAs that incorporate grassroots in the overall strategy for player development

**Age-appropriate** competition formats are key to success



### CALL TO ACTION

1. Implement comprehensive grassroots programmes countrywide
2. Encourage communities and regional associations to support the growth of volunteer engagement
3. Organise age-appropriate competition formats for optimal skill development





## Scouting and identification

Motivated and talented male and female footballers should all get the chance to be scouted, identified and developed, regardless of where they are from, when they were born, or their social or economic background.



Only half of the top 100 associations have a **TID system** in place for boys and girls.

# 85%

85% of the top 20 MAs have **qualified scouts** and talent ID staff.



### CALL TO ACTION

1. Implement a structured system for identifying talented young boys and girls at every stage of the pathway across all regions
2. Ensure that talents are not overlooked because of their date of birth or their maturation
3. Provide accredited training courses for the education of scouts and talent ID staff



## Data

Access to key technology is crucial to supporting the identification and development of players. From data collection hardware to data management systems that enable the data to be used effectively, knowing how to use the latest technology allows users to gain further insight into the game.



65%

65% of the top 20 MAs have an IT system/database for talent identification



### CALL TO ACTION

1. Increase access to technology to support the collection of data to objectively support the identification process
2. Implement a data management system to support decision-making

# Development of Talents

Train the talents



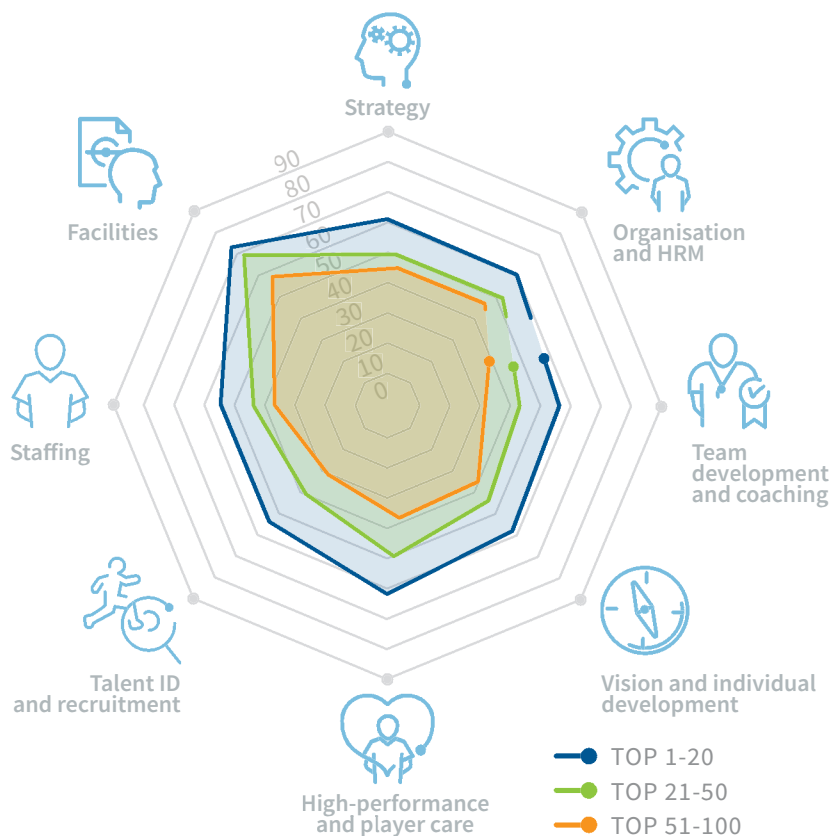




## Academies

High-quality, home-grown players are the cornerstone of any successful senior national team and competitive domestic league. It all starts with having a large number of players at youth level. The best talents should train and play with and against the best players in the best environment. Professionalised environments where the most talented players are developed on a day-to-day basis (also when they are not part of the youth national teams) are crucial.

### Average fulfilment ratio of academies in the top 100 countries



Academies in the top MAs have the **lowest player-to-coach ratio** across the U-12 to U-15 age bracket (11 players to 1 coach).

High-ranked associations have clearly defined football and coaching philosophies in their leading academies.

| 31



### CALL TO ACTION

1. Invest in academies with strong leadership to make sure that talented players are developed properly
2. Develop and follow a holistic long-term player development plan rather than focus on short-term results
3. Design and implement regulations to support a fair ROI and create incentives for clubs to invest in youth development



## Quality coaches

Key for the production of young talent are the people in charge of player development – none more so than the coaches.

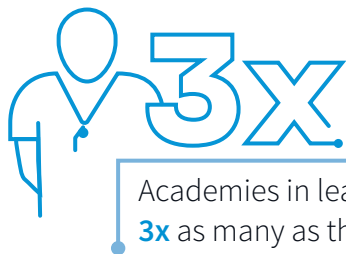
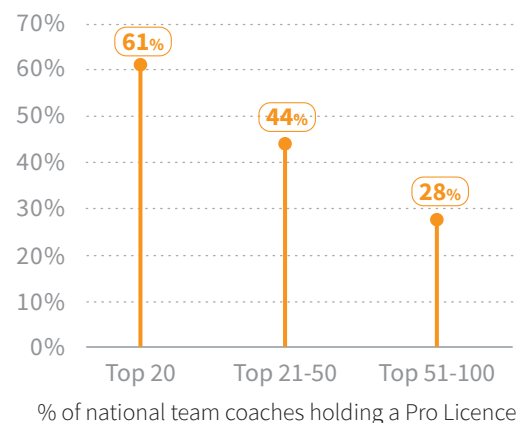
# 100%

of the top 20 MAs are members of a **coaching convention**



of top 20 MAs deliver specific programmes for **coach educators**

### The quality of coaches matters



Academies in leading MAs have **more full-time coaches** – nearly **3x** as many as those ranked 51-100



### CALL TO ACTION

1. Run a comprehensive education pathway as part of the confederation's coaching convention to develop top-quality native coaches and specialist practitioners
2. Invest in full-time coaching positions
3. Implement a coaching competency framework linked to the playing philosophy
4. Create a culture of knowledge development (collective findings, initiate research, bringing experts together) and sharing across all target groups (online and offline)
5. Provide educational opportunities for academy and national team staff and coaches



## Training sessions

Contact time is crucial in the acquisition of any skill – and football is no different. Talented players must be repeatedly exposed to high-quality, age-appropriate development sessions, both on and off the pitch, to become well-rounded athletes.

**198**



The average number of team training sessions for a **U-16 boy** per season

**171**



The average number of team training sessions for a **U-16 girl** per season



**U-12**

From the U-12 age category, top academies deliver >1 individual-focused session per week

**481**

On average, a male player training from U-6 to U-21 will take part in **481 more sessions than a female player**



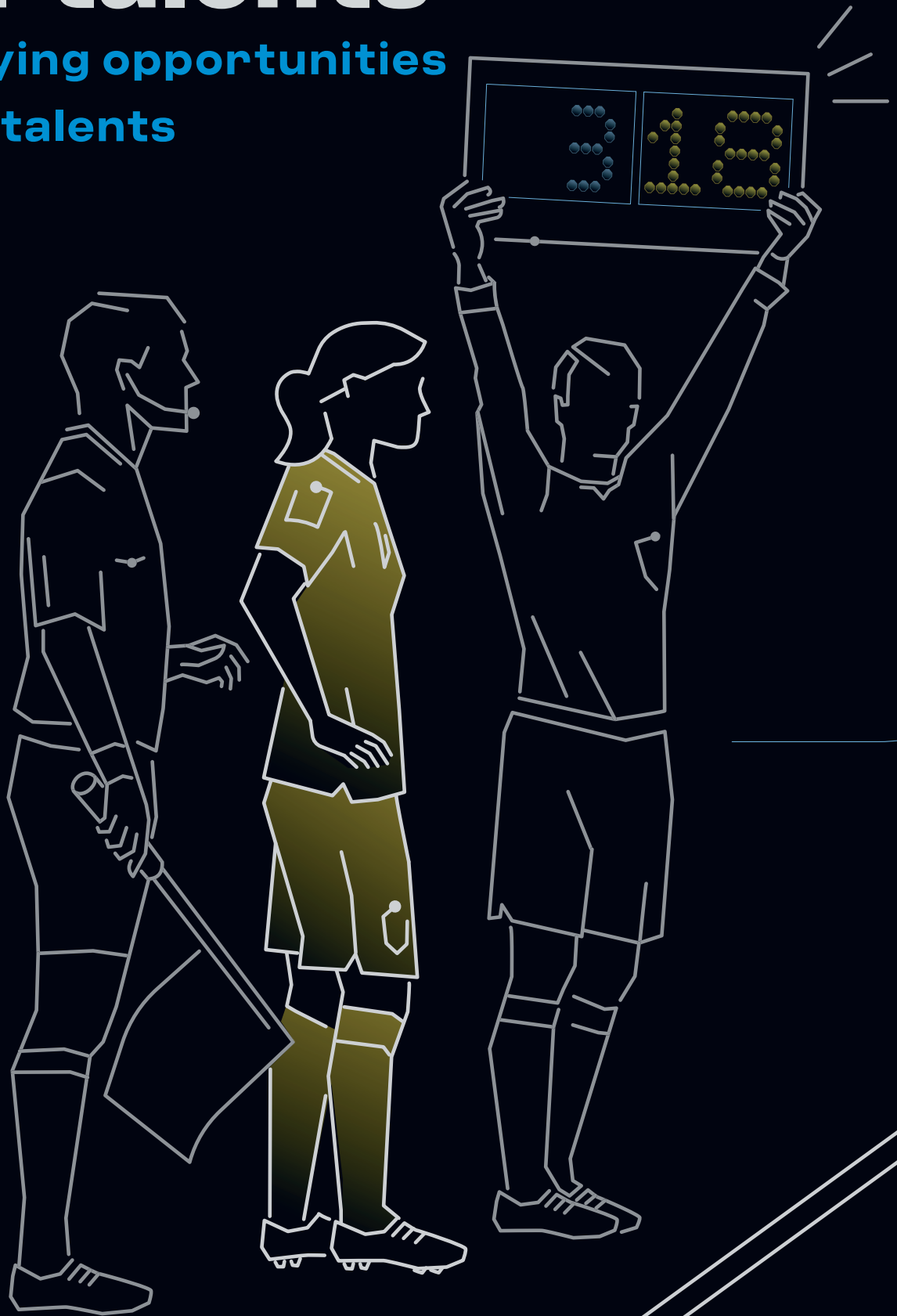
### CALL TO ACTION

1. Optimise the contact time with players
2. Ensure that training is age- and maturation-appropriate, both physically and mentally
3. Plan, review and track training over the long term to maximise player availability
4. Integrate the use of technology to support and monitor the development of individuals



# Development of talents

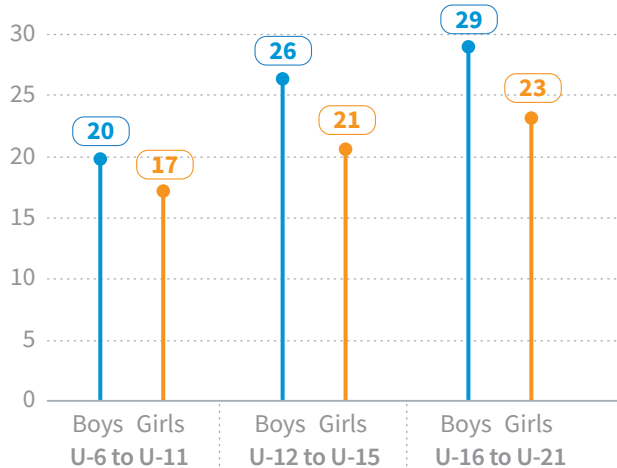
Playing opportunities  
for talents





## Domestic playing opportunities

Competitions offer players opportunities to implement what they have learnt in training. Competitions and games must start with a focus on having fun and playing football, and then progress to a situation in which the best can play with and against the best at each stage of the pathway. It is crucial to challenge talents in preparation for professional football. As with training, repetition is key, although balance is required.



Average number of domestic competitive games per season for boys and girls in the top 50 MAs

**44**

On average, a **14-year-old boy** at an academy in a top 20 MA will play **44 matches** per season, including friendlies.

**22% fewer**

In the key stages of youth development (U-12 to U-21), **girls have 22% fewer** playing opportunities than boys in the top 50 MAs.

**+22%**

Top 50 MAs offer **22% more playing opportunities** to young talents aged between U-12 and U-15 in their domestic competitions.



### CALL TO ACTION

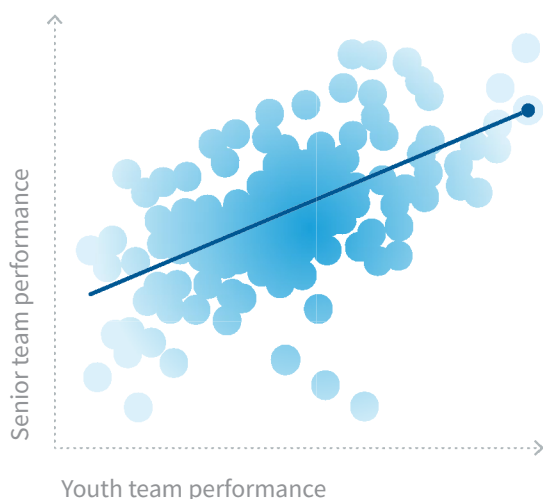
1. Create a games programme that maximises the opportunity to play across all age groups and minimises the gaps that incur drop-out
2. Use the support of technical expertise to ensure competitions are competitive and age-appropriate, and offer different experiences
3. Integrate the use of technology to support and monitor the development of players and coaches



## International playing opportunities

At international level, the same principle should be applied: the best versus the best across all age groups. Regular exposure presents players with invaluable experience and a greater understanding of what is required at the highest level.

At the same time, this gives technical staff a clear understanding of the level required and what needs to be adjusted to meet these demands. Furthermore, it must be noted that international playing opportunities are not only relevant to associations, but also offer key development experiences for academies as part of a progressive games programme.



# 12 games

UEFA associations played an average of **12 games** at both U-16/ U-17 and U-19/U-20 level during the last youth World Cup cycle, considerably more than any other confederation in which the number of games was as low as 4.

# 40% do not have

40% of MAs do not have an active U-16/ U-17 or U-19/U-20 **women's national team**.

93% of MAs have an active U-16/U-17 men's national team.



### CALL TO ACTION

1. Organise more frequent competitions across all national teams
2. Develop suitable programmes for youth national teams
3. Facilitate international playing opportunities for academies





## Performance analysis

The use of video footage to support performance analysis of both the team and the individual is common across the game. Such analysis can be used in a multitude of ways, including performance analysis, match preparation and delivering best practice.



# 69%

69% of academies around the world do **not** use **video analysis** for player development.

# 100%

of the top 20 MAs use footage for match preparation across all national teams.

# 85%

Percentage of the top 20 MAs that use video footage for individual player development



### CALL TO ACTION

1. Integrate the use of technology to support and monitor the development of players and coaches at international level
2. Support the development of specialist practitioners as part of the overall education strategy
3. Integrate such knowledge into the coaching curriculum
4. Emphasise the concept of individual player development within a team setting in coach education

# Development of talents

The transition of talent

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## Guidance regulations

The transition from youth to senior football is a delicate phase for talented players as they have to assert themselves quickly in a bid to find their place. Good guidance for talented players and their environment is key. The pressure of results-driven senior football, the need for an appropriate number of competitive experiences in this phase, individual long-term development and broader education are all in the balance. Players need a mentor, an individual who cares about their personal and sporting development in this phase.

The clubs, the domestic league and the member association are all key stakeholders in enabling the transition of talented young players. Implementing domestic regulations and incentives to field home-grown players encourages clubs to drive the development of young players.



**“Many talented youngsters waste their time on the benches of top teams instead of gathering experience on the pitch.”**

*Arsène Wenger*

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### CALL TO ACTION

1. Develop individual playing pathways to support players transitioning from the youth teams to the senior team at both domestic and international levels
2. Clubs must better use young talent from their academies in a bid to maximise the ROI in these financially difficult times imposed by COVID-19
3. Appoint persons of trust who can help talents and their environment to make well-considered choices in this phase
4. Implement domestic league regulations for home-grown players
5. Support a games programme or loan system that supports the transition from youth to senior football

# 43%

Only **43%** of the top 100 MAs have a specific strategy for the transition of male players **from youth to senior football**.

# 30% less

In the **18-21 age** bracket, domestic players receive **30% less playing time** than foreign players in the top 10 domestic leagues.

Lower professional leagues offer far greater **opportunities for** players to make their **debut** than the “big five” countries.



# Development of talents

**Talent development | Spotlight**

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## Women's football

To develop our game, we need to provide better access to all phases of player development, and more opportunities to play. Gaps in the player pathway push players to participate in older competitions, where they may not yet be physically or mentally ready to compete. This not only affects the players but also the coaches, as they are not exposed to the different phases of player development and do not gain the experience required to coach at higher levels.

# 28% fewer

In the top 20 MAs, U-12 to U-15 girls have **28% fewer training opportunities** per week than boys.

# only 41%

Only **41%** of the top 20 women's MAs have a **U-23** national team.

# only 32%

Only **32%** of women's national team **coaches** in the top 20 are **female**.

| 41

# 39%

Only **39%** of MAs in the top 100 have a strategy to support the **transition of female players from youth to senior football**.



### CALL TO ACTION

1. Create better league structures that allow players to play and train more consistently, thus increasing contact time through more playing and training opportunities
2. Through competitions, develop a complete player pathway to provide access and opportunities to play in appropriate-age and maturation phases
3. Create a coaching pathway and access to develop experience in the different phases of player development through improved competition structures
4. Facilitate female coaches' access to education and coaching opportunities



## Player welfare and holistic education

In a highly competitive environment in which only very few reach the top, academies, associations, leagues, confederations and FIFA need to take responsibility for the mental and physical health of each player. Creating an open and transparent environment with clear support networks enables players and staff to raise concerns and seek help and advice.

Having a safe environment for players, parents and coaches is crucial. As such, safeguarding policies, procedures and guidelines must be in place for everyone to follow.

Furthermore, alongside more formal education programmes, players need to have the opportunity to take part in other workshops as part of a holistic education programme to prepare them for life inside and outside of football, as well as helping their performance on the pitch.

Leading associations are more likely to offer a player-care programme, with the most popular being:



1. Anti-doping



2. Nutrition



3. Media



4. Match-fixing prevention





## 25-50 days

Girls and boys in 40% of the top 50 associations **miss 25-50 days of school** due to international call-ups.

**Less than half** of the top 100 associations allocate **staff to support the education of youth players.**

## only 42%

**Only 42%** of leading academies across the globe have a formal education programme.

| 43



### CALL TO ACTION

1. Create a safe environment for players, parents and coaches with a structured safeguarding framework
2. Raise awareness of the stresses of professional football and their impact upon mental health, and create a support network for players, coaches and parents to seek support and advice
3. Support the holistic development of players through the delivery of formal and informal education and training to give them the best opportunity outside of the game



# The case for talent development

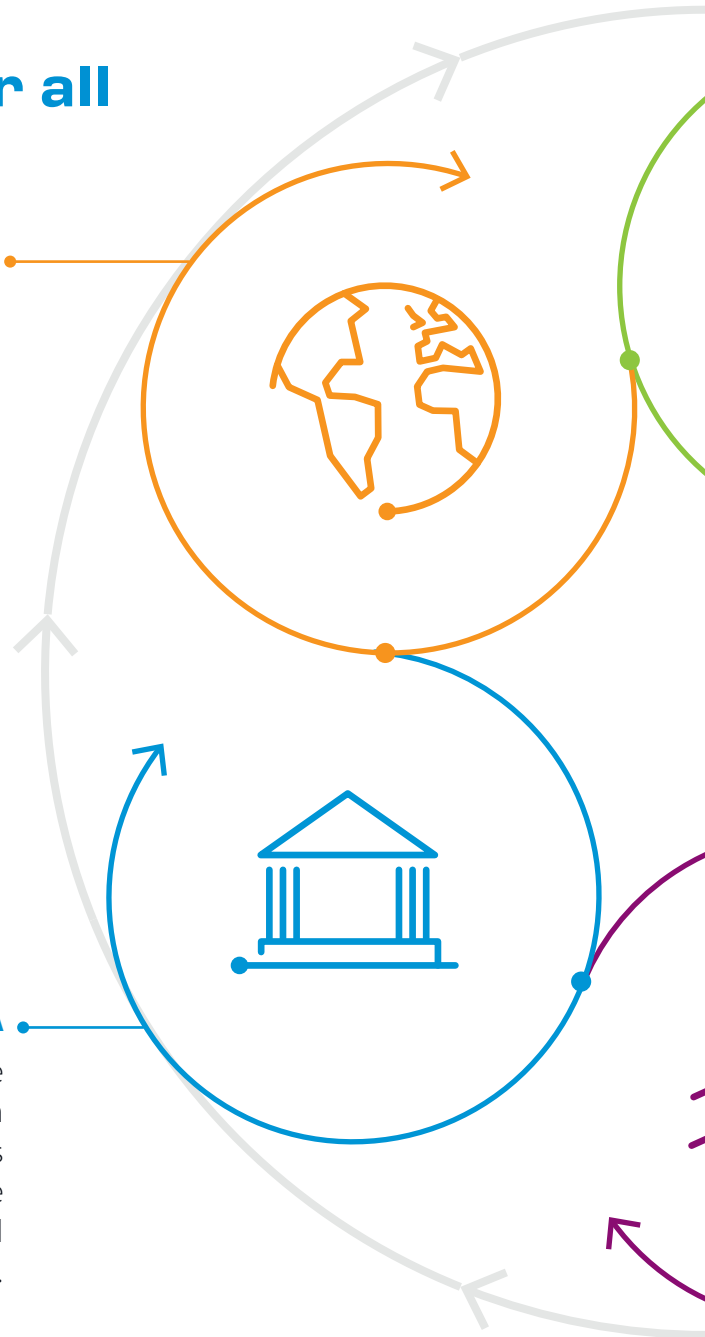
## Creating benefits for all

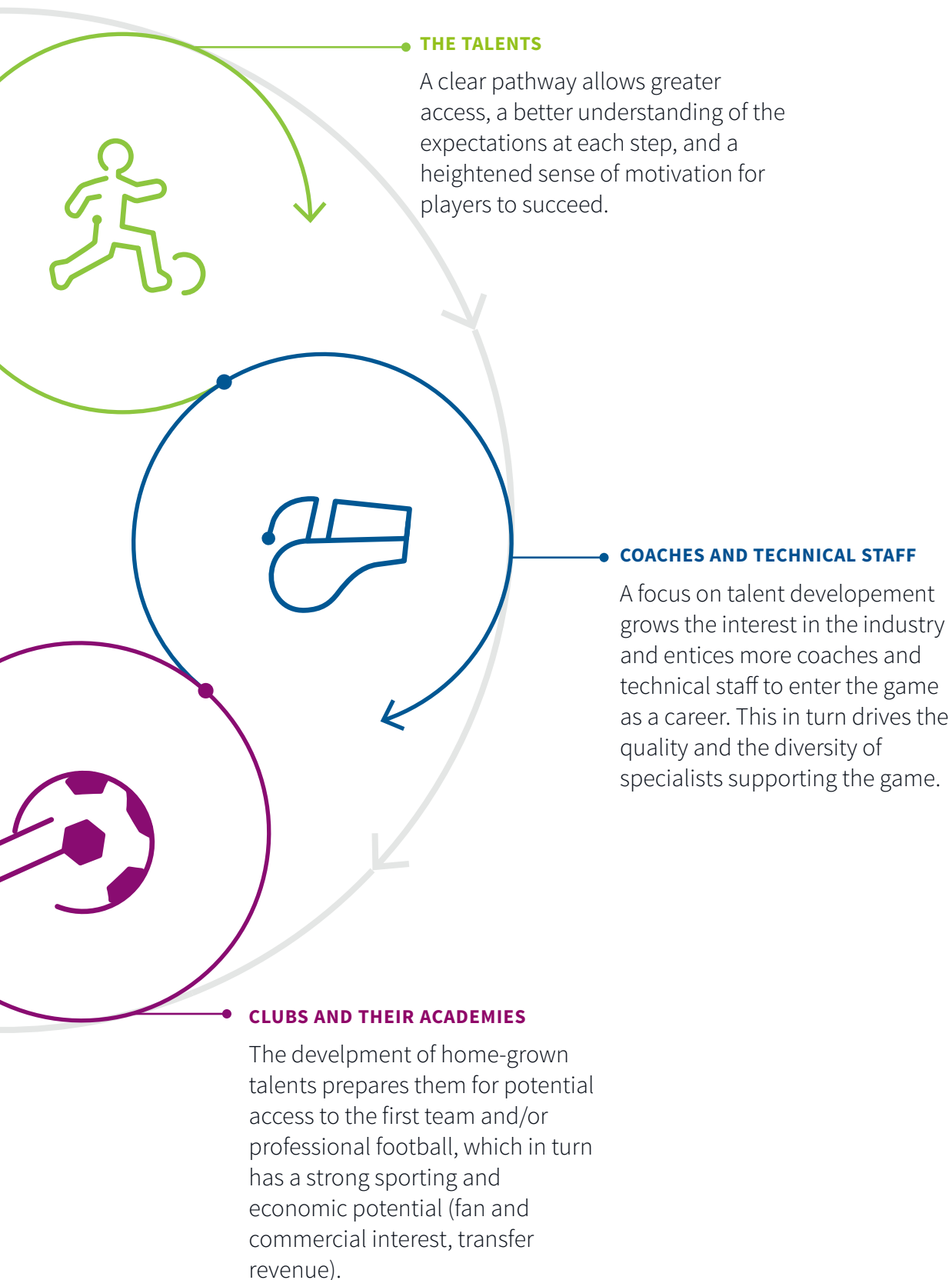
### GLOBAL FOOTBALL

When more talents can access the game, the competition will become more exciting. The fan base of both men's and women's football will grow across all regions - making football truly global.

### DOMESTIC LEAGUES AND THE MA

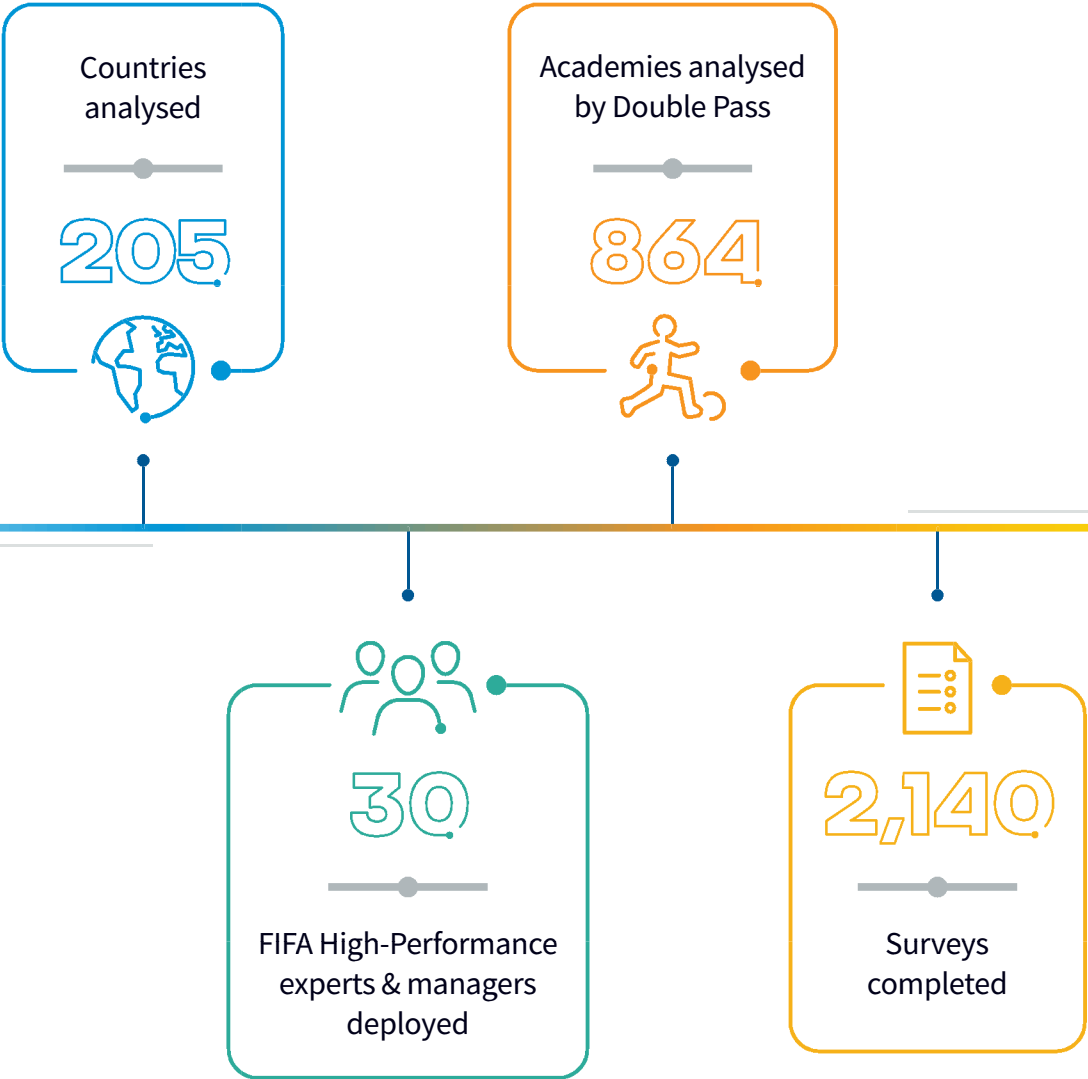
More quality home-grown talents in the domestic league increases the connection with the local community. The same players often become the cornerstone for the future national team success and widespread national pride.

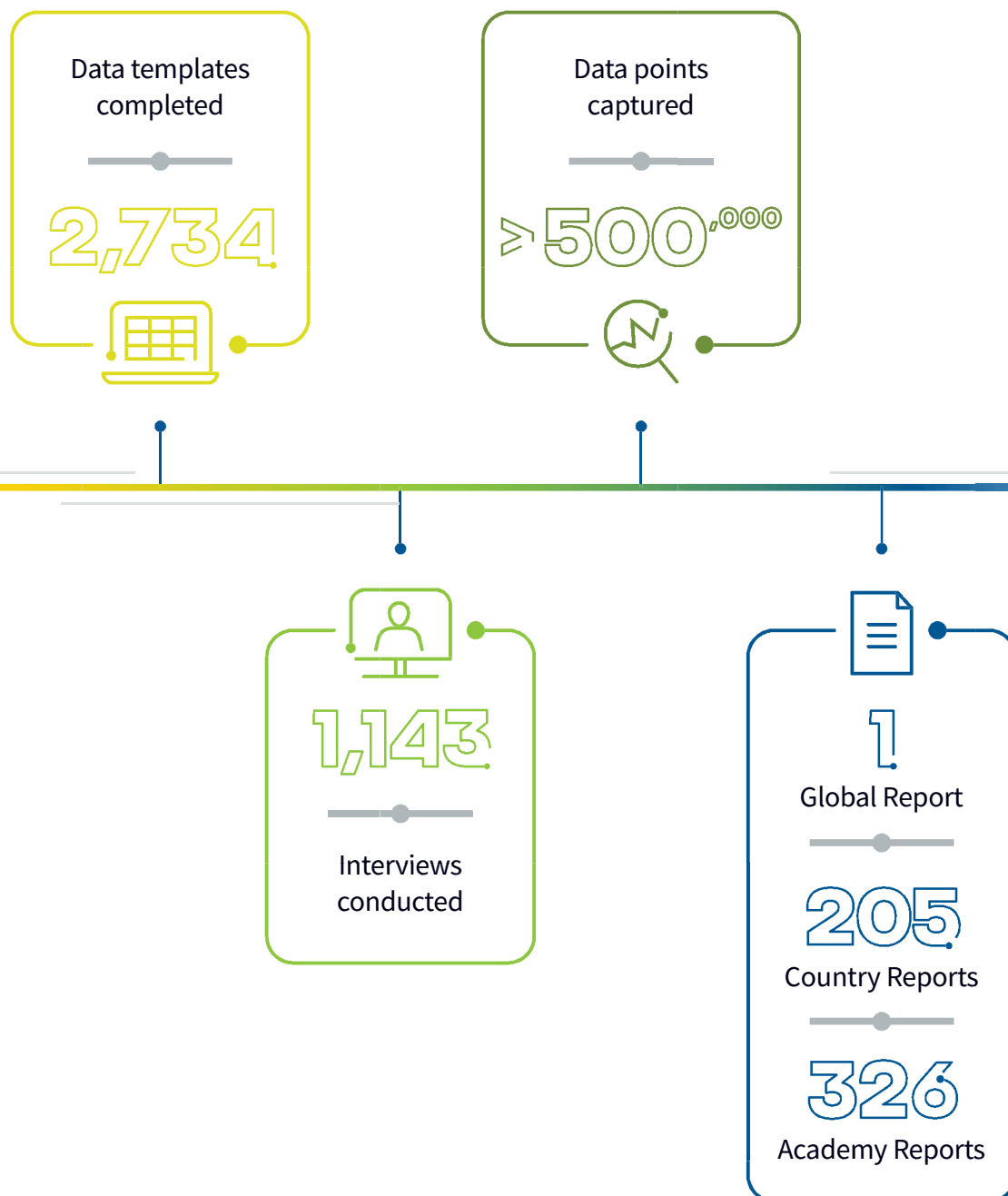




# The analysis process

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# THE TALENT DEVELOPMENT ECOSYSTEM



Technical report

**FIFA**

# Introduction



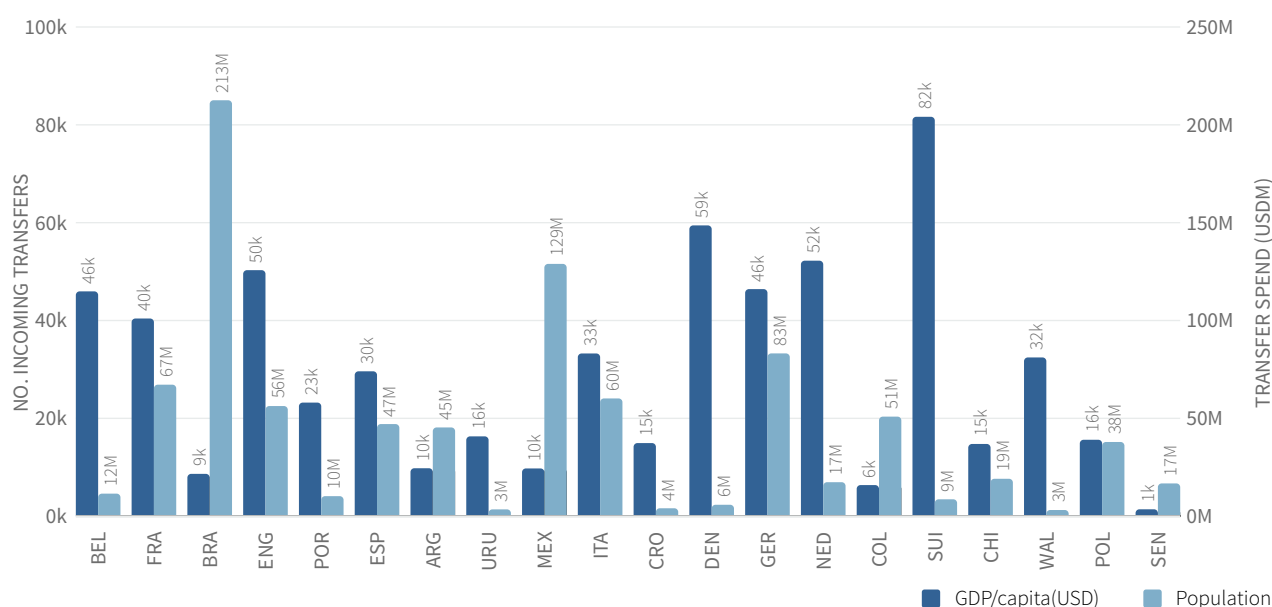
It is now clear that global football has significant room for improvement when it comes to establishing competitive balance, making sure that each member association reaches its true potential, creating consistent playing opportunities, and closing the gap between the men's and women's game. The report that follows contains a complete analysis of the current status of the global football environment. It delves deeper into how the associations ranked 1-20, 21-50 and 51-100 operate – specifically regarding the football dimensions that constitute their ecosystems – compared with the rest of the world.

The aim of this report is to present an understanding of global talent development as it is now, and to identify critical success factors that explain why some countries are outperforming others at major international competitions.

## Scope

International football success does not always depend on a country's characteristics in terms of GDP and population. Therefore, it is clear that we need to understand the talent development ecosystem that enables relatively small member associations (MAs) to compete at the pinnacle of international football. Such insight can also help to identify associations that are not reaching their full potential.

### Money and population alone are not predictors of international success – the development ecosystem is key.



**Illustration 1** | Population and GDP per capita of the top 20 member associations in the FIFA/Coca-Cola World Ranking (men) as at 10 December 2020. Sources: World Bank – DataBank

It must be noted that before COVID-19, the football industry's elite clubs and associations were enjoying what seemed to be stable growth. However, the past 12 months have been devastating for both clubs and associations across the globe due to the impact of the pandemic, with KPMG<sup>1</sup> reporting an initial aggregate decrease in total operating revenues of approximately USD 1.44bn amongst clubs in the top ten European leagues. This is a new financial era for modern football, and it is one that must be met with caution to ensure the game's future is protected.

As mentioned before, Croatia and Uruguay have achieved significant international success with not only the smallest populations and lowest GDPs in the top 20 of the FIFA/Coca-Cola World Ranking, but also the sparsest domestic league revenues. Further to this, Denmark has the third-lowest population but the highest GDP per capita in the top 20, whereas Senegal has the 13<sup>th</sup>-highest population inside the top 20 but the lowest GDP per capita.

Based on the assumption that money and people are not predictors of success, smaller associations with fewer financial resources can achieve great results. It is clear that the structure of the country's football ecosystem and provision throughout the player pathway is having an impact on international achievement. It is this ecosystem that we are setting out to examine and understand in a bid to bridge the gap to ensure that each MA can reach its full potential and every talented player gets a chance.

<sup>1</sup> [https://footballbenchmark.com/library/football\\_clubs\\_revenues\\_and\\_profits\\_hit\\_by\\_coronavirus\\_crisis](https://footballbenchmark.com/library/football_clubs_revenues_and_profits_hit_by_coronavirus_crisis)



The analysis matrix

To understand the talent development ecosystem in each country, it was crucial to gain a clear picture of the opportunities available to talented male and female players and the processes and structures that are in place to support their pathways.

Interaction within the matrix

The analysis matrix was designed to facilitate the examination of talent development across MAS. This matrix portrays how an age-appropriate support framework specific to football (“AREAS”) must be coupled with appropriate management and resources (“OPERATIONS”) at each stage of development in order to facilitate the progression of talented young footballers, both male and female. With such structures in place throughout the player pathway, MAS will have every opportunity to thrive and reach their full potential.

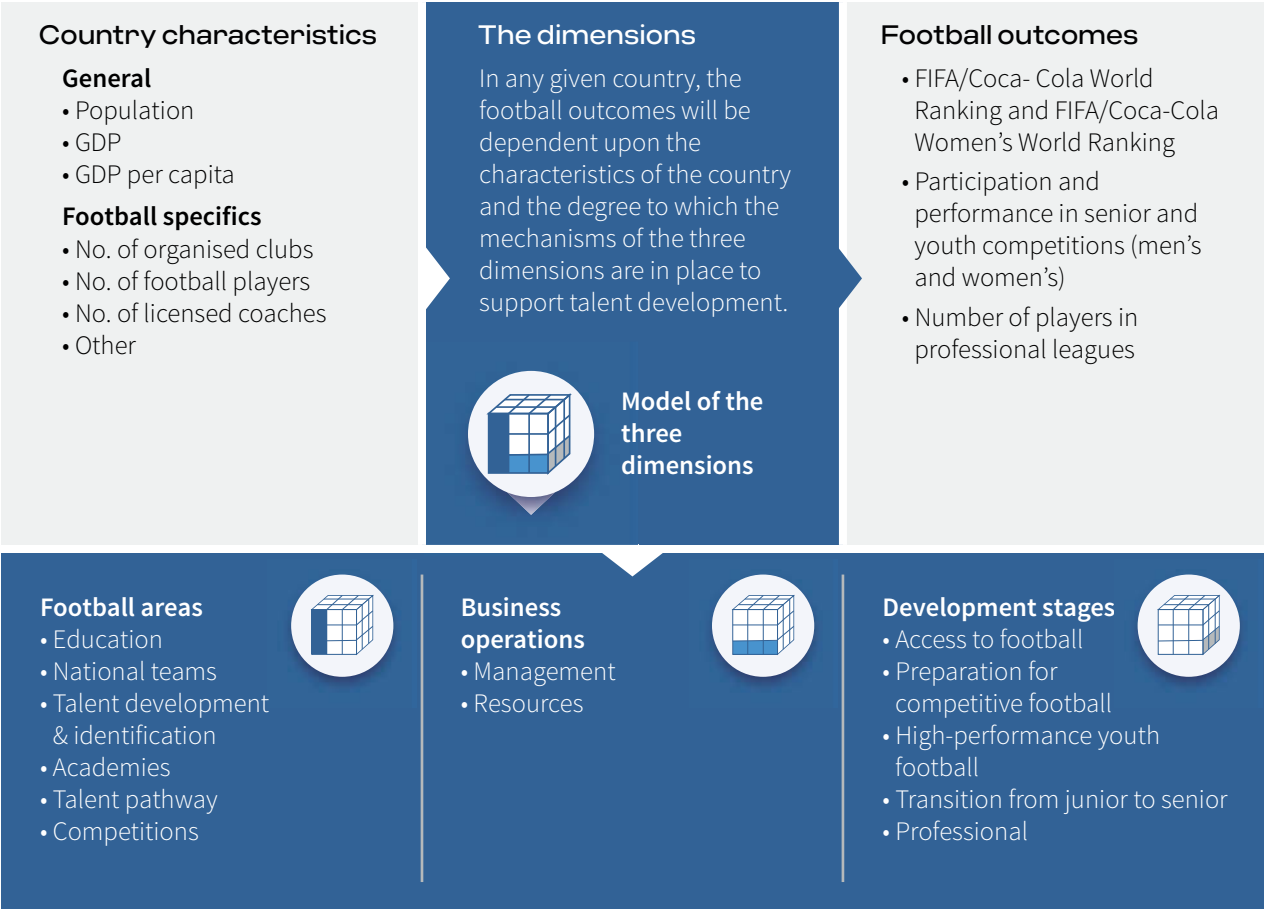


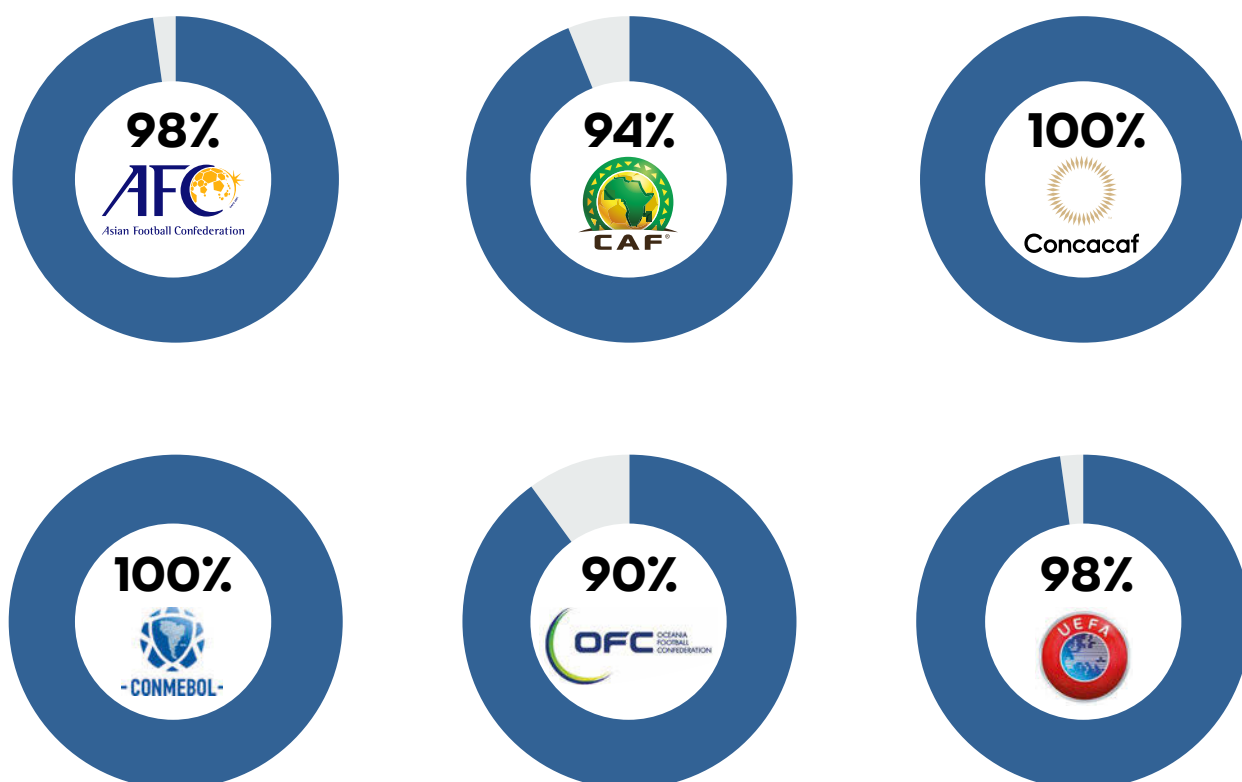
Illustration 2 | The three key dimensions of the analysis matrix that forms the basis of the talent development ecosystem analysis



## Methodology

All 211 MAs were invited to participate in this analysis, with 205 accepting the opportunity. However, this report is based on the 190 MAs that had completed the ecosystem analysis process by the deadline of 31 January 2021.

**205 MAs accepted the invitation to participate in the process, which encompassed over 2,000 surveys, over 2,500 templates, over 85,000 questions and over 1,000 interviews.**



**Illustration 3** | Percentage of member associations per confederation taking part in the talent development ecosystem analysis

### The people

In December 2019, FIFA brought together a vastly experienced and diverse group of strategic thinkers with a proven track record in football to form a high-performance team tasked with spearheading the delivery of the ecosystem analysis. Each of the 16 high-performance teams included a high-performance expert and a high-performance manager and was assigned a set of MAs to support on this fact-finding mission. In collaboration with Double Pass, and by using its scientific, proven methodology, analysts located across the globe set out to investigate the critical success factors of selected elite academies within each MA.

Throughout this process, FIFA's regional technical consultants were integral in becoming a conduit between the high-performance team and the MA and helping to build a fruitful relationship.

The Plan



Illustration 4 | Road map

The process

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the initial plan was for this process to be conducted in person with the high-performance teams embarking on a three- to four-day site visit to each participating MA to validate data, interview key stakeholders and observe the ecosystem in practice. Regrettably, the process had to be redesigned due to the impact of the pandemic and the resulting travel restrictions, while taking the welfare of all involved into account.

Analysis content		
	Survey modules	Up to 14 per country (resulting in more than 2,140 completed surveys)
	Template modules	11-13 per country (totaling to over 2,730 templates completed globally)
	Academy Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 854 academies selected, with analysis conducted by Double Pass</li><li>• Three in-depth evaluations (interview + CAMP survey), 2:1 split (boys' or girls' academies)</li><li>• Up to ten (five boys', five girls') academies analysed through CAMP survey only</li></ul>
	Interview programme	1,143 interviews globally, incorporating executive management, leaders of technical departments, coach education staff, talent identification staff, youth and senior national-team coaching and support staff and professional league representatives

Illustration 5 | The ecosystem analysis process

This remodelled online ecosystem analysis followed the same process across all MAs, with four forms of data collection for each association. This consisted of MA-specific surveys, data templates, an interview programme led by a high-performance team and an analysis of selected domestic academies conducted by Double Pass.

The process of collecting information was conducted over a seven-month period during which positive working relationships were formed between high-performance teams and MAs. With regular contact through weekly video calls, groundbreaking results were achieved: greater insight into the football landscape within the country and the MAs' needs was obtained and, most importantly, trust was built up among those working within associations.

## The data

This is the first time that FIFA has conducted an analysis of this magnitude, with the scale of the collection and dissemination of data unrivalled on the global stage. FIFA sees this as the basis of future research and a continuous evaluation process. The analysis in this report is based on the participation of 205 MAs, and the findings and comparisons herein are drawn from a data set comprising 2,140 completed surveys, 2,734 completed templates and 1,143 interviews and 854 analysed academies.

Despite the undoubted boon represented by the huge amount of data collected, it must be noted that throughout this analysis journey, there were many challenges and restrictions due to the absence of critical data points from across the associations. Data forms the basis for analysing the state of play and helps to make developments visible. It provides important insight and information and is therefore essential for making informed, objective decisions and assessments. As a result, we urge each and every MA to facilitate the discovery of similar insights internally by collecting data to produce association-specific key performance indicators for progress assessment and to enable the development of its own ecosystem for the future.

In this report, average values from comparison groups are given. The basis for determining the comparison groups was the FIFA/Coca-Cola World Ranking (for both men and women) from December 2020, with levels I-III bringing together the countries ranked 1-20, 21-50 and 51-100. When discussing aspects explicitly applicable to the women's game, the report used the FIFA/Coca-Cola Women's World Ranking for countries accordingly.

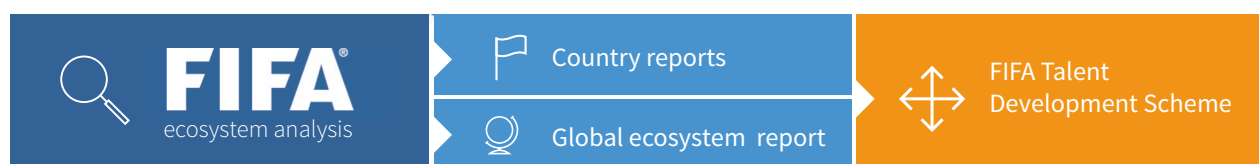
The comparisons presented in this report can be highly informative and have the potential to enhance practice. However, they must be treated with caution. Each and every MA is different, with its own football ecosystem, cultural background and social structures across the country. Consequently, what works in one MA will not necessarily work in another due to the needs and demands of different regions across the globe, denoted by the cultural background and historical development of football in a given country. From an interview perspective, we also found that, on occasion, there was a range of interpretations of certain questions, which was reflected in the answers and does not always allow for reliable comparisons to be drawn. However, it was important for us to present these questions, as well as the corresponding answers and data, as they can provide valuable suggestions for the development of adequate long-term plans.

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## The report

The analysis will enable the development of an MA-specific report outlining the current football landscape of the country, along with a global report highlighting trends and critical success factors across the world. Both of these elements will support the creation of a tailor-made programme for each MA.



**Illustration 6** | Expected project outcomes



Acknowledgements

This report is the result of a combined effort involving many people and organisations across the global football community. We would like to thank in particular all 205 contributing MAs, Double Pass, and our international network of high-performance experts for all of their support and collaboration in bringing this analysis to life.

Building solid relationships with all of the MAs involved in this global process was key to completing the vast amount of interview programmes as well as collecting the necessary data. Carrying out this process led to the following report to reflect on the global condition of football ecosystems.

The FIFA High-Performance team

High-Performance Experts

April Heinrichs

Diogo Matos

Diogo Netto

Edvinas Eimontas

Erich Rutenm ller

Gabriel Calderon Pellegrino

Ged Roddy

Hesterine de Reus

Holger Osieck

Jose Ram n Capdevila

Kelly Cross

Marcus Keane

Pierre Barrieu

Steve McClaren

High-Performance Managers

Beni Rubido

Callum Irving

Christos Kanelleas

Ed Franklin

Gizela Menezes

Javier S nchez S nchez

John Harrower

Karina Barriga

Luis Miguel Del Risco

Manuel Feist

Moaz Awadelkarim

Patrick Pinto

Raimondas Statkevicius

Stuart Swift

Varun Ranjan



# 1. Management and resources

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Through thoughtful management, MAs can take significant steps towards achieving their performance objectives.

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The management and resources of a member association (MA) influence a wide range of departments across the association, as well as all levels of the wider football community. The process of identifying the strengths and weaknesses of an MA's performance in all of its areas – from strategy to the national playing philosophy – can significantly contribute to the realisation of the broader objectives and goals that the MA has set for itself and its footballing community.

## 1.1 General management

The following section provides an overview of general management, the long-term strategy for player development and the support for executing this strategy through sufficient budgeting and data management. It is imperative that the MA outline a clear direction – supported by sufficient financial and empirical backing – that it wants the organisation and its staff and players to work towards.

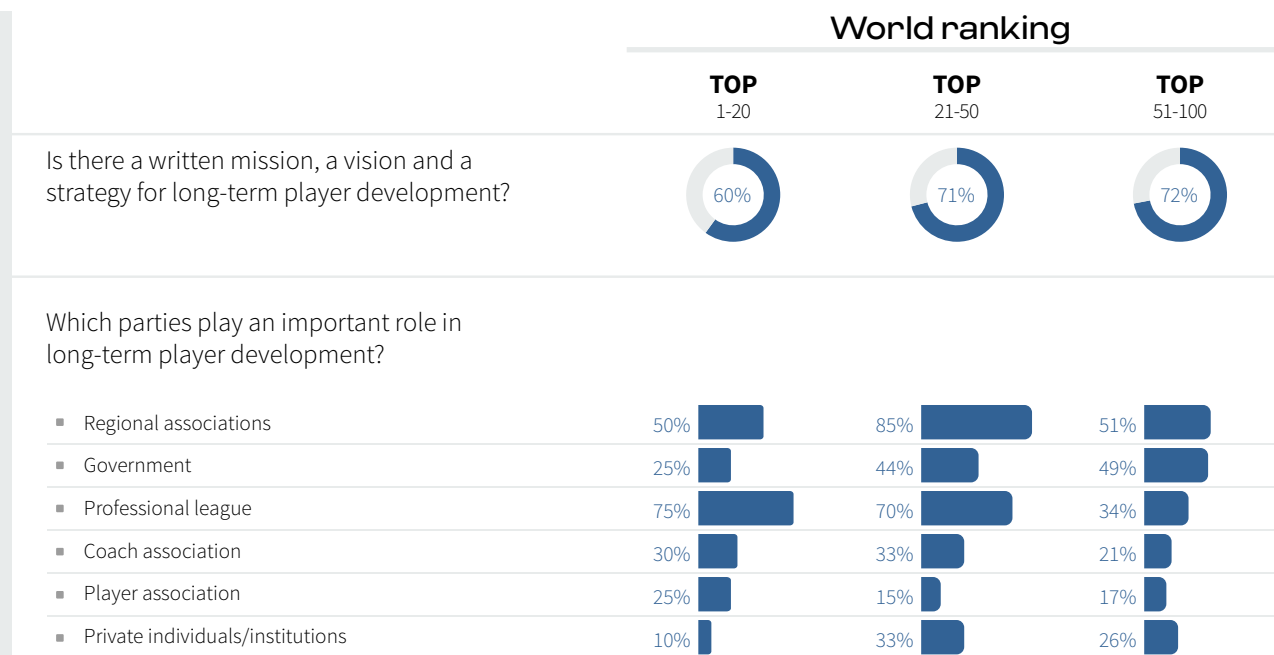
### Long-term player development strategy

A long-term player development (LTPD) strategy that is devised, developed and executed by an MA in partnership with clubs and other football stakeholders is generally recognised as a prerequisite for an MA to achieve its player development goals or objectives. Setting a clear LTPD strategy enables MAs to develop their player pathways and set specific targets for the production of home-grown players.

### 69% of member associations in the top 100 have a written strategy for LTPD.

The majority of MAs have a strategy for LTPD, with the breakdown by ranking group ranging from 60% (top 20) to 72% (51-100). The successful delivery of such a strategy requires engagement from a range of agencies and stakeholders. The most popular key stakeholders amongst the top 100 are regional associations, the government and – particularly among the top 50 – the professional league.

Illustration 1.1



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### The national strategy for player development and the associated key stakeholders

- Successful MAs develop clear visions and strategies for player development in close collaboration with key stakeholders, such as regional associations, professional leagues and governments, which play an important role in their implementation.
- A high percentage of MAs in the top 100 have relevant documentation in place to help staff, players and other stakeholders to organise and implement the national performance plan effectively.
- National performance plans typically need to identify the mission and vision for player development. They should set targets and provide strategic direction for those working across the game.
- The most effective examples of planning are when MAs embrace a “plan, do, reflect and review” approach. MAs that adopt this model set time aside for a formal review of their actions so that they can check and challenge the progress they are making against the targets they have set for themselves.
- Without appropriate resources and access to technical knowledge, MAs find it more challenging to create a specific long-term player development strategy.



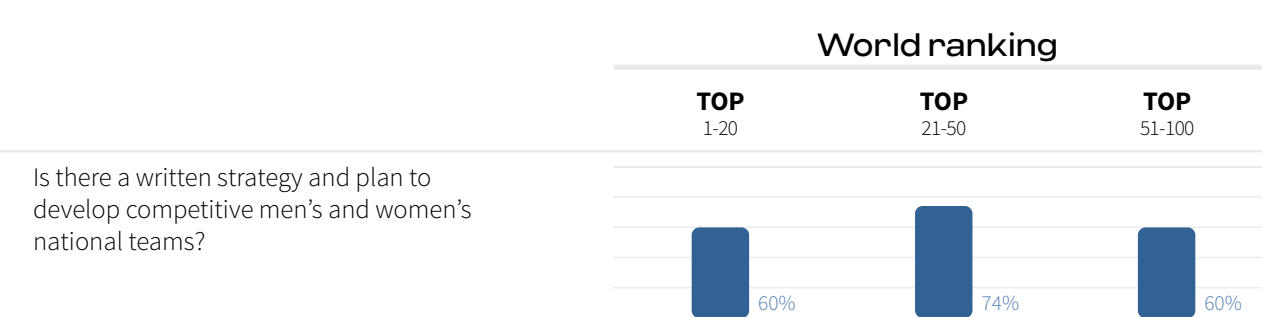


**The existence of a written national team strategy**

Having a written strategy formally acknowledges the targets – and the means to achieve these targets – that have been set by the MA. Furthermore, a written strategy minimises room for miscommunication between those who are pursuing it, allowing faster progress towards the goals set by the MA. A written national-team strategy will usually seek to establish a football philosophy, an approach to squad/positional profiling, team management, organisation and performance targets. The strategy will also identify key roles and responsibilities for staff and players.

**Approximately 35% of the MAs across the top 100 do not have a written plan to develop competitive national teams.**

The top 100 MAs are similar in their focus on the development of their national teams, with between 60% (top 20 and 51-100) and 74% (21-50) of associations having a strategy in place.



**The written strategy for national teams**

- In many MAs, there are nationally identified playing philosophies and game models embedded in the development plans for the national teams. Those MAs can demonstrate how this philosophy is communicated, coached and implemented through the national teams and across the game.
- The nationally identified playing philosophy is often used by MAs to help to shape the curriculum for the development of coach education in their organisations.
- A considerable number of MAs have specific written plans for the development of their national teams. The best of these plans identify and clearly resource the management, coaching and support structures around the team.
- Many MAs in the top 100 adopt a unified approach between national teams, coach education and player development strategies, with consistent messages being shared across the three sections.
- Having a written strategy in place helps MAs to achieve continuity in building competitive teams.

## Data management

Technical leaders can benefit from data insights gained from processing and analysing relevant data in many ways. However, a prerequisite for the processing and analysis of data is for data to be first collected and then presented informatively.

Data can play an important role in making more informed decisions. The quality of decisions taken is closely linked to data quality. It is therefore important to ensure that data is relevant, reliable and consistent. Effective data management is necessary to ensure that MAs develop the basic infrastructure of a football ecosystem. The areas of data that require oversight relate to player, coach and match official registration, as well as coach education, national teams, talent identification and scouting.

### All of the top 20 MAs have a database for players, coaches and match officials.

The vast majority (>98%) of the top 100 MAs have a data management system to track registered players. However, the top 20 use such a system to a greater extent for the tracking of match officials, as well as for the management of coach education and talent development.

Illustration 1.3

Do MAs have a data management system in place for the following?	World ranking		
	TOP 1-20	TOP 21-50	TOP 51-100
■ Registration of players	100%	100%	98%
■ Competition management	95%	89%	87%
■ Registration of coaches	100%	78%	85%
■ Registration of referees	100%	78%	81%
■ Coach education management	84%	78%	66%
■ Talent development management	63%	41%	32%
■ Management of the national team(s)	89%	63%	72%

## The implementation of data management

- A core function of the majority of MAs is data management to support the growth and development of the game.
- The development of specific management systems to support player, coach and match official registration is a priority for MAs.
- Data management of player registrations has a significant impact upon an MA's ability to effectively manage its talent identification systems.
- Coach education departments rely heavily upon databases to manage the licensing of coaches and for the ongoing delivery of professional development courses.
- Data-based systems are critical to the effective administration of all leagues and competitions.

1.2 Organisational structure

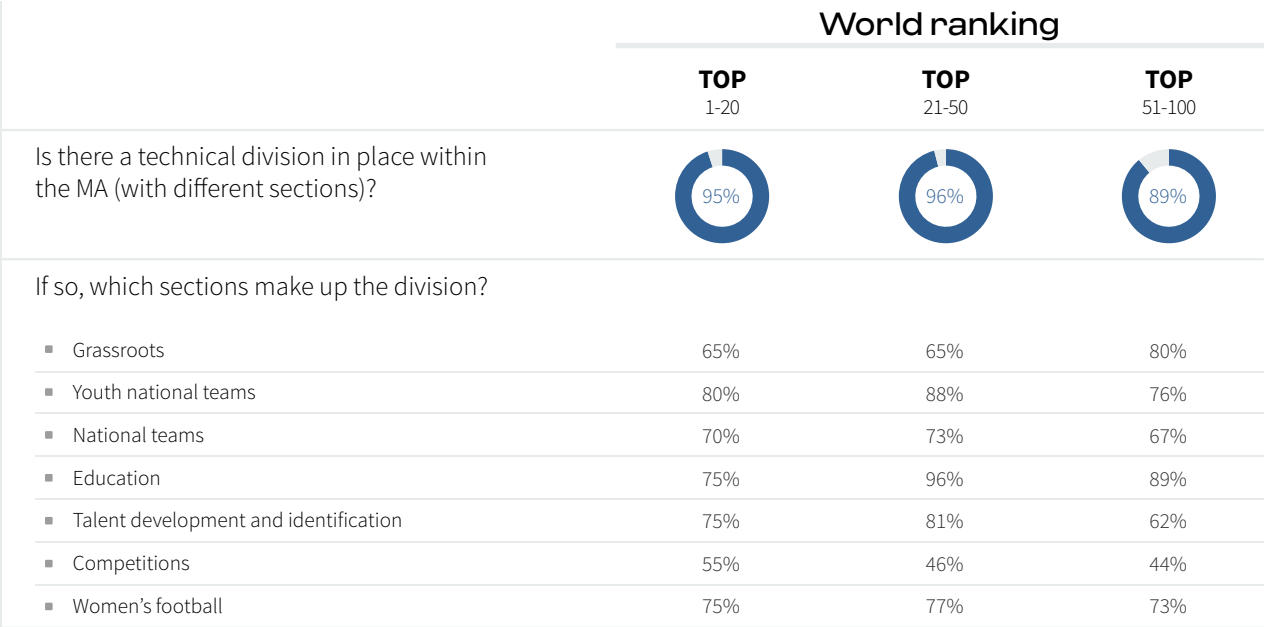
The following section illustrates how technical divisions are situated in the organisational structures of MAs. The organisational structure of an MA is comprised of many components. The specific role of the technical division is important to the wider MA as it develops football expertise at the heart of the organisation.

Technical division

Incorporating a technical division into the wider structure of an MA and giving it a high enough platform at executive level enable an MA and its corresponding football ecosystem to gain access to football expertise, strategic direction and leadership on technical issues relating to the game.

Education, youth national teams, talent development and women's football are all key sections of the technical division across the top 50 MAs.

Nearly all MAs in the top 100 have a technical division (92%). Associations ranked 51-100 are more likely to have the grassroots game as part of the technical division, with education, talent development and identification, and women's football more prominent in the structure of the technical division across the MAs ranked 21-50.



The technical division's operational structure and its representation at board level

- The most effective MAs have a well-defined structure in their technical division, with a distinct allocation of roles and responsibilities across the different areas within the technical director's remit and close alignment with the national performance plan.
- It is notable that the best-performing MAs all have consistent technical development representation at board level. Technical directors need to be given the opportunity to make proposals and recommendations with regard to technical matters.
- Technical divisions can oversee the development and implementation of national performance plans through their technical directors and the overall strategic leadership of MAs.
- The best MAs are outstanding in their communications, both internally across departments and externally with stakeholders and government. These MAs have a clear understanding at senior executive level of the key characteristics of the football ecosystem in their country. They recognise their strengths and have strategies and plans in place to address their weaknesses.
- Some MAs have adopted a dynamic approach to governance in terms of a commitment to review their processes. They are also being proactive by promoting diverse representation at senior levels across their associations. There is clear recognition of the value of including more female staff at board level, as well as developing former players as future managers and leaders.

## Women's football

This section focuses on the current status of technical development within parties in the MA that are specifically relevant to women's football. It is important for an emphasis on technical development – and its corresponding benefits – to be seen in these parties as well, in order to match the ever-increasing popularity of the women's game. One prime example of this is including women's football on the technical director's agenda.

### MA's adopt various models of integrating women's football into their organisation according to their circumstances.

MA's ranked 21-50 favour tend to fully integrate women's football in the technical division, whereas the top 20 more commonly have women's football partially integrated. Furthermore, associations in the top 100 often have a head of women's football or a director who reports to the technical director. In some MA's, multiple people are responsible for women's football.

Illustration 1.5



1.3 Technical leadership

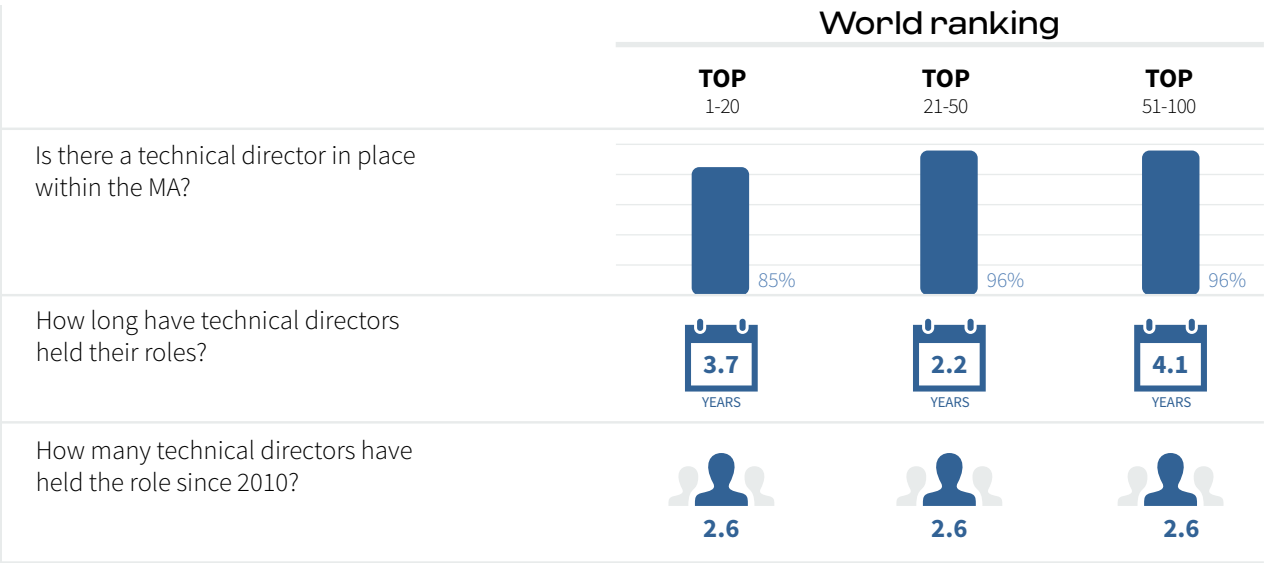
Strong technical leadership can have a positive influence on the development of football within a MA. Technical leaders play an essential role in raising standards, growing the game and guiding national team development. They can achieve this by focusing specifically on developing a national performance plan, creating playing philosophies, talent identification systems and player pathways, and by delivering competitions and tournaments.

Technical director

The following section looks at the various processes in place within MAs regarding the role of the technical director, which is to deliver strategic change in the football environment over a number of years through the implementation of a specific plan for football. The role should be performance-managed through a set of criteria or indicators which reflect this, and these should not be based on short-term results. FIFA will offer all MAs the opportunity to recruit, develop and performance-manage technical directors (and technical leaders) through the Growing Professionally Framework (GPF) to align the role(s) with the strategic plan for football within the MA.

**MAs ranked 21-50 offer the least stability in the role of the technical director, with an average length in post of 2.2 years.**

Although 93% of MAs in the top 100 have a technical director, the limited time in which technical directors are in place (2.2 to 4.1 years) is a key issue in order to guarantee the implementation of long-term strategies. Supporting the technical director and ensuring that the MA has stability and perseverance over a sustained period of time is an essential ingredient for successful player development.





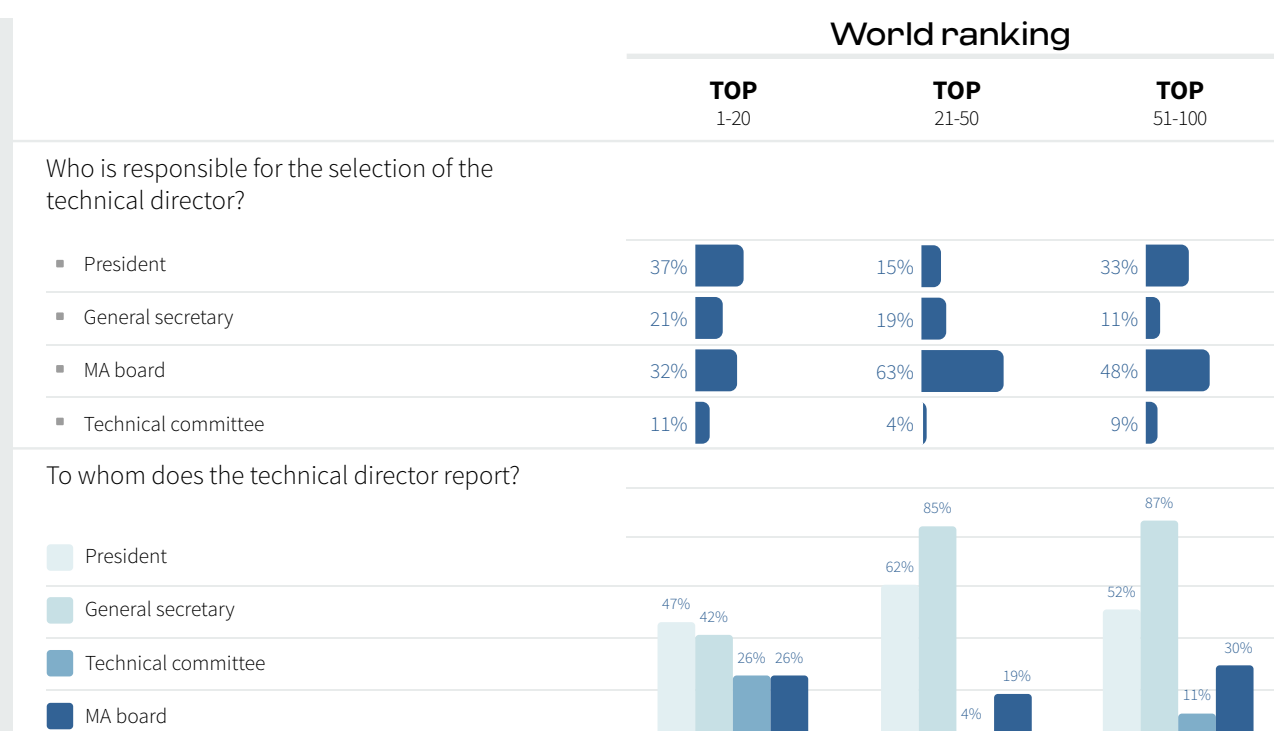


### The MA board plays a significant role in the selection of the technical director across the top 100 MAs.

A greater percentage of the top 20 MAs have their president take the lead in the appointment and management of the technical director. Conversely, in associations ranked from 21 to 100, it more frequently falls to the MA board to select the technical director and to the general secretary to manage him/her.

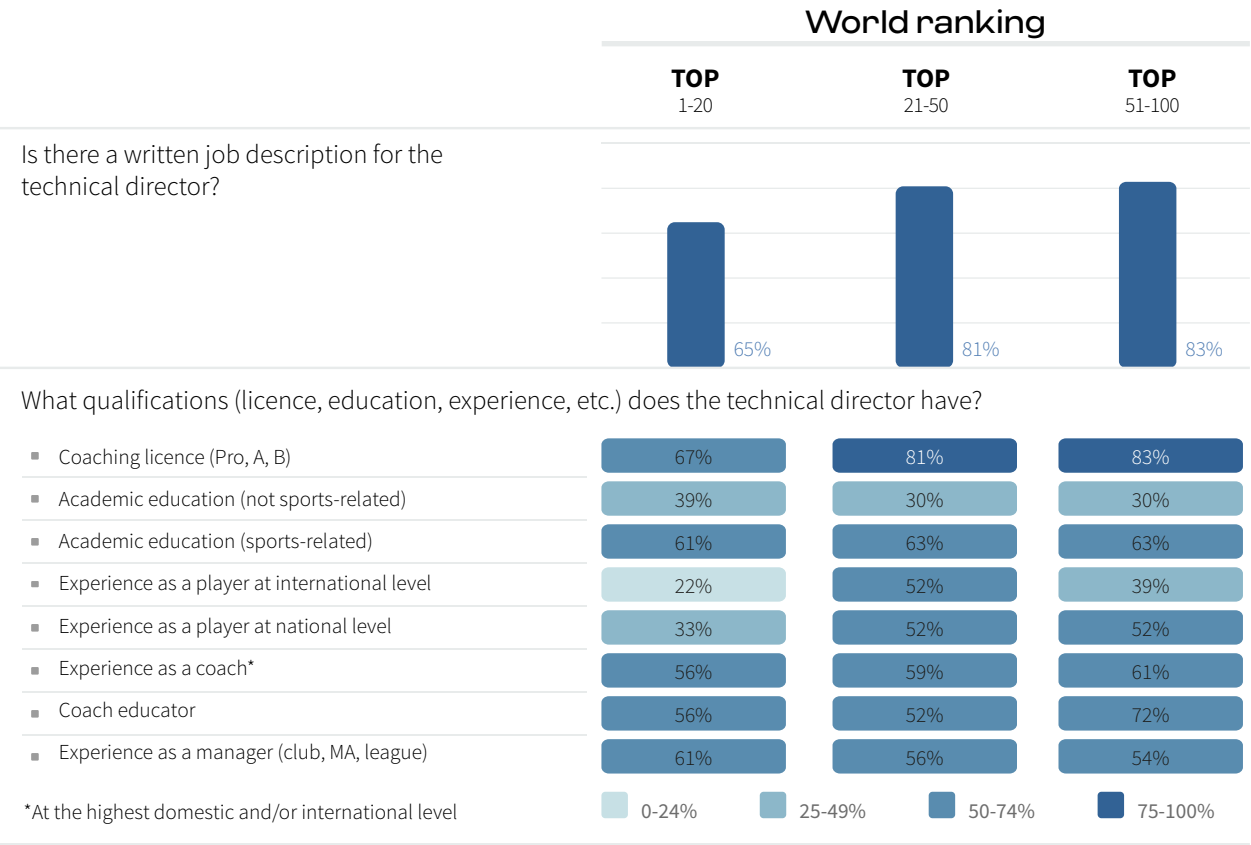
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Illustration 1.7



57% of technical directors in the top 100 MAs have experience as a club, association or league manager.

82% of technical directors in the MAs ranked 21-100 have a coaching licence, as opposed to 67% of those in the top 20, with more technical directors at associations ranked 51-100 being qualified coach educators (72%). Furthermore, across the top 100, 62% of technical directors have a sports-related academic qualification. From a human resources perspective, most MAs have a written job description for the technical director, but most noticeably associations in the top 20 are less likely to have such working documents in place.



The technical director and the assigned roles and responsibilities

- The most successful MAs seek to employ experienced technical directors who typically have previous experience working in club management or in the MA's technical division.
- The technical director is seen as the key figure to drive the delivery of the MA's national performance plan.
- The turnover of technical directors remains high all around the world and the regular loss of expertise can hamper long-term development.
- MAs that cannot identify technical leaders within their organisation or country tend to employ foreigners to bridge the gap in technical expertise. To ensure they leave a lasting legacy, it is important that these technical leaders work collectively with all sections. This would allow the MA to continue to evolve.
- The most ambitious MAs emphasise the ongoing development of technical staff and, as such, they have comprehensive CPD programmes in place, which offer a wide range of learning opportunities.
- The FIFA GPF will support MAs to create job descriptions and to allocate the roles and responsibilities of the technical director and other technical leadership positions found within the technical division.
- The FIFA GPF identifies several capabilities for leadership and management, along with core capabilities, which can be specifically aligned to meet the demands of each technical director and their MA's national performance plan.

## Strategic planning

Similar to the overarching strategy necessary for setting the general direction of MAs, strategic planning specific to the technical division is needed to outline the unit's direction for the short-term, medium-term and long-term future. Strategic planning also entails working with and gaining insight from scientific institutions outside football. MAs establish strong partnerships with these leading scientific institutions, universities and other organisations in order to create marginal gains and/or aid with additional insight in areas where the MAs may lack technical expertise.

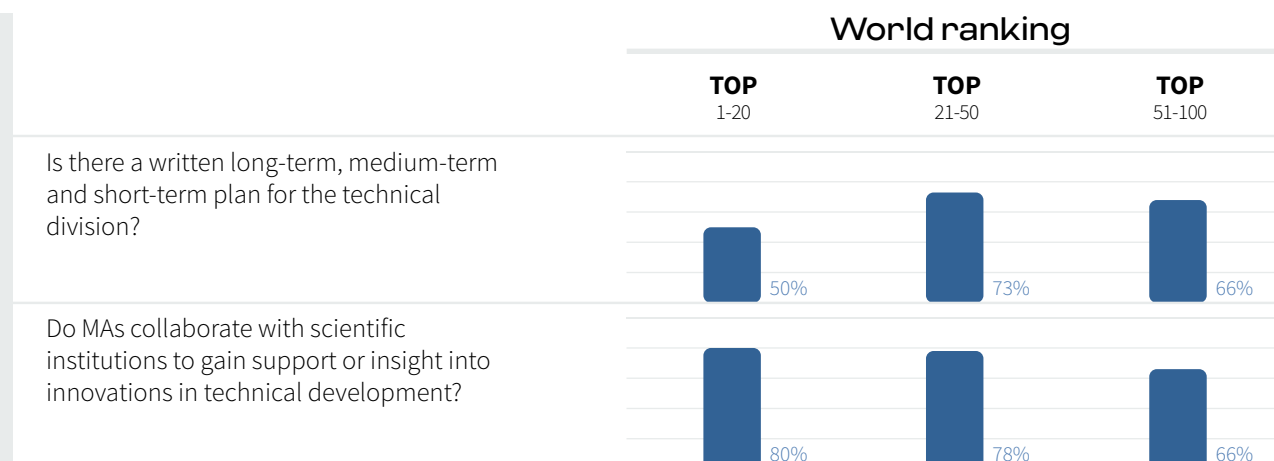


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### A significant number of MAs have yet to create a written strategy for the management of the technical division.

Approximately 30% of the top 100 MAs do not currently have a written plan for the technical division. A large proportion of the top 100 associations (70%) collaborate with scientific institutions, with more MAs in the top 50 choosing to exchange knowledge.

Illustration 1.9

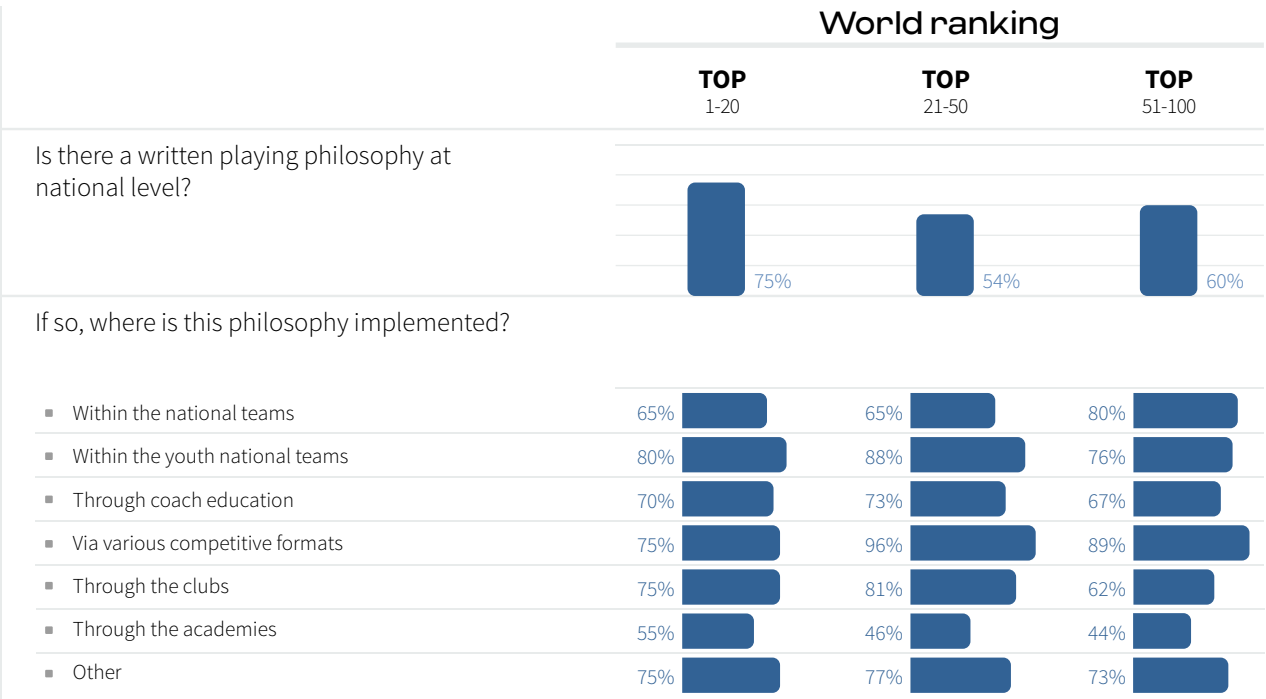


National playing philosophy

The development of a national playing philosophy enables the MA to communicate a preferred approach in terms of how the national teams will train and play. The philosophy will identify the key aspects of a tactical style and how this may be adapted to different game models. By using it, youth developers and coaches can identify and develop players who have the characteristics needed for the preferred national approach. It allows the MA to plan ahead in terms of the development of national teams. Coach educators are also able to use the national playing philosophy to underpin their curriculum.

Leading MAs are more likely to have a written national playing philosophy in place.

There is a clear distinction between the top 20 MAs, where 75% have a written playing philosophy in place, and the lower-ranked MAs (21-100), who are less likely to have such a philosophy. Most MAs that do have this philosophy in place implement it across the youth national teams (80%), coach education (69%) and senior national teams (74%). It is important to note that there may be variances in the extent to which national teams follow their MA's philosophy. Factors such as the resources available, the skill set of the current senior national team squads, and the unique demands of the women's game are just some of the reasons why teams may distance themselves from adopting one specific style of play.



Implementation of the national playing philosophy

- There appears to be a disconnect between senior and youth national teams in the implementation of a national playing philosophy. A significant number of senior teams' national coaches appear to have the freedom to adopt their own approach.
- The top MAs have a unified national playing philosophy that is implemented across men's and women's youth and senior national teams.
- Many MAs tend to reinforce the implementation of their national playing philosophy to the national teams' technical staff through technical workshops and regular review meetings.
- Coach education is a great tool to share the national playing philosophy on a nationwide scale. The core messages are reinforced through guest presentations from the national coaches, whilst video footage from international matches is often used to demonstrate the key playing principles.



## 1.4. Resources

This section illustrates the resources available to the technical divisions of MAs. MAs require sufficient resources to be effective within their football ecosystems. The same applies to their technical divisions. This division can only function in a way which benefits the MA and football within the country if it has suitable financial and human resources. When an MA supports a technical division in this way, it can be assured that it is placing football's well-being at the heart of its operations.

### Financial resources

Chief among the resources required for the technical division are financial resources. Financial investment in football should be a national effort and it should, therefore, be supported jointly by key stakeholders such as governments, clubs, leagues and sponsors in addition to MAs. All parties should work closely to provide sufficient resources for football to move forward in a country.



### Financial resources for technical divisions and their management

- MAs follow different approaches to budget planning as per their needs and available resources.
- MAs that lack financial resources seem to follow a top-down approach, with a specific budget allocated to technical development. Technical directors are responsible for distributing it according to the needs of each technical section.
- It is important that technical directors and leaders have an insight into the technical development budget and that they understand how finance is aligned with the specific plans for football.
- Technical budgets that are closely linked to tournament cycles can lead to an increase in temporary and part-time staff appointments. This can have a negative impact on player development.
- Budget forecasts are usually formulated according to the operational plans for the coming year, with ongoing discussions taking place between the technical director and the heads of each department.
- Many MAs express the need for more financial backing. However, as demonstrated by the findings of funding programmes (such as FIFA Forward), there are also many MAs that do not use the resources available to them.
- Consistent investment in competitions and national teams is required to support the pathway for talent development. MAs have stressed the need for consistency.

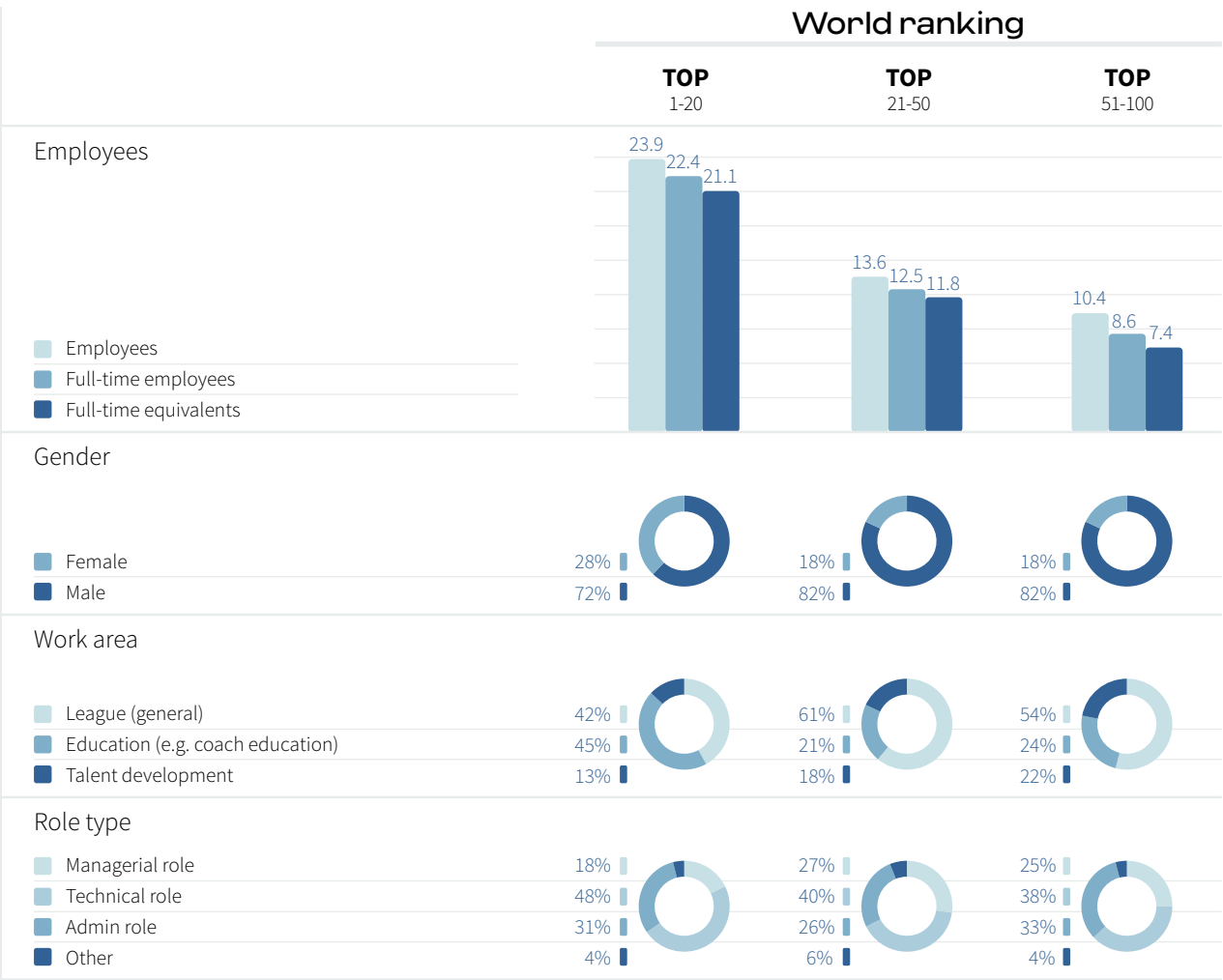


Human resources

The importance of having the right people in technical roles at the right time cannot be underestimated. FIFA can support MAs with the recruitment, development and management of technical staff through its GPF. The framework also supports technical roles in MAs that are not currently represented in this area. Importantly, schemes such as the Women in Football Leadership Programme, the Coach Mentorship Programme and Coach Education Scholarships – which are all part of the FIFA’s Women’s Development Programme – seek to increase the representation of women across all roles within football.

Identifying and developing the right staff will have an impact on the performance of MAs, both on and off the pitch.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, MAs ranked in the top 20 tend to employ more staff in their technical areas than lower-ranked MAs. This gives the top-ranked associations advantages in terms of the consistency of delivery and the ability to invest in the long-term development of staff, as well as greater continuity in the development of long-term planning for the game. Regarding women’s representation, an average of 28% of the staff in the top MAs are female, a number that drops to 18% in the MAs ranked between 21 and 100. The most ambitious associations have appointed dedicated female staff to develop the women’s game.



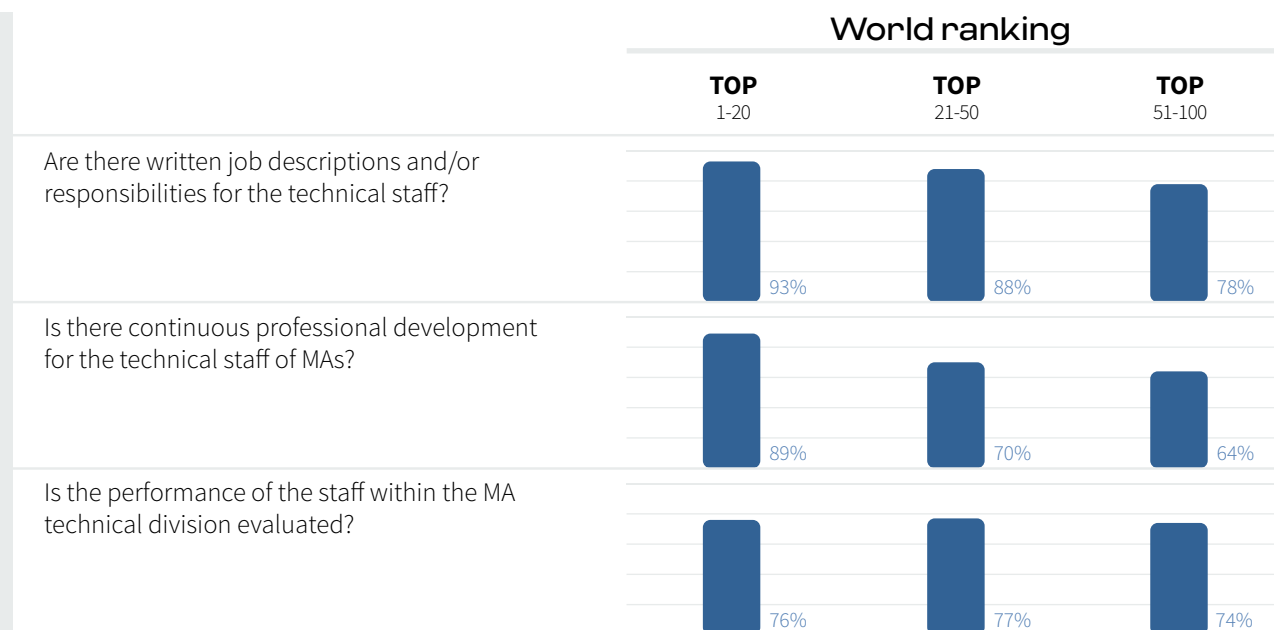
### Human resource management

This aspect of human resources looks after the well-being of employees, provides them with opportunities for development and ensures that the technical division has a sustainable work environment where staff can meet the targets set by the MA.

#### 89% of the top 20 MAs support technical staff with continuous professional development (CPD).

MAs in the top 20 appear to have a greater support network for human resource management than their lower-ranked counterparts. A larger proportion of the highest-ranked group have job descriptions in place, support CPD and evaluate staff performance. Furthermore, only 64% of associations ranked between 51 and 100 support the development of technical staff through organised CPD.

Illustration 1.12



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### Infrastructure

As well as serving as the pinnacle of football infrastructure in a given country, a modern national training facility provides a state-of-the-art platform for honing players' skills and fitness, and consequently influences performance on the pitch. An MA with a facility that caters for the multidisciplinary nature of modern football will reap the vast rewards of this approach. There is a need for country-by-country studies looking at the broader football infrastructure within football communities, analysing components such as academies and clubs.

There are a number of inspiring innovations being developed locally to meet the needs of national team players. It is clear that there is no one way to develop these facilities and, although there are ideas and principles that can be shared, the best solutions are invariably bespoke to meet local or national priorities. However, many MAs need sufficient resources to maintain and develop their national training facilities.

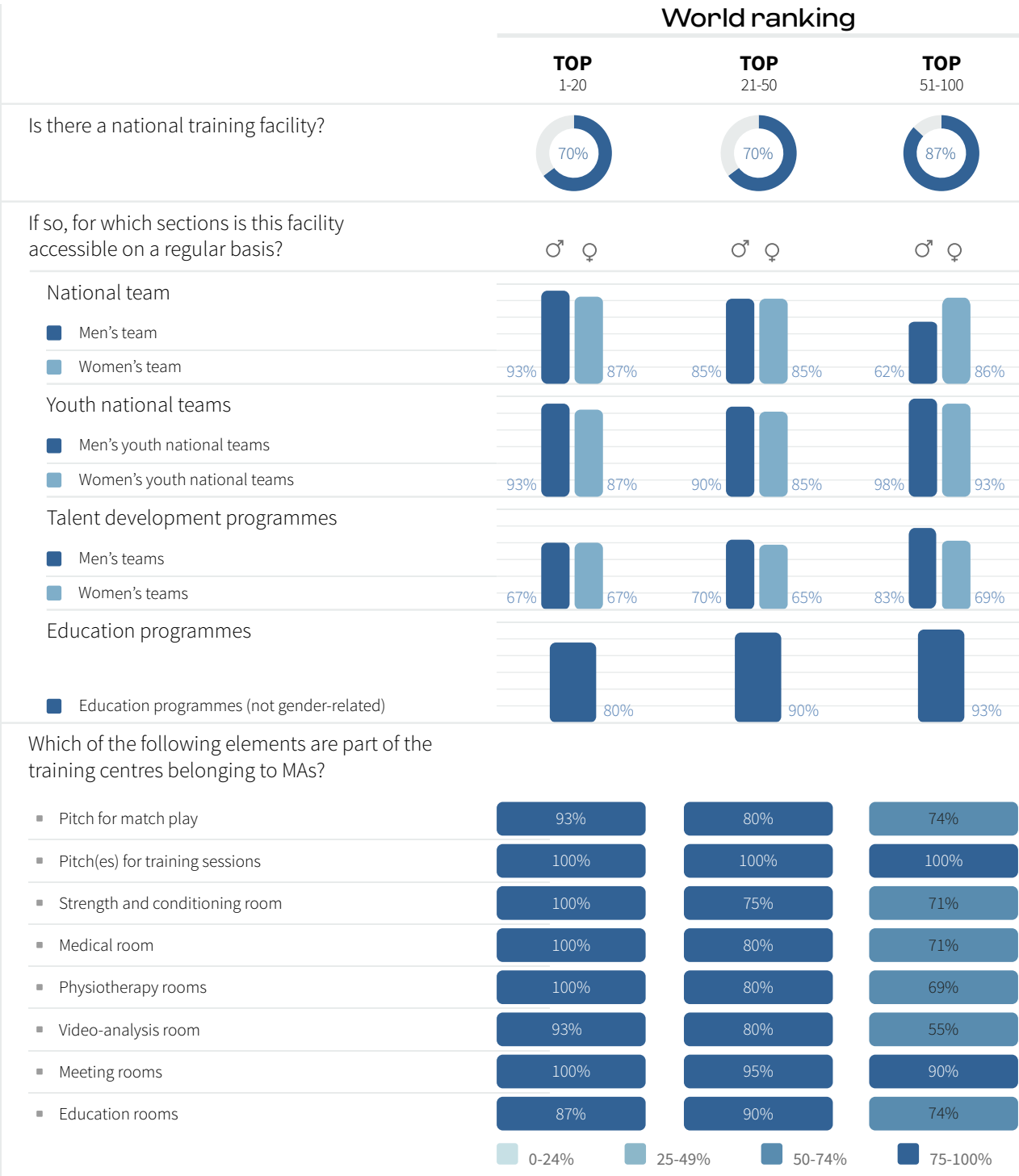
#### 80% of the top 100 member associations have a national training facility.

A greater percentage of MAs ranked from 51 to 100 have a national training facility (87% compared to 70% of both the top 20 and those ranked 21-50). Although national training centres are more commonplace in lower-ranked MAs, these facilities tend not to be fully equipped. National training centres are used for a variety of purposes, such as for the training and development of youth internationals, the development of national academies, the preparation of national teams, and the delivery of coach education, as well as sometimes as a venue for visiting teams.



Illustration 1.13

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# Management and resources

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# Recommendations

- The development and implementation of clearly written visions and strategies for a long-term development plan should be a collective effort involving the MA and key stakeholders such as government, regional associations and professional leagues. Despite potentially differing objectives, those involved can play a powerful part in enhancing football in their regions. In addition to instigating these collective visions and strategies, MAs should implement national playing, coaching and development philosophies across different technical areas, such as national teams and education.
- Technical development needs to be given representation at board level so that experts are heard. Once this has taken place, clear decision-making processes and responsibilities that set technical guidelines can be established. Having technical leaders make operative proposals and recommendations on technical matters – and take responsibility for their implementation – is an important aspect of giving technical development the platform it deserves within an association.
- As well as representation at board level, technical divisions should receive the necessary human and financial resources to put plans into action. The aspects that fall under the technical director's remit must include a distinct allocation of roles and responsibilities, and there must also be clear decision-making processes. Identifying individuals who fit the mould of these technical roles is crucial to maintaining an organisation's success. Resources need to be allocated to the ongoing development and evaluation of technical staff to minimise skill gaps, improve performance, gain a competitive edge and keep in sync with the latest developments and innovations in football.
- Data contributes significantly to informed decisions that are both effective and resourceful. MAs need to recognise the importance of data in the growth and development of the modern game and prioritise the development of robust management systems to support players, coaches, match officials and their competitions. The relevance, consistency and degree of accuracy of data determines the quality of a decision. MAs need to do what they can to guarantee that their association and football ecosystem can base decisions on high-quality data.
- Although many aspects of good management are universal, MAs are encouraged to adopt governance approaches that fit the specific needs, demands and cultures of their football ecosystems and the countries in which they are situated. Associations should reflect on their strengths and form strategies that address their weaknesses. Time should be allocated to a formal review of the progress of these strategies against the targets set.
- The lack of female representation at the higher levels of football's organisational structures is a global challenge that needs to be addressed. It is imperative that MAs recognise the value of appointing female employees so that their expertise and experiences are given a voice. Giving retired female players the opportunity to develop into future managers and leaders is one step that can be taken to achieve proportionate representation. This framework is already being broadly implemented in the context of men's football and is easily transferrable to the women's game.
- By implementing or aligning with the GPF, MAs can support the recruitment, development and performance management of technical leaders and their technical divisions. Alignment with the framework ensures that considered processes are in place for the strategic development of staff, in keeping with the overall developmental plan of the football ecosystem.



## 2. National teams

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Performing at the game's pinnacle, a national team's success can drive football engagement within a country for generations to come.

National teams offer their players an unrivalled development experience. The elite-competition and tournament situations of international football provide an incredible learning process. National teams are important for the health of their domestic football environment as well. A team's success on the global stage can inspire younger generations, generate interest in the game, and drive amateur engagement in the community.

## 2.1 Strategic management

This section reviews the top 100 MAs' management structures and the alignment of their national teams from youth to senior. Having such alignment across the national teams is essential to maximise player development and support the transition of the best youth players into the senior national team. The ideal environment for the development of national team players is complemented by the application of a national playing philosophy, a multi-disciplinary coaching and development methodology, national player profiling, a performance support network, and the communication and collaboration of staff across all squads.

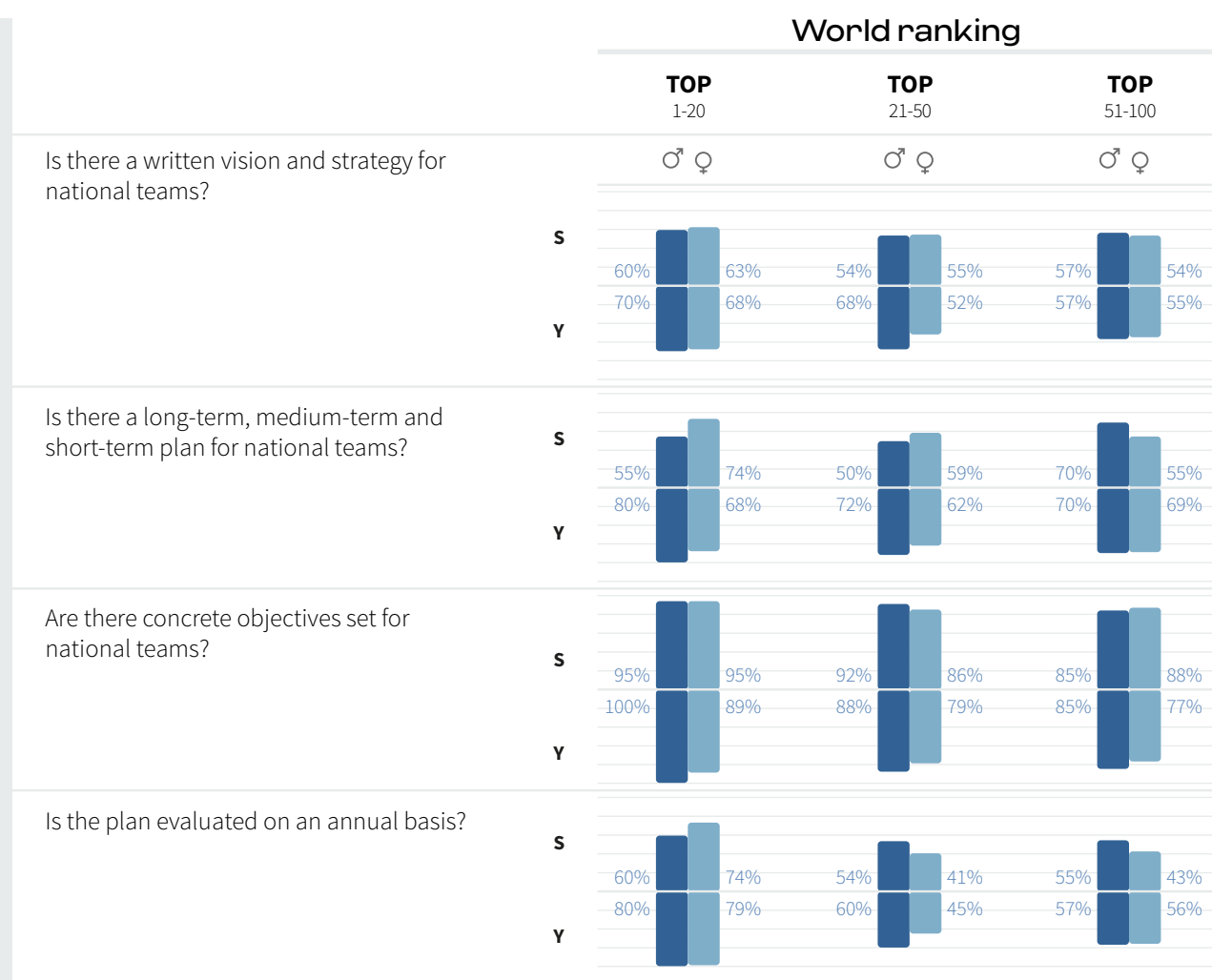
### Strategic planning

Having transparency within the member association by setting a clear direction for national teams to work towards is important. A unified vision, strategy and set of objectives is necessary for coaching staff and players to know what is collectively expected of them. The following table illustrates the different ways in which strategy and planning are evident among the top 100 MAs' national teams.

### 58% of the top 100 MAs do not have a vision, mission or strategy to guide the development of their men's senior national team.

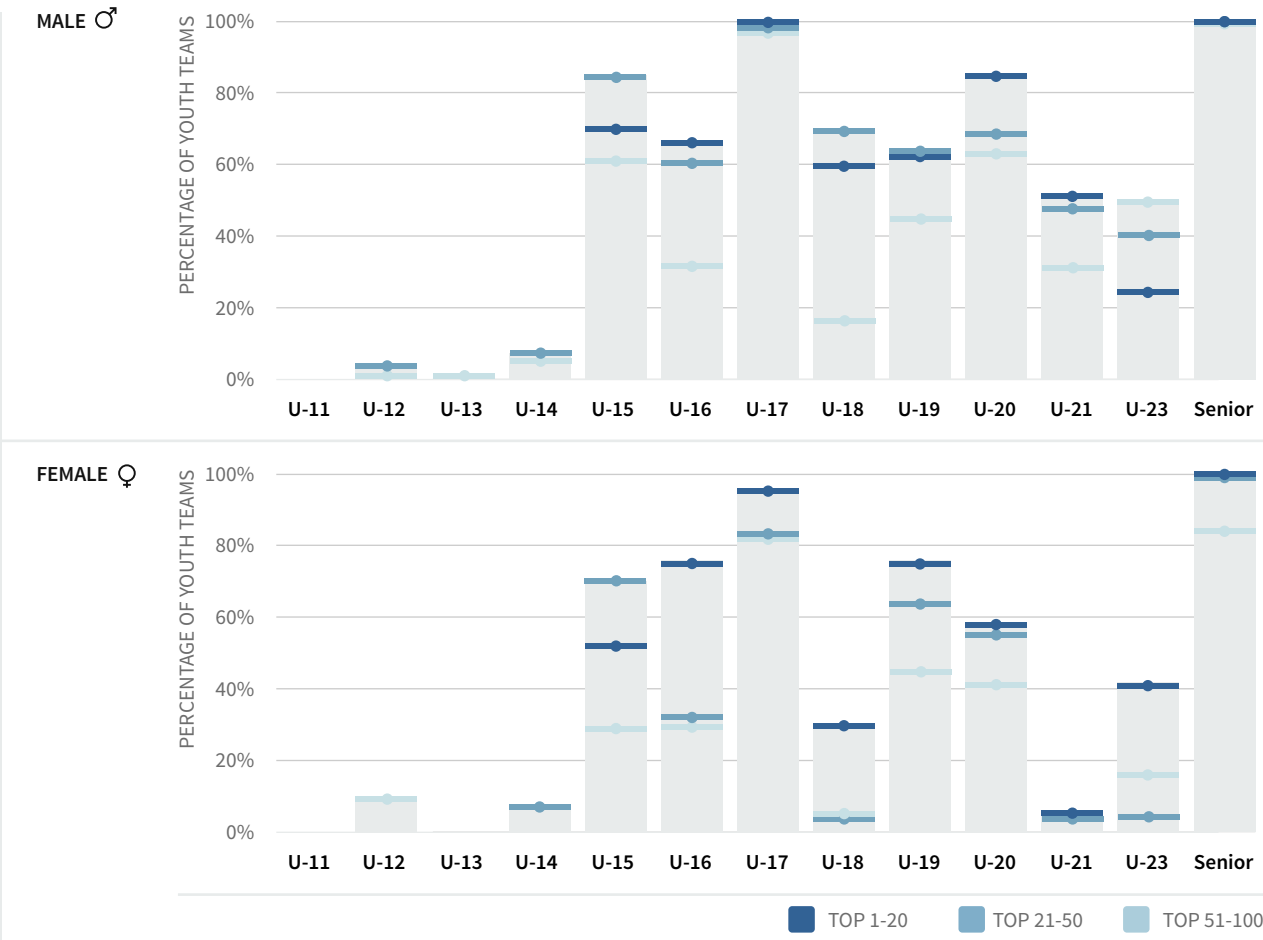
Approximately 95% of the top 20 MAs have structured objectives for all national teams, both youth and senior. Furthermore, 58% of MAs in the top 100 have a long-term plan for their senior men's national team, with the top 20 more likely to evaluate progress annually. In most cases, there appears to be more evidence of strategic planning for youth teams than for their senior counterparts.

Illustration 2.1



National teams programme

National teams provide unrivalled development opportunities. To maximise these opportunities, while avoiding any gaps in the development process, a consistent pathway throughout the appropriate age groups is required. Below is a table indicating the percentage of member associations that have a national team at the indicated age level.



Strategy and performance of the national teams programme

- MAs need to recognise the importance of developing a clear vision and strategy for their national teams. They need to set specific objectives, which are evaluated systematically according to the successes or shortcomings of their national teams, and make changes and improvements where necessary.
- Ensuring that each national team has a competitive games programme and that each of these team's players (especially youth team players) receive enough game time is a key responsibility of any MA. Where possible, MAs should seek to find additional international playing opportunities beyond the core FIFA and confederation tournament qualifiers.
- Each MA decides when to commence its own player pathway via the creation of youth national teams. The age at which a national teams programme commences varies from country to country due to local circumstances. It is clear that the most successful players at international level (based on those players reaching the latter stages of World Cups) predominantly begin their international careers in the youth teams before graduating to the senior national team.

## 2.2 Resources

This section investigates the top 100 MAs' investment in creating high-performance environments. A high-performance culture is essential for maximising player development in youth teams as well as for gaining competitive advantages for the senior national teams playing at elite level. Whether it be specialist coaches, a national training centre, access to tactical analysis modalities, or the delivery of performance support services, all play a role in creating a high-performance environment.

### Financial resources

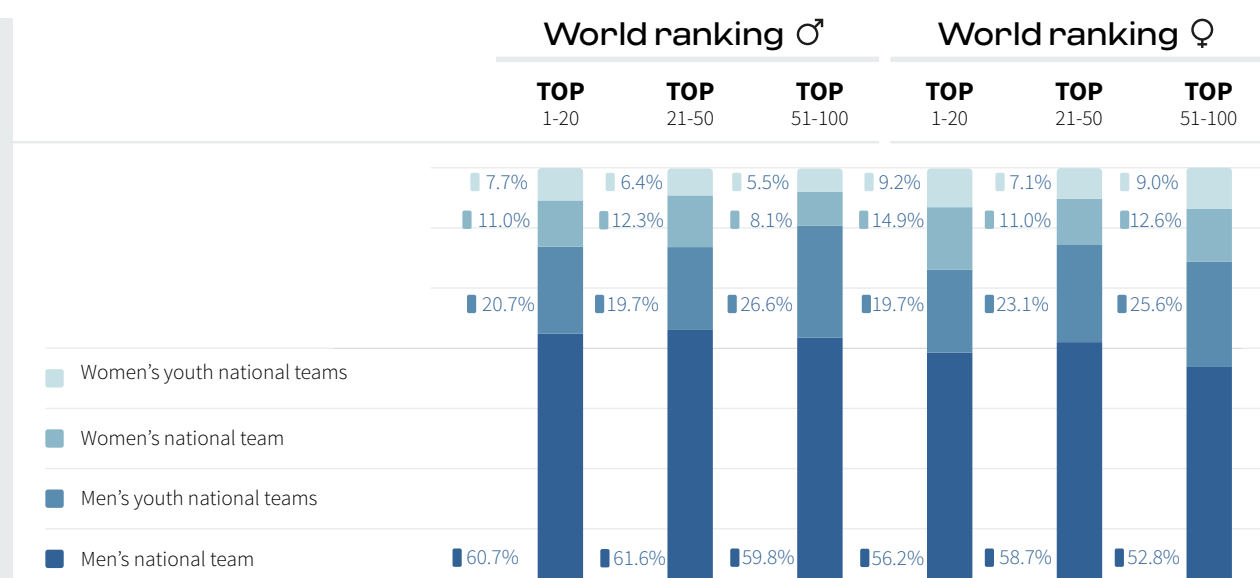
National teams – especially senior national teams – account for a significant amount of an association's budget. However, a successful national team can in return provide a valuable source of income for the entire domestic football pyramid. Thus, providing financial support for national teams not only influences those specific teams, but also contributes to the overall health of the domestic football ecosystem.

### MA's in the top 100 spend over 80% of their national team budget on men's youth and senior national teams.

Approximately 60% of all money spent by the top 100 MAs on their national teams is allocated to the senior men's squad, with men's youth teams representing the second largest spend with investments ranging from 19.7% (in MAs ranked 21-50) to 26.6% (in MAs ranked 51-100) of the overall spend. However, when based upon the women's world ranking, the MAs in the top 20 spend a greater amount on their senior and youth national teams, with a combined investment of 24.1% of the overall budget.



Illustration 2.3





Human resources

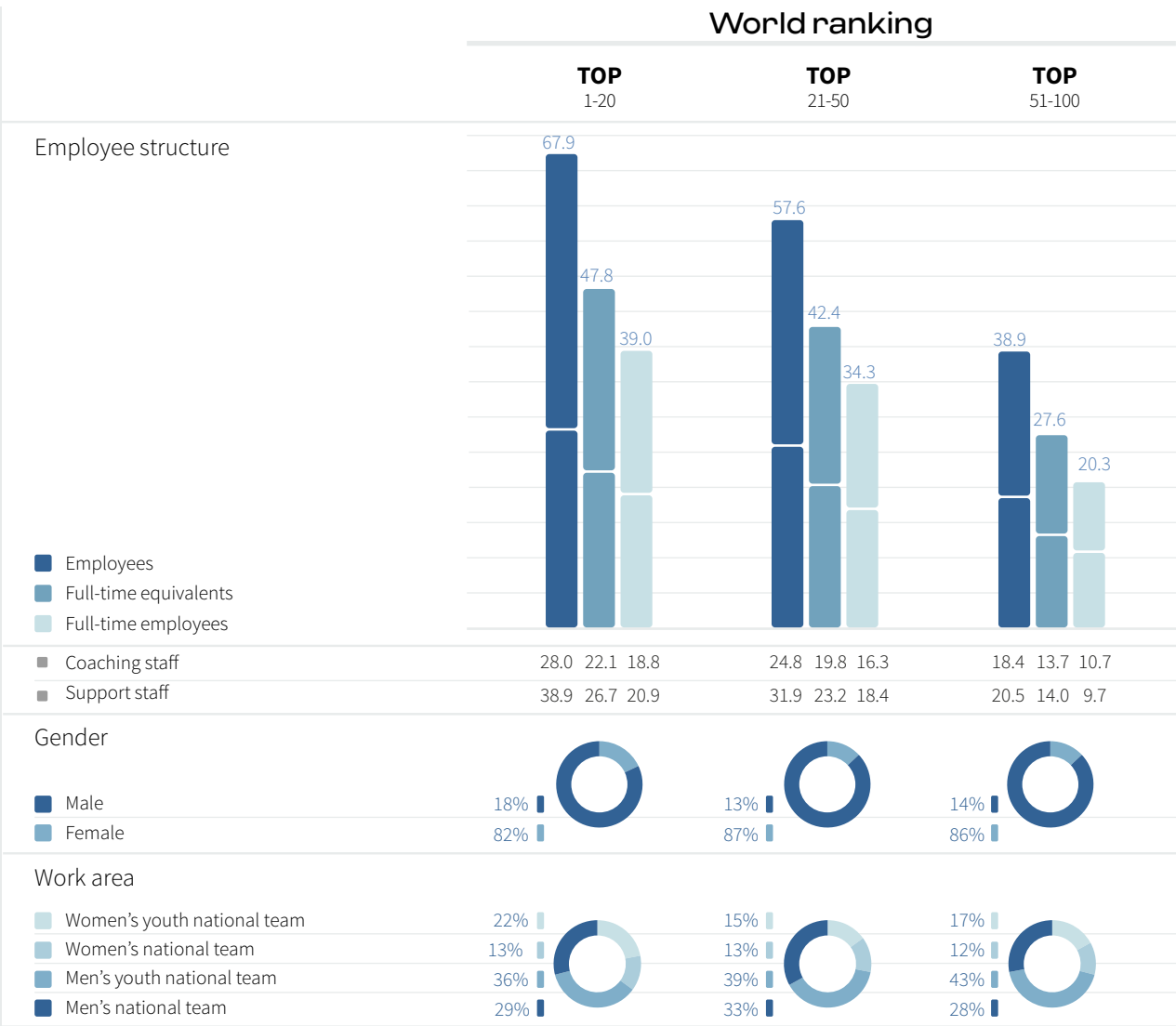
Elite national teams require a variety of support staff working behind the scenes in order to function at a high standard. Employing the necessary specialists – and in correct numbers – is a crucial process for guaranteeing tangible results in international competitions. As international football is the highest level of the game, the support staff should match the calibre of the players with whom they work.

National team staff overview

A balanced allocation of staff can optimise the processes and performances of an association’s national teams. Included below is the average total number of employees for the men’s national team, the women’s national team, the men’s youth national teams, and the women’s youth national teams of the top 100 MAs. The average number of full-time employees, as well as the full-time equivalent (FTE) of all employees working for these teams, is also shown. One FTE is equivalent to one person working full-time. Note: the data reflects the staffing situation in January 2020. Staff changes due to COVID-19 are not taken into account.

The top 20 MAs employ more full-time staff and more staff overall to support their national teams than those ranked lower in the top 100.

Over 80% of the staff attached to the senior and youth national teams of the top 100 MAs are male. Approximately 70% of the national team workforce across the top 100 associations are dedicated to the men’s national teams at youth and senior levels.



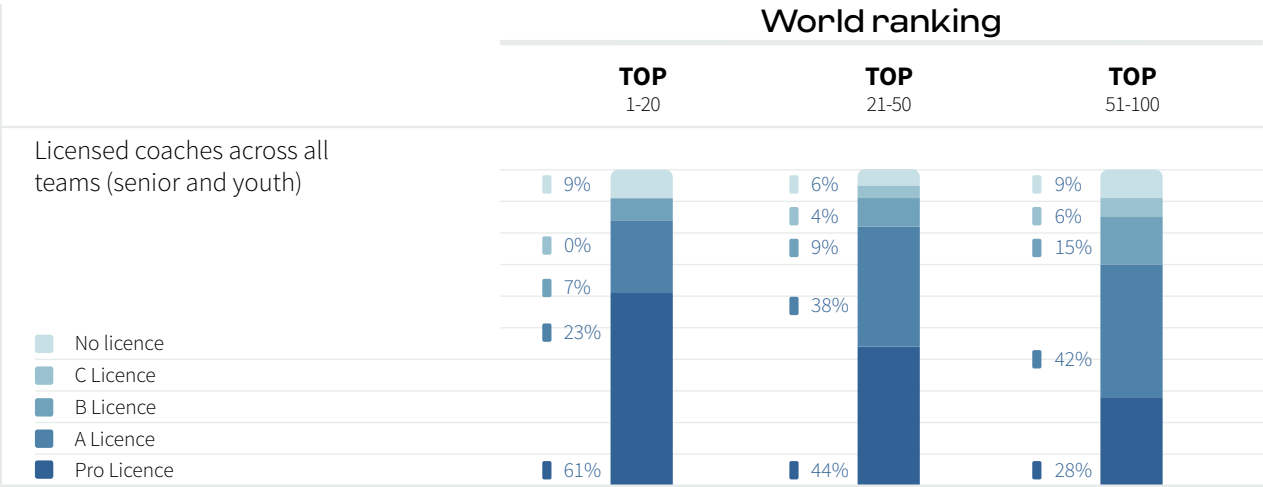
Coaching staff qualifications

The level of qualifications obtained by the coaching staff is an important aspect of any national team’s human resources. Below is a chart which shows the various types of coaching licences obtained by the head and assistant coaches of the national teams of the top 100 associations.

Top 20 MAs have the highest percentage of Pro Licence coaches at national team level.

61% of the coaches working for the top 20 MAs have a Pro Licence, a figure that falls to 44% and 28% in the 21-50 and 51-100 ranking groups respectively. However, the top 50 MAs have over 80% of national coaches qualified at either Pro or A Licence level compared to 70% in MAs ranked 51-100.

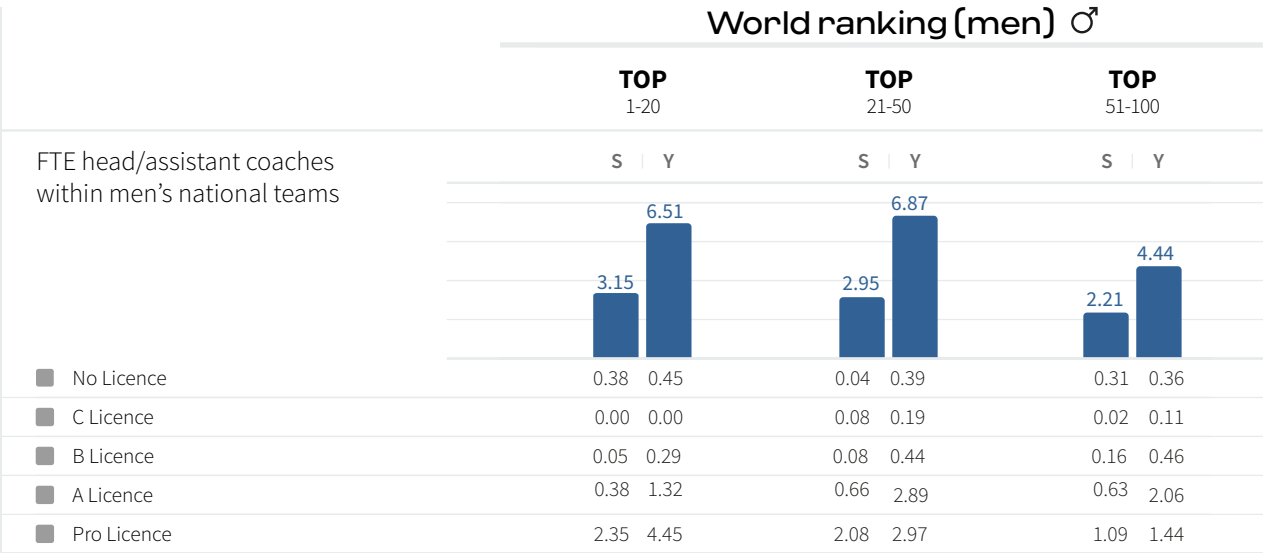
Illustration 2.5



MAs ranked 51-100 have approximately 2.5 times fewer FTE Pro Licence coaches working across all men’s squads than the top 20 MAs.

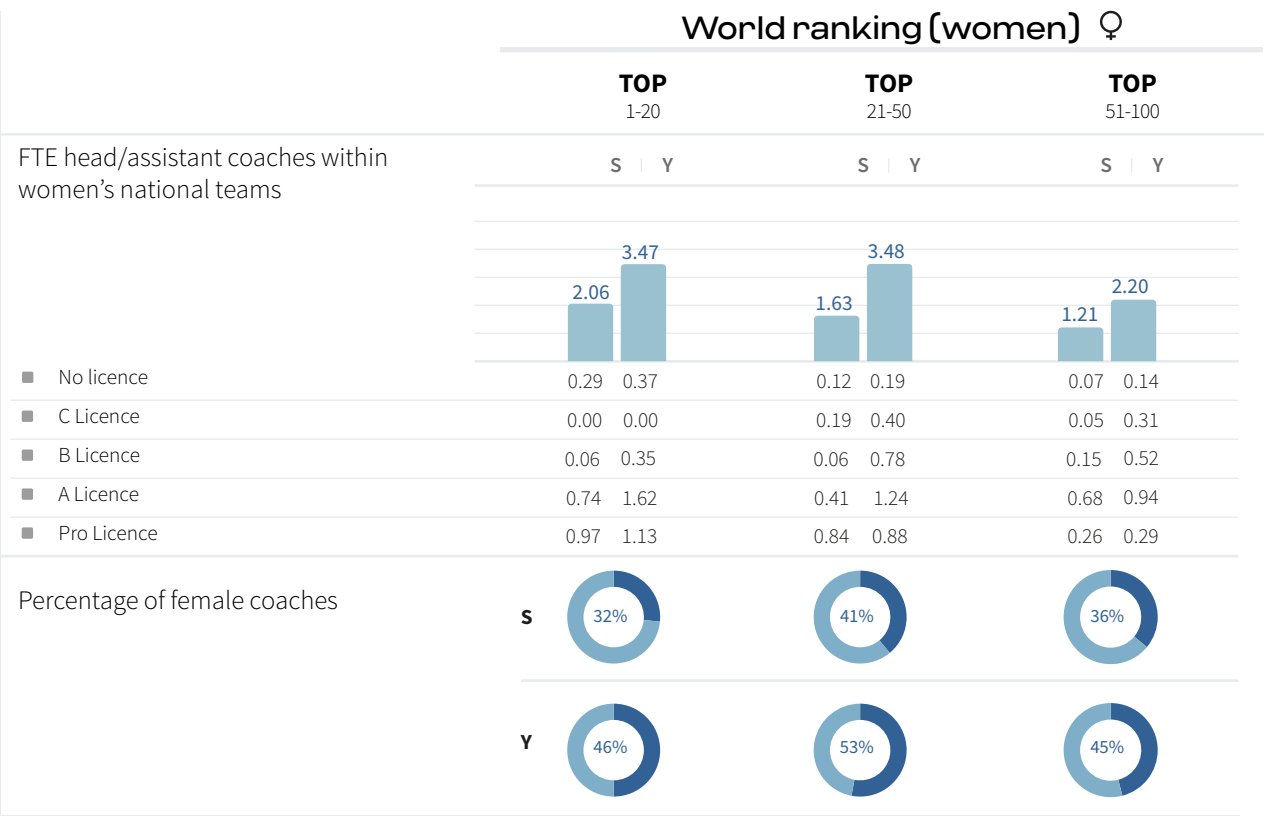
At senior level, the top 50 MAs have a similar FTE number of Pro Licence coaches, with top 20 MAs having 2.35 and MAs ranked 21-50 having 2.08. At youth level, the gap widens between youth and senior across the top 100, with the top 20 MAs having 4.45 FTE Pro Licence coaches compared to 2.97 and 1.44 for MAs ranked 21-50 and 51-100 respectively. This shows that across men’s national teams, leading MAs have more highly qualified coaches to support their players.

Illustration 2.6



Top 20 MAs have more A and Pro Licence coaches working across the women's national teams.

The top 20 MAs have the highest number of FTE Pro Licence coaches (0.97), with the MAs ranked 51-100 having the least (0.26). Furthermore, at youth level, the top 50 MAs have the highest total number of FTE coaches, with 3.47 and 3.48 for MAs ranked 1-20 and 21-50 respectively, compared to 2.20 in the 51-100 ranking group.



Human and financial resources

- Ensuring that the coaching staff of the national teams are the best-prepared and qualified staff in the country and providing them with continuous development opportunities should be a strategic priority for all MAs. Whilst there is a good representation of Pro Licence coaches working across the top 100 MAs, there remains a big challenge to continue the overall improvement in the education of coaches working with national teams.
- The most advanced MAs employ a high number of support staff to work with their national teams. This enables them to provide more comprehensive support for the players and yield performance advantages for these teams.
- Although the men's senior national team represents the largest expense across all MAs, the income generated from the team's success continues to be the biggest driver of investment in an association.
- There is an urgent need to develop and employ more female coaches at the top level of the game in every country. MAs should explore ways to recruit more female coaching staff to lead the men's and women's national teams programmes.



### Quality of pitches available to national teams

- MAs should invest in high-quality pitches as these have a strong correlation with player development, skill acquisition and technique, enabling players to reach their true potential. Playing surfaces of high standards provide national team players with optimal playing comfort and maximum safety.
- In many countries, the men's senior national team appears to have continuous access to better infrastructure compared to women's senior and youth national teams. MAs need to ensure that all teams have access to facilities and infrastructure of the same standard so that they can build high-performing national teams at all ages and across both genders.
- MAs need to be aware of the challenges that come with hiring pitches for their national teams from third parties. Hiring pitches for this purpose can lead to difficulties in accessing and having control over them.
- MAs with a national training centre often face challenges in terms of maintaining and developing the facilities due to a lack of financial resources. It is important to develop sustainable business plans and to identify ways to generate sufficient revenue so that national teams can continue to perform at the required level.



2.3 Processes of the senior national teams

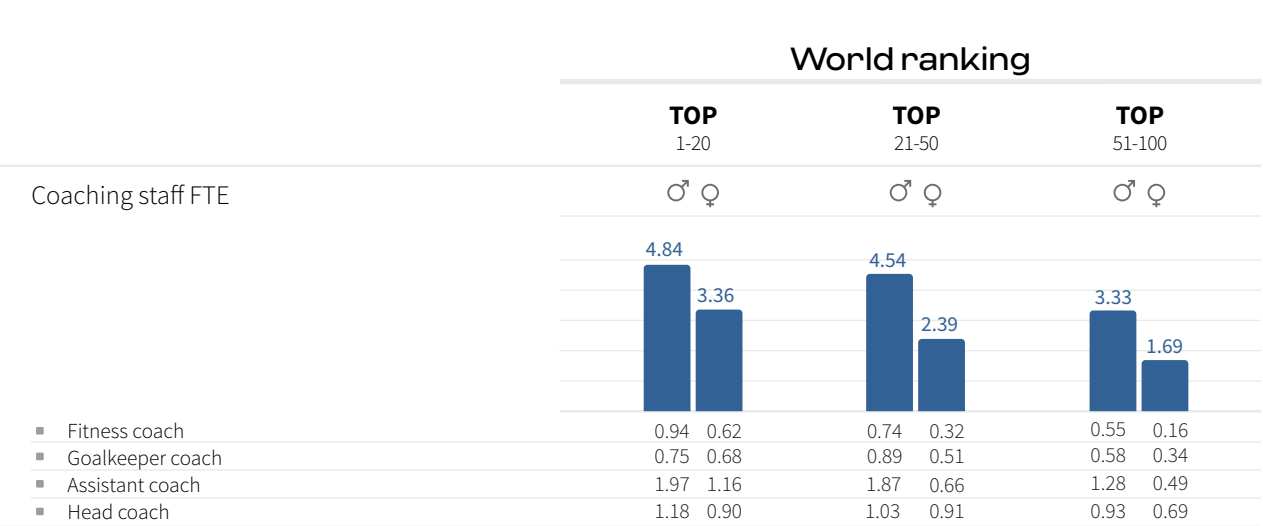
This chapter analyses the mechanisms in place to support the work of the men’s and women’s senior national teams in their quest for international success. It is widely known that the relative success of these teams can substantially impact the growth of the game in a country. This impact is felt financially through new investments and endorsements in football, as well as in participation, with a surge of male and female players wanting to follow in the footsteps of their heroes.

Coaching staff

Possessing the right number of coaching staff is important for the overall functioning of a national team. The number of people employed by the top MAs to work with their national teams is displayed below in absolute numbers (full-time equivalents).

MAs in the top 20 have the largest coaching staff cohort at senior level.

The women’s senior national teams of the top 20 MAs are more resourced in the areas of fitness, goalkeeping and assistant coaches compared to their lower-ranked counterparts. The top 20 men’s senior national teams follow a similar trend, except for goalkeeping, as MAs ranked 21-50 have the most resources in this area.



Team schedule

Like any football team, national teams need to guarantee their players playing time and training sessions to ensure that they develop. As national team players are primarily occupied by their club duties throughout the year, it is important that national teams allot enough time in their calendar so that players and coaching staff can gel as their own group.

Matches played per calendar year

The following two tables show the total number of official and friendly matches played by the men’s and women’s senior national teams of the top 100 MAs. The timeframes are based on their respective World Cup cycles (men’s: 2015-2018; women’s: 2016 to 2019). Illustration 2.9 shows the number of active senior national teams per confederation and the average number of games that each team played per year in their respective World Cup cycles.

A significant number of associations do not have an active women’s senior national team.

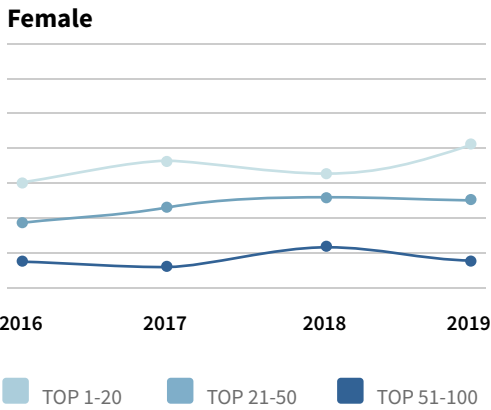
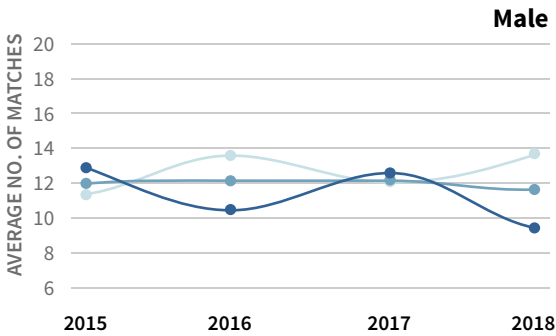
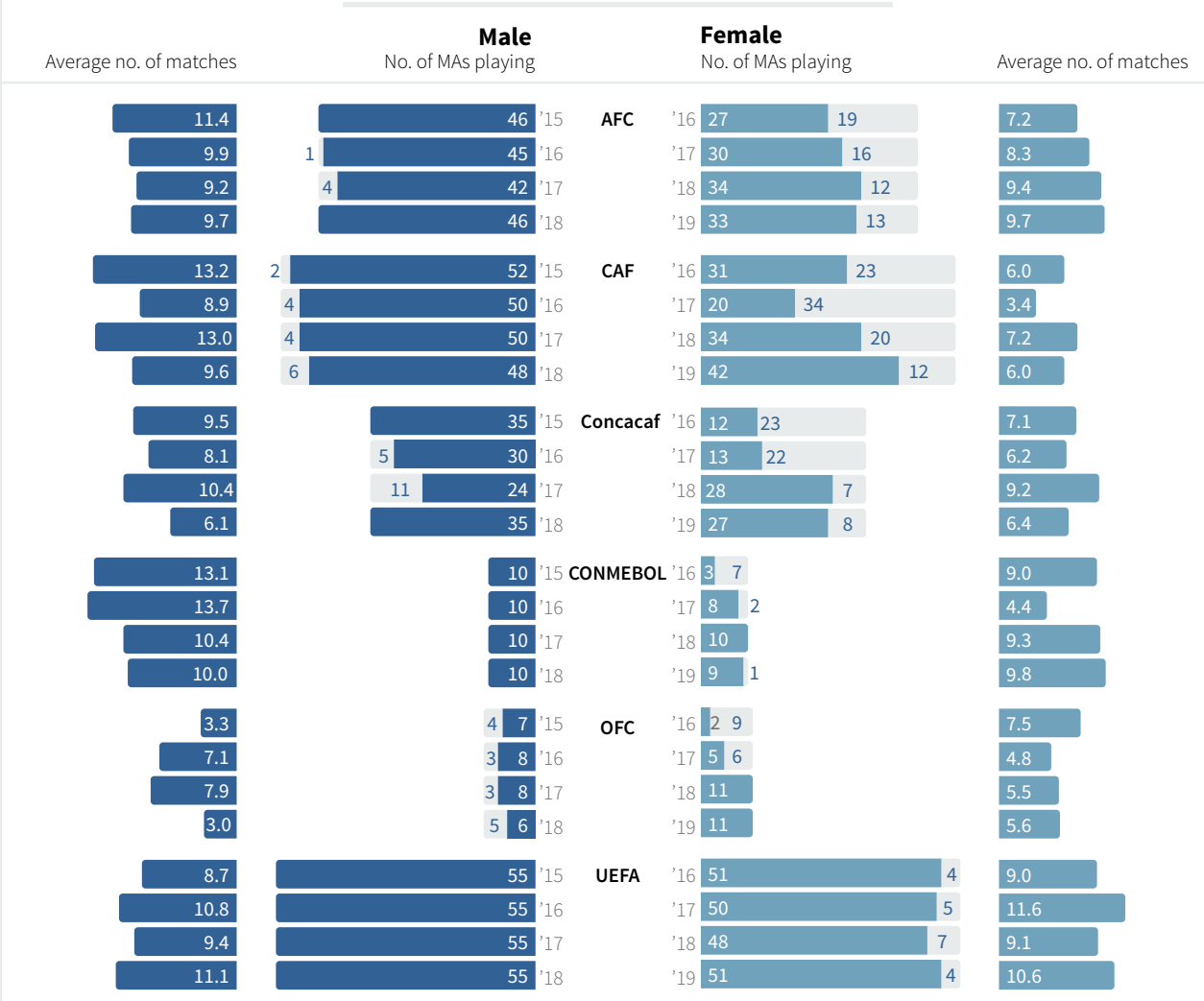
Many countries do not have an active senior women’s national team, particularly in the AFC, CAF and Concacaf regions. Furthermore, depending upon the confederation, the number of games per calendar year can vary, with the OFC offering the least number of playing opportunities for senior men’s national teams over a period of four years. In terms of playing opportunities for senior women’s national teams, the data shows a trend in which higher-ranked nations play more games, which in some cases can be a difference of up to seven games per calendar year. This trend saw the national teams of the top 20 MAs play 14 games in 2019, compared to the national teams of MAs ranked 51-100, who played only seven.





Illustration 2.9

Confederations



Appropriate number of matches and training days for the senior national teams

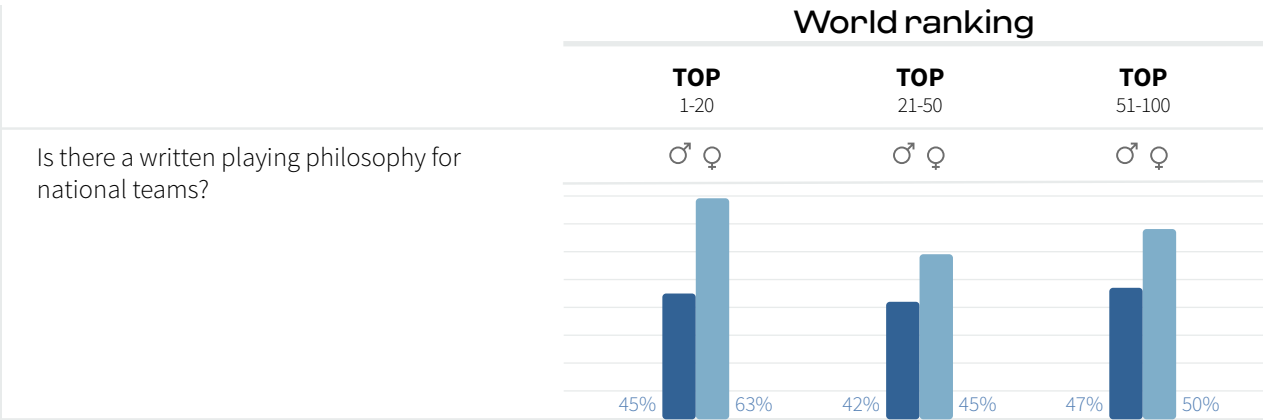
- Many MAs are addressing the need to increase the number of playing opportunities for their national teams. This has led to the development of innovations amongst the most proactive MAs to create new playing opportunities, which have included more regional competitions, increasing friendly fixtures, and in some cases national teams taking on club opposition.
- Mapping the games-playing profile of successful senior international players demonstrates the advantages of gaining access to regular international playing experience at youth level. The MAs that regularly review the international games programme for all of their national teams – learning lessons from their previous practices – are best prepared to meet the needs of future international players.
- A number of MAs experience limitations when players have limited training time before matches. Creating training times other than simply pre-match enables development and is essential to growing successful national teams.
- Confederations should consider various international competition formats that guarantee sufficient playing opportunities at senior level. They should also work together with MAs to ensure that women’s national teams are in place across more countries.

Playing philosophy

A playing philosophy can help to sustain certain performance standards in a national team over a prolonged period and provide a template for incoming coaches and players to follow. Subsequently, an overarching philosophy is invaluable to the long-term stability of any national team, giving it a solid foundation to achieve its performance goals.

A national playing philosophy is more prevalent across senior women’s teams.

67% of women’s senior national teams in the top 100 have a playing philosophy compared to 45% of men’s senior national teams.



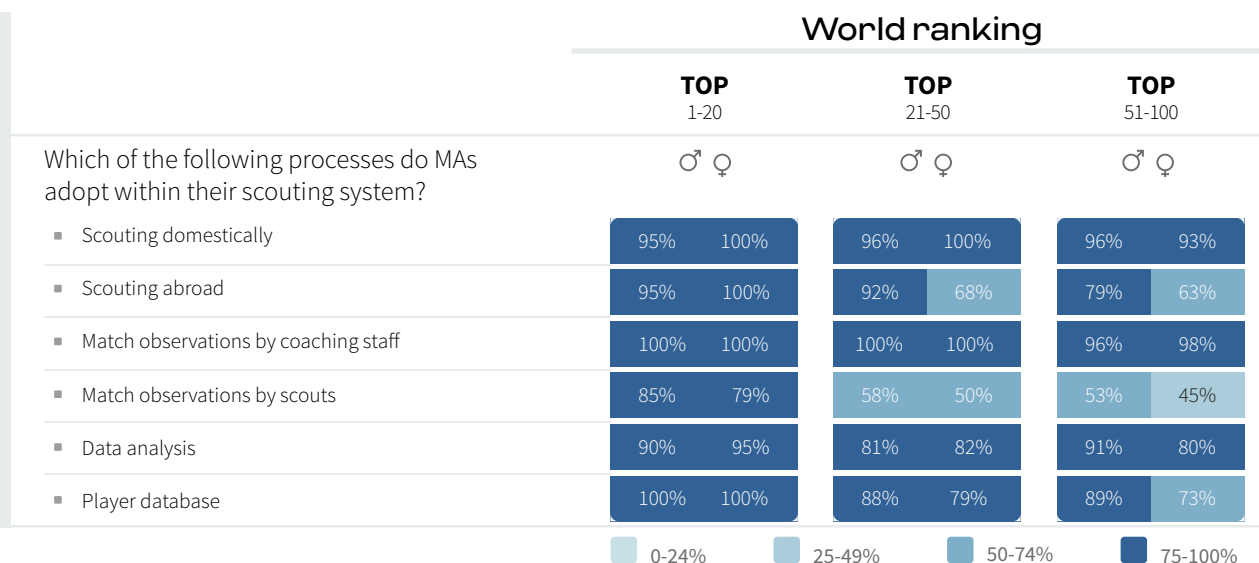
Scouting and team selection

The national team is meant to be made up of the best players available to that country. The scouting process ought to reflect this. Scouting and selection should be based on proven practices so that a promising squad can be formed. The following table identifies the scouting and selection practices that associations undertake.

## Top 20 MAs adopt a more comprehensive scouting system at senior level.

Member associations in the top 20 collectively utilise a greater array of processes as part of their scouting system. Furthermore, the use of data analysis and the production of a player database is commonplace in the top 20.

Illustration 2.11



### The implementation of national playing philosophies and scouting/selection processes

- The most successful MAs have a national playing philosophy and game model that are fully embraced by players and coaches across all age groups and into the senior team.
- A national playing philosophy instils a common language, training design and game management methods, as well as consistent and highly professionalised sports science processes across all age groups in both the men's and women's programmes. The national team programme may have a "script" for how to run training camps, training sessions, team meetings, staff meetings and debriefing sessions. This should be the same across the men's and women's programmes.
- The most successful national teams are characterised by robust scouting and selection processes that are aligned with the use of sports science and performance analysis, as well as ongoing player evaluation.

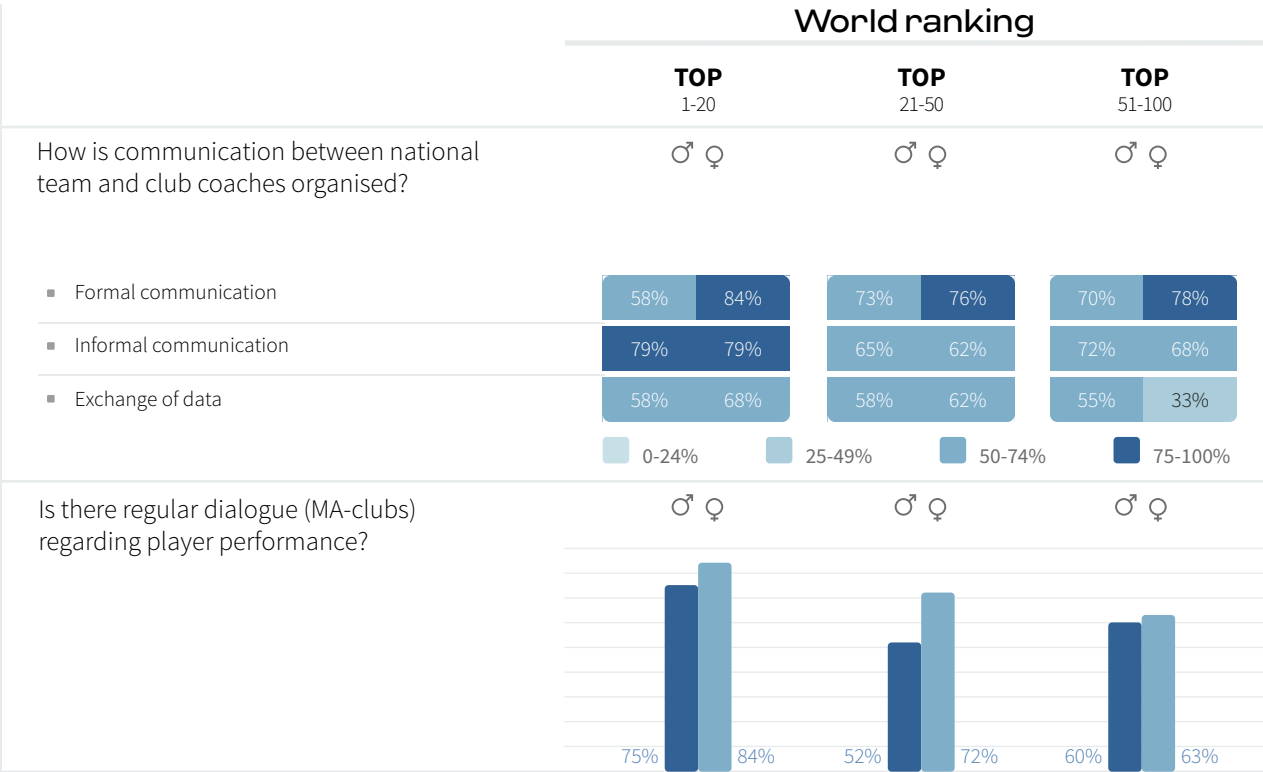
85

### Communication with club coaches

The way the football season is structured means that national team players (or players under consideration for national team selection) will play the most minutes for their club teams, resulting in club coaches having more opportunity to assess them. Considering the informed opinion of club coaches can have great value for national teams when evaluating a player's form, development and potential. The most proactive MAs tend to create close alignment with professional clubs that provide players for the national teams through regular formal and informal meetings and by sharing data and information regarding these players, particularly match-related data and medical records.

## A greater percentage of the top 20 MAs communicate regularly with clubs on player performance than their lower-ranked counterparts.

84% of women's teams and 75% of men's teams of MAs ranked in the top 20 have regular contact with clubs on player performance. MAs ranked 51-100 are least likely to form such relationships. Furthermore, a greater percentage of top 20 MAs exchange data with clubs.





## 2.4 Processes of the youth national teams

This section delves into the working practices of the youth national teams in discovering and nurturing the best talent in the country, with the aim of creating a senior national team for the future. The development initiatives that are performed within the youth national team set-up are vital in creating an elite learning environment, not only for players, but also for national team staff. These initiatives maximise the development opportunities that the players are exposed to and help to strengthen the national talent pool, with sufficient playing opportunities being the most important measure.

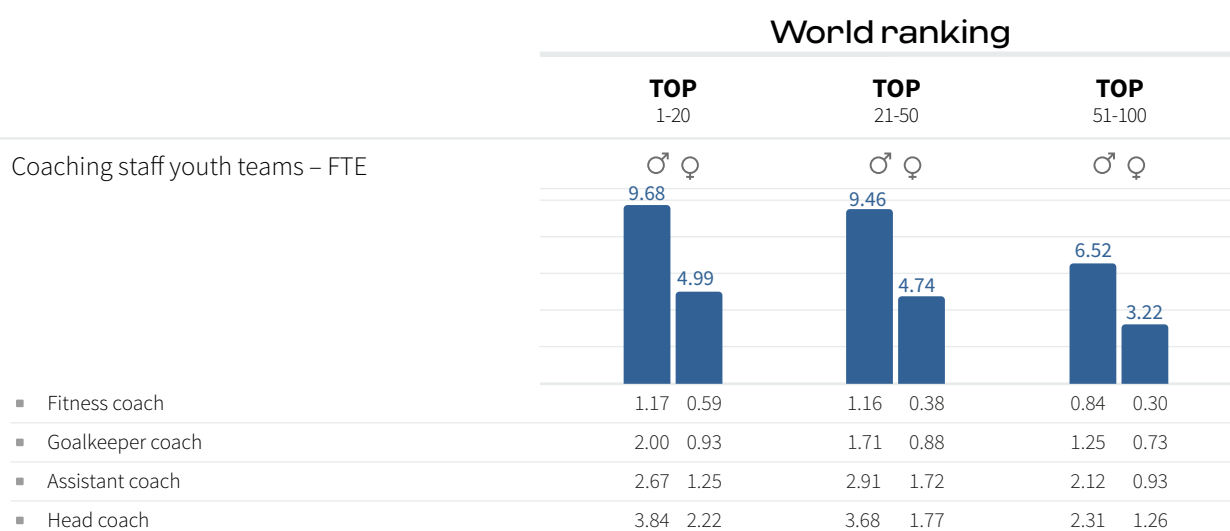
### Coaching staff

Having a coaching set-up that consists of the right number of staff is just as important for youth national teams as it is for their senior equivalents. The number of people that the men's and women's national teams of the top 100 MAs employ in these coaching roles is shown below in absolute numbers.

### Men's youth national teams tend to have a more comprehensive coaching team than women's youth national teams.

Across the top 100 MAs, men's youth national teams have a greater number of coaching staff than women's youth national teams. Moreover, the top 50 MAs have greater staffing resources across both genders than their lower-ranked competitors.

Illustration 2.13



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### Team schedule

Like senior national teams, youth national teams benefit from gatherings outside of official international schedules. Training camps, friendly matches, domestic tournaments and participation in various competition set-ups are essential to develop a deeper understanding of the best possible team structure. Such events guarantee the best possible preparation for official tournaments.

### Number of matches

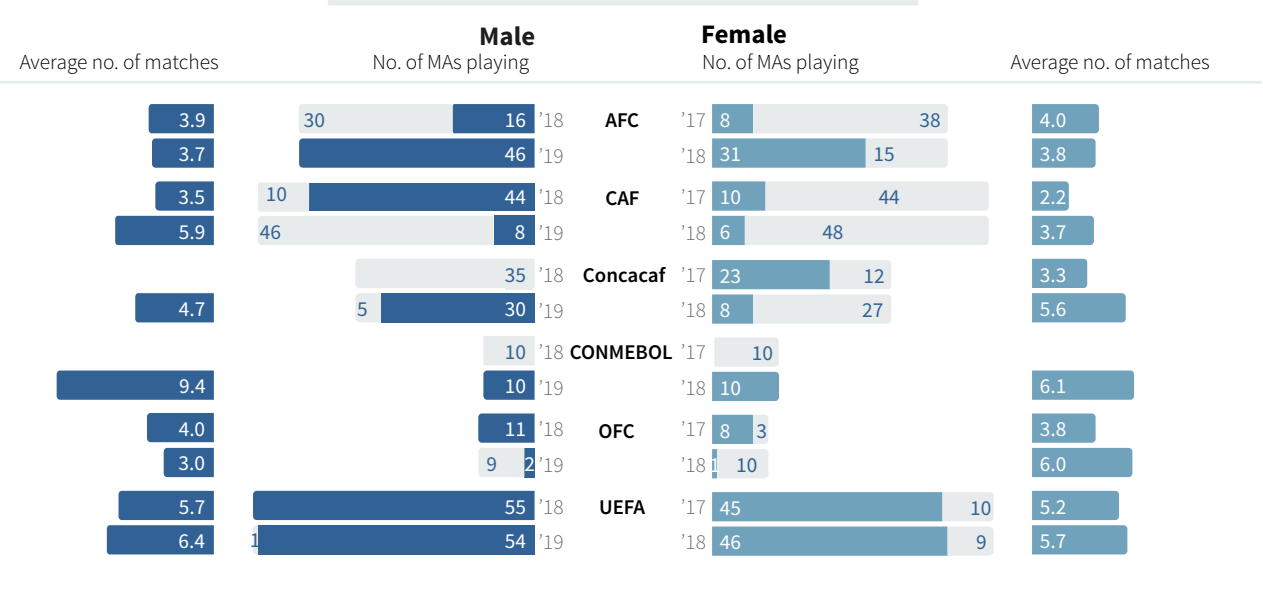
Playing both friendly and competitive matches is essential for giving youth players more experience. The following two tables show the number of official matches (FIFA or confederation competitions) played by the top 100 MAs' U-16/U-17 and U-19/U-20 men's and women's national teams. The timeframes of the men's and women's graphs are based on their last two World Cup cycles (men's: 2012 to 2019; women's: 2011-2018).

A large percentage of associations do not have active women's youth national teams.

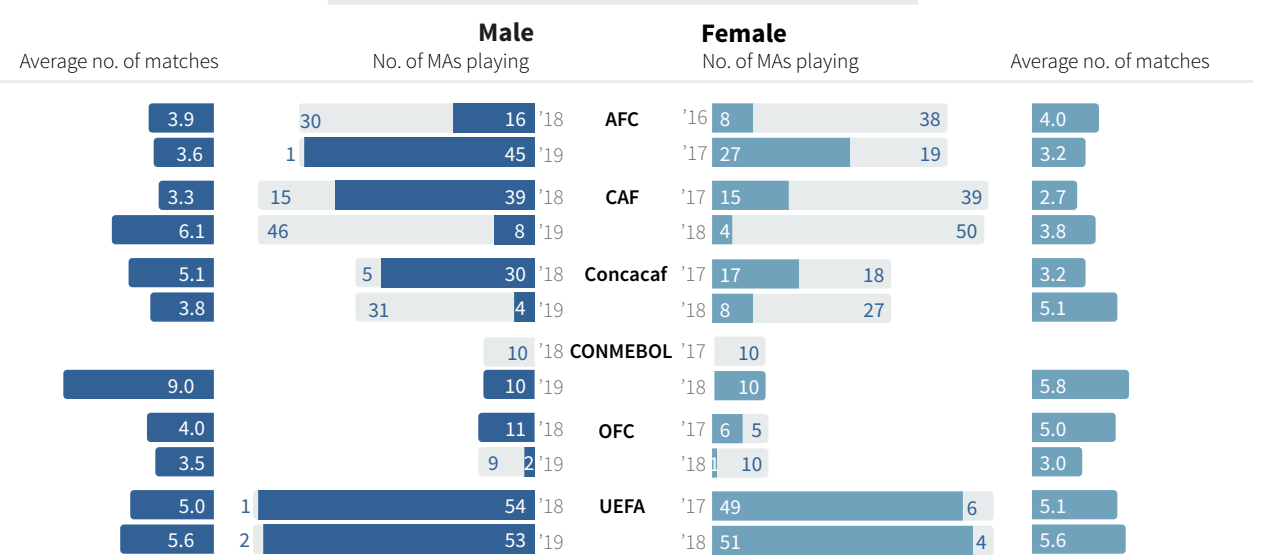
Many countries do not have an active women's youth national team at either U-16/17 or U-19/20 level, particularly in the AFC, CAF, Concacaf and OFC regions. Furthermore, across all age groups and genders, higher-ranked nations offer more playing opportunities to their talented youngsters.

Illustration 2.14

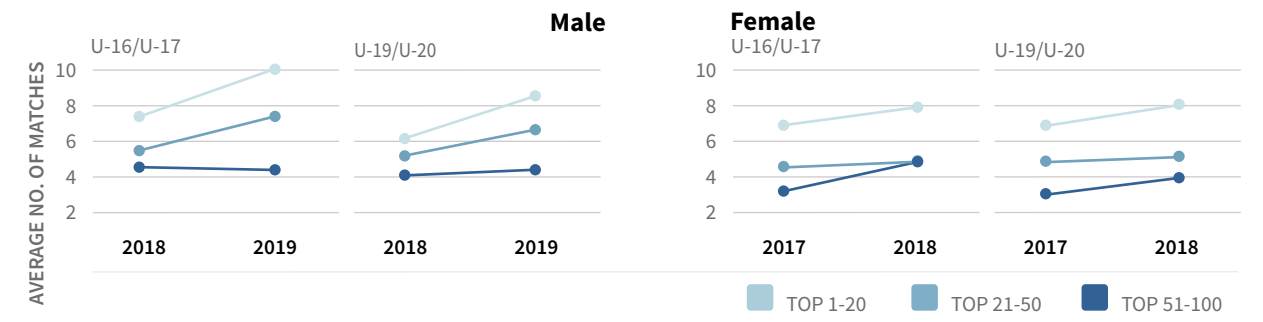
Confederations U-16/U-17



Confederations U-19/U-20



UEFA currently organises annual tournaments.



### Appropriate number of matches and training days for the youth national teams

- MAs should continue to improve the quality of their games programmes across both genders and all age groups. This is particularly necessary for women's youth national teams, who have the most limited access to an appropriate number of matches.
- The most successful MAs often have relatively limited access to train their youth national teams as their players are often embedded in professional club academies, which means that players are only available to national team coaches during FIFA windows. Conversely, MAs that host their own national academies are able to gain the easiest access to facilitate training days with their youth national team players.
- Technical directors at the most successful MAs are focused not just on the volume of games but also on the quality of the opposition. These MAs recognise the need to find “best versus best” opportunities to test and challenge their players.
- The logistics and expenses of creating an appropriate international games programme for youth national teams is a consistent challenge for all technical divisions. The frequency and competitive intensity represent different challenges for every MA, and there is not a single solution that will meet the needs of all associations. However, it is apparent that there are clusters of MAs facing similar challenges. It would be worthwhile bringing these clusters together so that they can share best practices and seek opportunities to improve the global games programme for youth national teams. This is a future challenge for the confederations and FIFA.
- All confederations should consider organising more international youth competitions on a yearly basis while also working with MAs to ensure that youth national teams, especially in the women's game, are in place across more age groups.

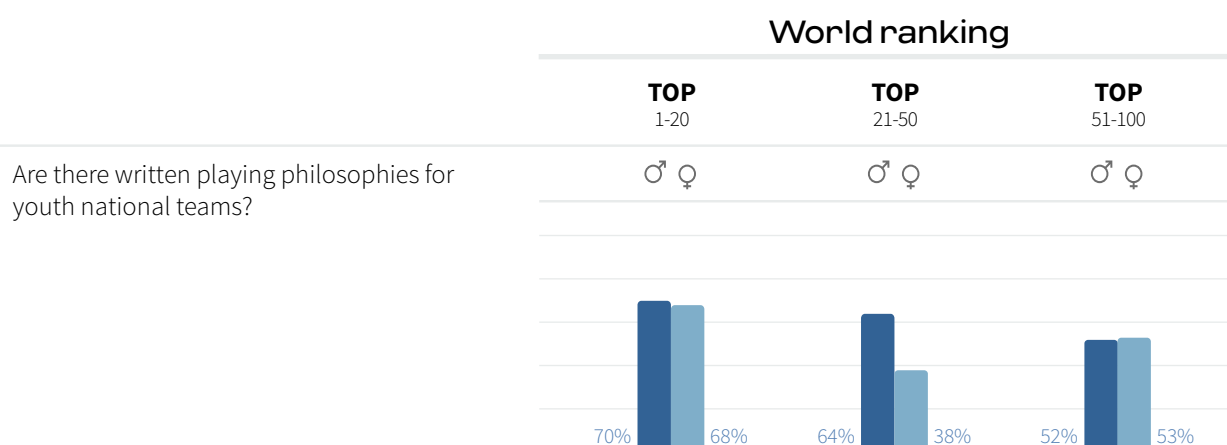
### Playing philosophy

Having youth national teams adhere to an overarching playing philosophy can assist in developing players in a way that will make them valuable assets to the senior national team in the years to come. The table below shows whether national teams have a written playing philosophy.

#### Top 20 MAs are more likely to have a national playing philosophy at youth level.

More than 68% of MAs ranked in the top 20 have a national playing philosophy. Associations ranked 51-100 have the lowest percentage supporting a written playing philosophy for their men's youth national teams, whereas for women's youth national teams, the MAs ranked 21-50 have the lowest percentage at only 38%.

Illustration 2.15

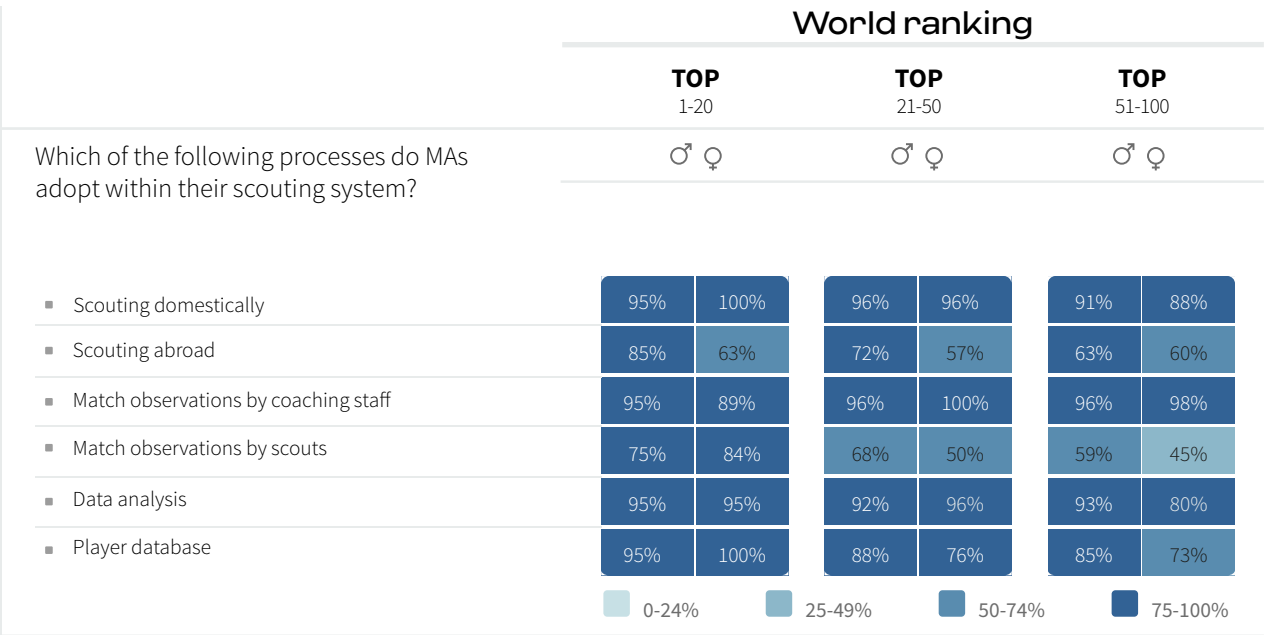


Scouting and team selection

An effective scouting and team selection system is a rewarding practice in youth football. Identifying players with a natural aptitude for the game early on, and on an ongoing basis, allows teams to optimise these young players’ potential. The graph below shows the processes related to effective scouting that the youth national teams of the top 100 MAs undertake.

Top 20 MAs adopt a more comprehensive scouting system at youth level.

85% of men’s teams and 63% of women’s teams in the top 20 scout abroad for talent, more than any other ranking bracket. Scouting domestically is still the most popular method across the top 100, with top 20 MAs more likely to use a player database at youth level.



The implementation of national playing philosophies and scouting and selection processes

- The least successful MAs in the area of recruitment lack access to a long-term vision, plan and playing philosophy for their national teams. A lack of focus in these areas leads to confusion regarding the type of players and the style of play that national teams are seeking to develop.
- The best performing MAs have robust scouting and selection processes. Additionally, they use sports science and performance analysis, along with ongoing player evaluation, to support the coaching staff in the scouting and selection of players.
- MAs that seek close alignment between age groups are able to create better continuity in terms of the player pathway across youth national teams. Information on players is shared and realistic targets and expectations are set for the development of players over time. These targets are presented to players as part of their individual development plans (IDPs). These IDPs are shared between coaches and recruitment staff so that all technical staff gain a better understanding of the technical expectations placed upon players at each stage of the player pathway.
- Regular review meetings between technical staff and those tasked with scouting and recruitment is essential to building a successful player development system for youth national teams. These review meetings should have access to regularly updated databases and depth charts that map the players currently selected for the national teams and those outside who are being watched and/or monitored. Comprehensive player monitoring (through methods such as player reports and the exchange of information) is a prerequisite for the successful recruitment of players for youth national teams.



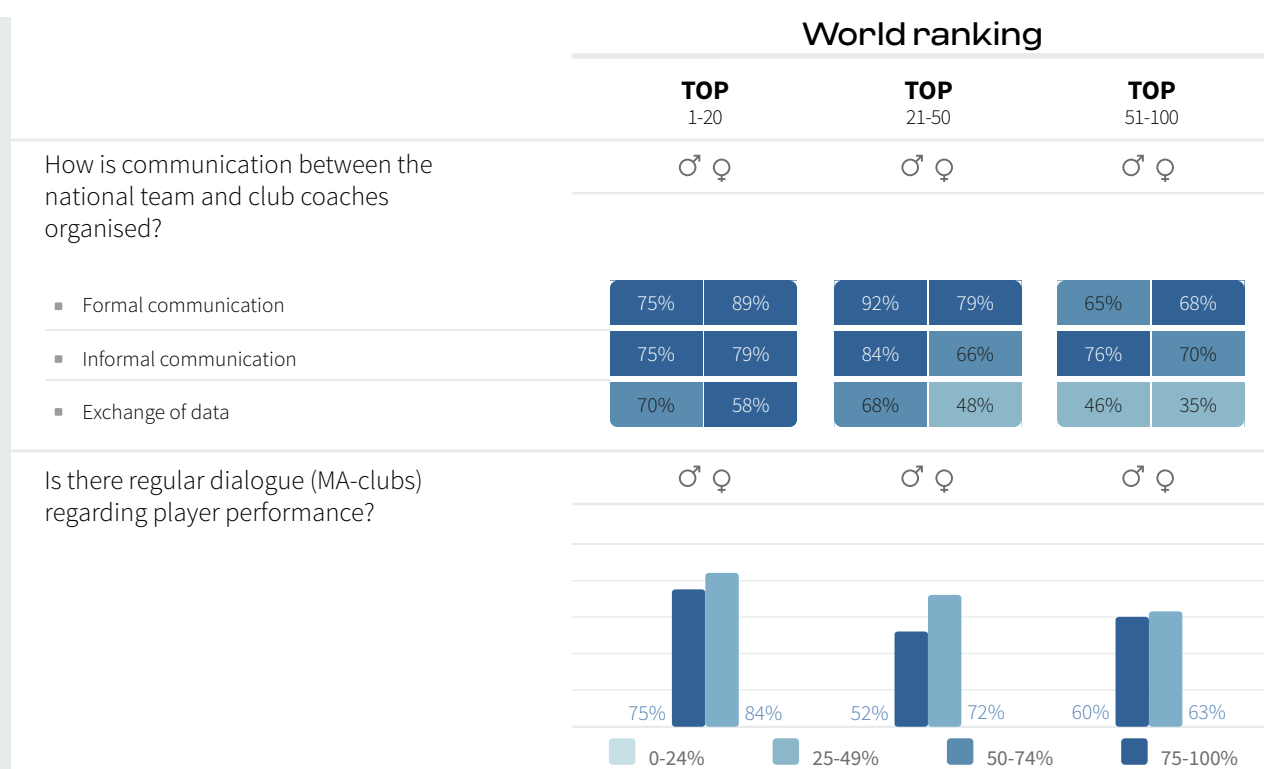
## Communication with club coaches

Transparent communication between national team coaches and the club coaches of national team players is beneficial, not only for the development of players but also the future potential for club and country. National teams should strive to establish formal communication approaches with club coaches. The topics of these approaches should be the annual schedule, the call-up process, sharing post-event reports, the exchange of data between sports scientists, health monitoring and medical reports.

### A greater percentage of the top 20 member associations communicate regularly with clubs on player performance than lower-ranked MAs.

89% of women's teams and 75% of men's teams ranked in the top 20 have regular contact with clubs on player performance. Associations ranked 51-100 are least likely to form such relationships regarding female national team players, whereas for men's youth national team players, MAs ranked 21-50 are least likely. Furthermore, a greater percentage of top 20 MAs exchange data with clubs.

Illustration 2.17



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## Communication with club coaches regarding player performance and welfare

- The best-practice examples of cooperation are based on a formal communication approach to produce an annual schedule and call-up process for players. MAs should also seek to share post-event reports, and sports scientists should share data, health monitoring and medical reports with club representatives.
- The most successful MAs build close collaboration and open lines of communication with clubs, and engage in regular discussions regarding the welfare and development of national team players.
- A number of technical directors specifically noted that cooperation between domestic clubs and national teams is best served when national team coaches conduct club visits, deliver training workshops and build relationships with club coaches. These also provide a good platform to share the national playing philosophy, where existing.
- Delivering extensive player welfare support (such as well-being workshops, schooling and parent workshops) for youth national team players contributes to the positive support for the players and demonstrates to their clubs that the MA is serious about its duty of care to the players when on international duty.

2.5 Performance support services

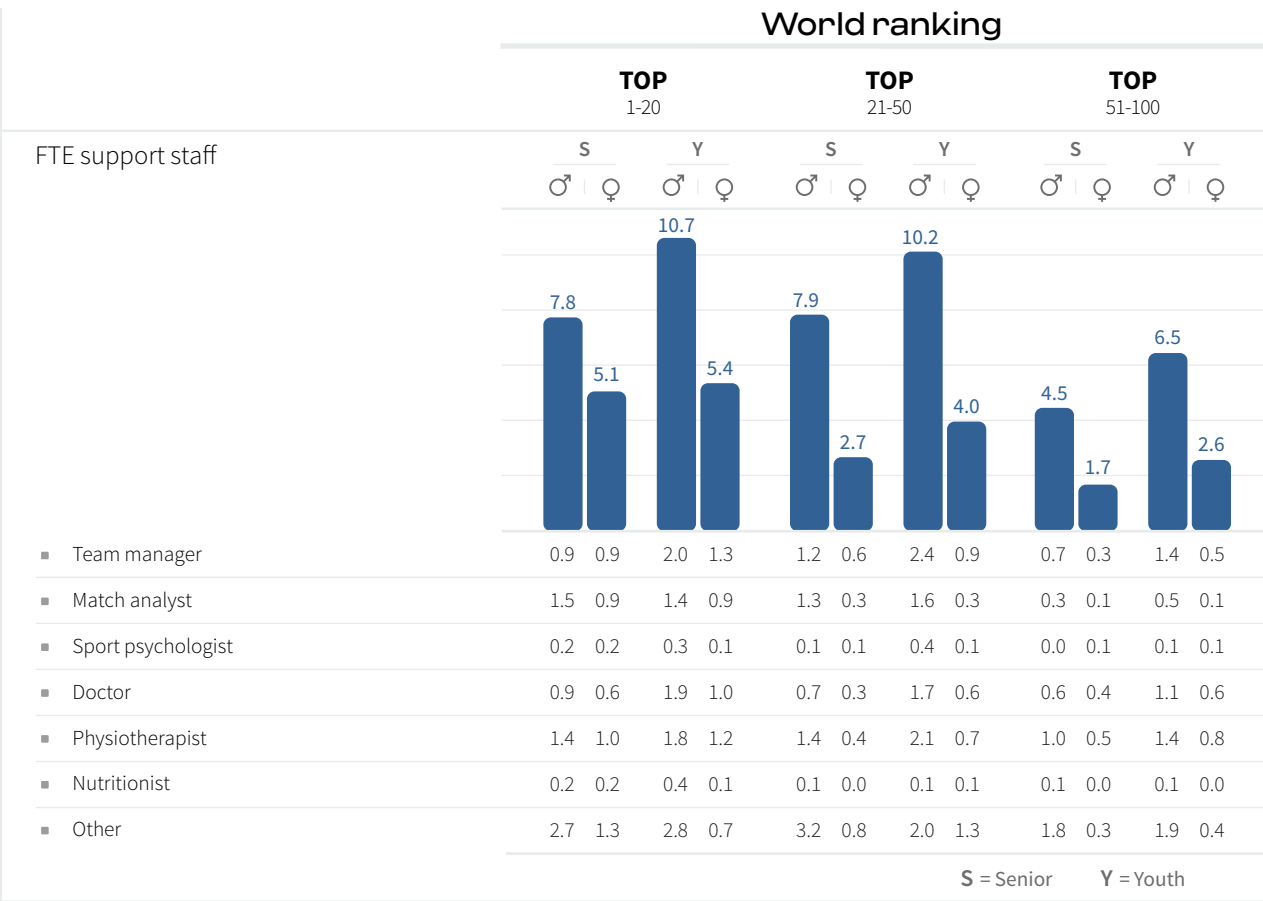
This section investigates the access to high-performance expertise and the support frameworks available to men’s and women’s national teams. This service is vital in terms of making informed decisions to maximise both team and individual performance output whilst minimising the risk of injury and championing an elite learning environment.

Support staff breakdown

A healthy distribution of the necessary support staff is needed to sustain the high-level performance standards of national teams. Below is a table that indicates the number of support staff across the national teams of the top 100 MAs.

Top 20 MAs have a more comprehensive performance support team across all squads than their lower-ranked competitors.

MA’s ranked in the top 20 have a greater number of performance staff supporting all national squads. However, women’s youth teams are still considerably under-resourced when compared to the men’s teams across all age groups and rankings.



Performance analysis

The following section displays how the national teams of the top 100 MAs implement match analysis. The ability to analyse previous matches and to highlight the strengths and weaknesses of a team’s performance is a critical process for both team and individual player development. Below is a table that shows the availability of match analysis for the men’s and women’s national teams of the top 100 MAs at both youth and senior levels.

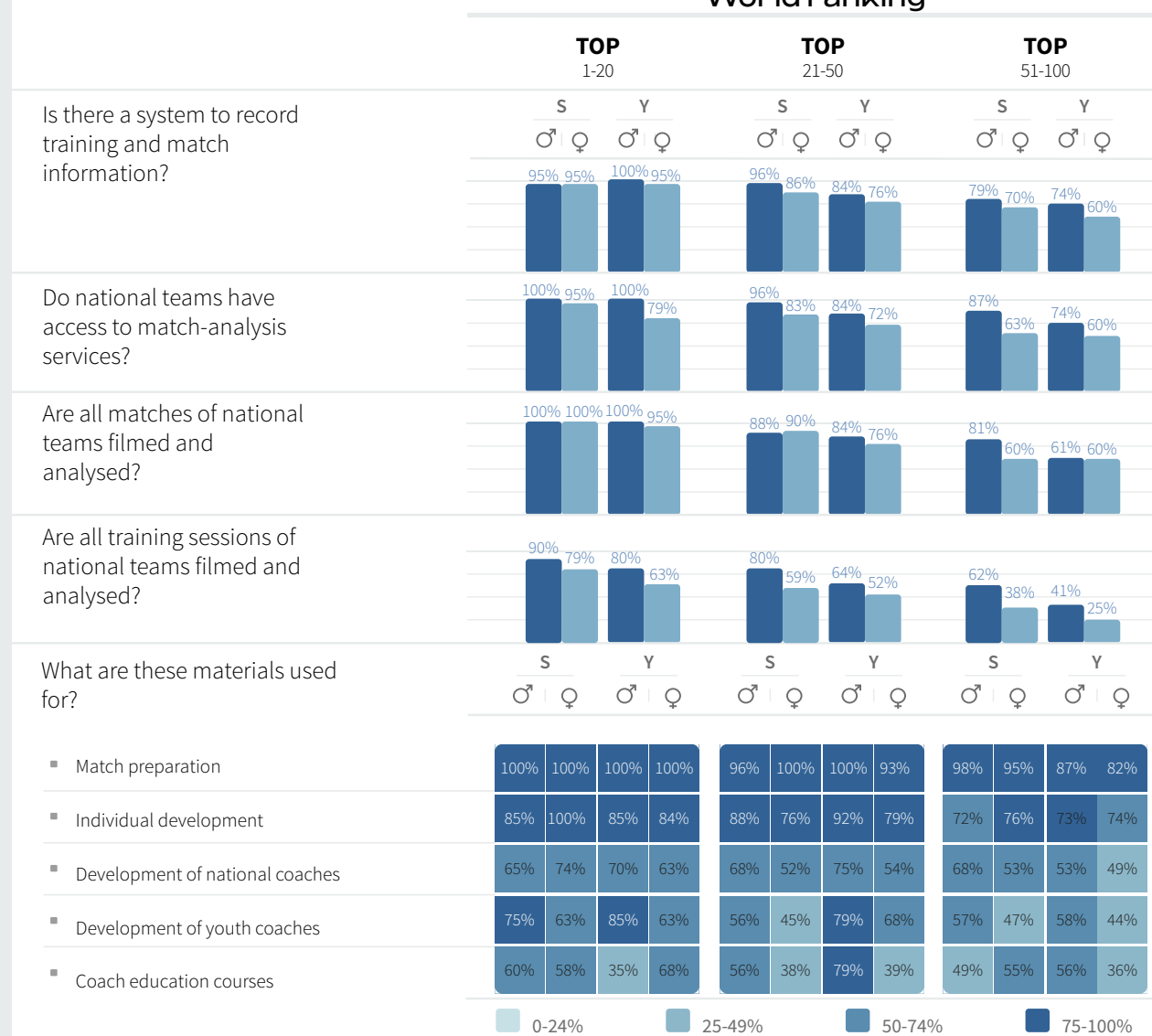


## Performance analysis is used to a greater extent across the top 20 MAs.

Video analysis is used across a multitude of platforms to aid the development of players and coaches to a greater extent in the top 20 MAs. Associations ranked 51-100 use this process the least in supporting player and coach development.

Illustration 2.19

### World ranking



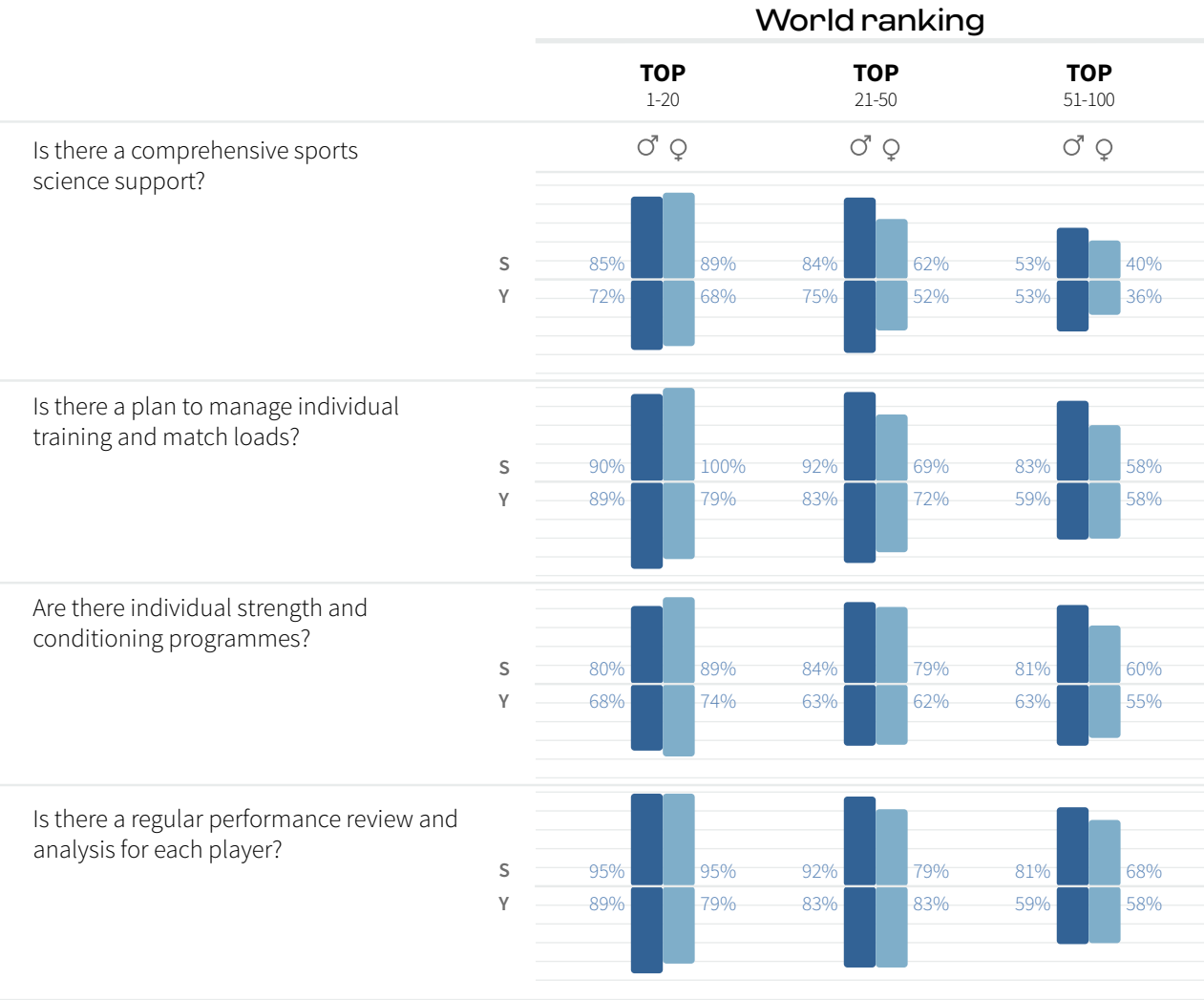


Sports science

Incorporating sports science into national teams is part of the wider multi-disciplinary approach that modern football requires. In this way, national teams can discover innovative ways to boost a player’s physical and mental performance. The extent to which sports science practices are implemented in the top 100 MAs’ senior and youth national teams can be seen in the following tables.

Senior national teams of MAs in the top 20 use sports science support to a greater degree than those of lower-ranked MAs.

89% of women’s senior teams in the top 20 have sports science support compared to 51% of MAs ranked 21-100. The same pattern holds true for senior men’s teams, with 85% of senior men’s teams in the top 20 compared to 69% in MAs ranked 21-100. Sports science is less well established at youth level, particularly in the women’s game. Furthermore, a greater percentage of the senior national teams of the top 20 MAs conduct regular performance reviews of individual players.





### Performance analysis, sports science and their implementation across the national teams

- Leading MAs utilise performance analysis and sports science support services extensively across age groups and with the senior national teams for both men and women. These MAs have developed multi-disciplinary teams that work in a coordinated way in support of the coaches and players.
- Access to suitably qualified staff and a lack of football-specific qualifications to support the development of specialists in performance analysis and sports science are often cited as reasons for the slow establishment of these services with some national teams.
- The more advanced MAs film national team training sessions and matches, using the analysed footage to support individual player and coach development.
- A significant number of MAs recognise the importance of sports science but have not been able to integrate these services into the national team structure. This is often due to a lack of financial support or the lack of availability of suitably qualified personnel.
- As well as providing support services to players, full-time multidisciplinary sports science teams that operate effectively at national team level also often actively involve themselves in research and development initiatives.

### Medical

The nature of the international schedule, where tournaments and qualifiers consist of many games in quick succession along with long-distance travel, is particularly demanding on the human body. A fully qualified medical team is needed to deal with injuries as well as to prevent injuries through sound medical advice. Whether senior and youth national teams have access to an appropriate medical team and its practices is displayed below.

95

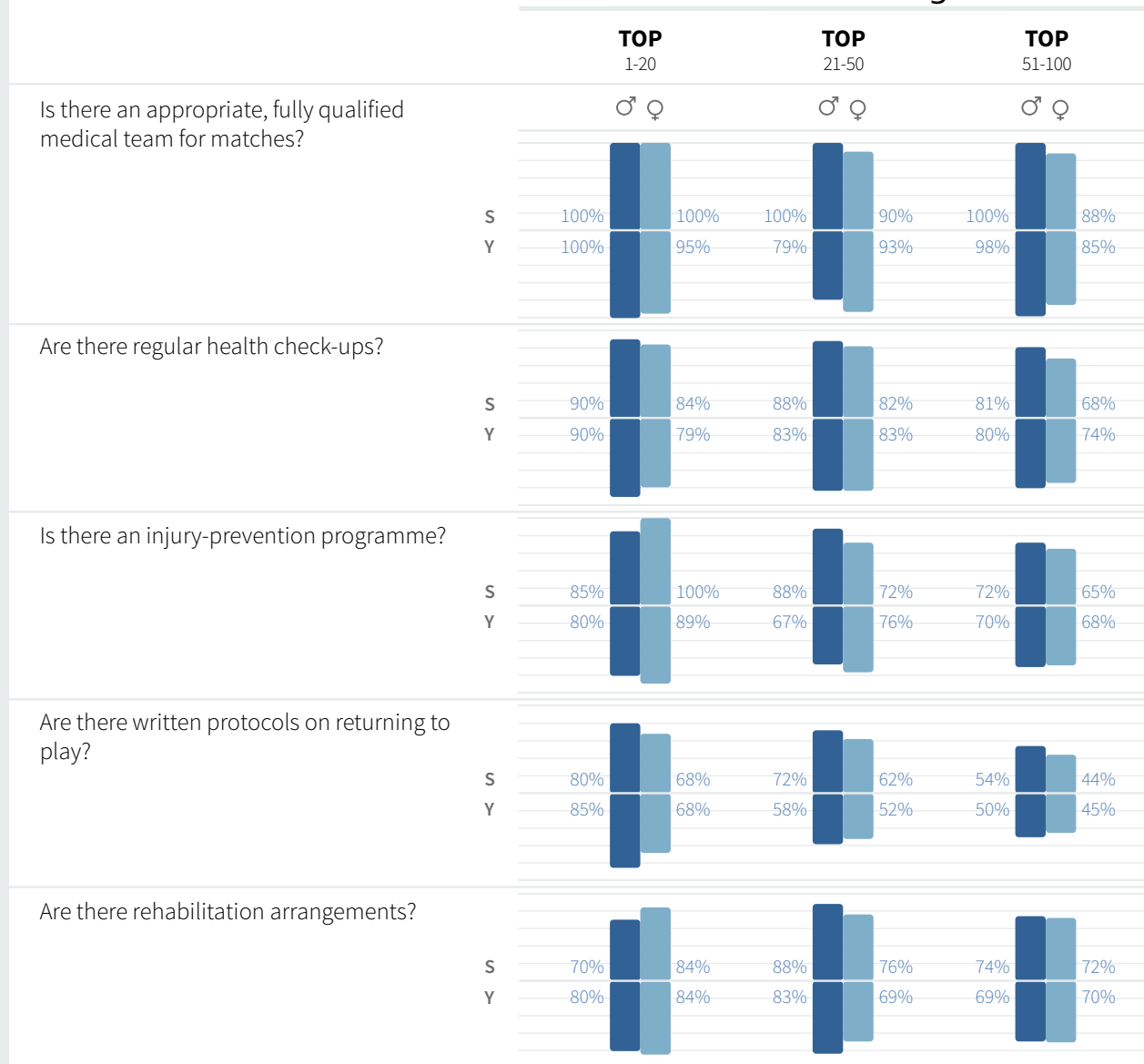
### Medical provision is more comprehensive in MAs ranked in the top 20.

All men's national teams in the top 100 have access to a qualified medical practitioner. Outside of the top 20, medical provisions and processes appear to be less comprehensive across all teams at both youth and senior levels.





## World ranking



### The medical team and its provision across national teams

- Fully qualified medical staff are widely deployed in support of national teams, which is a positive sign. However, the research with technical directors indicates that a significant number of medical staff members are employed on a match-by-match or part-time basis. Many doctors also do not have access to football-specific training and development. This implies that there is room for many medical staff members to engage with national teams at a more meaningful level.
- The compilation, storage and sharing of medical data differs greatly across MAs. The best MAs in this area work closely with clubs and ensure that medical data on players is shared effectively. However, this practice is still not undertaken by many associations.
- A number of MAs reported that they find it difficult to obtain up-to-date medical data on players from clubs. There are various reasons for this situation. In some countries, it may come down to a lack of trust between the clubs and the MA, whereas in others it is borne out of a desire to keep players' medical or injury information private. In all of these scenarios, the lack of effective data sharing is potentially detrimental to the health and well-being of players when on international duty.
- Injury to players whilst on international duty is seen as the biggest challenge for a number of MAs in terms of building long-term positive relationships with clubs.



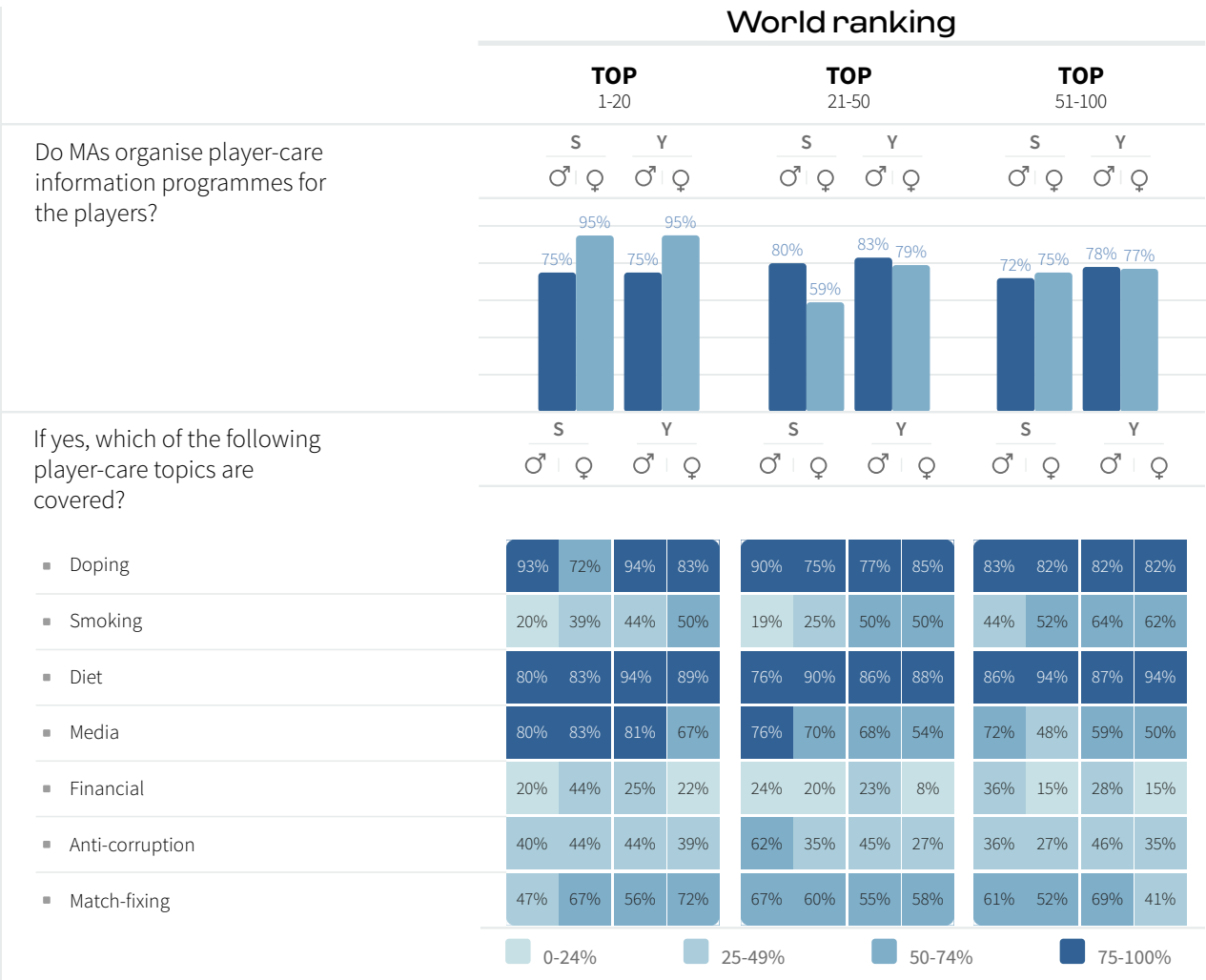
Player-care programme

A good player-care programme is intrinsically valuable to player well-being as well as to a team’s performance. Playing for the national team is a great honour but it comes with its own unique set of challenges. Additional player-care support helps players overcome these challenges and gives them the clarity of mind needed to perform at the top level. The two tables below illustrate the aspects of player-care programmes that are provided to senior and youth national teams.

More than 59% of MAs across the top 100 provide player-care programmes for their national team players.

Women’s teams in the top 20 MAs are more likely to have a player-care programme (95%). Moreover, doping, nutrition and media training are the most popular topics for MAs in the top 100.

Illustration 2.22



Holistic education

This section analyses the top 100 MAs' commitment to the holistic education of youth national team players. The careers of all players at all levels of the game is finite. The reality is that many youth national team players will not go on to have professional careers in football. For those youth players who do go on to have a professional career, all of them will eventually retire and go on to have a second career. Therefore, MAs and club academies have a duty of care to try to support the continued education of youth players.

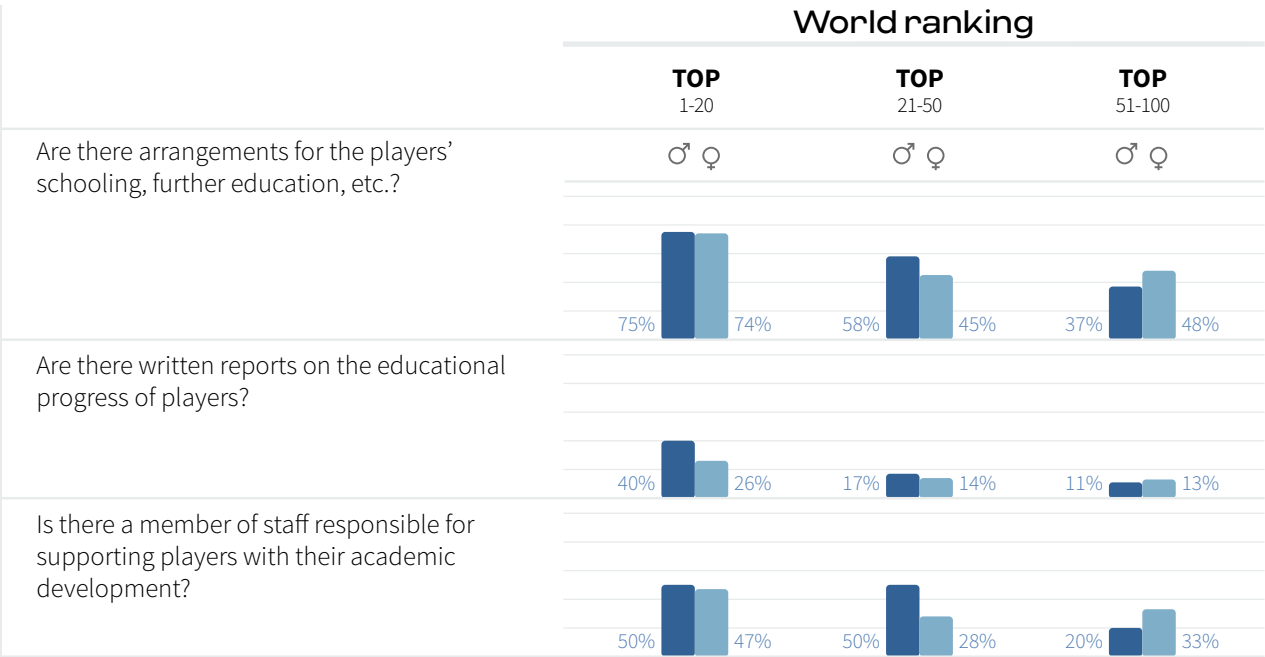
The data provided in this section illustrates how much school time players miss when representing their country. It also provides information on what strategies MAs employ to mitigate any problems that this can create for players in terms of their educational and academic development.

Processes

Processes need to be put in place to ensure that players are fulfilling their academic and basic well-being requirements. Youth players in national teams can miss out on parental guidance when away from their family. National teams have a duty of care to ensure that the necessary support is provided and that travelling away from home is an enriching – and not detrimental – experience for young players.

60% of the top 100 men's MAs do not have dedicated staff responsible for supporting players with their academic development.

75% of the top 20 men's MAs support education around training camps and games compared to approximately 48% of MAs ranked 21-100. The trend is similar for women's national teams, with only 47% of MAs ranked 21-100 supporting education during training camps. Written education reports are more prevalent across the top 20, but this is still low at only 40%.



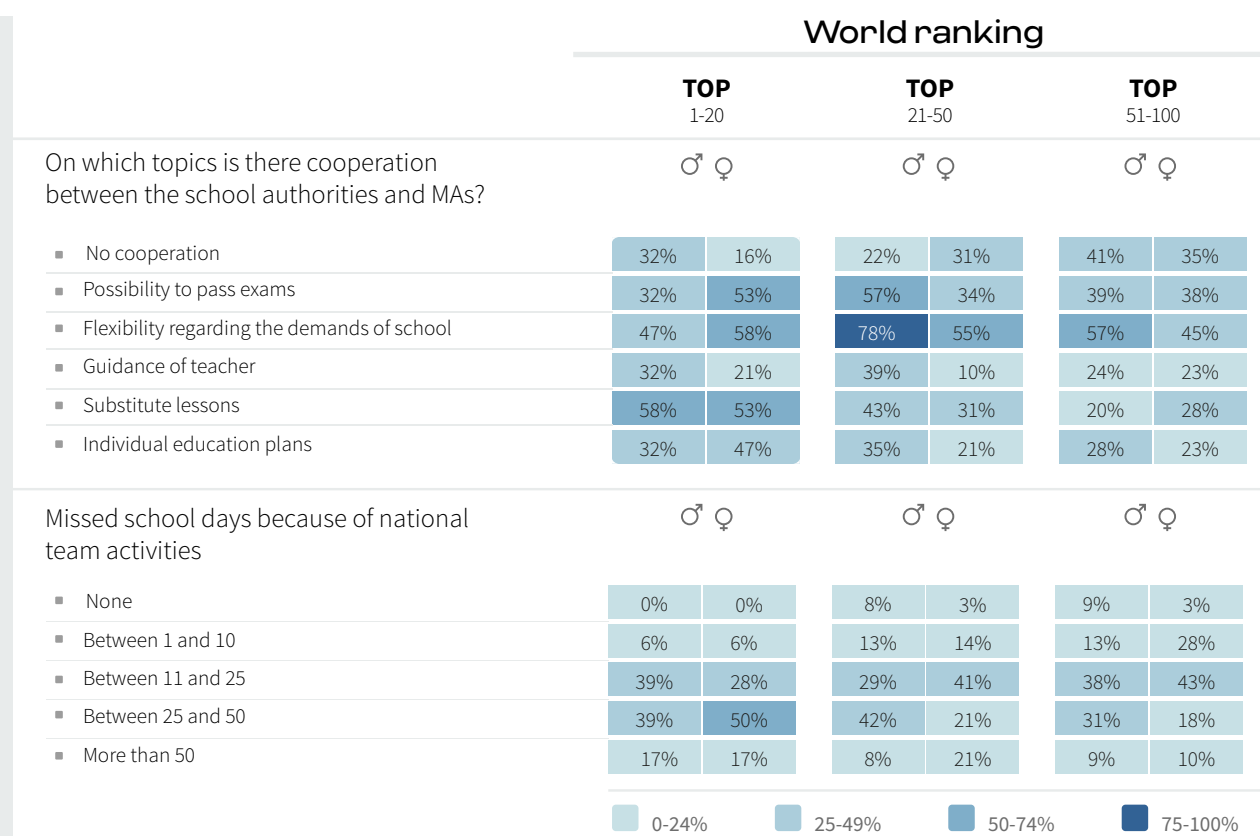
Formal education

National teams should provide academic guarantees to their young players and their respective institutions in return for the large amounts of time that players dedicate to fulfilling their national team duties. Teams need to be in constant communication with each youth player's school to guarantee that the player attains the necessary academic standards expected of them. The areas in which national teams communicate with the schools of their players, as well as the number of school days missed by these players due to playing duties, is shown in the table below.

## Youth players can miss up to five weeks of school per year whilst attending national team activities.

Whilst on international duty, most children miss between 11 and 25 days of school per year. In some cases, girls (15%) are more likely than boys (10%) to miss more than 50 days (ten weeks) of school per year whilst representing their country. Furthermore, top 20 men's MAs (58%) are more likely to support a player's education with substitute lessons than lower-ranked nations.

Illustration 2.24



99

### Holistic education and the support provision to youth players

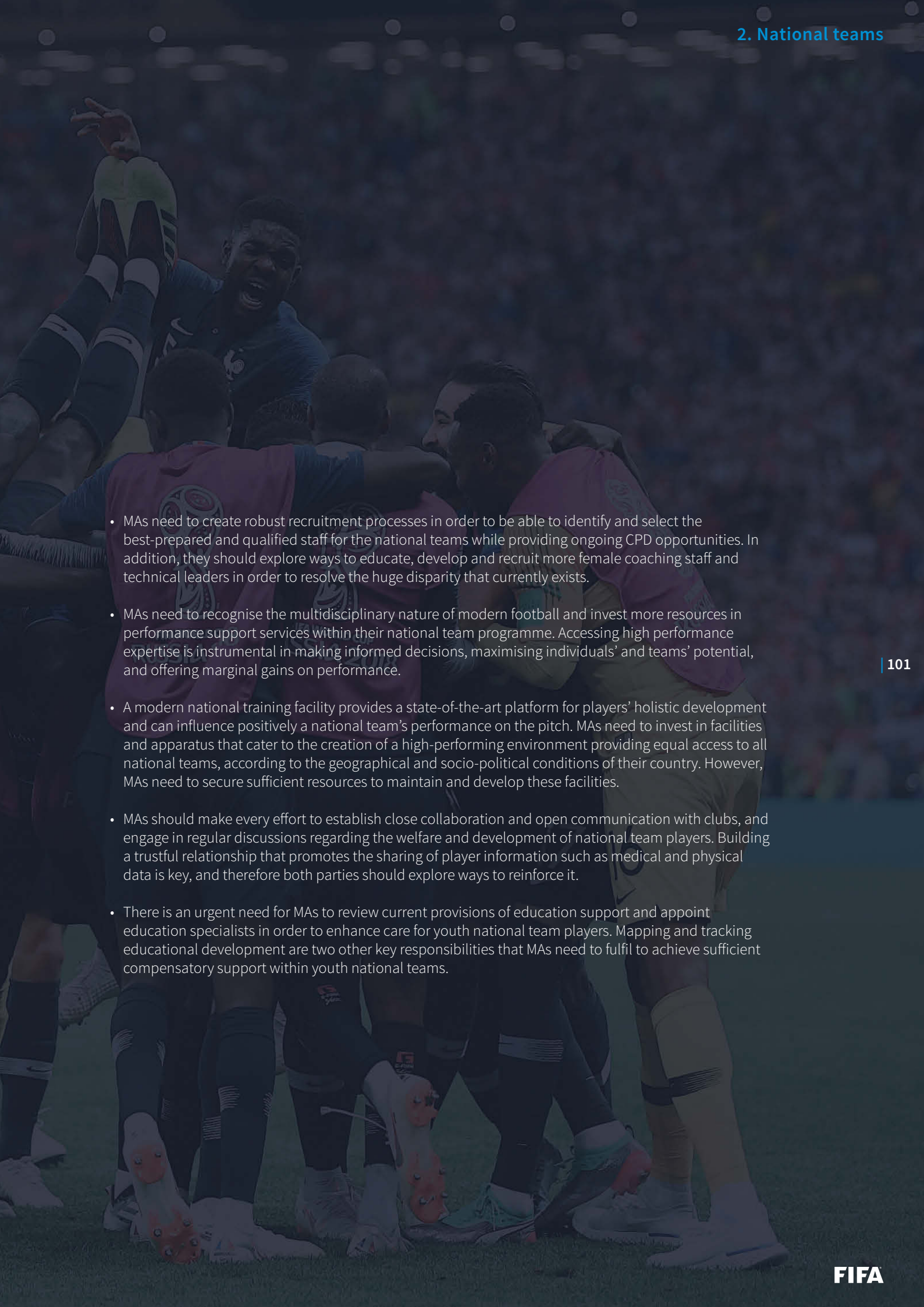
- There are many examples of support for the education of children playing for youth national teams. Whilst there are some examples of good practice, overall compensatory support for the education of international youth players is under-resourced.
- Many MAs do not employ specialist education staff to oversee the support of players in this area. Introducing such staff would provide more thorough and suitable education to youth national team players.
- The best MAs employ dedicated heads of education who work full-time with the national teams. They provide direct support to players and liaise with schools and clubs. However, these staff are not widely employed across MA technical departments.
- There is a widespread lack of understanding of the impact that representing youth national teams has on the general educational development of youth players. Many MAs do not see that they have a duty of care to the players in this area.
- Very few MAs map and track the educational development of their youth team players, even though a substantial number of male players in the top 20 MAs miss up to ten weeks of school each academic year. If a player enters the national team system at U-15 level and remains in the set-up until U-18, it is possible that the player could miss a whole year of education over those years without compensatory support. Losing out on this extent of schooling is bound to have a detrimental impact on the player's academic development. MAs ought to research their own provision of support in this area. Furthermore, they should map and track the educational development of their players and, where appropriate, partner with educational specialists to help them establish better support for the players.

## National teams

# Recommendations

- Competitive opportunities for youth and senior national teams outside of FIFA World Cups should be extended, at both confederation and regional level, to create new tournaments (e.g. leagues), competitions and meaningful games.
- The ages of FIFA and confederation youth championships should be reviewed to guarantee that no age groups miss out on the opportunity to appear in major tournaments. In a similar regard, the age groups and frequency of youth World Cup events should be expanded, whereas confederations should consider creating tiered youth international championships. This would provide young players with more games against appropriate opposition to improve competitive balance.
- The model of having a youth national team at every age from U-15 to U-20 should be considered by more MAs, as this would help to identify and accelerate player development for nearly every birth year and would provide a player pathway for the development of future senior national team players.
- International events should be used to share knowledge and best practices amongst technical staff. There is rapid development in the use of data to enhance and support national teams. However, if this is not yet taking place, MAs should create centralised player monitoring systems and review their use of video analysis and physical data to inform performance.
- Technical leaders need to create a clear vision and strategy for building a competitive national team programme and set specific objectives that are evaluated on a regular basis. Enhancing rapports and establishing common practices across men's and women's senior and youth national teams in order to close the gap between them should be a key priority.
- MAs should ensure that a national performance plan is in place that sets targets for the development of home-grown talent available for selection by the national teams. Following on from this, the player pathway for youth national team players should be systematically reviewed to guarantee that it is appropriately linked to the national performance plan.



- 
- MAs need to create robust recruitment processes in order to be able to identify and select the best-prepared and qualified staff for the national teams while providing ongoing CPD opportunities. In addition, they should explore ways to educate, develop and recruit more female coaching staff and technical leaders in order to resolve the huge disparity that currently exists.
  - MAs need to recognise the multidisciplinary nature of modern football and invest more resources in performance support services within their national team programme. Accessing high performance expertise is instrumental in making informed decisions, maximising individuals' and teams' potential, and offering marginal gains on performance.
  - A modern national training facility provides a state-of-the-art platform for players' holistic development and can influence positively a national team's performance on the pitch. MAs need to invest in facilities and apparatus that cater to the creation of a high-performing environment providing equal access to all national teams, according to the geographical and socio-political conditions of their country. However, MAs need to secure sufficient resources to maintain and develop these facilities.
  - MAs should make every effort to establish close collaboration and open communication with clubs, and engage in regular discussions regarding the welfare and development of national team players. Building a trustful relationship that promotes the sharing of player information such as medical and physical data is key, and therefore both parties should explore ways to reinforce it.
  - There is an urgent need for MAs to review current provisions of education support and appoint education specialists in order to enhance care for youth national team players. Mapping and tracking educational development are two other key responsibilities that MAs need to fulfil to achieve sufficient compensatory support within youth national teams.

# 3. Domestic competitions

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Domestic competition is vital to the growth of the game and the development of national talent.

The structure of domestic competition underpins the development of young players and their opportunity to reach their full potential. Having a competitive games programme throughout each stage of the player pathway is essential to support a progressive and challenging development environment to maximise the learning experience for all players. Such a games programme will not only grow the game, but will also optimise development.

3.1 Management and resources

This subsection illustrates the structure and organisation of the member association’s (MA) strategy in the development of domestic competitions. Development of – and adherence to – a long-term strategy is critical to the growth of the game in the country and its impact on the future success of national teams. In particular, talent development is directly affected by the competition structures and regulations.

Strategy and organisation

Embedding a competitions department into the structure of an MA can aid the development of competitions across the football ecosystem in the country.

It is of paramount importance that the competitions department has a strong relationship with the association's technical department. Regular meetings between the competitions department and its technical equivalent are essential to meet the MA’s technical, player development and overall football development objectives. The working relationship between the two departments will, ideally, be enshrined in the national performance plan. The national performance plan will usually provide a road map for the implementation of the national programme of competitions from youth to senior, and from grassroots to professional, across both the men’s and women’s games.

Most MAs have a competitions department, but very few have a written vision and strategy.

88% of MAs in the top 100 have a dedicated competitions department, with most (83%) being represented at board level. However, only 47% of the top 100 have a written vision and strategy for the development of competitions in place.

Illustration 3.1



Cooperation with the league

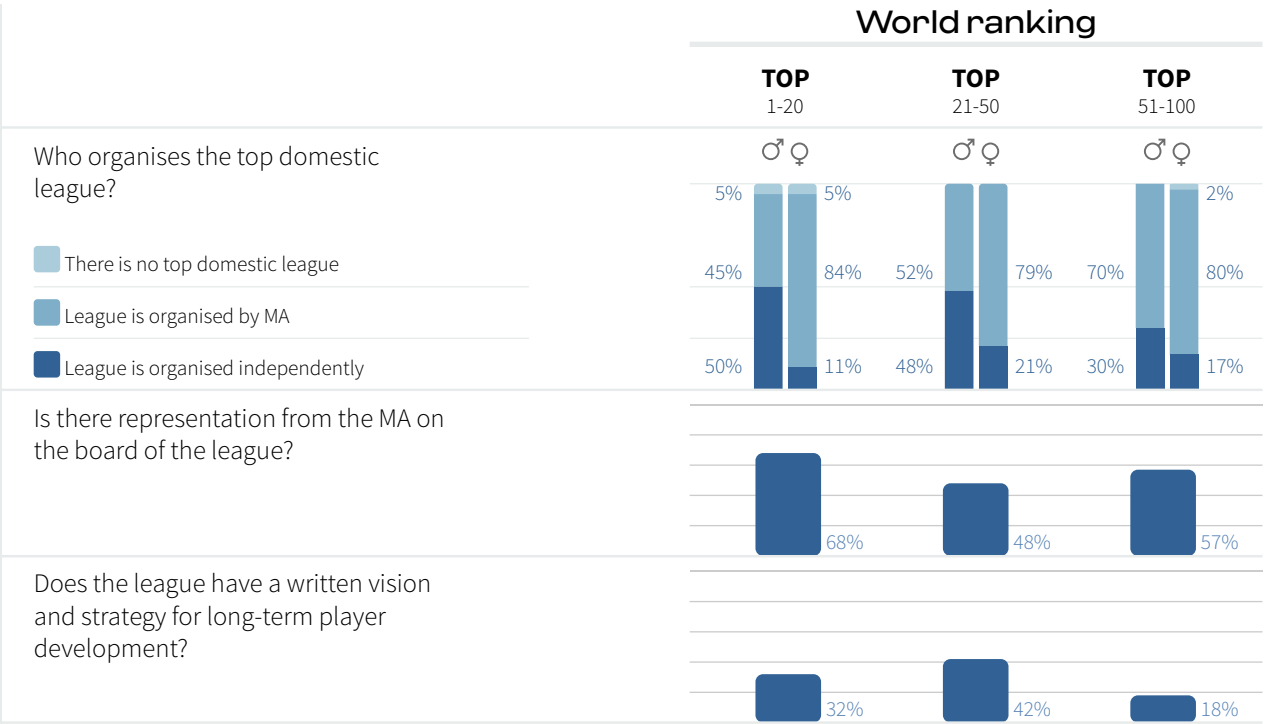
Domestic competition structures are influenced by the set-up of the football pyramid and by the relationship between the top-tier competition organiser and the MA. The human resource structure of this body (if cooperation with such an institution is in place) can give more detailed insight into the main focus areas.

Top-tier competition organiser

Having a unified player development strategy for both the MA and the independent top-tier league(s) ensures that player development is sustained throughout all competitions in the pyramid. The following infographic displays the cooperation and player development strategy between leagues and associations.

The majority of top-tier men's and women's domestic leagues are organised by the MA.

50% of the men's top-tier domestic leagues in associations ranked 1-20 are organised independently. Of all the independently organised leagues across the top 100, only 57% have a representative from the MA on the board. Only 28% of these leagues have a written strategy for long-term player development.



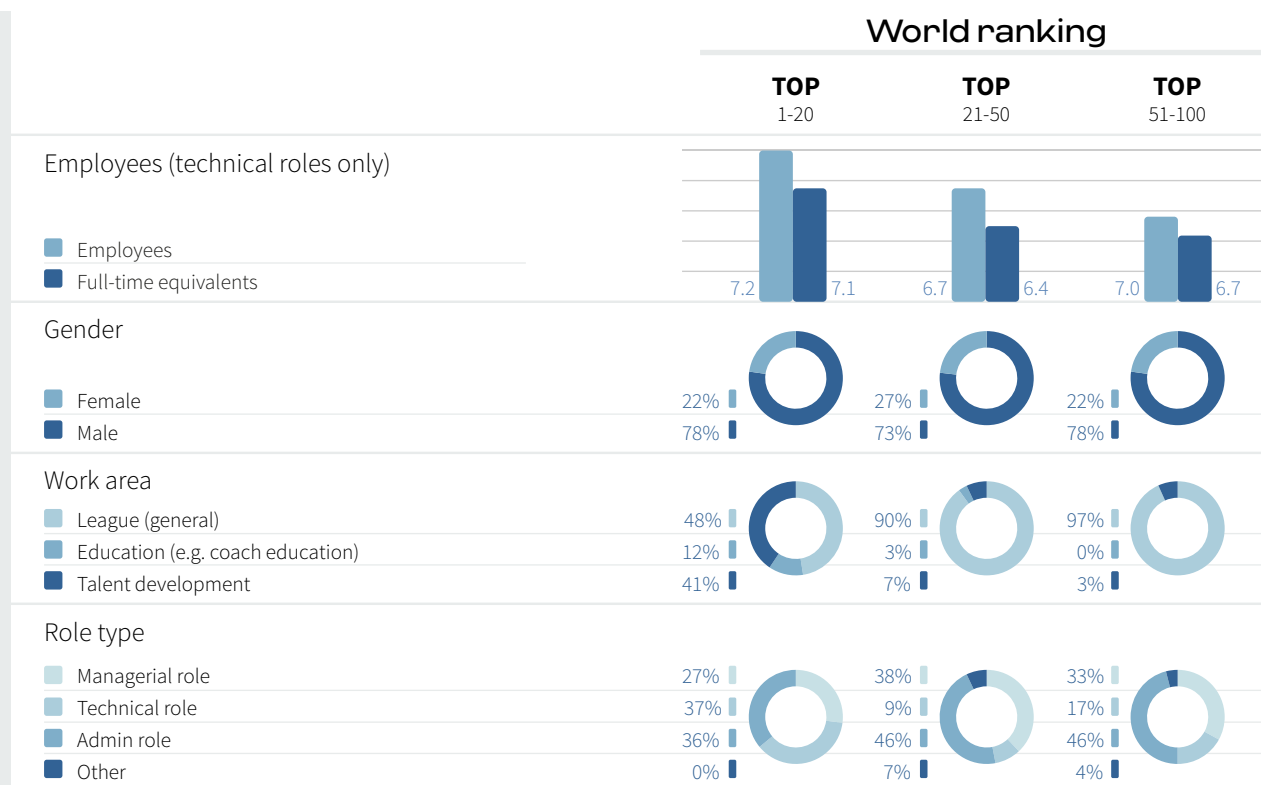
Professional league staffing

Aspects of a professional league, such as the technical staff structure, the gender make-up of this structure and the percentage of full-time technical staff (stated as full-time equivalents) can provide an insight into this league's emphasis on development. The number of staff dedicated to talent development and education compared to administration is also telling in this regard.

### There is a greater focus on talent development in the top 20 MAs.

Professional leagues within the top 20 MAs dedicate 41% of their relevant staff members to talent development, compared to 7% and 3% of leagues in MAs ranked 21-50 and 51-100 respectively. Across the top 100, there is a consistently low percentage of female staff (22% to 27%) employed within professional league structures. Additionally, from a structure perspective, there is an upward shift in the proportion of the roles deemed technical, increasing from 9% in MAs ranked 21-50 to 37% in the top 20.

Illustration 3.3



### The role of the MA and the league in terms of player development

- MA representation on the professional league board and vice versa is key to maintaining a constructive dialogue around player development and other related technical matters.
- Close cooperation and consistent communication between both parties is essential to establish clearly delineated roles and responsibilities between the MA and the professional league(s) on player development.
- There should be clearly defined responsibilities between the MA and professional league(s) in terms of the management of the academy system (where this exists) and the support and guidance of youth players in the player pathway. It is essential for both parties to agree on rules relating to the movement of players across the youth player pathway.
- Club licensing is an important tool that can assist with player development and the transition to senior football through relevant regulations. Therefore, MAs and professional leagues should work together on this aspect.



3.2 Senior competitions

This section illustrates the senior competition structure. It is widely known that the level of domestic competition and its structure can define the opportunities for players, coaches and support staff. Whether it be facilities, development infrastructure and support networks, income generation, or playing opportunities, all aspects of the game expand with the level of competition in the country.

Competition structure

The table below shows, according to the information provided by MAs, the number of leagues and teams in the different associations’ top three tiers.

**Top-tier men’s leagues across the leading 20 MAs have, on average, 17.6 teams.**

The number of teams per top-tier league in men’s football steadily increases from 14.6 in MAs ranked 51-100 to 17.6 in the top 20. Conversely, in women’s football, the number of teams per top-tier league decreases from 13.7 teams in the 51-100 benchmark group to 12.0 in the top 20.

Number of		World ranking					
		TOP 1-20		TOP 21-50		TOP 51-100	
		♂	♀	♂	♀	♂	♀
TIER 1	Leagues	1.1	1.0	1.1	1.2	1.1	1.7
	Teams	17.6	12.0	16.5	12.8	14.6	13.7
TIER 2	Leagues	1.1	1.6	1.4	2.0	1.3	2.6
	Teams	21.3	19.7	24.0	23.6	20.8	23.0
TIER 3	Leagues	1.8	2.3	2.8	2.8	3.4	1.2
	Teams	45.7	32.4	46.4	29.8	60.7	7.4

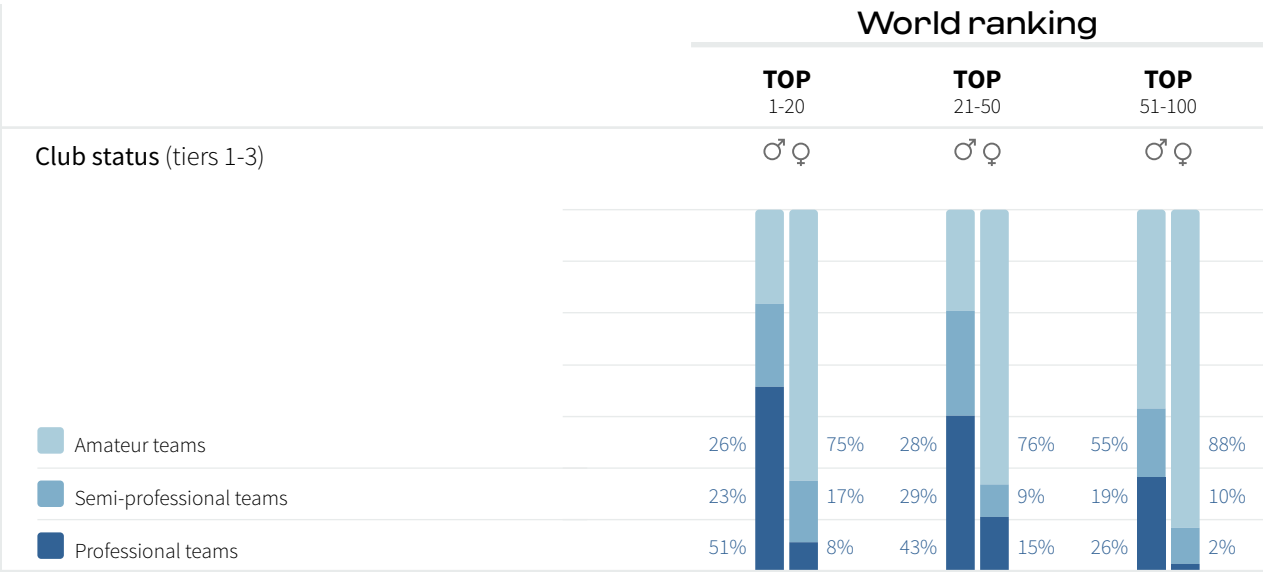
Professionalism in top-tier competitions

The number of professional, semi-professional and amateur teams participating in an association’s top three tiers provides insight into the health of the overall football environment. Having enough professional playing opportunities contributes to good health. A breakdown of the top three tiers of the world’s different football pyramids can be found on the following page.

**Approximately 40% of the teams in the men’s top three tiers of the top 100 MAs are professional, whereas the women’s game has an overall lack of professional clubs.**

As expected, the MAs in the upper reaches (top 20) of the world have a higher combined percentage of professional and semi-professional teams. This is drastically different for women’s football, as the vast majority of women’s clubs across the globe are amateur, with the largest percentage of professional clubs (only 15%) located in MAs ranked 21-50.

Illustration 3.5



Top-tier competitions

Top-tier competitions can serve as a flagship for the development of domestic football. Most of the time, these leagues will attract the highest number of spectators and will help to develop top home-grown players. Therefore, it is helpful to have a closer look at the characteristics of top-tier competitions and their constitution.

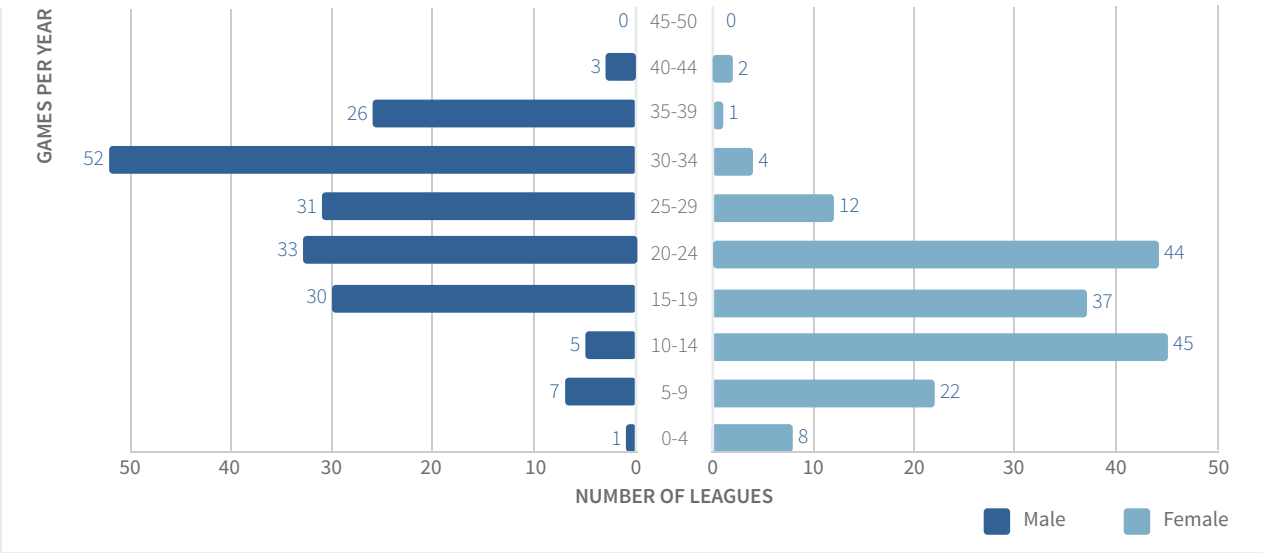
Number of matches played per year

Playing competitive matches is a fundamental aspect of player development. With too little playing time, players cannot acquire the experience needed to compete at the highest level. The table below shows the guaranteed minimum number of games per year that leagues around the world provide.

The most common range for the number of games in top-tier women’s leagues is 10-24 per season, whereas it is 30-34 in top-tier men’s leagues.

Overall, men’s league structures deliver more playing opportunities, with 51 of the top domestic leagues offering 30-34 games per season. This is in stark contrast to the women’s game, in which 45 of the top leagues offer 10-14 games per season, with a further 21 leagues offering only 5-9 games a year.

Illustration 3.6

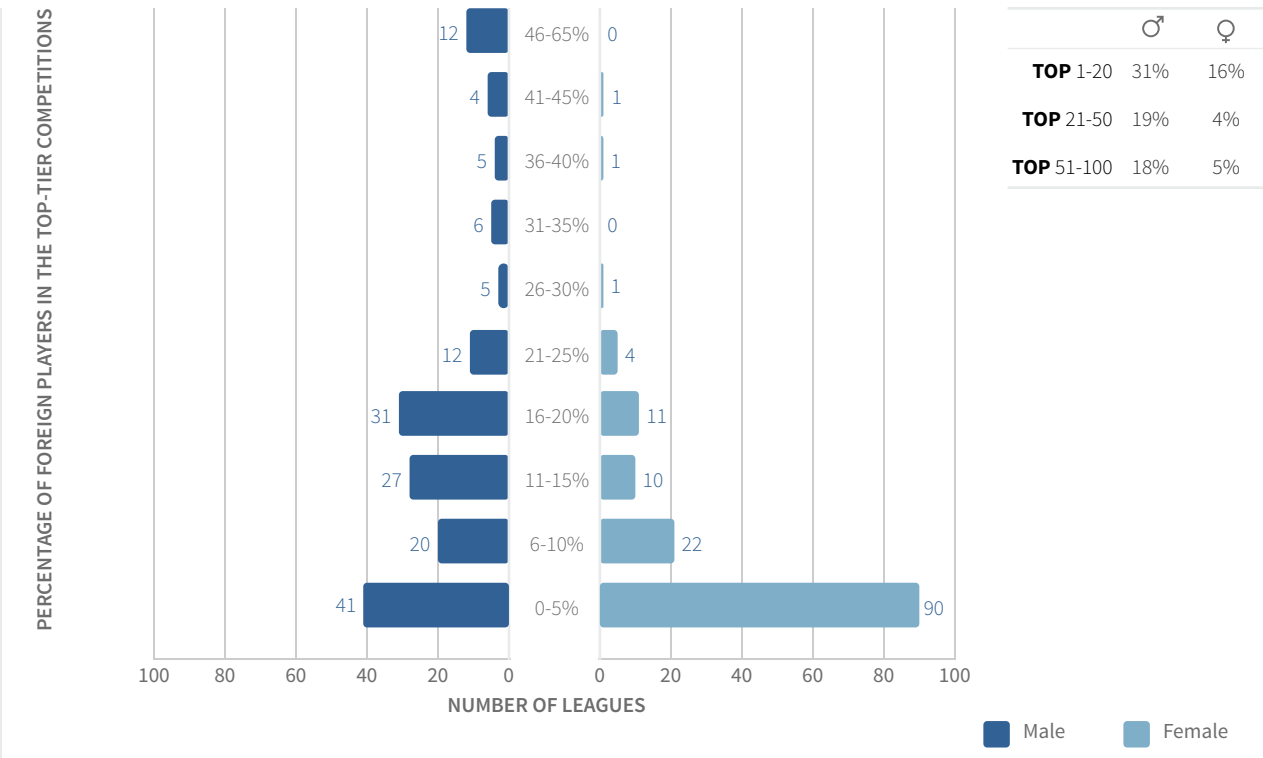


Foreign players in top-tier competitions

Striking the right balance between home-grown and foreign players is a significant topic for top-tier competitions. On the one hand, foreign players often help raise the standards of domestic leagues, generating more revenues as a result. They also help to expose young home-grown players to different playing styles. On the other hand, having too many foreign players can restrict opportunities for domestic talent and stunt competition growth. The percentage of foreign players playing in top-tier competitions around the world is displayed below.

There is a greater percentage of foreign players in the top-tier men's and women's leagues in the top 20 MAs.

The top 20 MAs in the men's game have the highest percentage of foreign players per team (31% compared to 19% and 18% outside the top 20). The same pattern can be seen in the top-tier women's leagues, but on a lesser scale (16% in the top 20 compared to 4% and 5% outside), allowing top-tier women's teams to have a greater proportion of home-grown talent.



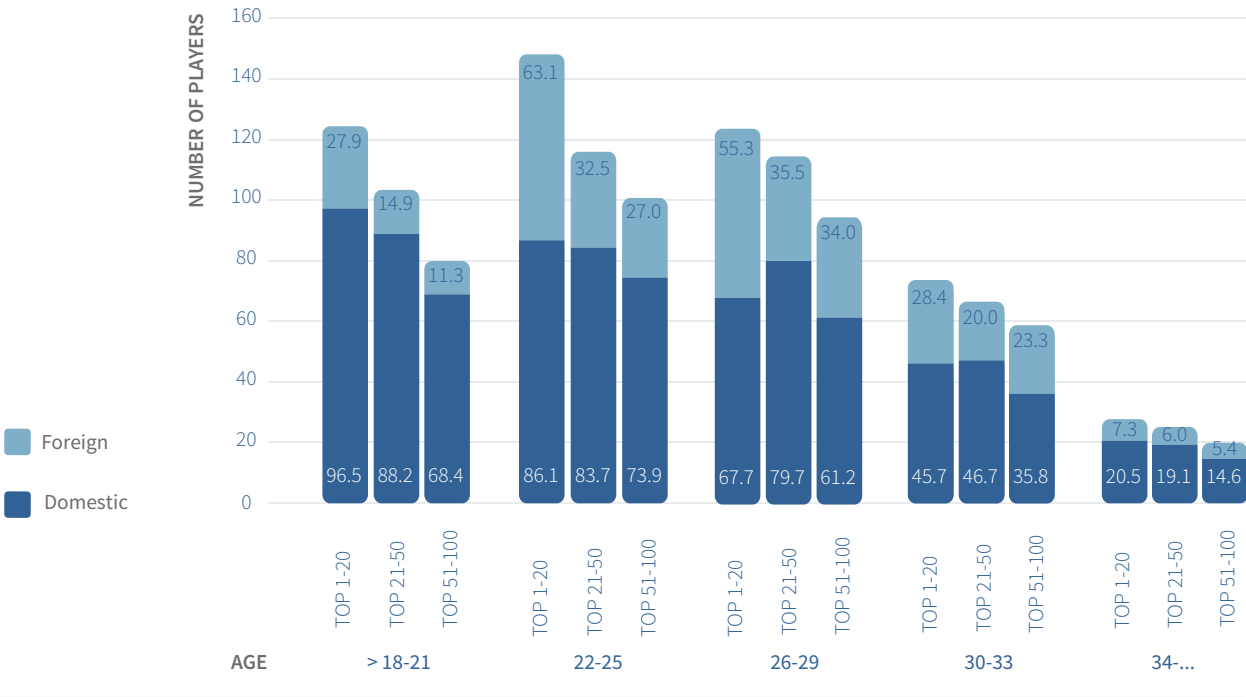
Average player age

The average player age can be a good indicator of a league's strength. A league with a relatively young average player age indicates that talented youngsters are getting competitive minutes, whilst a league with a higher average age can indicate that the competition has the buying power to bring in experienced elite players. An essential part of maintaining effective player development and sustaining high-level competition over time is to ensure that the league achieves a good balance between talented young players and experienced elite players. The illustration on the following page presents the number of players, both home-grown and foreign, in each age bracket across the top 88 men's domestic leagues worldwide (data courtesy of CIES).

All top 100 MAs have a focus on home-grown players between the ages of 18 and 21.

Across all benchmark groups, between the ages of 18 and 21, domestic leagues have a greater proportion of home-grown players than players from overseas. Furthermore, the top 20 domestic leagues have the highest proportion of players between the ages of 18 and 25 along with the highest number of foreign players across the top 100 between the ages of 22 and 25. The age profile shifts more towards older age groups across the MAs as they get further away from the top 20.

Illustration 3.8



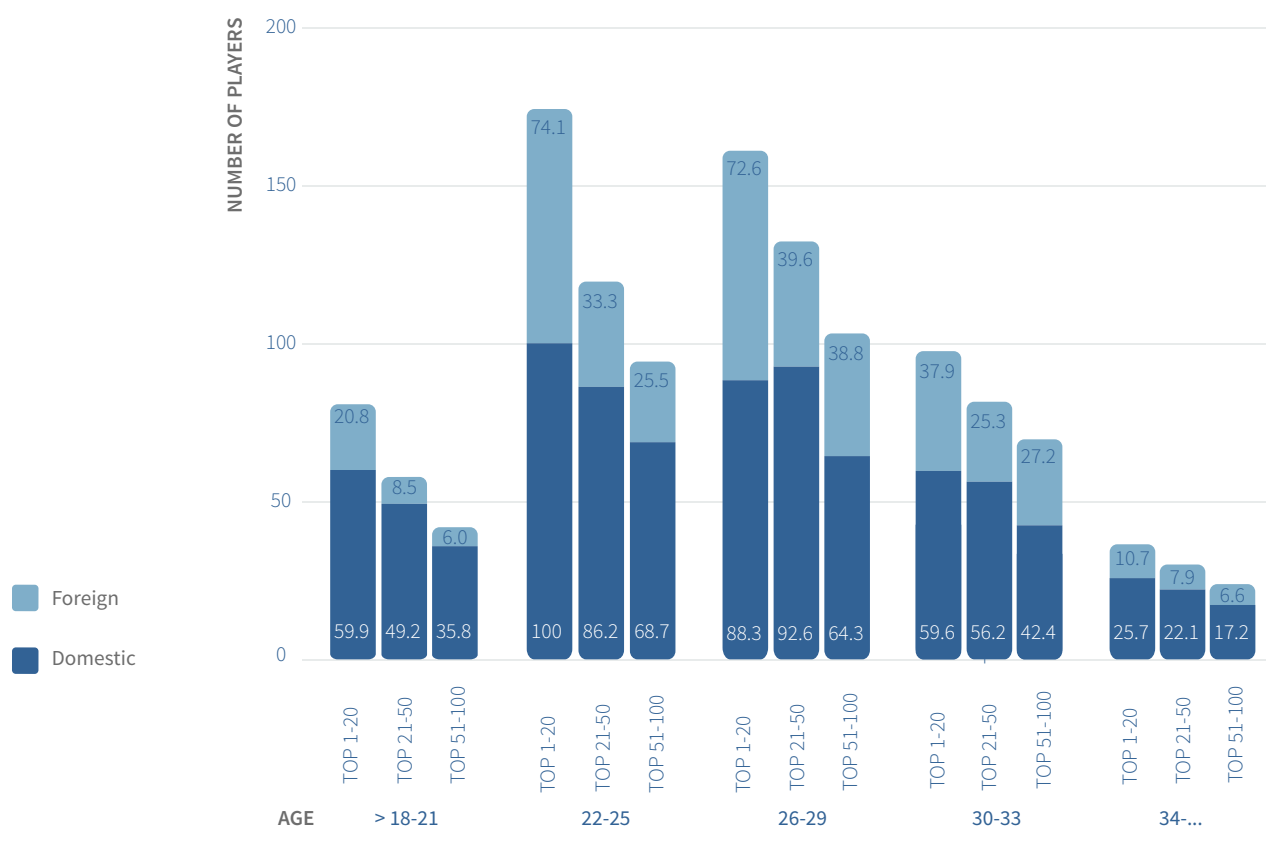
Average playing time for foreign and home-grown players

For the development of talent, no matter at what age, playing time is crucial. Having access to the top-tier domestic competition for young home-grown players along with a long-term strategy is critical for the effective transition of players into the senior game. The next step is to sustain this playing time through the crucial years of development, allowing players to establish themselves and inevitably enhancing the performance of the national team. The next illustration presents the playing time (per 1,000 minutes) of home-grown and foreign players in each age bracket across the top 88 men’s domestic leagues worldwide (data courtesy of CIES).

MAs ranked 21-50 offer the largest proportion of match minutes to home-grown players aged 18 to 21.

The top 50 MAs offer approximately 14% of all playing time to players aged 18 to 21, compared to 12% in MAs ranked 51-100. However, in this age group, leagues within MAs ranked 21-50 offer a greater percentage playing time to home-grown players (85%) compared to 74% in the top 20 MAs.

Illustration 3.9



### Set-up of the senior competitions structure

- In many countries, senior players lack year-round football, especially in the women's game. These truncated seasons can often be as short as three to four months, limiting both player development and the transition from youth to senior football.
- MAs have come up with innovative competition formats to increase the number of games played in women's national leagues, such as triple round robins or play-offs.
- The top-tier professional leagues seek to strike a competitive balance between clubs. Importing foreign talent which takes the place of home-grown players can have a significant impact upon the competitive balance between clubs. As a result, there are a number of initiatives that have been developed by the leagues and/or the MAs to ensure that the competitive balance is maintained at the same time as investing in home-grown talent.
- The transition from youth to senior level is an important phase in which talented youngsters step into a minefield of competing interests, such as contractual agreements and media attention. There is a need for good guidance for players across different areas (club, agents, academies).
- There is a need to develop sustainable business models for professional leagues to generate revenues.
- Club management staff require further upskilling to raise standards in business areas and to bring true professionalism, both on and off the pitch.



## Infrastructure

Infrastructure plays a large part in defining the nature of a domestic competition. The pitch quality within a football ecosystem is an important element of this infrastructure, which can influence the style of football being played. A certain level of pitch quality is required to cater for the most effective playing styles seen at the top of the game. An ecosystem that does not possess playing surfaces of this standard restricts the types of football that can be played, in a way which can be detrimental to player and competition development.

### Standard of the infrastructure available to stage matches in top-tier competitions

- The infrastructure used for women's top-division matches requires major improvements as playing surfaces often lack quality and supporting facilities do not meet the required standards.
- It is important to clearly delineate the roles and responsibilities of the MA and the professional league in relation to setting standards for infrastructure.
- Top-tier professional leagues have an effective system of matchday monitoring to ensure that clubs meet the necessary requirements to host matches.
- Club licensing regulations need to be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that minimum requirements are set out for stadiums to host games.
- Major sporting events can leave a lasting legacy of sports infrastructure as long as plans are devised and put in place for their long-term sustainability. Successful countries hosting such events create venues with their afterlife in mind, ensuring that local clubs can benefit from their future use.

## 3.3 Youth football competitions

An effective talent pathway is reliant upon a progressive and competitive games programme. Such competition structures should first and foremost have the capacity to maximise participation across the country to grow the game and its talent pool. Youth football, in particular, must be progressive across the phases of development, deliver multiple high-performance learning experiences, and be age-appropriate – based on awareness of growth and maturation – and aligned with the development methodology of the association. FIFA Forward funding specifically targeting the development of youth competitions is available for MAs that are willing to fulfil the programme's requirements.

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## Participation

The bigger the football family, the better. Youth players are the beating heart and soul of football culture all around the globe. But it is not simply the number of players that counts. To get a clear impression of the situation in terms of participation, aspects such as player pool (size) in comparison to the size of the population can be helpful.

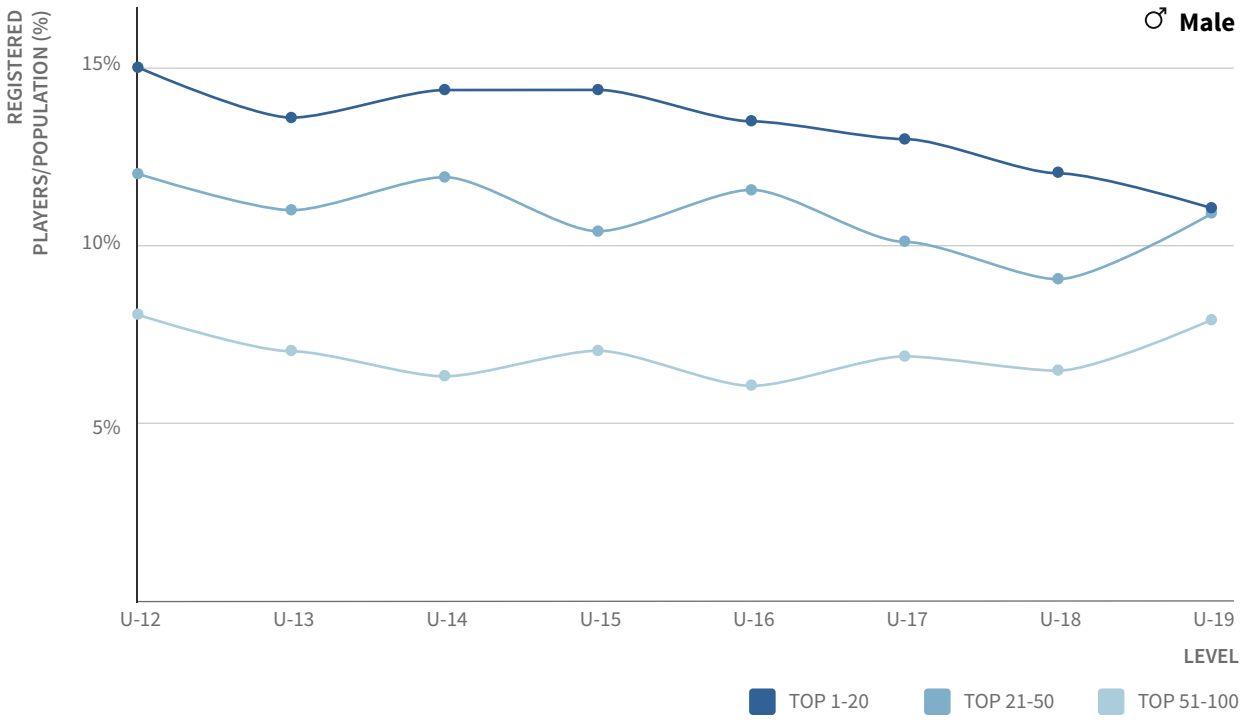
### Player pool

The player pool is the percentage of all registered male and female players in different age levels in comparison to the population of their country, irrespective of their competition level. Talent development can be enhanced by a large player pool and the high level of participation it generates. Since larger player pools create fiercer competition, the elite-level teams will ultimately see higher-calibre players enter their development pathways. The data displayed in the following illustrations is self-reported by MAs.

### The higher-ranked MAs have the highest percentage of registered male players across all age groups.

In men's football, the highest percentage of registered players (in comparison to the population) can be found in the top 20 MAs for all age groups between U-12 and U-19. Furthermore, at U-19, there is an upward shift in the percentage of registered players per population in the MAs ranked 21-100.

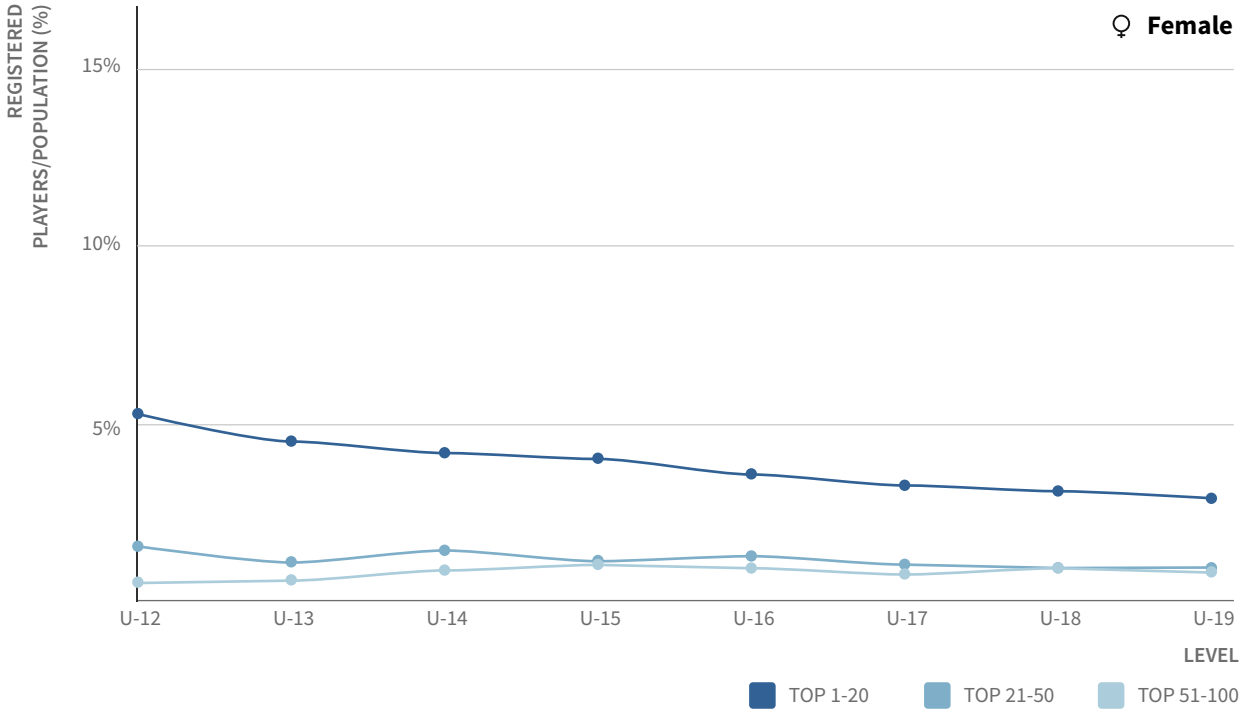
Illustration 3.10a



**The higher-ranked MAs have the highest percentage of registered female players.**

In women’s football, the highest percentage of registered players (in comparison to the population) can be found in the top 20 MAs for all age groups between U-12 and U-19. This percentage declines from the outset to less than 3% at U-19 – in stark contrast to the numbers in the men’s game. MAs ranked 51-100 have an increase in the number of registered players at U-15 level. However, this overall percentage is incredibly low, standing at approximately 1% of the population.

Illustration 3.10b



### Elite youth competitions

Competitions at elite youth level play an important role in player development as they involve the country's biggest talents. Having innovative and diverse competitive formats here can have a significant impact on player development.

There is a substantial imbalance in the number of club games played at youth level across different parts of the world, with an overall lack of organised football observed in many MAs below the age of 14-15 for both boys and girls. From the age of 16-17 upwards, across both genders, there appears to be a high dropout rate, which is partly due to the lack of opportunities to progress into senior football.



### Quality and quantity of playing opportunities for registered youth players

- The top-ranked MAs have comprehensive games programmes in place, putting players' holistic development at their core. Elite domestic youth competitions are complemented by international experiences and tournaments, which expose players to a range of opponents and different playing styles.
- Geographical challenges and financial restraints are described as two main factors that inhibit the organisation of year-round youth competitions by many MAs.
- Players in rural areas have significantly fewer playing opportunities compared to those living in urban areas and big cities. This is linked to the lack of clubs and appropriate infrastructure.
- A significant number of countries do not have enough age-group competitions to ensure a smooth transition from junior to senior football. Consequently, certain age groups do not get enough playing opportunities.
- Countries that lack a club academy system put a big emphasis on school competitions to bridge the gap in playing opportunities.
- Many MAs are lacking registration systems that can help to capture essential player information and to structure youth competitions that are fit for purpose.
- Upward trends in the number of registered players are potentially linked to better infrastructure and access to organised football and youth development systems in the countries of the top 20 associations.

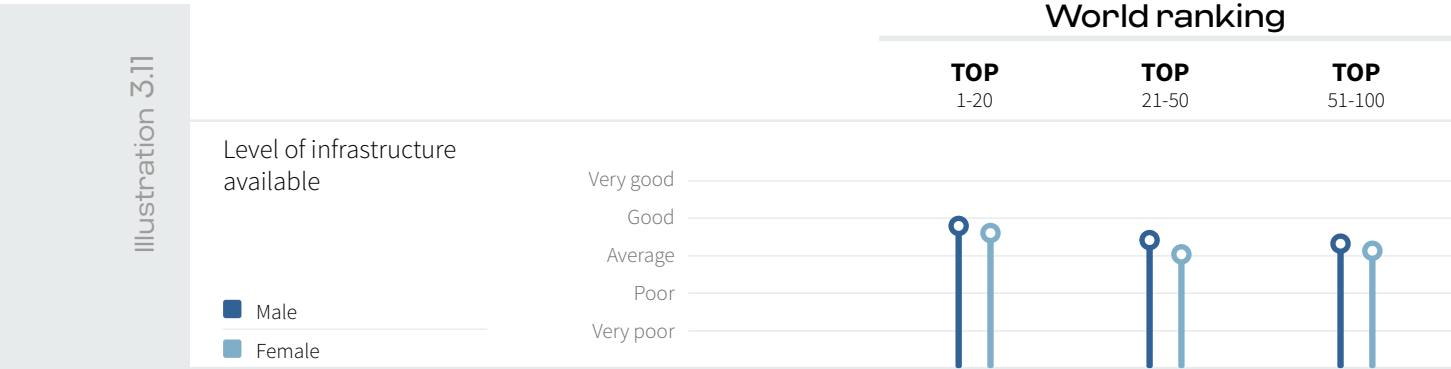


Youth football infrastructure

To help young players reach their potential, football ecosystems need to offer adequate facilities to host competition and training. The graphics below illustrate the level of infrastructure available for both boys’ and girls’ competitions. Note that this is a subjective evaluation completed by the MAs.

In comparison to girls, boys have better access to competition infrastructure across all of the top 100 MAs.

It is evident, across all member associations from 1 to 100, that boys’ football receives better infrastructural support than girls’ football. Boys’ competitions are often prioritised over the girls’ game, with the latter not having access to facilities of the same standards.



Standard of the infrastructure available to stage youth competitions

- There is a need for MAs to ensure that infrastructure standards are maintained and improved, where required, through club licensing or academy licensing regulations.
- Infrastructure for grassroots football is good in countries where government support is present and where there is close alignment with the MA's national football development strategy.
- There is a lack of pitches, ancillary facilities and associated football equipment in many countries; this has a direct impact on the number of games that can be played per team over the course of a season.
- The amateur status of many leagues inhibits the development and progression of facilities and player development infrastructure. This is due to the overall lack of funds, which results in insufficient funds being channelled to youth level.

3.4 Grassroots competitions

Grassroots football is the foundation of the pyramid and the development pathway. Between U-5 and U-12, there must be a focus on participation and growing the game across the country in a bid to develop and expand the MA’s pool of young male and female footballers. Grassroots football plays a key role in shaping football culture. Better access to grassroots football creates more opportunities for young players to get involved.

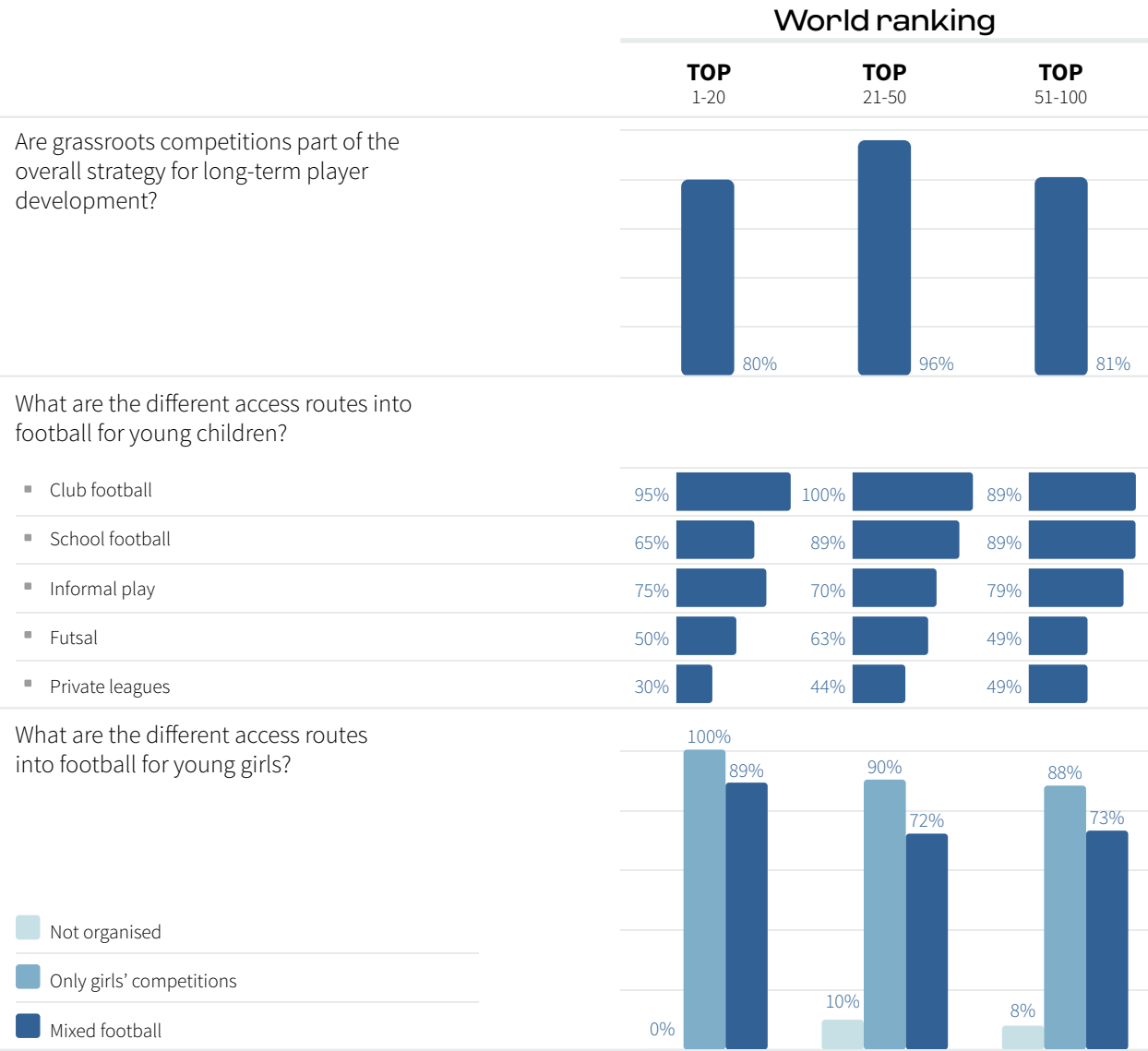
Organisation and strategy

Organising different routes into football helps to generate interest in the game. Furthermore, having a strategy for grassroots sustains interest over the long term. The level of organisation and the presence of a strategy to manage grassroots football can be seen in the illustration below.

Approximately 86% of the top 100 MAs have grassroots as part of the LTPD strategy.

Approximately 86% of MAs have grassroots as part of their overall strategy for long-term development, a figure that rises to 96% among the top 21-50 MAs. Club football is seen as the dominant access route to football for young children, with school football and informal play being close behind. From a girls’ perspective, female-only competitions are the most prevalent access route, with mixed football a close second. However, some MAs in the 21-100 ranking band currently have no organised girls’ football in their country.

Illustration 3.12



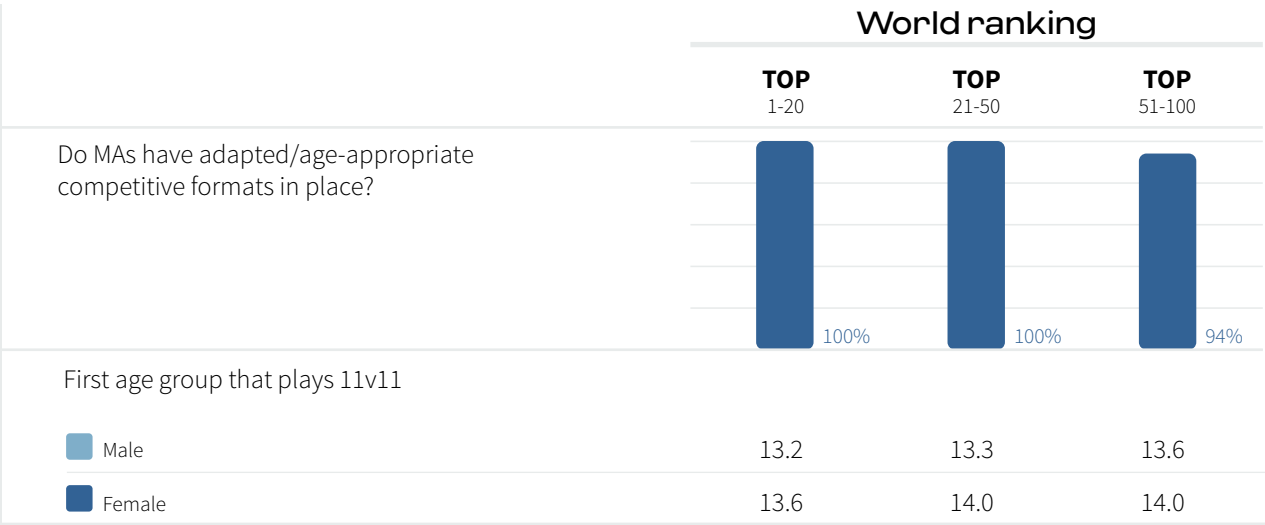


Age-appropriate competitive formats

Tailoring the football experience for different ages by adapting pitch size and player numbers can increase the retention of young footballers playing the game. How the game is adapted according to the age of young players can be seen below.

All MAs ranked 1-50 have age-appropriate game formats, with 11v11 starting at the average age of 13.

The vast majority of MAs in the top 100 have age-appropriate game formats, with more MAs focusing on adapting the match duration and the number of players than the size of the ball and the size of the pitch. Moving further away from the top 20, 11v11 game formats are introduced later for both boys and girls.



Use of age-appropriate competitive formats to aid player development

- Grassroots competitions are often neglected by the MAs in their long-term player development (LTPD) strategy. This has a negative impact on the talent pathway.
- MAs recommend a wide range of age-appropriate competitive formats based on their LTPD philosophy. Coaches should be encouraged to follow the guidelines and provide a variety of challenges for players across the various stages of development.
- MAs need to have strong national football development plans in place and a clear strategy for the transition from small-sided games to 11v11, which usually happens between of U-12 and U-14.
- MAs and leagues need to use the evidence from relevant research into relative age effects to make appropriate and demonstrable interventions, such as creating a range of bio-banded competitions, tournaments or festivals.
- The introduction of competitive structures into the youth games programmes in grassroots football and the academies is very important, whilst coach education at grassroots level is key to supporting the agreed approach.
- School football and private academies play an integral role in player development. This is especially true in smaller countries in Asia, Africa and Oceania, where club academies may not exist. Such schools and academies often lack the technical expertise to apply age-appropriate formats and require additional support from MAs.
- More emphasis needs to be given to futsal and small-sided games, especially for foundation-phase players, in order to aid long-term development. Although girls-only competitions are growing in number, mixed football in the younger age groups is still vital for female player development.



# Domestic competitions

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# Recommendations

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- Financial support for clubs that invest in youth and promote academy players to the first team would lead to more young talent in elite competitions. Where applicable, club licensing regulations requiring minimum numbers of U-20 or U-23 home-grown players in senior first-team squads could help to increase the number of elite playing opportunities for young talent.
- Appropriate investment is required in the infrastructure for youth and grassroots football. This would help to develop the quality and quantity of age-appropriate playing surfaces, the ancillary facilities and the associated football equipment.
- MAs should incentivise men's clubs to create women's sections, such as an academy and a first team. Women's national leagues need to be professionalised. Introducing teams across more of the age groups required at youth level would also raise club standards.
- To create a more attractive product, MAs could expand professional leagues to include teams from several countries, which would also generate more revenues. This approach may work to help smaller leagues and their MAs to compete against their larger counterparts.
- There is a greater need to create playing opportunities that enable players to extend and consolidate their learning. This requires access to different standards of opposition and different game formats. Academies and other youth systems need to balance competition and development opportunities in the training and playing curriculum for youth players in the player pathway.

## 4. Talent identification and development

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Every talent deserves a chance.

Regardless of a country's size or success in its footballing endeavours, it cannot afford to be complacent with its talent pool. Due to the inefficiencies in talent identification and development, MAs around the globe need to dedicate significant amounts of time, effort and resources to constructing effective systems and strategies for these areas. By closing gaps in identification and development, MAs can treasure the unique talents within their countries by helping them to reach their full potential.



## 4.1 Talent identification

This section highlights the talent identification (TID) practices across the football ecosystem. TID refers to the processes employed by associations, clubs and academies to assess the relative talent of players in the talent pool. This process is often referred to as “scouting” or, in some MAs, as “recruitment”.

### TID strategy

Determining what constitutes a player with the necessary talent to perform at the elite level is fundamental to building both successful national teams and a vibrant talent system that feeds the professional or elite domestic competitions. The development of a TID strategy enables the MA to guide scouts, recruiters and other stakeholders to identify certain key characteristics and future potential in players. Ideally, the TID strategy will be closely linked to the national playing philosophy and will seek to identify players who have the potential to meet the performance criteria outlined in the national playing philosophy and games programmes.

The TID strategy should also set out standards for the education and development of TID staff at national and club levels, and guide the licensing of scouting and TID staff. The TID strategy typically also sets out the approach to managing data analytics, match analysis, creation of databases and talent depth charts.

### A high number of MAs in the top 100 do not have a strategy in place to identify talented players.

Although men’s football appears to take account of the relative age effect more than women’s football, the percentages are still quite low across the top 100 MAs, with only 51% of the MAs ranked from 51 to 100 implementing such programmes. In the women’s game, the vast majority of the top 20 MAs have a specific strategy for the TID of players, with lower-ranked countries less likely to have a system or criteria in place.



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Illustration 4.1

### World ranking

		World ranking		
		TOP 1-20	TOP 21-50	TOP 51-100
Is one of the following in place?				
■ A specific strategy for the identification of talented players	♂	70%	81%	43%
	♀	89%	31%	45%
■ Defined criteria for the selection of players through (a) talent development system(s)	♂	79%	64%	43%
	♀	78%	39%	36%
■ An IT system/database to process the information from the TID	♂	65%	60%	34%
	♀	78%	34%	18%
■ Measures in place to deal with the relative age effect	♂	60%	56%	51%
	♀	56%	24%	38%

Specific strategy for the identification of talented players

- A significant number of MAs have no TID strategy. In addition, they have no defined criteria for player selection and no databases or systems to track potential talent. Implementing each of these systems will yield immediate performance gains.
- The most successful MAs have comprehensive scouting systems in place with appropriate resources and technical expertise, ready to identify players around the country regardless of their location or the level of competition.
- Bolstering TID events and programmes which offer as many players as possible the opportunity to be seen is essential to maximise the potential of the national talent pool.
- MAs should invest in technical staff with a high level of expertise who can be attached to regional FAs and who are responsible for TID and coach development (course delivery, club visits, mentoring opportunities).

TID system

The illustrations below highlight the systems used by MAs to identify players with potential. The types of process in place influence the amount of talent that is identified. The more effective the process, the greater the number of players with strong natural ability who are identified.

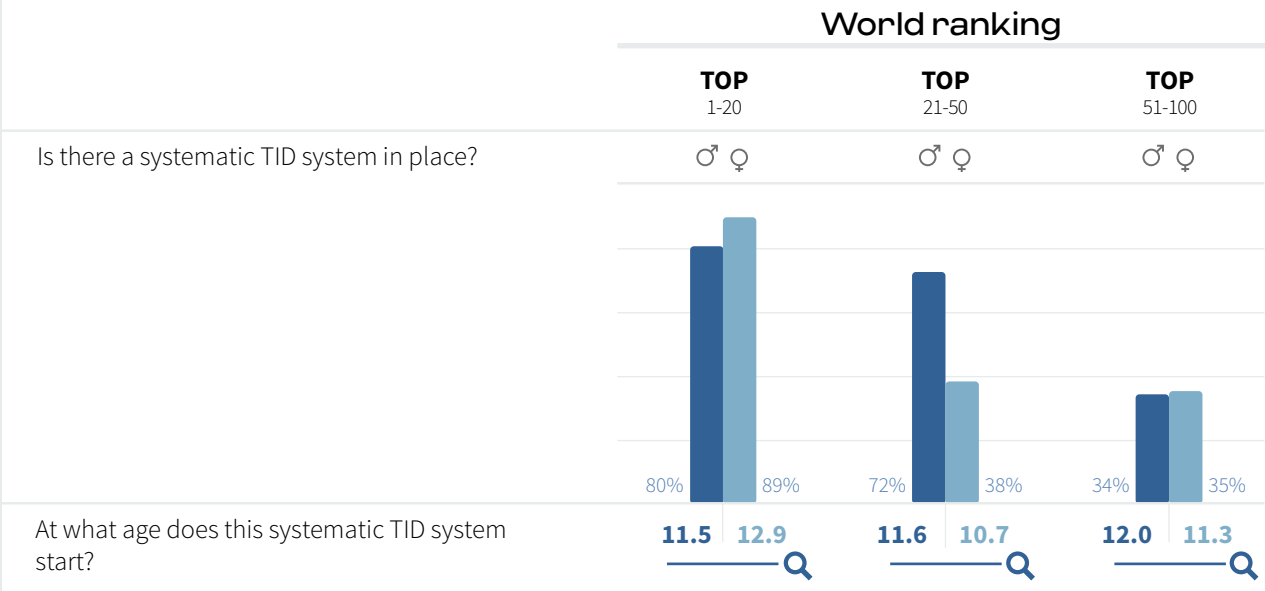
A high percentage of MAs in the top 20 have a TID system in place.

More than 80% of the top 20 MAs adopt a systematic approach to TID. This number decreases significantly in the lower-ranked MAs, especially on the women’s pathway, where only approximately 37% of MAs ranked 21-100 have a TID system in place for female players. Across the top 100 MAs, TID appears to start between the ages of ten and 12.

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Illustration 4.2





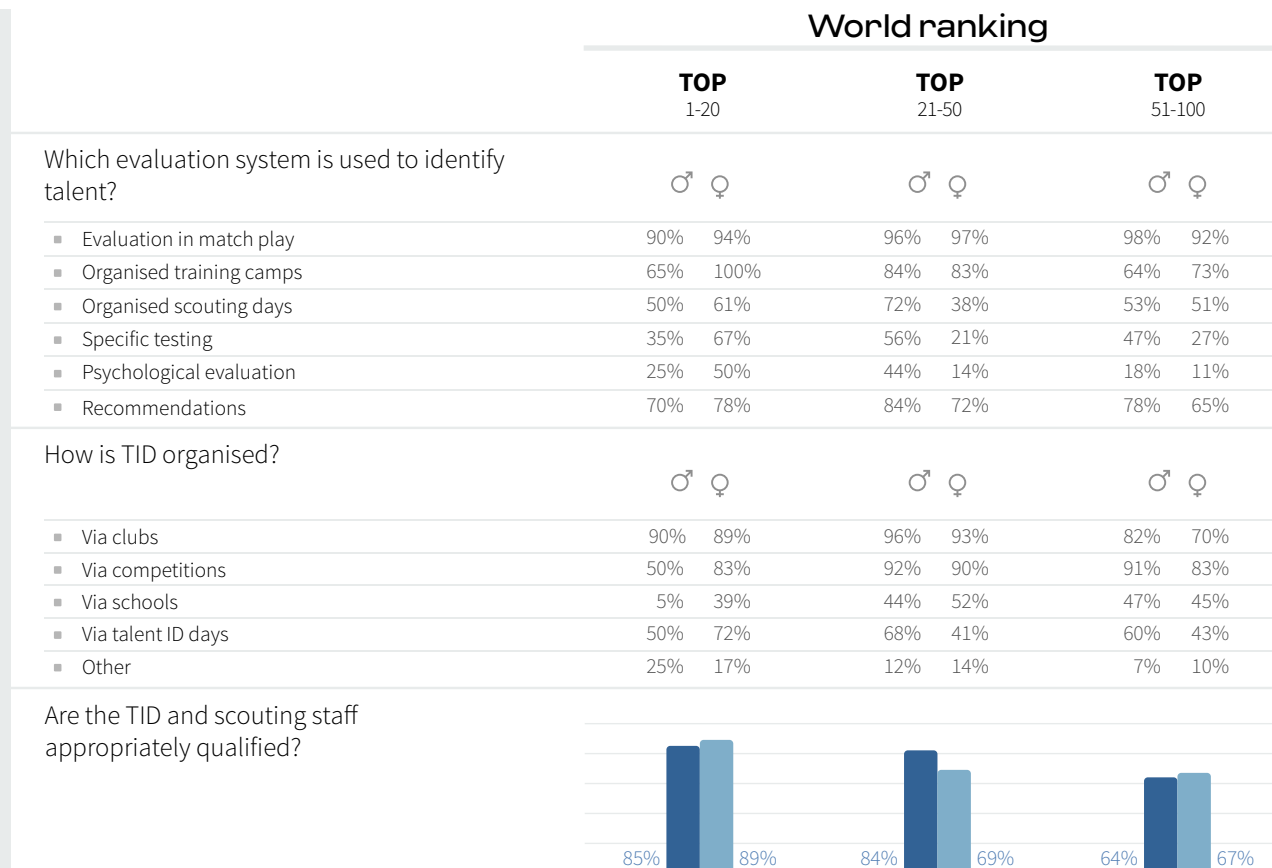
### TID organisation

An effectively organised TID system can potentially identify a large pool of promising players from which elite teams can choose. The way TID is organised globally and the methods used for evaluating this talent can be seen in the table below.

#### In the majority of the top 100 MAs, TID is organised through clubs.

Match play is the most popular form of evaluation across the top 100 MAs, with specific testing and psychological evaluations being the least-used methods. Player identification across the top 100 MAs in both the men's and women's games is organised primarily through clubs, competitions and TID days. Furthermore, the top 20 MAs have a higher percentage of appropriately qualified scouts and TID staff than the lower-ranked MAs.

Illustration 4.3



### The organisation and structure of the national TID systems

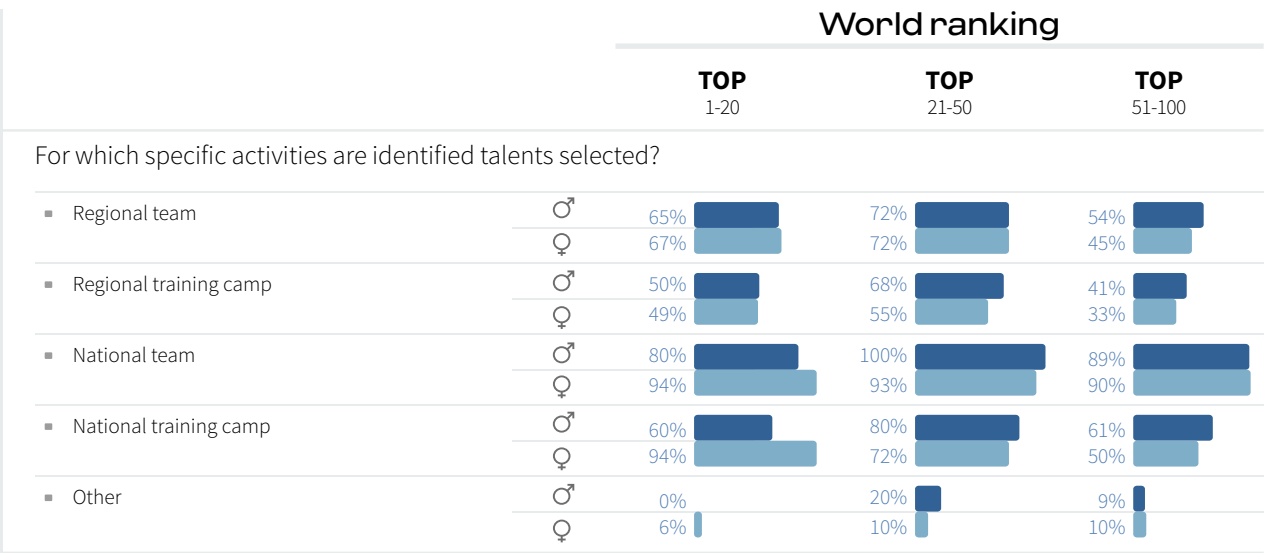
- MAs should focus on developing a TID strategy that provides clear direction, sets specific targets for player development and seeks to maximise the potential of the talent pool. Ideally, the strategy will be closely linked to the national playing philosophy and game programmes.
- MAs should seek to develop specialists, both at the associations and at clubs, who understand the particular challenges of identifying talent in youth players at different stages of the player pathway.
- For many MAs, there are significant geographical challenges to developing a national network, with different obstacles faced depending on whether areas are urban or rural. MAs should create a national network of TID specialists that spans every region in their country. This would enable MAs to have oversight of the whole talent pool – not just the players from more accessible areas, but also those from hard-to-reach rural regions.
- The most successful MAs have developed analytical tools to help measure and track the talent pool. Utilising databases and building depth charts to monitor talent are core functions of a properly developed TID system and should ideally be in place across all MAs.
- Given that almost all MAs have acknowledged the key role that academies play in TID, it is essential that there is close cooperation and alignment between MA TID systems and those being developed at the leading clubs and academies.

Post-identification activities

Once players have been identified, they move into the talent development pathway. This can be at an academy, but it may also be via national and regional training centres. Many MAs then create further selection processes, bringing potential national team players to regional and national training camps.

The top 100 MAs mostly select players for the national teams following identification.

Most MAs (>80%) across the top 100 select players for the national team following identification. Further to this, the women’s national teams ranked in the top 20 use regional teams and national training camps more than men’s teams following identification.



## 4.2 Talent development

The following section illustrates how talent development strategies are implemented and managed in the global football ecosystem.

Talent development refers to the programmes and processes that are implemented to support talented players' ongoing development once recruited. Talent development strategies are designed to build pathways that enable players to move from grassroots football to the elite levels of the game.

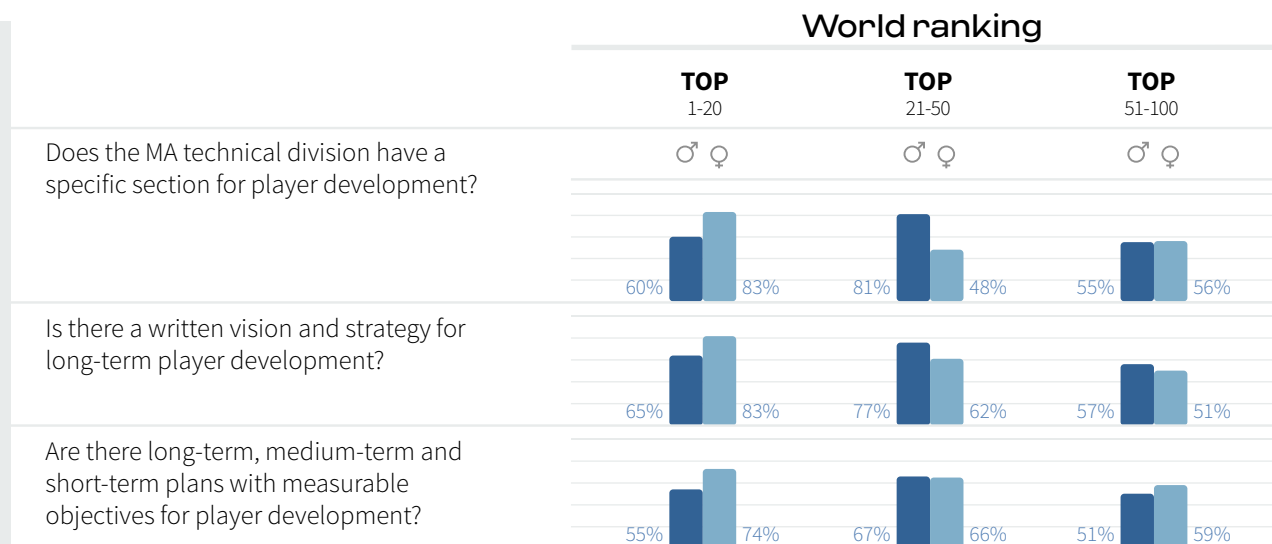
### Talent development: strategy and planning

Having a clearly defined and agreed vision and strategy to support the development of talent allows an MA to combine its key staff and resources and to create tangible targets for the management of the national talent pool.

#### A significant number of MAs have committed to implementing a talent development strategy with identified targets.

Of the top 20 MAs in the women's ranking, 83% have a specific section in their technical division that focuses on talent development, in contrast to only 60% of the men's top 20. The degree of management and planning increases across nearly all areas as one moves up the three ranking groups in the women's game. On the men's side, all of the metrics are highest in the MAs ranked between 21 and 50. However, there remains a significant minority of MAs which have neither a strategy nor targets for talent development.

Illustration 4.5



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### Talent development as a part of the technical division

- A key priority for MAs is the creation of a nationwide talent development plan that enables the MA to work with the key stakeholders (including leagues, clubs and academies) to create appropriate training, playing and development opportunities.
- The appointment of key technical staff to support the technical director is an important step for technical divisions to take to enhance player development. Examples of such staff include coach development and talent development experts who coordinate player development programmes as part of the national performance plan.
- MAs need to establish comprehensive multidisciplinary support services that are delivered to a high standard (sports science, video analysis, psychology, education, welfare).
- Developing a range of games programme opportunities (such as festivals, leagues, tours and tournaments) through an MA's technical division challenges players and enables coaches to extend and consolidate the development of these players by exposing them to different tasks.
- The development of MA-led training centres that provide training programmes to selected players but sit outside the academy pathway has proven to be complementary and successful in its own right in terms of developing players. Good cooperation with club academies in this regard can be beneficial to player development to avoid conflict.

Stakeholders and partners

There are a number of key stakeholders and partners that play important roles in terms of player development. MAs play a pivotal role in managing the feeder system – including the different types of academies such as clubs, schools and centres of excellence – to ensure that they buy in, and adhere, to an overarching development plan that helps to create an environment where talent is effectively nurtured. Given the pre-eminent position that academies hold in the vast majority of MAs in terms of player development, this is a key relationship for MAs. Forging meaningful partnerships and support and oversight of the academy system are important priorities for MAs where these systems exist. The most important stakeholders and partners are, of course, the young players themselves and their parents or guardians.

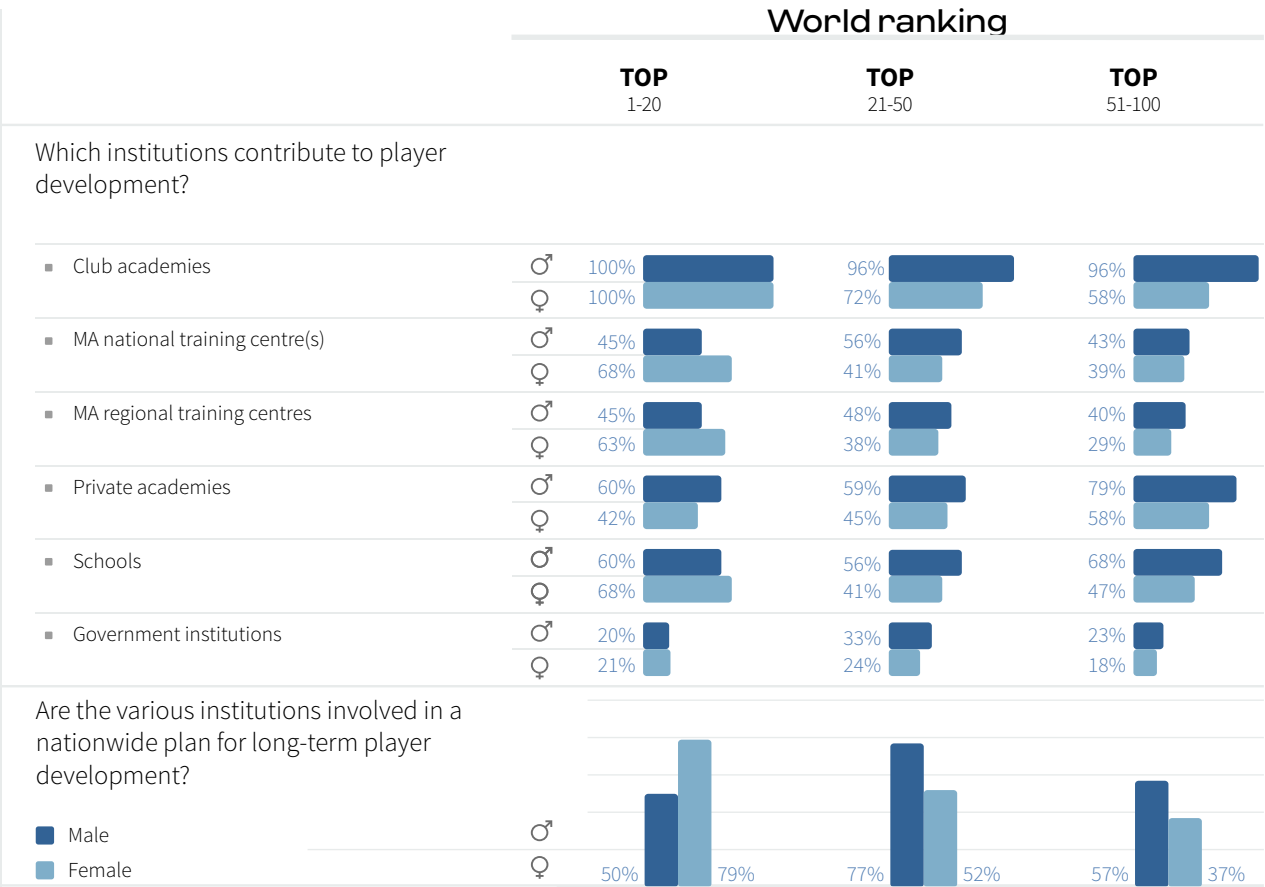
The best player development systems are player-centred, placing the player at the heart of the process and challenging and supporting the player in equal measures. They provide compensating education opportunities to ensure that players do not suffer any detriment due to loss of schooling and demonstrate that attention is genuinely being paid to player care, especially to how players exit the youth development system. On the contrary, development systems that view players as a means to financial gain do not see players reach their true potential. Investment in education and guidance for parents is often either missing or given low priority.

Most MAs have a challenging dual role to play in this area. On the one hand, MAs oversee the system and seek to check the quality of the environment in clubs and academies. On the other hand, they also have direct responsibility for the development of players in national teams.

It is important to point out that the way in which some of these institutions are involved in the development of young players can vary from one country to the next. For example, a school may act as a supplement to club academies in one country, whereas, in another, it may have the crucial role of being the only location hosting organised football.

Club academies are the key stakeholders in player development across the top 100 MAs.

The majority of MAs in the top 100 see club academies as the key stakeholders in the development of male and female players. A significant number of MAs also recognise the importance of leading national and regional training centres in supporting player development. In women’s football, 79% of the top 20 MAs include various institutions and academies as part of their national plan for long-term player development, compared to just 50% of the top 20 men’s MAs.



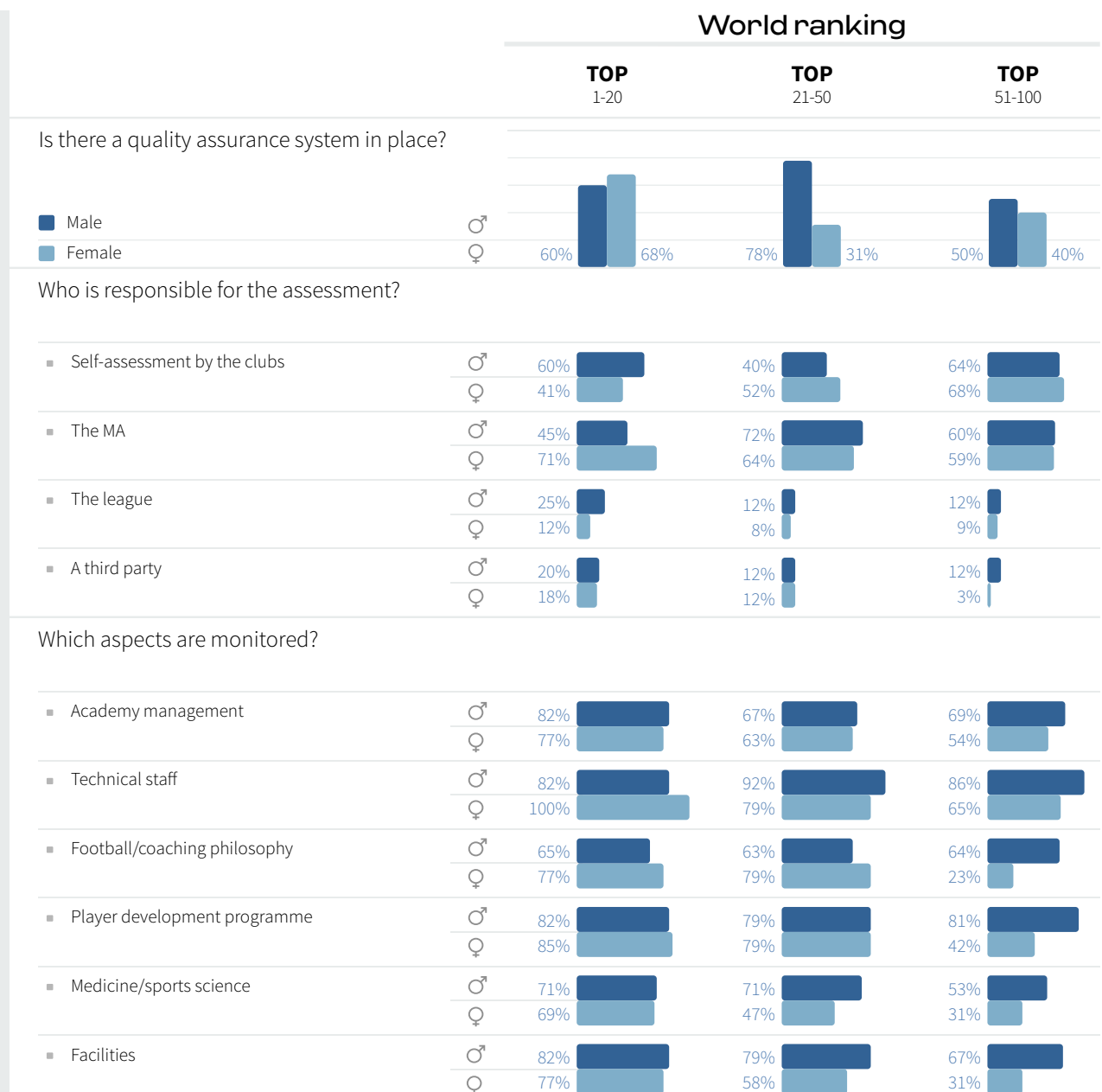
## Quality assurance of academies

For talented players to reach their full potential, the academies to which they belong must be up to the necessary standard. The MAs and leagues are responsible for assuring the quality of academies. By focusing on maintaining the quality of the various stages and institutions involved in a player's development, quality assurance can help to guarantee that youth players have attained the necessary level when called up by their senior teams. It is vital to ensure that the process is entirely impartial to maintain a fair and high-quality system. Selecting which youngsters to develop ought to be based on the value the player brings to the football pitch, not on age or socio-economic factors. A league's rules and regulations can also help to maintain good youth development standards. It is important that there is collaboration between a league's rule-making body and the MA to ensure that rules which promote talent development are created.

### Quality assurance systems for academies are not commonplace across the top 100 MAs.

Among the top 20 MAs, 60% of male academies and 68% of female academies undergo a form of quality assessment. Outside of the top 20 (21 to 100), this number drops to approximately one in three associations, particularly in women's football. Furthermore, a high proportion of clubs with such a system in place have the assessment conducted by the MA or follow a self-assessment process, with technical staffing a key aspect to be monitored.

Illustration 4.7





### Involvement of academies in a nationwide plan for long-term player development

- Where possible, the MA should take the strategic lead in overseeing the auditing and regulation of the academy system. Using independent standards organisations to provide independent measurement and auditing of the youth system has proven beneficial for a number of MAs.
- MAs have the opportunity to set targets for the development of home-grown players. These targets are often based on players making their debuts and appearing in the professional leagues.
- The key to effective engagement of academies in long-term player development is the creation of an academy performance plan (APP). An APP is a strategy created by the academy and is ideally endorsed and supported by the MA, which sets out the academies' long-term plan to develop players.
- An inherent weakness in many of the academy systems across the global ecosystem is the perceived low conversion rate from academy player to first-team professional. Proactive MAs have sought to regulate the system and to ensure that academies and clubs provide appropriate aftercare for players released from the youth system.
- Parent education is an important tool in supporting player development, and MAs and clubs should therefore work together to ensure that families are properly informed. This is particularly important for players and families entering the international environment and elite professional academies.
- Private academies can play an important role in talent development, especially in countries where club academy systems do not exist. MAs need to ensure that these private organisations embrace the long-term player development plan and follow the existing rules and regulations.



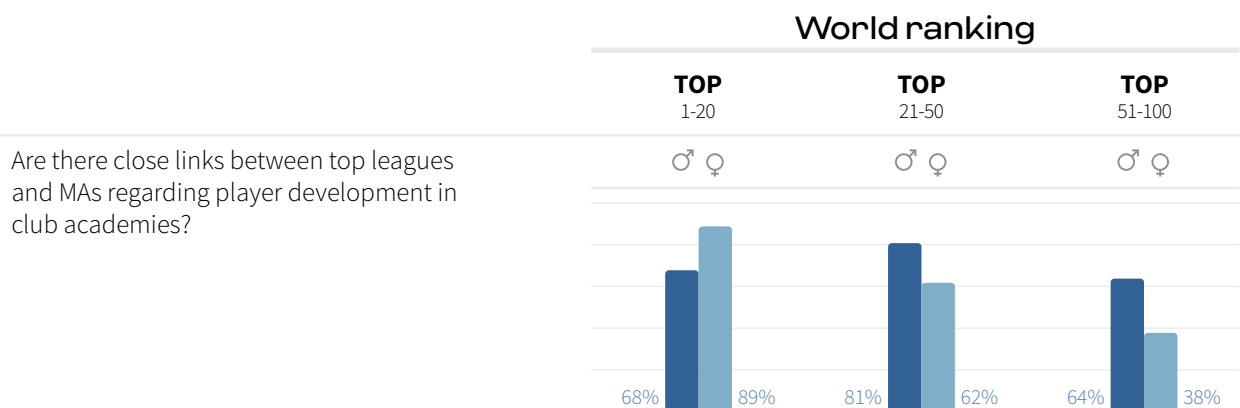
### Collaboration on player development between MAs and top leagues

Strong relationships between MAs and the top leagues regarding player development in their respective countries lay the groundwork for an optimised development process. Conflict between an MA and leagues or clubs in this area can significantly harm promising young players' prospects. MAs and leaders should do what they can to ensure that there is collaboration instead of conflict.

### The top 50 MAs have closer links with the top league in supporting player development at club level.

Over two thirds (68%) of the top 20 men's MAs have close links with the top league to support the development of club academies, rising to 81% in the 21-50 ranking group. In women's football, this type of relationship is not as commonplace in MAs outside of the top 50, with only 38% of these associations appearing to have brokered such a partnership with the top league.

Illustration 4.8



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### Collaboration between MAs, top leagues and clubs in supporting the development of club academies

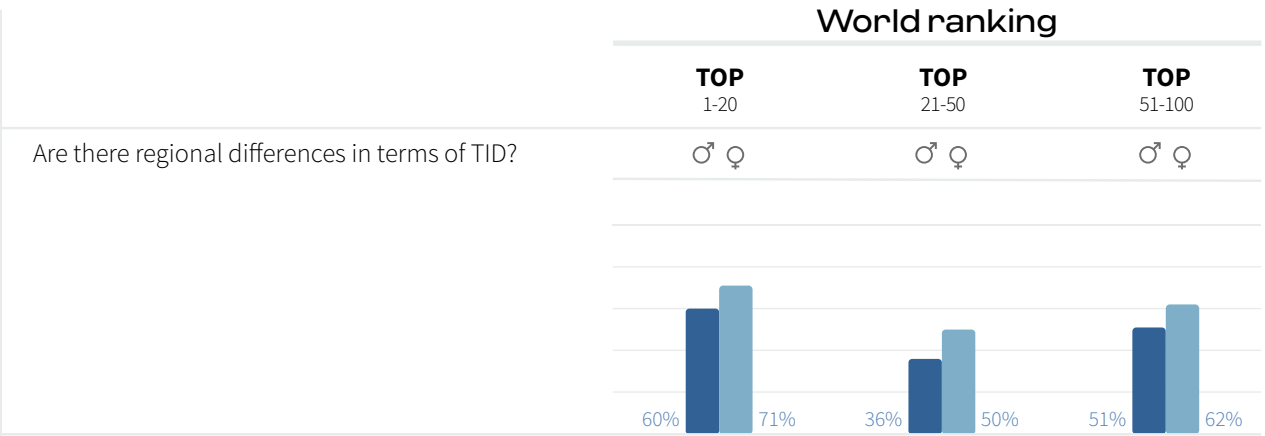
- The most successful MAs have strong relationships with clubs and have implemented a robust club licensing system that includes regulations around youth development. However, these MAs remain in the minority. Closer collaboration between the MAs and leagues around an audit and quality assurance system of academies will yield significant performance benefits.
- Cooperation between the MA's competitions department and the league can help to create comprehensive youth competitions at all ages with appropriate formats, thus ensuring access to game time for players.
- A number of MAs have worked with their top league to introduce regulations to promote talent in first teams. These include limits on foreign players and requirements for quotas of home-grown players. In many cases, these require a minimum number of U-20s or U-23s to be in the starting line-up. Conversely, some MAs and leagues have adopted the exact opposite approach, encouraging the importing of players to drive up standards and to challenge home-grown players. Both approaches have their benefits and potential pitfalls.
- A key challenge for MAs and top leagues is the management of a player's transition from youth level into the professional league. The lack of a second-tier competition for the last phase of player development can be a missing link.
- Training compensation systems can play a crucial role in protecting academies and clubs that are proactive talent developers. A number of MAs and confederations have established innovative systems that incentivise investment in youth development.

Regional differences

Some MAs may have regional differences in terms of their TID. Identifying and acknowledging these differences can be useful steps towards mitigating any negative consequences they may have on maximising a country’s pool of talented players. The existence or lack of regional differences within the countries of the top 100 MAs can be seen below.

A considerable number of MAs face regional differences in TID.

More than 63% of the top 20 MAs have regional differences in the identification of talented players, this being the highest bracket across the top 100.



Regional differences in TID

- Since the majority of MAs acknowledge that they face regional challenges in delivering the TID system, there is an opportunity to share innovations and best practice regarding how to solve some of these issues across MAs. This is something that confederations and FIFA may be able to facilitate.
- The population density, total population and area of a region are some of the reasons why more players might be selected from one part of a country than another. MAs need to be aware that it can be natural for more players to be selected from one region than another due to these demographic and geographical factors. When looking to improve the opportunities for all talent within a country, it is essential to be able to distinguish if these reasons are in play or if the differences are rooted in disparities in wealth or football infrastructure.
- Developing MA specialists to be deployed in regions to work with local clubs, academies and regional associations is one method adopted by a number of MAs to try to manage the recruitment bias created by regional differences.
- Developing more regional competitions and festivals organised by the MA may fill gaps in the national network and allow for more effective TID. Some MAs have successfully partnered with schools where academies or the club system have not been in place.

### 4.3 Transition from youth to senior level

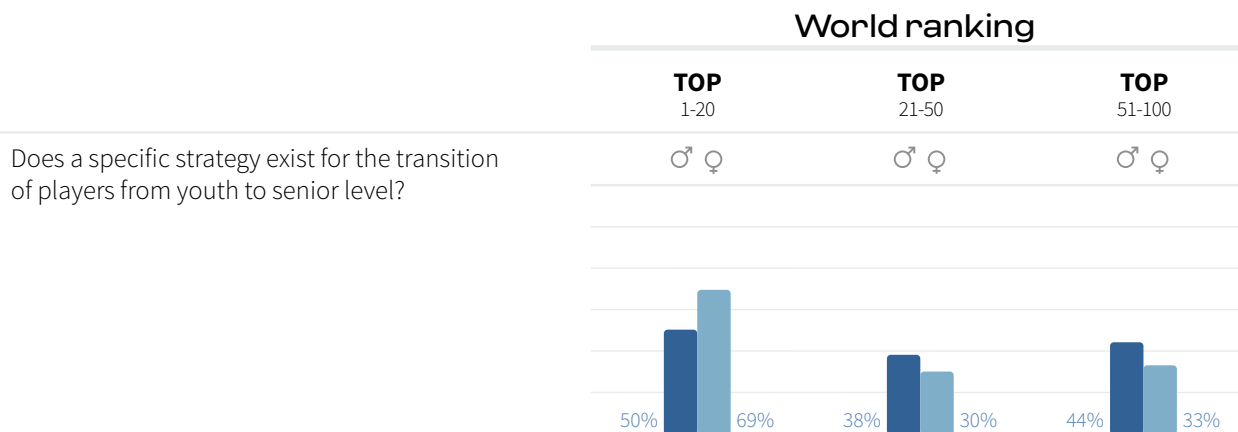
Moving youth players up to senior level has an incredibly positive effect on their development and can determine the heights they will reach in their prime. Specific strategies can be created to guarantee a transition whereby young prospects receive the early senior exposure needed to become high-quality senior players.

However, the transition is also one of the most challenging phases of the entire development pathway. During this time, a young player's commitments are spread across different teams with differing interests, in a way that can be disorientating. Providing clear guidance and a plan for the next two to three years is necessary to ensure this crucial period is indeed a beneficial learning experience for players and is not detrimental to their development.

#### A significant number of the top 100 MAs do not have a strategy in place for transitioning players to senior football.

Across the top 100, fewer than 50% of MAs in men's football have a strategy in place for the transition of players from youth to senior level. For women, it is a similar picture outside the top 20, although in the top 20 itself, 69% have such a support strategy in place.

Illustration 4.10



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#### Measures in place to facilitate the transition from youth to senior level

- MAs should develop strategies to ensure that players are guided through the transition from youth to senior level in a way that is both beneficial to their development and guarantees that they get enough playing opportunities.
- Development of second-tier leagues, B teams in lower divisions, quotas for young players or entire MA-led teams providing playing opportunities in the top league are amongst the range of innovations that are being used by MAs to assist in the transition of players from junior to senior level. The range of these initiatives demonstrates that there is no one way to solve this challenge. Local solutions which are tailored to each MA's specific circumstances are likely to be the most effective.
- Focusing on the different rates of maturation in young players enables MAs to put in place late development strategies to smooth the transition of players from junior to senior level. These strategies may involve developing bio-banding events and initiatives to counter the relative age effect. There is still a lack of widespread understanding of these issues. More research and more MA-wide awareness is required.



# Talent identification and development

## Recommendations

- MAs that do not have a nationwide plan for talent development need to prioritise the creation of a such a plan by working in close collaboration with the key stakeholders, including leagues, clubs and academies, to provide appropriate training, playing and development opportunities.
- Having a TID strategy that aligns with the wider objectives of an MA's football ecosystem is essential for a unified identification process. TID systems should also be holistic in their scope and look to identify players across their talent pool for a multitude of developmental reasons, not just to serve the national teams.
- Regional differences within a country pose unique challenges to TID and development. Urban environments present different challenges for TID than rural areas. However, by creating a national network of TID specialists that spans all regions of their country, MAs can guarantee thorough oversight of the entire talent pool available.
- All MAs should strive to put fully developed TID systems in place, where using databases and building depth charts to monitor talents are standard practice. Developing analytical tools to help measure and track the talent pool is a key characteristic of effective MAs in this area.
- The most effective TID systems are player-centred. This involves players being at the heart of the process, being both challenged and supported in a way that is beneficial to their development. Systems with these characteristics – not ones that view players as a means to financial gain – should be promoted. Not only do MAs, confederations and FIFA have the key role of building towards giving every talent a chance, but they are also responsible for protecting the players by ensuring that TID systems and talent development pathways are safe and appropriate.
- Only a handful of MAs implement robust club licensing systems that incorporate regulations on youth development. A stronger relationship in this sense, as well as collaboration between MAs, leagues and clubs regarding audits and quality assurance of academies, would see significant performance benefits in youth development.
- The transition from junior to senior level is one of the most defining moments of a player's career. During this time, elite youth players have commitments to different teams. MAs need to emphasise the importance of the transition and stress the need to identify someone who is responsible for guiding a player during this time. This is crucial to preventing situations where a potential star's personal and player development are in limbo between all the teams to which they are committed, while none of these teams takes full accountability.
- The amount of competitive playing time that players get when young can be decisive in determining the heights they will reach in their prime. Not receiving enough competitive minutes can prove harmful to a young player's development. MAs should implement strategies that guarantee young players the competitive playing time they need to reach their full potential.





## 5. Academies

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The quality of the academy system is decisive for the future success of the MA, the professional league and the national teams.

The vast network of academy structures is linked to clubs, schools and private institutions, in addition to regional and national associations, and can be considered as the feeder system for the national teams. As a consequence, the (future) success of any member association (MA) is largely determined by the capacity and performance of this academy system. Talented players are recruited and developed by these academies and follow their pathway to the top along these structures. Moreover, academies are also responsible for the players' personal and social development with the aim of moulding these youngsters into well-rounded people.

## 5.1 Participation and academy types

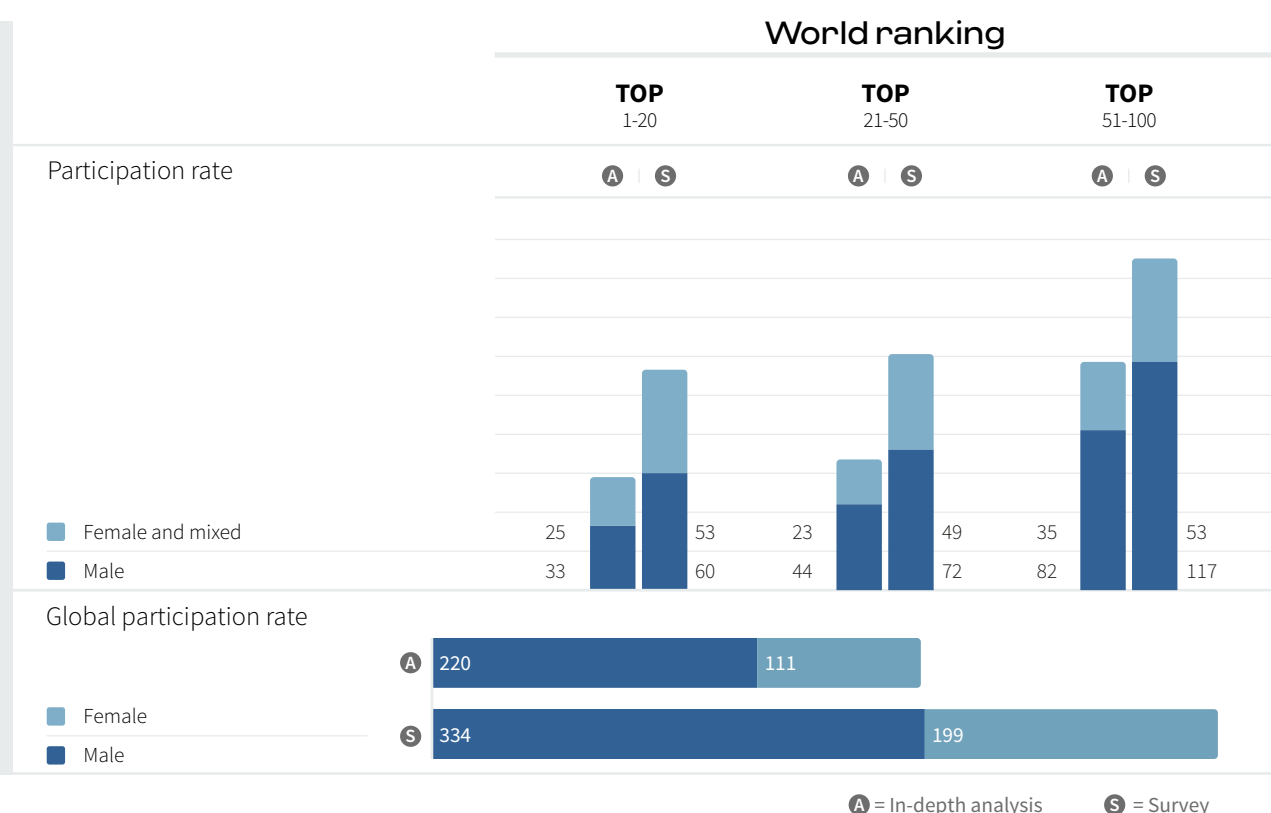
The Academy Analysis focused on all environments and institutions that develop the most talented players in the country. In most cases, these are youth academies at (professional) clubs, but they also include national or regional training centres operated by the MA, elite schools run by the government, private academies and a mixture of other approaches.

### More than 1,000 academies from 130 FIFA member associations participated in the Academy Analysis.

The graphs below show the participation rates for the in-depth analysis and the survey, with a focus on the proportion of boys' and girls' academies and different types of organisations. All selected academies, whether they were invited for the in-depth analysis or only for the survey, were given access to the online Club and Academy Monitoring Platform (CAMP). Of the 1,027 academies that started to complete the questionnaire, 864 (84.1%) fully completed the ID Card with general information about their teams, programme, staff and facilities. This means that an average of 6.6 academies per MA shared sufficient quantitative data about all these aspects.

In the in-depth analysis of the leading academies (an average of 2.8 per MA), in addition to the data collected via CAMP, documents were analysed by a team of experts, and interviews were conducted with various key figures from the academy. In this way, it was possible to undertake a more objective analysis of these academies and to provide them with a report with concrete findings and action points.

Illustration 5.1

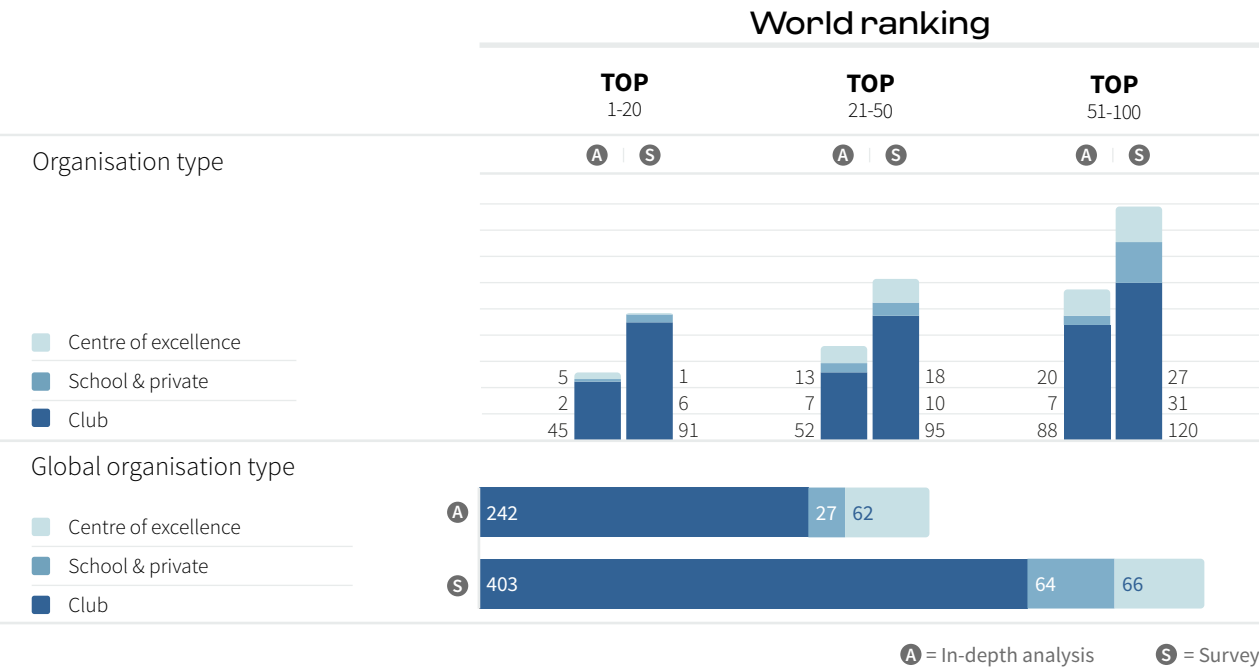


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The graphs below present the composition of the samples according to the types of organisation. Three quarters of the academies in the total sample were related to a traditional club structure. In the top 20 MAs, this contingent was even higher, accounting for 90% of the sample. A fifth can be considered as a centre of excellence linked to a national or regional association. The smallest group was academies related to schools or private institutions.



**Cooperation with the selected academies for the in-depth analysis**

- A total of 864 academies from 130 countries fully completed the ID Card in the Club and Academy Monitoring Platform (CAMP).
- 374 academies went through an in-depth analysis, conducted by an independent analyst of Double Pass, which resulted in more objective results such as a score on 74 international standards.
- 71.9% of the academies in the in-depth analysis are associated with an MA in the top 100, three quarters of which belong to a (professional) club(s).

## 5.2 Typical academy structures and pathways

The pathways for academy players to senior football mostly differ for boys and girls according to the type of academy. In this section, information is presented about the age groups and teams, as well as the training and playing opportunities for these academy players in the main phases of the development pathways.

### Age groups and teams

The tables below provide an overview of the average number of teams and players per age group, as well as the player/coach ratio within the various teams for boys and girls.

**Overall, there are about 50% more age groups at boys' academies compared to girls' academies.**

In general, boys' academies have an average of 7.7 age groups, compared to 5.4 at girls' academies. In the youngest phase (U-6 up to U-11), there tends to be a high number of teams in each age group. In the second phase (U-12 to U-15), these numbers start to decrease, and in the oldest phase (U-16+), age groups are regularly structured per two or three years.

In general, the average number of players per coach is 12.5 for boys' academies and 11.9 for girls' academies. For boys' academies, within all ranking groups, the U-12 to U-15 phase has the highest player/coach ratio. At girls' academies, the player/coach ratio tends to increase with ranking group and age-group phases.

Illustration 5.3

	World ranking						World ranking							
	TOP 1-20		TOP 21-50		TOP 51-100			TOP 1-20		TOP 21-50		TOP 51-100		
	Teams							Player/coach ratio						
	♂	♀	♂	♀	♂	♀		♂	♀	♂	♀	♂	♀	
	2.1	3.5	2.5	1.7	2.3	1.6	U-9	9.4	7.3	11.2	10.4	12.6	11.0	
	2.0	3.8	2.1	2.0	2.0	1.8	U-10	9.6	8.7	10.7	11.6	13.2	11.4	
	1.9	3.4	1.8	2.3	2.2	1.5	U-11	10.3	9.1	10.5	10.0	13.0	10.1	
	1.8	2.9	1.9	2.4	2.1	1.5	U-12	11.0	10.8	11.7	10.8	13.1	10.9	
	1.5	2.6	1.5	1.8	1.8	1.3	U-13	11.4	9.8	12.4	11.4	14.4	11.2	
	1.4	2.4	1.9	2.2	1.7	1.5	U-14	11.2	10.9	13.1	10.7	13.8	12.7	
	1.3	1.9	1.4	1.7	1.6	1.2	U-15	11.9	10.5	13.8	11.0	14.4	12.0	
	1.2	2.1	1.4	1.9	1.5	1.2	U-16	11.1	10.8	12.9	10.1	12.1	13.2	
	1.1	1.8	1.3	1.5	1.5	1.1	U-17	12.2	7.2	12.2	5.9	10.9	10.9	
	1.0	1.4	1.3	1.7	1.2	1.1	U-18	12.2	11.1	13.0	12.6	11.9	11.9	
	1.1	2.1	1.4	1.3	1.1	1.2	U-19	11.1	10.6	12.7	9.7	13.3	13.0	
	1.1	1.0	1.3	1.6	1.3	1.3	U-20	11.1	10.6	12.7	9.7	13.3	13.0	
	1.1	1.1	1.2	1.1	1.1	1.1	U-21	11.1	10.6	12.7	9.7	13.3	13.0	





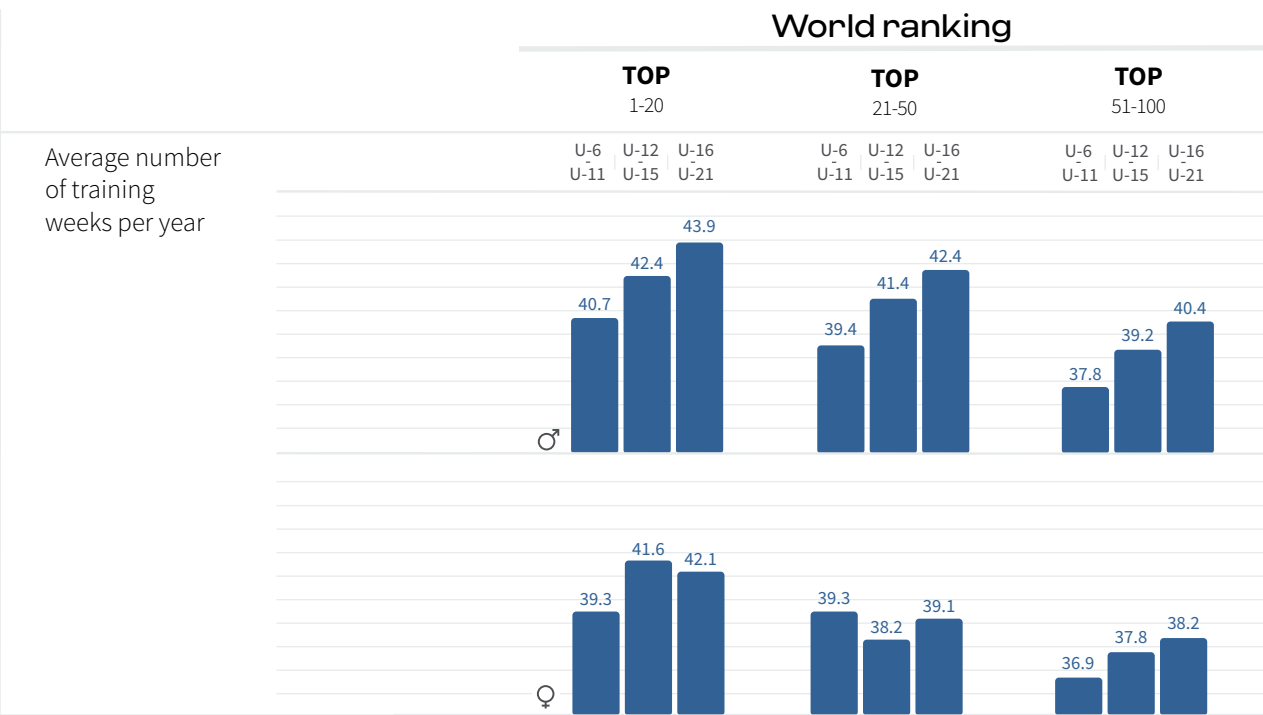
Training opportunities

Maximising the number of training opportunities and the contact time between a coach and a player leads to a great opportunity for development. The data below gives an overview of the training opportunities at academies across the top 100 MAs for both boys and girls.

Academies in the top 20 MAs have the highest number of training weeks per season.

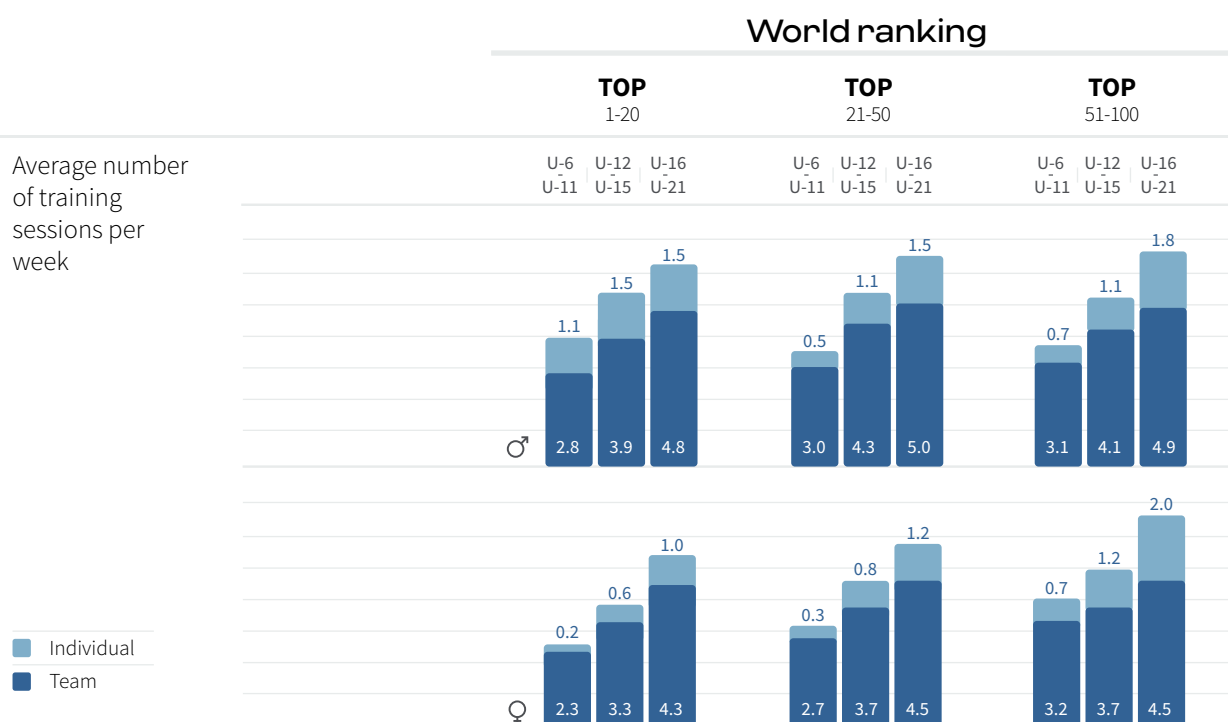
136 | The graphs below show the average number of training weeks per year and the average number of training sessions per week. In general, boys have more training weeks than girls (on average 39.0 weeks for boys compared to 37.9 weeks for girls). For both genders, the academies in the top 20 MAs have significantly more training weeks than the lower-ranked countries. There are also some significant differences in the average number of training weeks between the confederations.

Illustration 5.4



With an average of 5.3 training sessions per week, boys have an average of 206.7 training opportunities per year (team and individual sessions together). At girls' academies, the average sum of team and individual training sessions per week is 4.7, giving them an average of 178.1 training opportunities per year. As presented in the table below, there are significant differences in training opportunities between boys' and girls academies' along all phases of the pathway. On the other hand, it is only on the girls' side that there are significant differences in the training opportunities in the top 20 MAs and the lower-ranked associations.

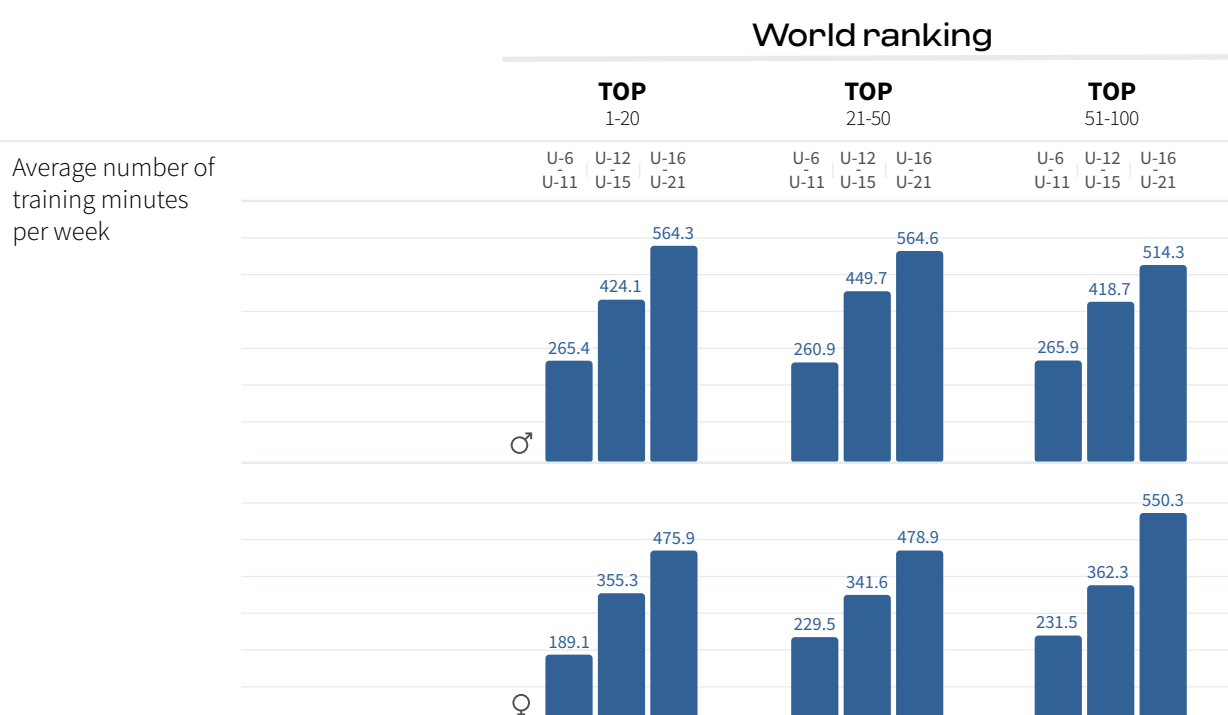
Illustration 5.5



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The graph below shows that this also translates into a training volume that is significantly higher for boys than for girls. While boys have an average of 423.7 training minutes per week, the average for girls is slightly lower (396.1 training minutes per week).

Illustration 5.6



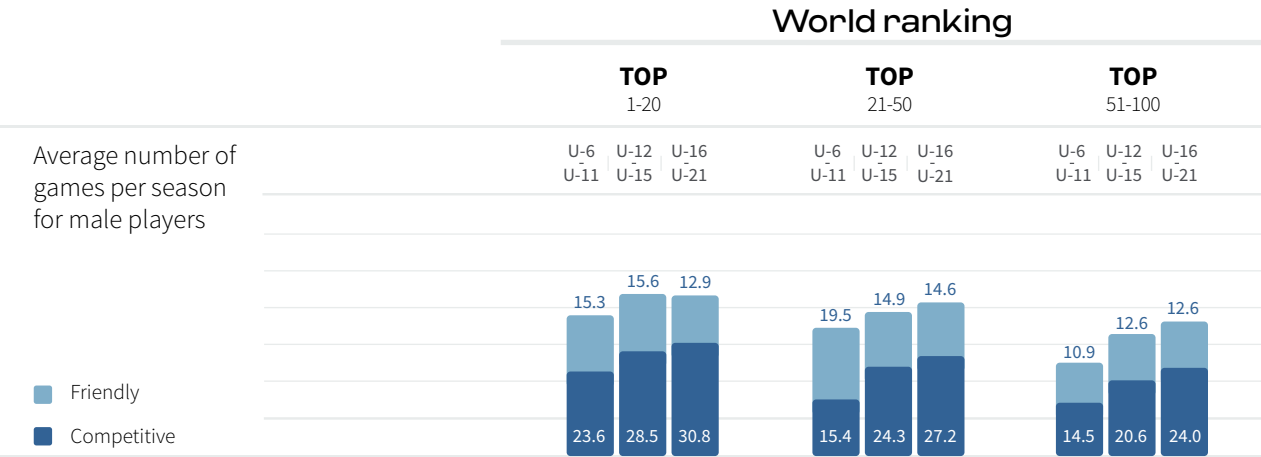
In general, individual training sessions are not frequently organised. This is an area for improvement for both boys’ and girls’ academies, including those in the top 20 MAs.

Playing opportunities

Game time and playing opportunities are crucial for the development of players, no matter at what age. The data below gives an insight into the playing opportunities at academies across the top 100 MAs for both boys and girls.

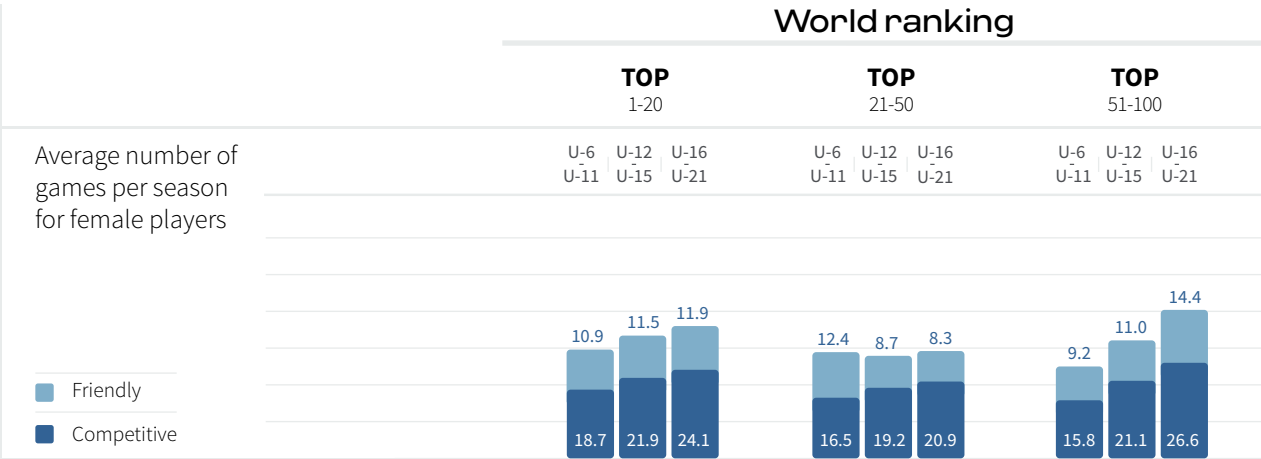
Boys at academies in the top 20 MAs play more meaningful games per season, particularly in regular competitions.

The graph below shows the average number of games per season, regular competition matches and friendlies combined for boys in the three main phases of the pathway. The number of competition games appears to differ significantly for the boys’ academies in the higher-ranked MAs, whereby clear differences can be noted between the different confederations. In addition, it is clear that clubs (in comparison to the other organisation types) offer the most opportunities to play enough meaningful matches over a season.



In general, there are fewer playing opportunities for girls, mainly due to a significantly lower number of matches at girls’ academies.

Below is a similar graph for girls’ academies. Among these, the differences in the number of matches appear to be less pronounced between the top-ranked MAs and the rest. On the other hand, it is clear that there are fewer (competitive) matches for girls compared to boys, especially in the higher-ranked MAs. This applies not only to competitive matches, but also to friendlies.



### Typical academy structures and pathways

- In order to be able to give sufficient individual attention to all players, also in team sessions, it is important that the average player/coach ratio is no higher than 10 in the younger age groups and no higher than 11 in the oldest phase.
- It is vital that sufficient training opportunities are spread over the week. These training sessions can also be individualised.
- Overall, with an average of 262 training sessions (team and individual sessions together), a boy in the oldest phase (U-16+) has significantly more training opportunities per year than a girl in the same age group, who has an average of 224 sessions per year.
- Playing a sufficient number of meaningful games is also vital. It is striking that there are significantly more competitive matches in the top 20 MAs, perhaps because in this group most academies belong to a club. In the oldest phase (U-16+), there are an average of 30.8 competitive games, a number that drops to 27.2 in the MAs ranked between 21 and 51, and to 23.9 in MAs ranked between 51 and 100.

### 5.3 Overall evaluation of the academies

The capacity and performance of any talent development system are dependent on the availability of appropriate resources like staff, infrastructure and technology. Besides this, structures, strategies and procedures have to be properly designed and aligned to execute the managerial, football-specific and supporting processes in an efficient way. Permanent monitoring of the implementation and the output is key to effective talent development.

In the in-depth analysis of the leading academies, 230 criteria were checked to evaluate these critical success factors. In the Double Pass model, these are related to 12 key areas or dimensions over four main components: management, football, support and resources. Research at the University of Brussels resulted in a selection of 74 international standards that have a significant impact on the productivity of an academy. Although these factors have not been validated for other academy structures (such as centres of excellence and schools), we used them as a guideline to analyse the actual status of the academies in the different countries.

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### Leading academies in higher-ranked MAs have a higher fulfilment ratio for the international standards.

With an average of 66% of fulfilled international standards, the leading academies in the top 20 MAs have significantly higher scores than those in the MAs ranked between 21 and 50 (53%) and those in the MAs between 51 and 100 (46%). In general, with an average fulfilment ratio of 51%, boys' academies score higher than girls' (43%). For the few mixed academies in our sample, the fulfilment ratio of 50% is similar to that of the boys' academies. It is important to note that this objective analysis is only based on the selected leading academies per MA.

Illustration 5.9

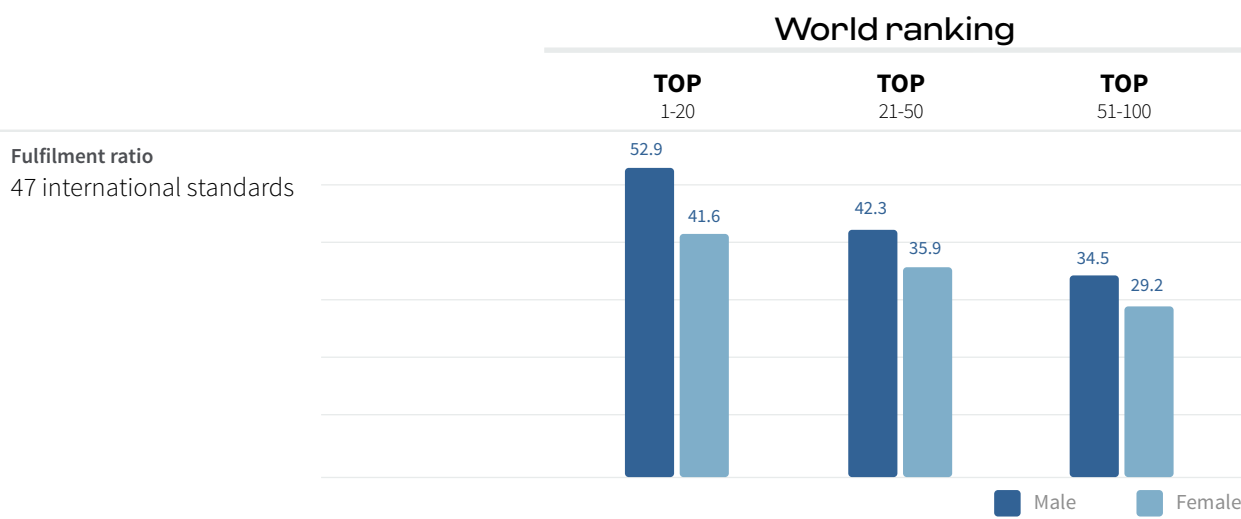
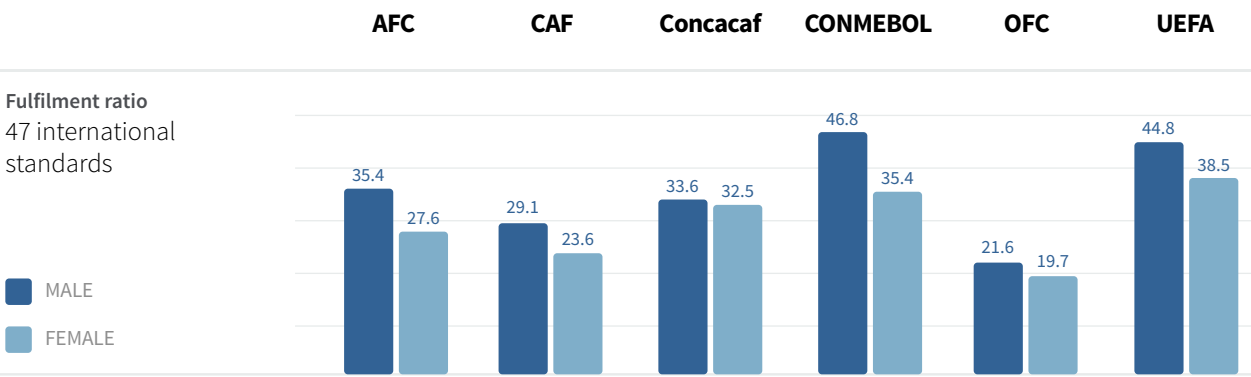
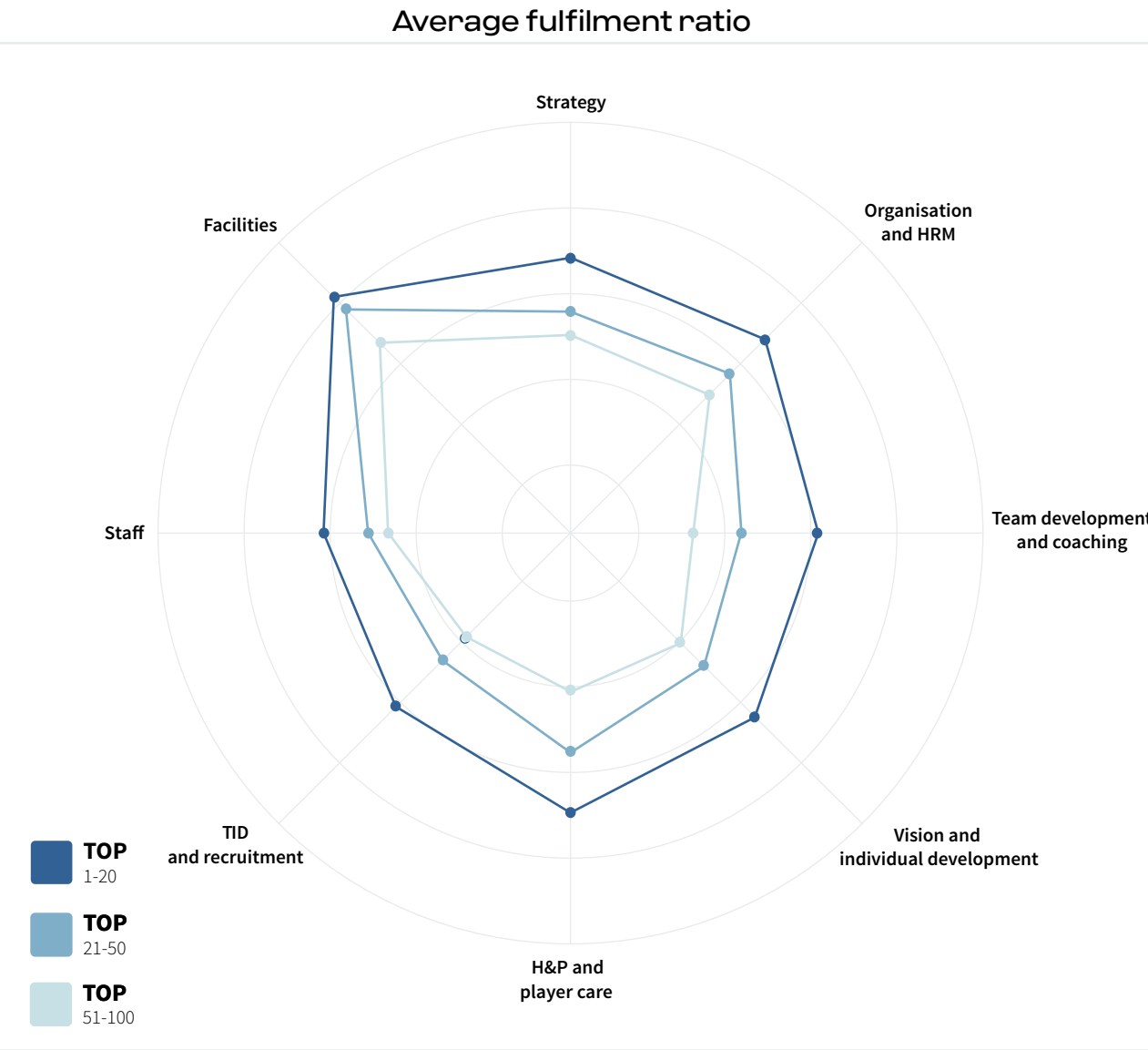


Illustration 5.10



The radar diagram below shows the average fulfilment ratio of the leading academies in the MAs in the top 20, in those ranked between 21 and 50, and in those ranked between 51 and 100 on the different dimensions. With the exception of facilities and organisation, it is noticeable that the hierarchy of the world ranking is respected in all dimensions in terms of higher fulfilment ratios for academies in the higher-ranked MAs. If boys' and girls' academies are compared, the greatest differences are in the supporting services (health & performance, player care, and TID and recruitment) and the resources (staff and facilities), where the boys' academies tend to perform better.

Illustration 5.11





## 5.4 Management

Long-term success in talent development and academy management requires a clear strategy and structure to create the right setting and culture. The analysis of these three management-related dimensions (strategy, organisation and HRM) provides a clear picture of the potential for further business growth.

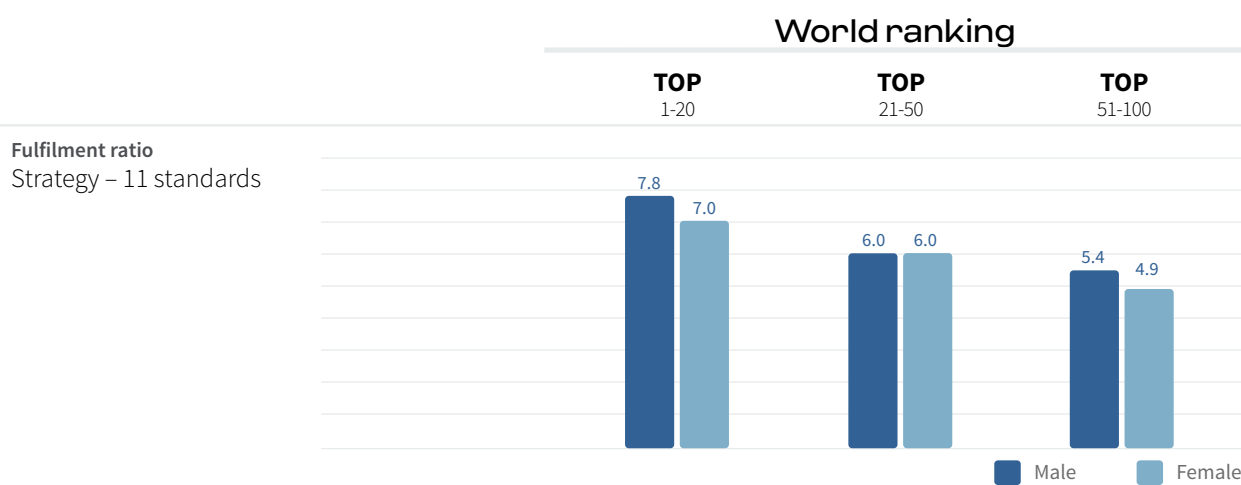
### Strategy

This dimension analyses the different elements of a strategic road map for the academy. For instance, we evaluated whether there is a sustainable vision for the football business model and if a strategic role for the academy is present. In addition, this dimension examined whether the mission and vision are translated into strategic objectives and operational goals. Lastly, we also checked whether performance targets are monitored as a measure to evaluate the effectiveness of action plans.

**The best-performing academies work more purposefully, with sharply defined targets (KPIs) that are continuously monitored.**

The leading academies in MAs in the upper reaches of the FIFA world ranking fulfil more standards for strategy, whereas the global average is about half of the 11 selected standards. Although the boys' academies appear to score slightly higher, no significant differences can be established between boys and girls.

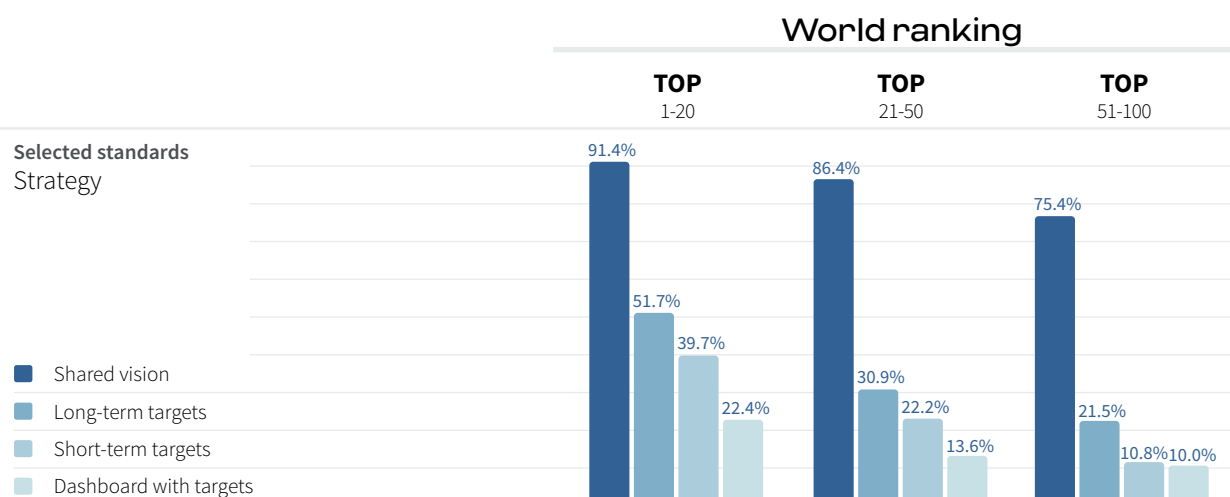
Illustration 5.12



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Most of the organisations have a shared vision regarding talent development. A few have defined strategic objectives for the academy and have translated these into operational goals. Only 10% of the academies monitor their performance targets on a permanent basis.

Illustration 5.13

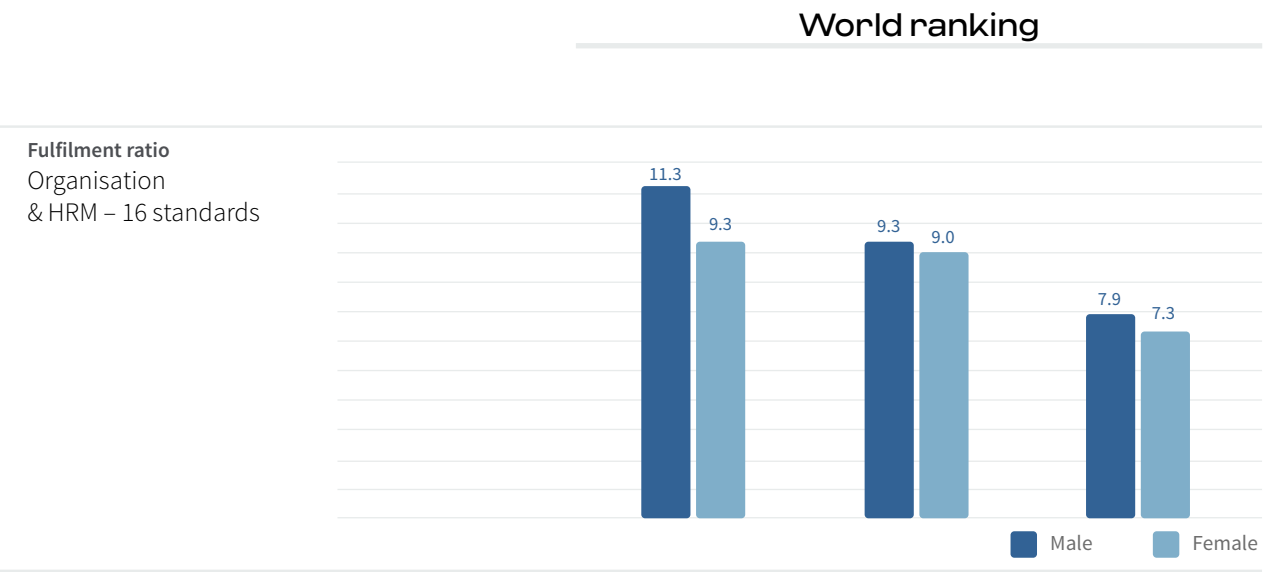


Organisation and HRM

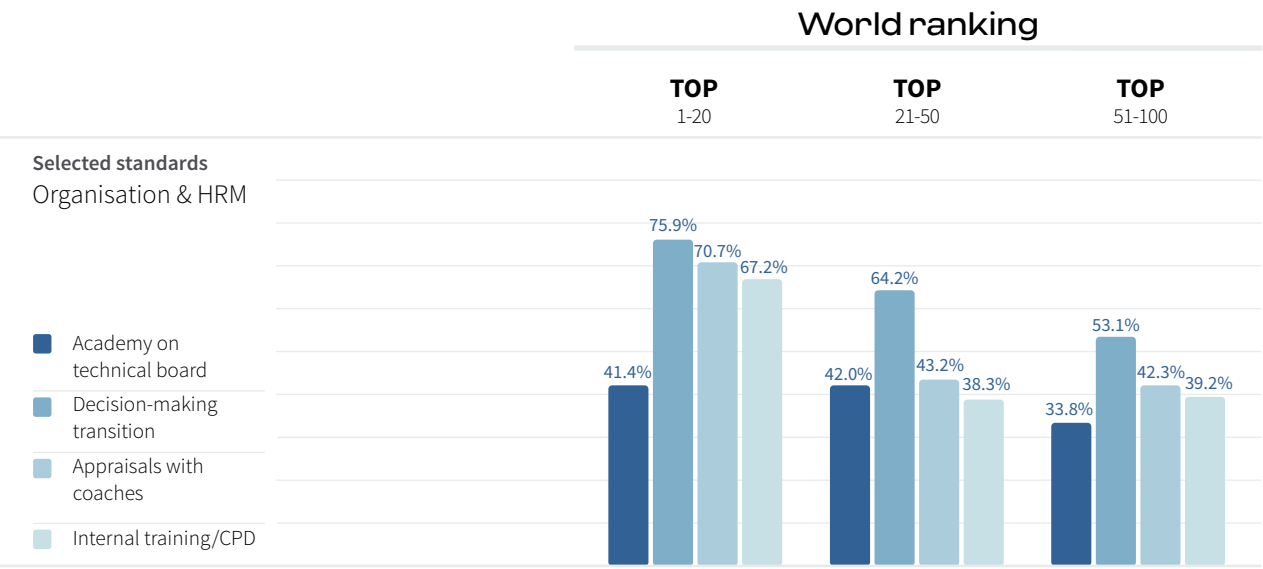
In these dimensions, the focus is on the position of the academy in the organisational set-up and the potential as a learning environment. This analysis examines whether there is a clear decision-making model or committee structure that covers the strategic planning process of the organisation and the different key areas. Additionally, it identifies whether the performance of the academy staff is monitored and evaluated by observing their contribution to the overarching objectives, and lastly whether continuous improvement is guaranteed at all levels.

The academy management of the most productive academies is better positioned in the decision-making model.

While there appears to be little difference between the top 50 MAs in terms of organisation, it is clear that the leading academies in the top 20 MAs have a higher fulfilment ratio for human resources or people management.



Although a decision-making process has been outlined for the transition of players at more than half of the academies, we noted that the academy management is formally involved in the technical board of the organisation in only a minority of cases. HR activities such as performance appraisals and professional development of staff seem to be implemented better in the top 20 MAs, in particular for boys' academies.



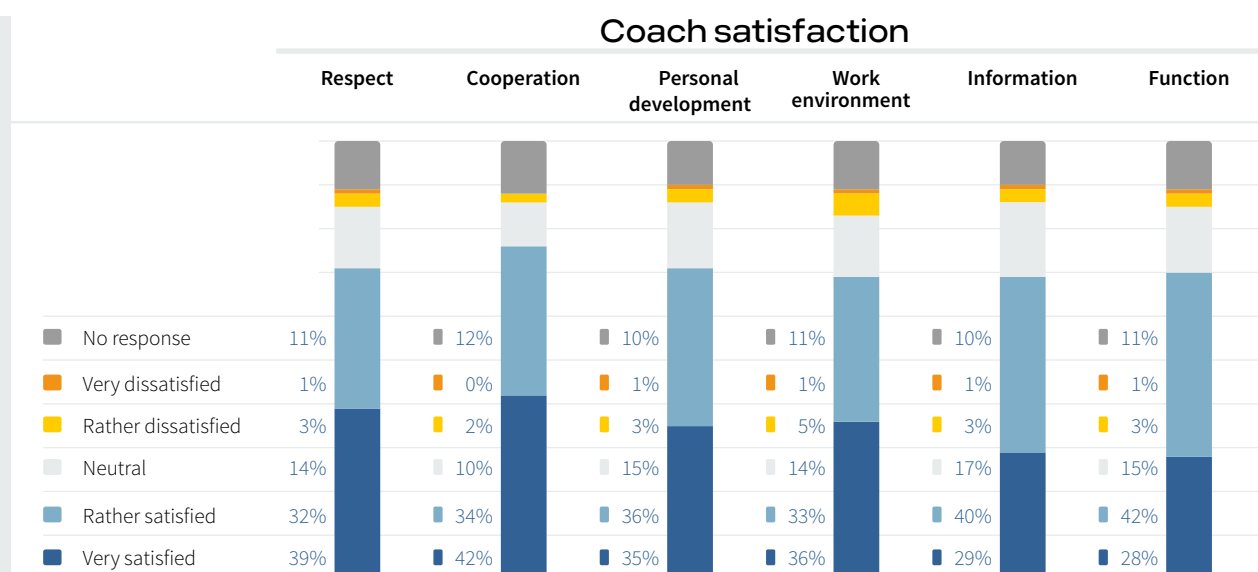
### Coach satisfaction survey

A well-functioning HR policy should result in more satisfied and better-performing staff members. For this, we conducted a coach satisfaction survey on the key factors: the function, the extent to which one is informed, the colleagues, the work environment, the possibilities for personal development and the respect one receives.

**Coach satisfaction can be considered a key performance indicator for a successful HR policy and a well-managed academy.**

The graph below shows to what extent the coaches at the participating academies are satisfied with these aspects. These results are quite similar for boys and girls, even across the different types of organisations and confederations.

Illustration 5.16



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### Management-related aspects

- It is crucial to define a long-term strategy and to monitor KPIs related to player production and return on investment.
- The academy has to be involved in the senior management and technical board to discuss strategic football-related topics.
- Performance analysis has to be implemented by means of a coaching competency framework with specific criteria related to the football and coaching philosophy.

## 5.5 Football

The football programme is at the heart of any academy. Team development examines how the football philosophy is translated into a curriculum to develop the desired player profiles for the professional game. This must guide the coaching staff on how to put the football philosophy into practice. The individual development of players focuses on maximising the football potential of each individual player and providing them with a clear pathway to professional football.

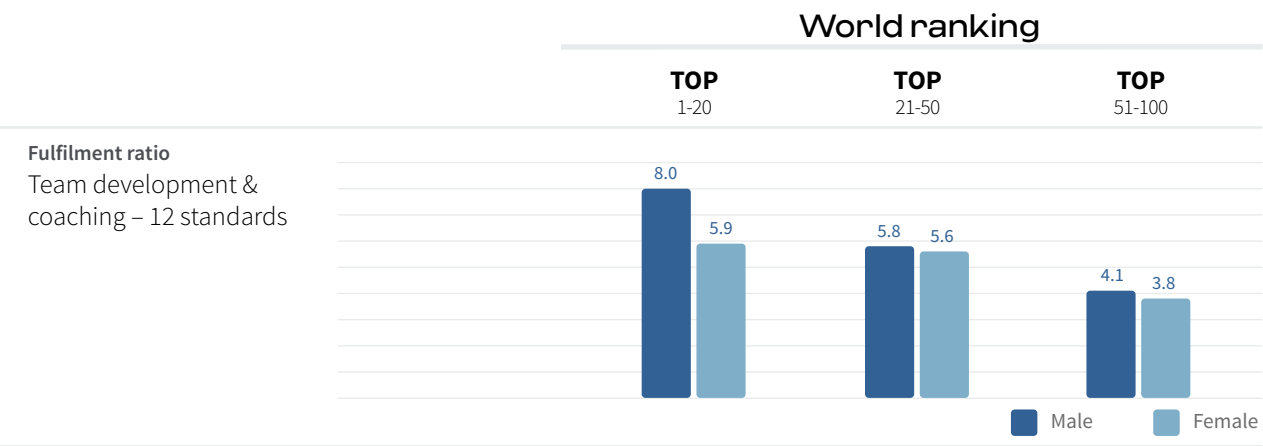
### Team development and coaching

This dimension analyses whether there is a well-defined football philosophy, including a style of play that represents the identity of the organisation on the pitch. In addition, we examined whether there is a football curriculum to inform coaches about what to focus on in different age groups, and lastly, whether there is a preferred methodology and coaching DNA that translates football theory into practice.

The higher-ranked MAs have better-defined football and coaching philosophies at their leading academies.

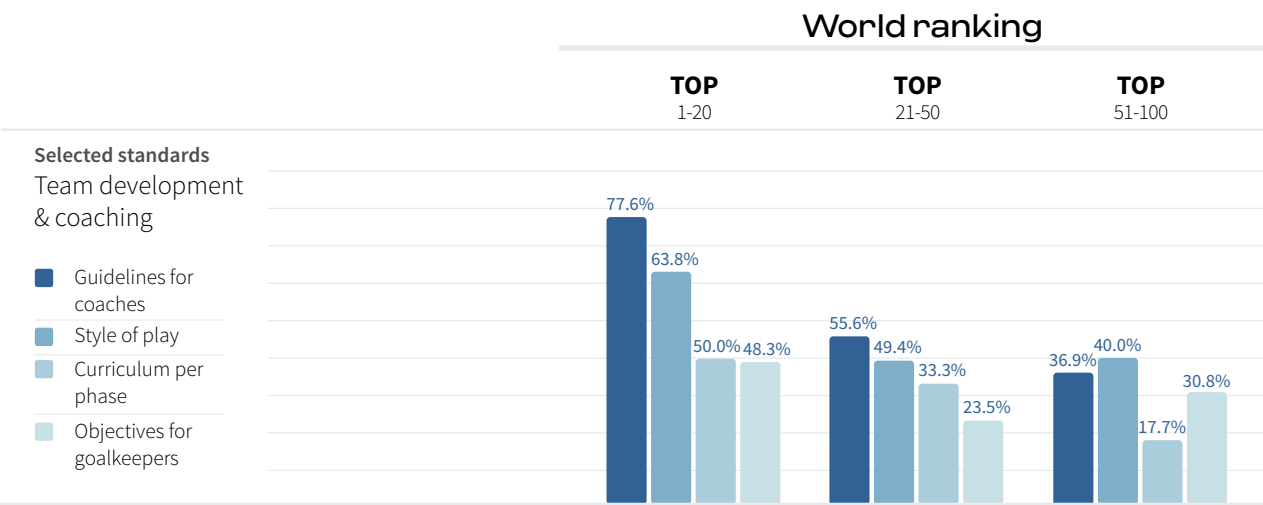
The academies in higher-ranked MAs in the FIFA world ranking fulfil more standards for team development and coaching, especially on the boys’ side. Nevertheless, the overall average is less than half of the 12 selected standards, which means that the football philosophy still has to be created or better documented to give more guidance to the coaches.

Illustration 5.17



When we focus on some of these standards, we see that most of the leading academies have a defined style of play. These numbers systematically decrease when we look at how this is translated into a curriculum, with objectives for the different phases (including goalkeepers) and concrete guidelines for coaches in terms of a session, exercise and coaching DNA.

Illustration 5.18



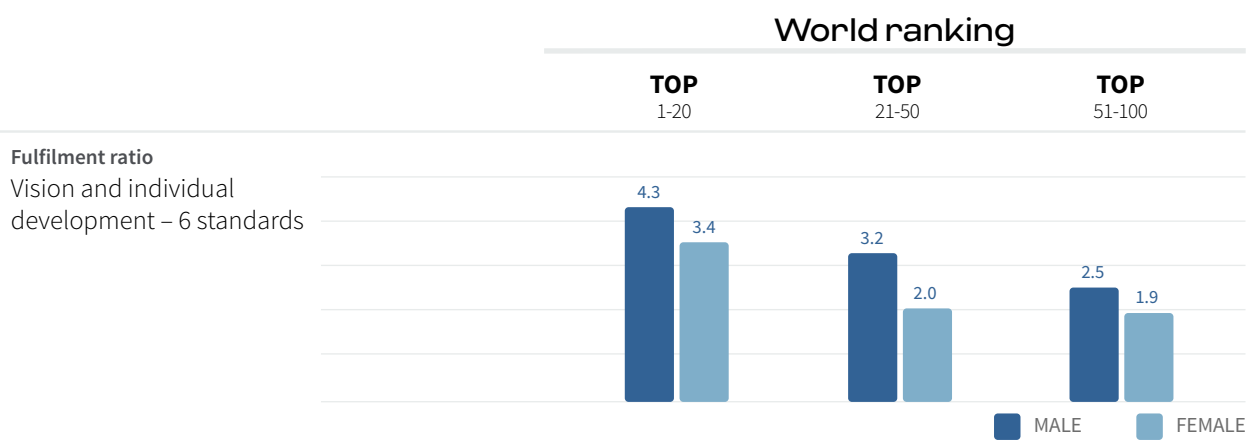
Vision for talent development and individual development

In this section, the individual development of a player is examined, focusing on the efforts made by the academy to maximise each player’s football potential. Firstly, we looked at how player profiles are translated into individual key qualities. Next, we analysed how players are individually screened and evaluated, and how individual programmes and action plans are implemented in daily practice. Lastly, we examined how young players are integrated into the professional environment, with a focus on the completion of their individual development.

## The best-performing academies focus more on the individual development of their top talents.

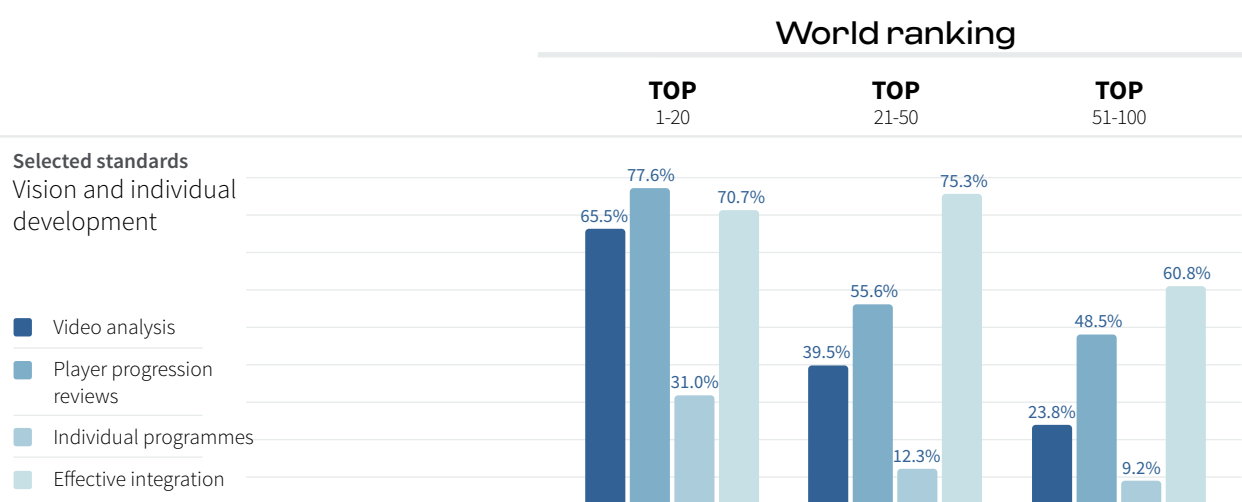
For these dimensions, there are significant differences between boys' and girls' academies, as well as between the MA groupings based on the FIFA world ranking.

Illustration 5.19



The following illustration explains some of the differences in the individual approach towards talent development at the leading academies in different MAs. It is clear that only a few academies work with individual programmes for their players, mostly in the top 20 MAs.

Illustration 5.20



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### Football programme of the academies

- Team development starts with a clear football philosophy representing the DNA of the academy and the MA. It is important to monitor the implementation all over the pathway, which is still all too rare.
- Step-by-step individual player development receives more attention, but it must be further professionalised in many cases.
- It is important that the progression and performance of each individual player is regularly evaluated and discussed with a multidisciplinary coaching team. This forms, among other things, the basis of individual programmes and action plans.
- It is clear that technology, such as video analysis, is used significantly more by the leading academies of the top 20 MAs. There is also a difference between boys' and girls' academies, with the former using it more frequently.



5.6 Support

In any high-performance environment, it is important to provide young talent with professional support, both on and off the pitch. Because of the increasing physical and mental load, a health and performance programme should be in place to ensure that players are healthy and ready to perform. Besides this, academies are also responsible for the social welfare and personal development of these youngsters. Another department that supports the coaching staff is TID and Recruitment.

Health & performance and player care

These dimensions focus on the holistic perspective of player development. They examine how the physical fitness and mental performance of academy players are developed and monitored. We also checked whether a protocol for injury prevention, treatment and return to play is in place. Besides this, we evaluated how the academy gives support to its players in combining elite football with their studies and how top talents are prepared for a life as a professional football player.

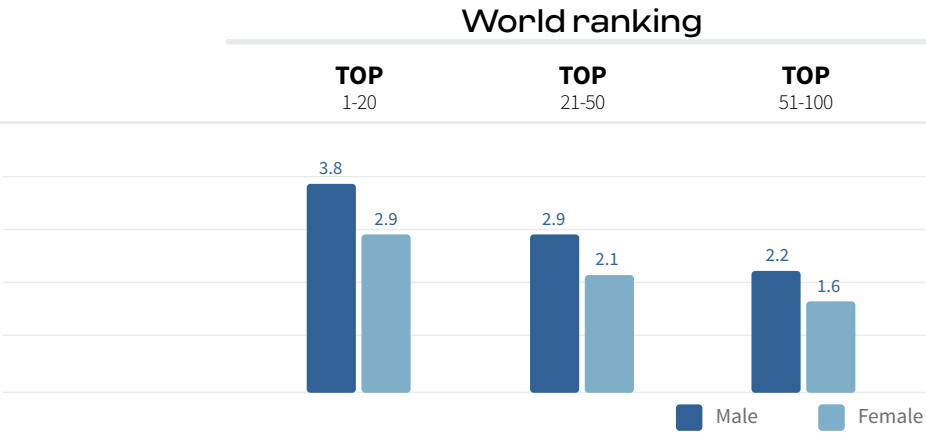
In any high-performance environment, it is important to provide young talent with professional support, both on and off the pitch.

In this analysis, only a few basic criteria were evaluated regarding health & performance and player care. Nevertheless, we found that, on average, only half of these criteria are met by the leading academies in the top 50 MAs. Moreover, significant differences are also noticeable here between boys' and girls' academies.

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Illustration 5.21

Fulfilment ratio  
H&P and player care –  
5 standards

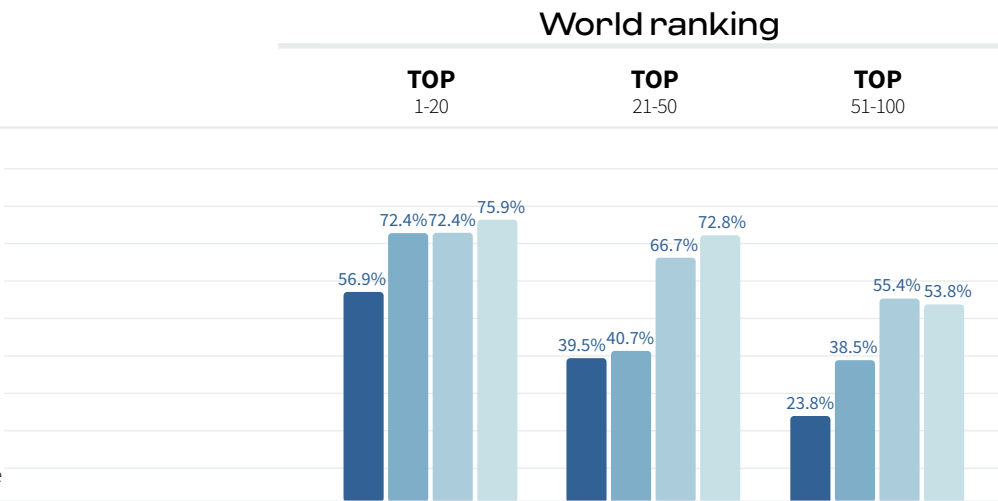


The graph below shows the fulfilment ratio of four international standards regarding these supporting procedures. Academies in the top 50 MAs seem to score higher on these standards, especially for boys' academies.

Illustration 5.22

Selected standards  
H&P and player care

- Medical examination
- Physical screening
- Monitoring training load
- Life skills programme



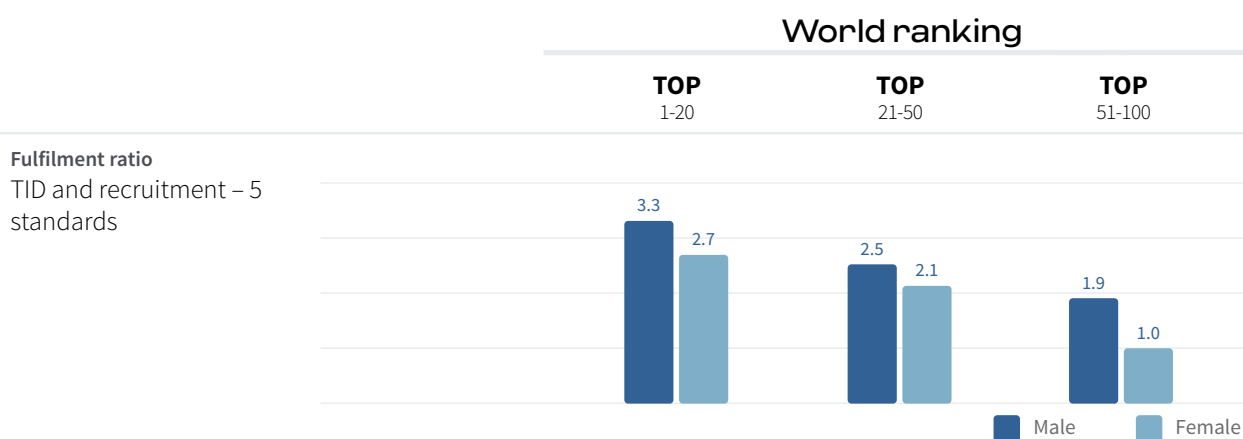
## TID and recruitment

This section analyses the academy's strategy for identifying and recruiting the best available talent for its football programme. It examines whether there is a shared vision on talent, defining the process of talent identification and whether the academy has a network of scouts who are aligned with the coaching staff.

### TID and recruitment is a key area with room for improvement in most MAs, for both boys and girls.

The graph for this dimension follows a similar pattern to those for the previous dimensions of support. This means that there are clear differences between boys' and girls' academies, as well as between the MA groupings based on the FIFA world ranking.

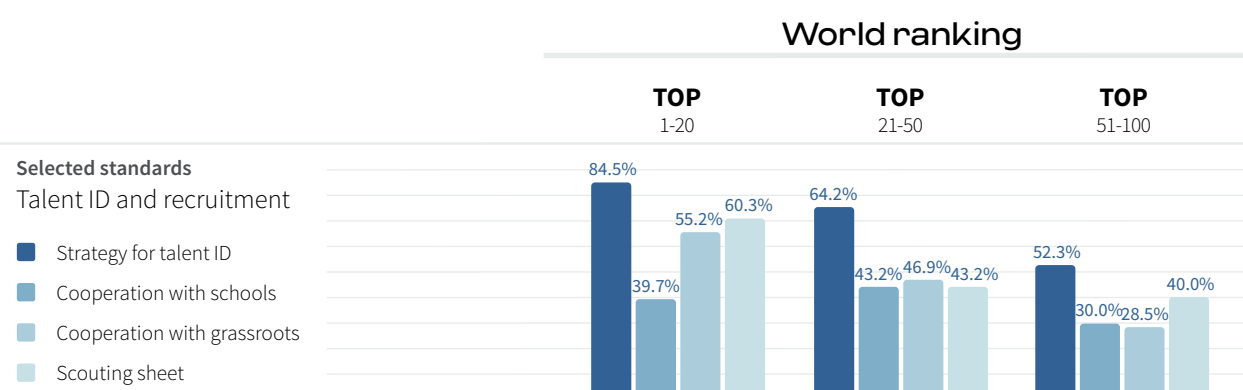
Illustration 5.23



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About half of the leading academies in the participating countries have a clear strategy for talent identification and recruitment. The graph below shows the number of cases in which the scouting strategy is translated into partnerships and concrete guidelines for scouting staff. For these items, a significant difference can be seen between the top 50 MAs and the rest.

Illustration 5.24



## Support-related dimensions

- Academies play a crucial role in talent identification, and it is important that they maintain excellent relationships with grassroots clubs and school football.
- Because of the increasing physical and mental load, a health and performance programme should be in place to ensure that these young players are healthy and ready to perform. It is clear that more needs to be invested in this area, especially at girls' academies.

5.7 Resources

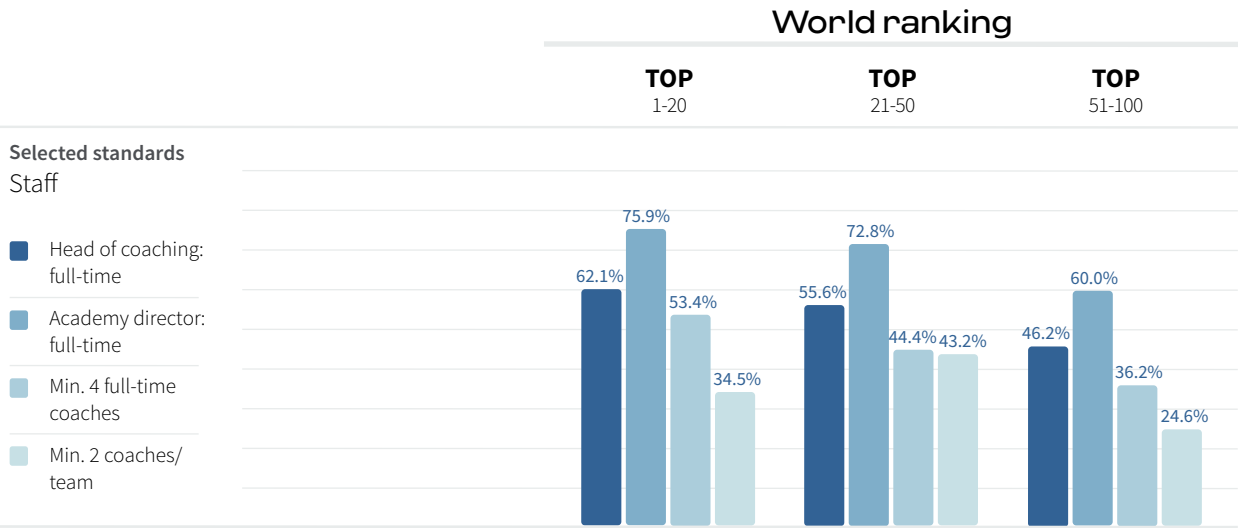
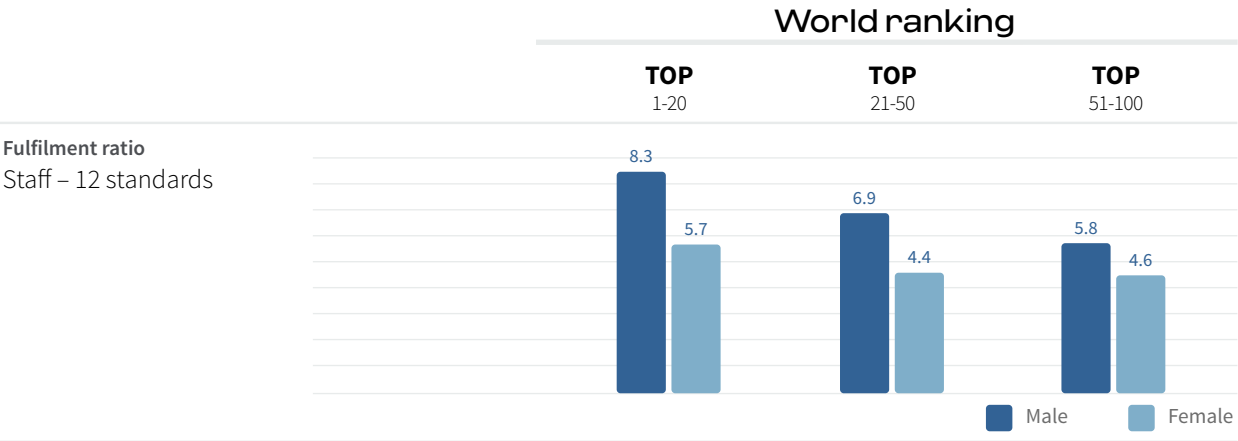
One fundamental aspect that largely determines the capacity of any professional academy is the availability of sufficient resources in terms of people and infrastructure. The people aspect deals with the availability of qualified and specialised staff. Infrastructure focuses on the facilities for both players and staff. Both dimensions are directly dependent on the budget spent on the academy.

Staffing

This section is about the level of specialisation of the academy staff. It explores whether leadership roles are fulfilled in an exclusive manner, and examines the size and composition of the coaching staff. Additionally, it addresses aspects such as whether coaches are sufficiently qualified and experienced to fulfil their roles and whether there are specialists available to support specific aspects of player development.

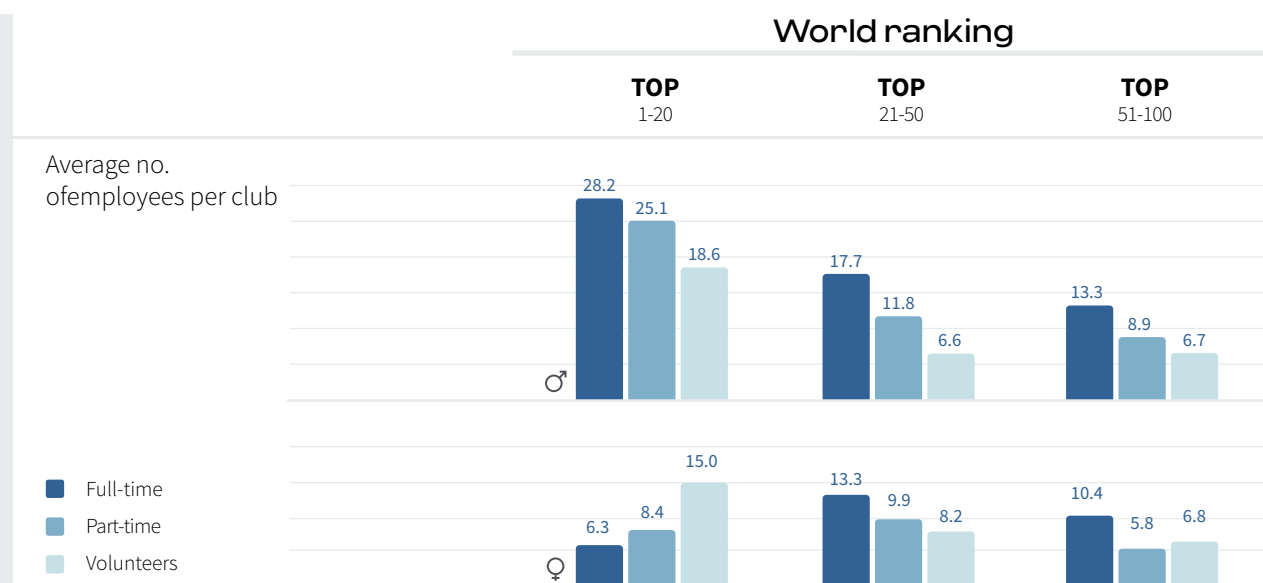
**The level of specialisation of the coaching and support staff is significantly higher at boys' academies, especially in the top 50 MAs.**

While the majority of leading academies have a full-time academy director, we also noticed that half of them do not have a head of coaching who works full-time for the academy. The same applies to the coaching staff, as we found that only the leading academies in the top 20 MAs have at least four full-time coaches for their academy teams or at least two qualified coaches per age group.



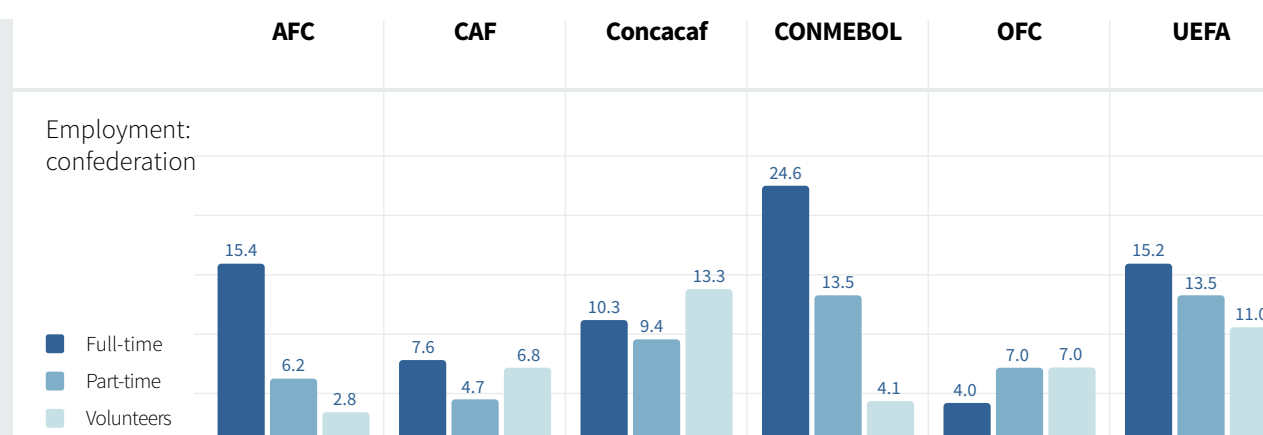
When we focus on employment status, we can conclude that academies in the top 20 MAs have, on average, more full-time, more part-time and more volunteer staff members. However, this only applies to boys' academies as there are significantly fewer full-time and part-time staff at girls' academies.

Illustration 5.27



The graph below shows that there are also significant differences in employment between the different confederations.

Illustration 5.28



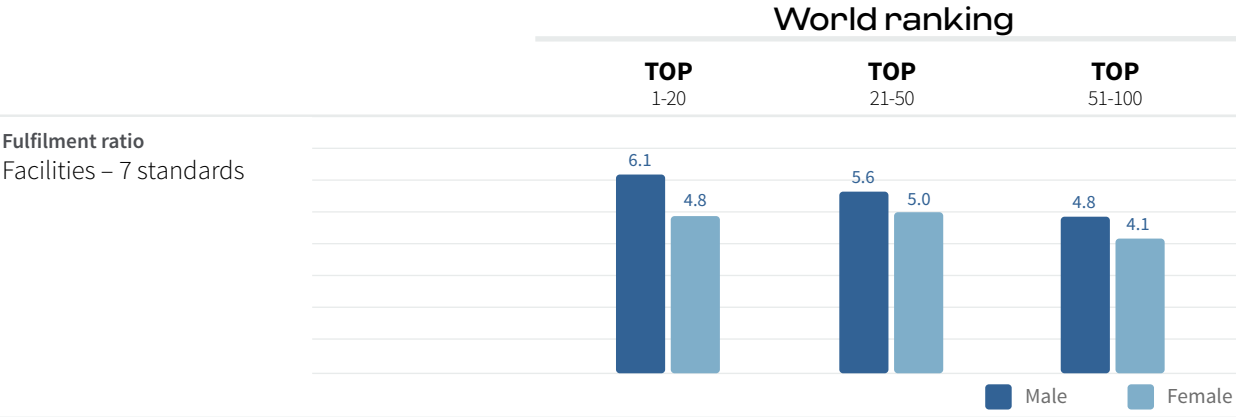
## Infrastructure

This section is about the physical setting of the academy in terms of facilities for players and staff. We examined whether there is a centralised location for all academy activities, and whether academy teams have sufficient access to high-quality pitches and other training facilities. Lastly, we considered whether academy staff have access to a modern and functional work environment.

**It seems that the minimum requirements regarding facilities are available for most academies, especially in the top 50 MAs. However, the main difference may lie in the quality of these facilities.**

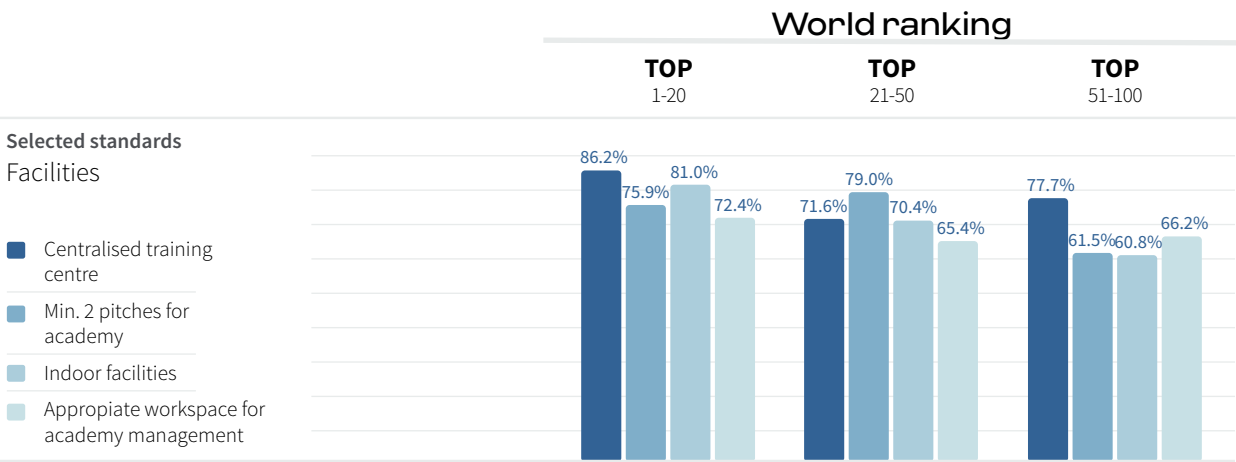
In general, we observed relatively high scores for the availability of specific infrastructure, in all cases with significantly higher scores for boys compared to girls. It was noticeable that academies in Europe (UEFA) have significantly higher scores for this dimension, compared to most of the other confederations. After all, the focus was more on the availability, rather than on the quality of the facilities, which could not be evaluated on-site because of COVID-19.

Illustration 5.29



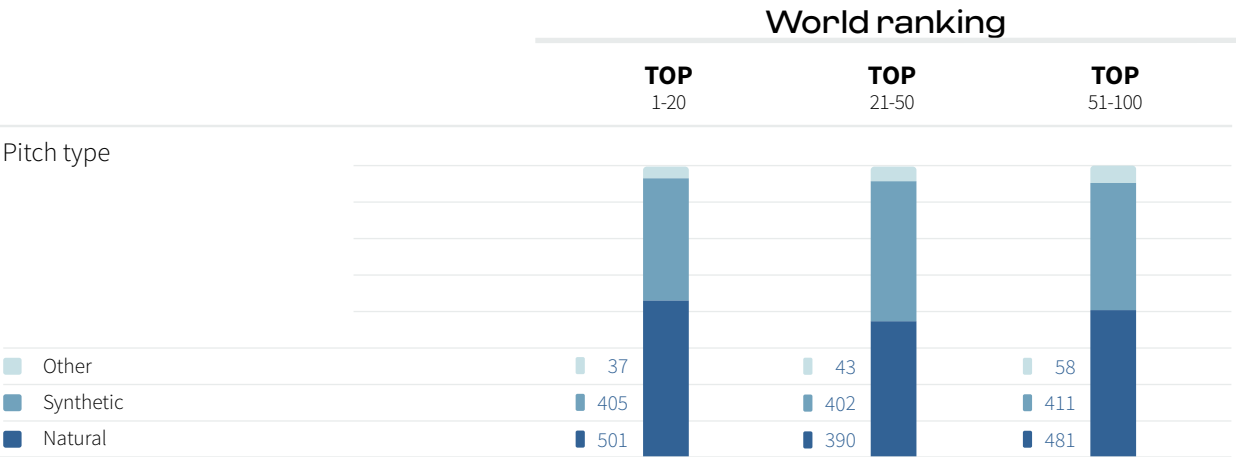
Most of the leading academies in each MA have access to a centralised training centre with a minimum of two pitches for the academy. In most cases, they also have access to indoor facilities for strength and conditioning.

Illustration 5.30



About half of the pitches for the academy teams are made of natural grass, which is almost on a par with synthetic surfaces. In all, two thirds of the academies have a synthetic grass pitch available.

Illustration 5.31



**Staffing and facilities of the academies**

- Further investment in the professionalisation of the academy leadership is required. Separating the roles of academy director and head of coaching is an important point to address, especially at girls’ academies.
- Academies in the top 20 MAs have significantly more full-time and part-time staff available. This is visible in the management, coaching and support staff.







## Academies

# Recommendations

- Incentives provided by the MA should be linked to a quality assurance system that sets specific standards to be met by academies/training centres, ensuring they are continuously following good practice in their daily operations. A licence or certification system can stimulate investment in talent development and optimise the academy system. Moreover, this would guide talents to the best-performing training centres.
- Define a talent development strategy at MA level to promote a “best v. best” approach and expose the top talents of each country to a more varied and challenging games programme. In addition, create a standardised competition format, linked to the output of a certification system, and expand the games programme to provide more meaningful games. Finally, consider installing a ‘Futures Programme’ for the youth national teams so that late developers are also exposed to international competition along their development pathway.
- Provide online or on-site educational opportunities for academy directors (and the entire academy staff and coaches) to ensure that they systematically cover all aspects of running an elite academy (e.g. club and academy management, football, health and performance, TID and recruitment) and focus on long-term player development. In this way, formalised planning and evaluation of academy performance may receive more attention and focus.
- Promote the role of head of coaching and educate individuals in this role about how to create and implement a consistent football philosophy and age-specific curricula through a comprehensive coaching competency framework. By doing so, various football development philosophies can be implemented and monitored more effectively.
- Encourage academies to implement a coaching competency framework with specific criteria around their coaching philosophy. Ideally, this should be supported by a structured and objective analysis of training content and coaching practice. Additionally, apply performance analysis in the field of continuous professional development of coaches more consistently. Make sure that coaches’ performance reviews are supported by objective analysis of their delivery within their club setting.

- Define a long-term strategy for each academy/training centre and embrace management tools to monitor KPIs related to player production and return on investment. Encourage clubs to have a technical board structure with representation of the first team and academy to provide a solid platform for the evaluation of KPIs linked to talent development and for structuring the transition process for young players joining the club's first team.
- Support the clubs to create and document a detailed football philosophy with a DNA to provide a clear reference for the development of youth players and the club. Consider a link to a national philosophy that is structured by the MA. This could be developed into a digital playbook connected to the curriculum and implemented across age groups. Install a monitoring system to obtain permanent and detailed feedback on the implementation of these principles.
- Emphasise the concept of individual player development within a team setting in coach education and in the daily work of academies. In this way, existing training programmes could be tailored to the needs of the players with the highest potential. This may be achieved through recognising and sharing best practice amongst football practitioners in a well-organised way and by launching initiatives in cooperation with schools so that football contact time can be maximised.
- Install a nationwide system for the identification of talent for both genders. Make sure that professional clubs and academies are well connected and have a strong link with local schools and grassroots clubs.
- Invest into further developing the women's football landscape. The professionalisation of staff working at girls' academies, increased contact time with female players, and the promotion of a more balanced competition system are key action points within this area.
- Invest in the further professionalisation of academies/training centres in terms of the available infrastructure and human resources.

## 6. Education

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A holistic learning environment can raise both coach and talent development to new heights.

The talent development workforce across the country must be regularly upskilled to have an impact on creating an elite learning environment in which young players can develop and thrive. This impact can be felt across all levels, genders and age groups. To this effect, it is important that the education across all technical domains is up to date, challenging and appropriate for the demands of the modern game.

6.1 Management and strategy

The implementation of a nationwide coach education strategy is paramount for the development of a workforce that is capable of successfully delivering the MA’s long-term coaching and football development objectives. The most successful MAs have created discrete strategies and plans for the delivery of coach education across the country, at all levels of the game and for all coaching and support roles. These MAs recognise that a well-structured and executed education strategy can have a hugely positive impact on the growth and development of the game. Improvements in the quality of coaching have been shown to drive participation at grassroots level and increase the overall quality of player development at the elite level.

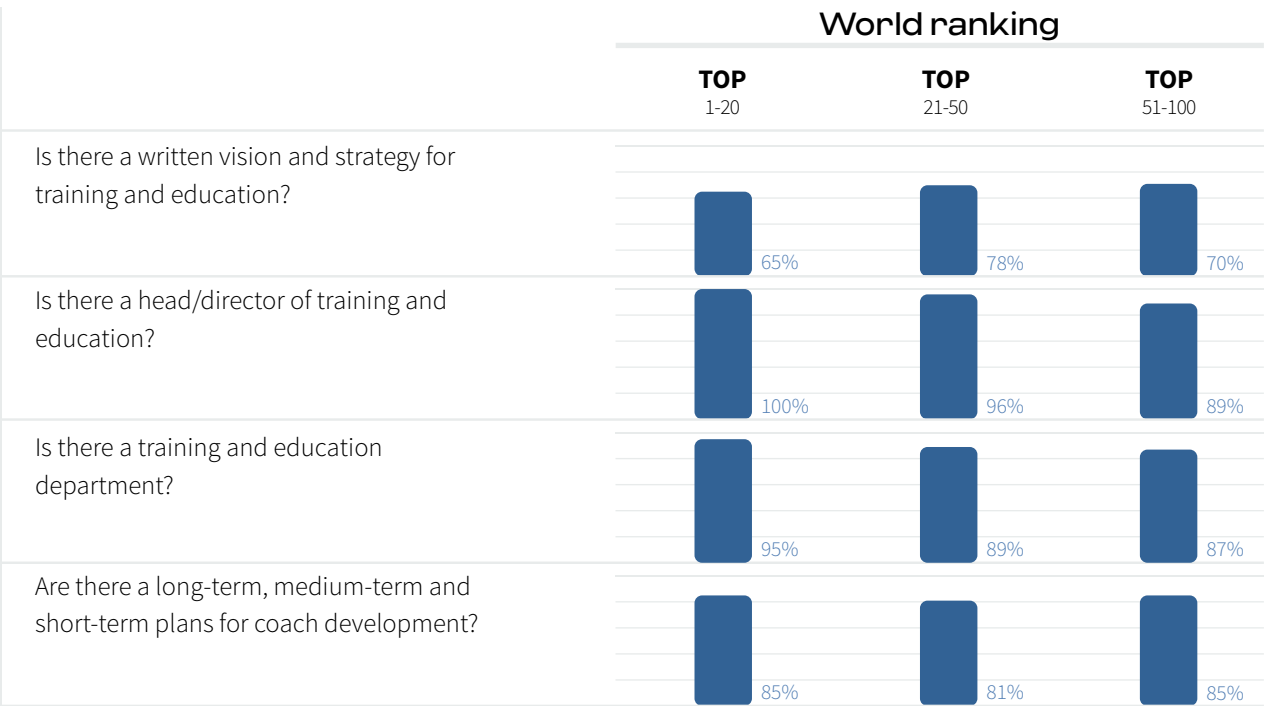
Structure

Almost all MAs in the top 100 employ a head of coach education whose job it is to oversee the management of the coach education department. Nearly all MAs also have an education and training department and strategic plans for the development of coaches. These structures across MAs provide a global coach education network which supports the development of coaching.

Approximately two thirds of the MAs in the top 100 have a strategy for training and education.

The vast majority of the top 100 MAs have a head/director of training and education, and a higher percentage of the top 20 MAs have a specific training and education department when compared to the MAs ranked from 51 to 100 (95% v. 87%). However, the numbers remain encouragingly high across all MAs. Overall, the higher-ranked MAs appear to have more resources. Nevertheless, the percentage of MAs in the top 20 that have a written vision and strategy is actually as low as 65%. This may indicate that MAs are less committed to long-term planning for development and innovation in the area of coach education.

Illustration 6.1



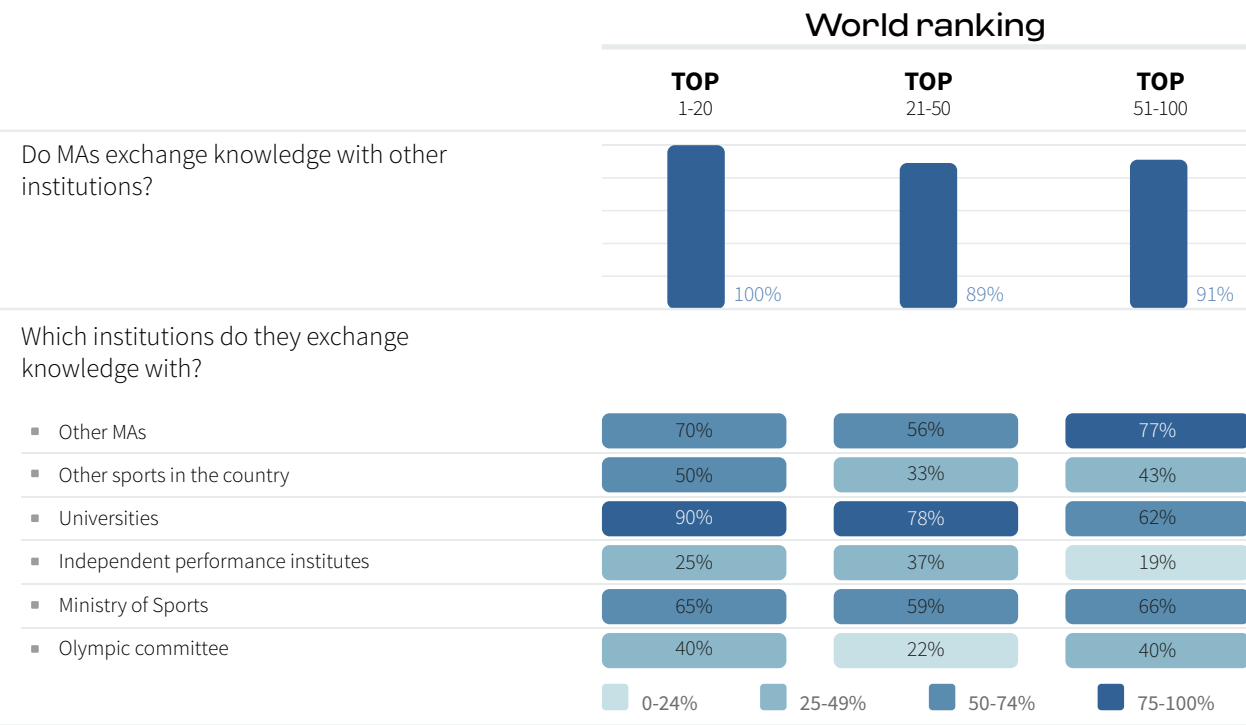
Collaboration

The technical and tactical challenges of the game continue to evolve rapidly. The challenge for football education is to develop strategies, establish curricula and deliver effective programmes which can support the development of coaches who are fully equipped to meet the changing demands of the modern game. New ideas in coach education are developed through research-based initiatives inside the MA’s coaching community and through a range of collaborations with institutions and individuals. No single institution possesses all the resources required to effect change and to develop football education, and there is strong evidence from our research to demonstrate that MAs are committed to many collaborations designed to extend their knowledge and understanding of the coaching process.



There is a strong commitment to collaboration between the top 100 MAs and external institutions.

Most of the top 100 MAs participate in the sharing of knowledge with external institutions (>89%). The 20 highest-ranked MAs collaborate with more institutions than their lower-ranked counterparts, and more of the top 20 MAs collaborate with universities, other MAs and the Ministry of Sports (90%, 70% and 65% respectively).



The national education strategy

- The best coach education strategies and plans set smart targets in terms of the number and quality of coaches, technical leaders and specialists to be developed each season.
- The coach education strategy should be linked to the wider performance, development and participation objectives of the national performance plan.
- The coach education strategy needs to be regularly and systematically reviewed, and the curriculum should be updated to reflect developments in the game. Innovative learning methods also need to be embraced, especially the use of online resources and virtual learning, which have become much more prevalent since the COVID-19 pandemic began.
- In many MAs, the coach education programme is not restricted to confederation-recognised courses, but also includes a range of other locally licensed courses and professional development opportunities. Dedicated coach educators lead the strategy and deliver the programmes. In addition, many proactive elite clubs have created head of coaching/coach education roles which focus on training club coaches holistically.
- The objective of developing elite learning environments across clubs and throughout the MA is characterised by close collaborations with various education providers. These collaborations ensure that future developments in coaching are grounded in sound principles of pedagogy and andragogy.
- There is strong collaboration between MAs in the area of coach education, and the majority of MAs also forge collaborative knowledge-transfer relationships with universities and research institutions. There is less evidence of collaboration with other sports.
- There needs to be close cooperation between the MA and other key stakeholders, providing education to avoid the duplication of resources and also to try to ensure that learning opportunities are maximised through a wide range of programmes provided by each organisation.

6.2 Coach education

The effective development of the coaching workforce is a prerequisite for the growth of the game and the development of elite players within a country. Ideally, the MA's coach education strategy should be clearly defined and aligned with the coaching convention of its confederation. The coach education strategy should also meet the needs of nationally agreed policies designed to grow the long-term player development model and player pathways. The strategy should reflect the national playing philosophy, where this has been agreed.

A coaching workforce should understand the demands and challenges of the modern game, and create elite learning environments across clubs, academies and national teams. Developing a workforce with these attributes will directly enhance the development of young players across a region.

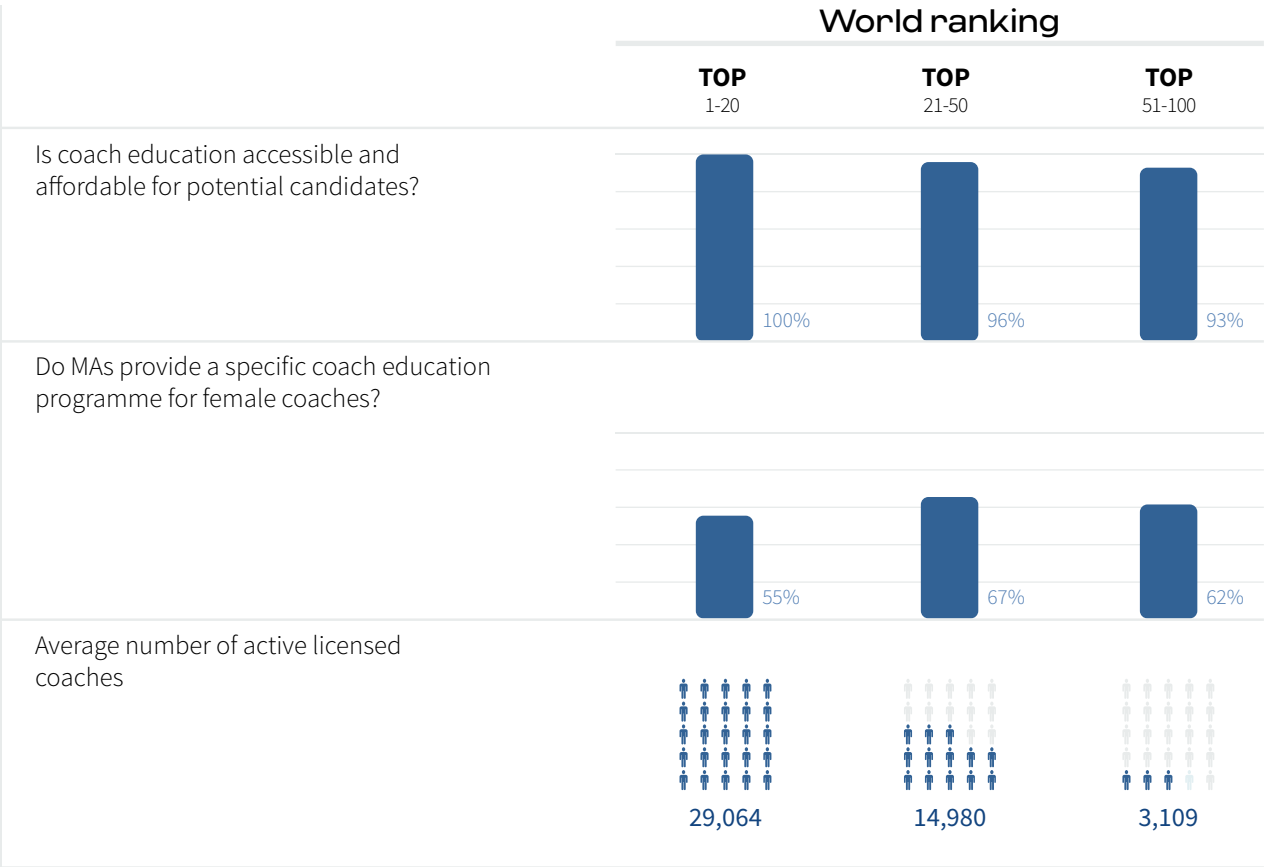
Coaching licence pathway and curriculum

An appealing and easily accessible route into the world of coaching as well as a progressive pathway through the coaching licence framework are two significant contributors to a country's emphasis on football education. In addition, a curriculum that trickles down from elite teams to the grassroots elicits effective coach and player development throughout.

**Coach education is widely affordable and accessible across the football ecosystem, although more opportunities need to be provided for female coaches.**

All MAs in the top 20 make training and education more accessible to potential candidates and, in general, have a greater ratio of licensed coaches per capita of population. There needs to be a better coach education provision for female coaches, as currently there appears to be a significant gap between them and male coaches.

Illustration 6.3



Accessibility to coach education

- The leading MAs supplement the delivery of the core confederation licence courses with a range of services for the coaching workforce. These are designed to enhance and support coaches' lifelong learning.
- There is a need, and a growing demand, for an adequate number of coach education courses specifically for female coaches.
- There is also a need to develop sufficient home-grown coach educators so that MAs can provide enough courses.
- Entry-level courses should be offered in various locations to make them more accessible and affordable, encouraging more individuals to start their coaching learning journey.
- Some of the most innovative MAs provide bespoke education workshops, delivered at clubs by MA instructors, specific to the development priorities of the club's coaching staff.
- Deploying heads of coaching in professional clubs who have specific responsibility for supporting the club coaching staff's professional development can prove beneficial to creating a holistic coaching environment.

Football coaching course programme

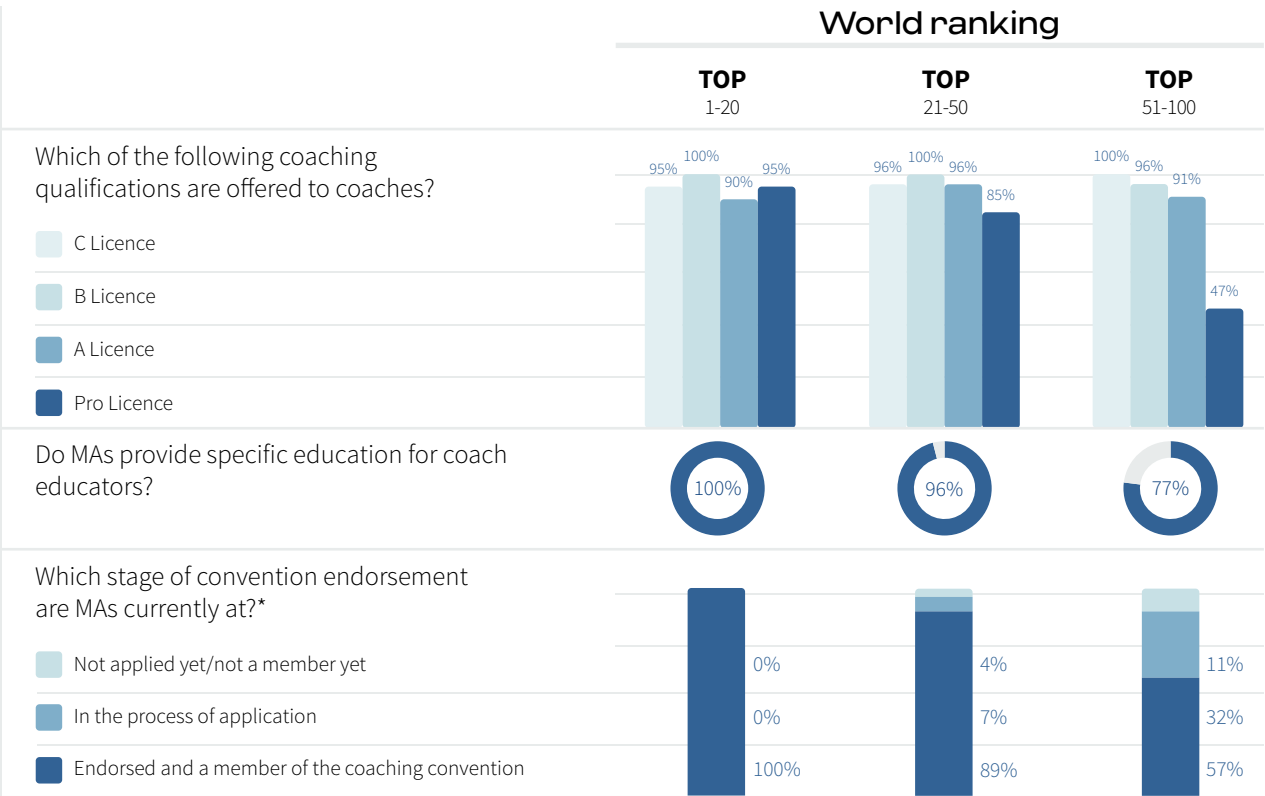
MAs offer a diverse and wide range of coaching courses for all levels of coaches. Many MAs also seek to provide additional bespoke courses which can help to develop coaches beyond the core requirements needed to obtain a licence. The most proactive MAs are developing complementary coach education programmes which supplement the technical and tactical skills-based licensing curriculum with broader-based courses which develop understanding of pedagogy, andragogy and development of softer skills in terms of player management, leadership and so on.

The top 100 MAs have made significant provision for the development of coach educators.

Core coaching programmes are more likely to be provided by the top 50 MAs. All of the top 20 MAs are members of a coaching convention, a figure that drops to 57% for the MAs ranked between 51 and 100.

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Illustration 6.4





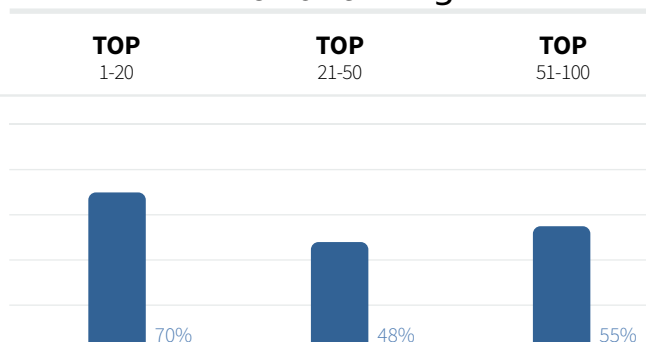
### Higher-ranked MAs reflect their football philosophy in their curriculum.

70% of MAs in the top 20 reflect their football philosophy in their coach education curriculum, with the MAs ranked between 21-50 and 51-100 recording lower percentages (48% and 55% respectively).

Illustration 6.5

Are the MAs' football philosophies reflected in the curriculum of their coach education programme?

#### World ranking



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### Coach education innovations, individual development plans and multidisciplinary working environment

- The national playing philosophy and/or LTPD plan should be fully integrated into the coach education curriculum.
- Coaches at the top end of the game are increasingly required to work in complex coaching environments where multiple staff may be working with players. These staff members may include sports scientists, match analysts, doctors, physical conditioning coaches and physiotherapists. The modern coach needs to be able to manage these multidisciplinary teams and ensure that they are pulling in the same direction for the benefit of the player.
- Innovations in approaches to coaching include the establishment of individual development plans. Coaching in elite learning environments has moved from being generic and principally team-/squad-based to a mix of individual/unit and team sessions.
- Individual development plans work well when they are communicated effectively, on a one-to-one basis between coaches and players. This type of approach requires coaches to develop new coaching skills.



### **Coach identification and development**

It is with good reason that significant time and energy is spent on identifying and developing talented players. A myriad of schemes and projects are implemented across the football ecosystem in this regard, but there is generally less focus on and energy expended in identifying and developing the most promising male and female coaches in any given country.

Just as talented players can come from many different environments and may have a variety of challenges on their route to the top of the game, the same is true for coaches. Many MAs have built player pathways which provide a process to support players as they develop. The very best MAs also develop a coaching pathway to ensure that similar support is available to talented coaches, but these MAs are currently in the minority.



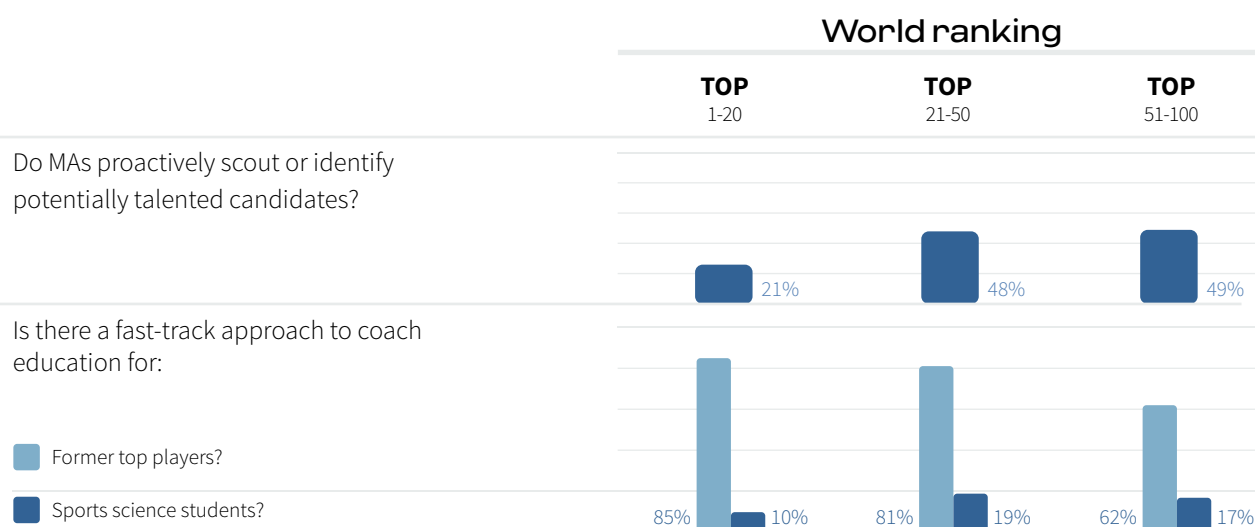
## Coach identification

Many coaches begin their coaching careers as a hobby and not as a profession, so highly talented coaches can be found at the grassroots level of the football pyramid as well as at the top. A comprehensive identification process is therefore essential to ensure that talent at all levels of the pyramid is identified and brought into an elite environment where their capabilities can flourish.

### Proactive scouting and identification of coaching talent is not currently a key focus for the majority of the top 100 MAs.

The lower-ranked MAs in the top 100 have a more proactive approach to identifying talented coaches but, overall, the ecosystem does not currently focus on this. All MAs confirmed that they have specific programmes in place to fast-track former top players into coaching, but there is a low level of commitment to adopting similar innovations for coaches from other backgrounds.

Illustration 6.6



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## Coach development

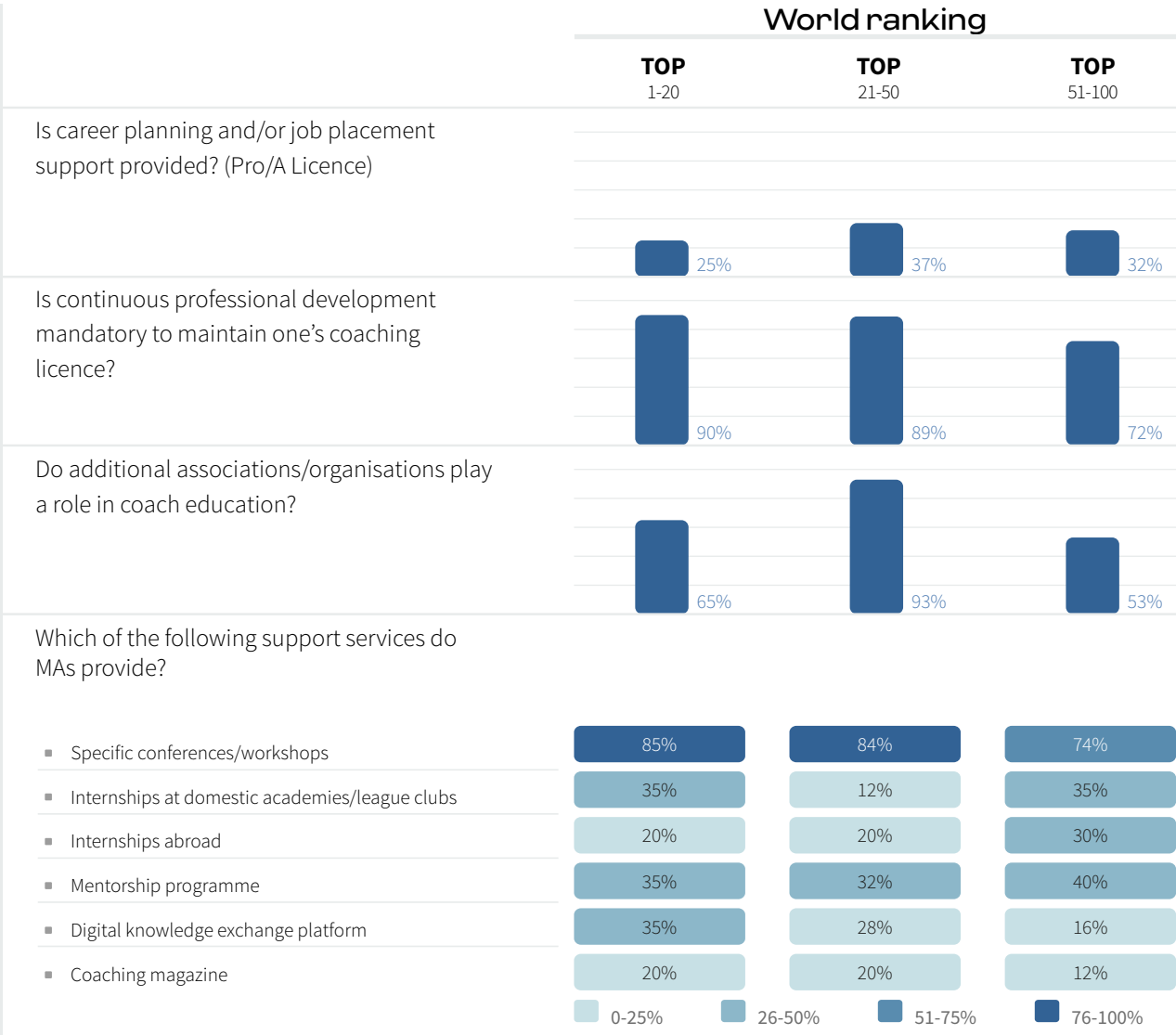
Once talented coaches have been identified, it is important to nurture them. MAs will do this to a greater or lesser extent by providing a variety of coach development opportunities, including internships, workshops, career planning and mentorships. Providing these opportunities contributes towards the development of a holistic coaching environment which focuses on the long-term development of coaches throughout their career – not just the time spent obtaining a licence. Furthermore, having a relicensing process and mandatory continuous professional development (CPD) regulations assures MAs of the quality of coaching across their countries.

### The majority of the top 100 MAs are committed to making CPD mandatory to maintain a coaching licence.

The vast majority of MAs make it mandatory for licence holders to undertake CPD to maintain their licence. However, there is little uptake across the ecosystem for the development of systematic career planning or job placements for elite A Licence and Pro Licence coaches.

Similarly, although most MAs offer access to conferences and workshops, only a minority develop bespoke internships for talented coaches and there is an overall lack of exposure to international internships (this situation will have only become more challenging since the onset of COVID-19). A significant number of MAs across the ecosystem have recognised the benefits of developing mentorship programmes for coaches, but these MAs still remain in the minority overall.

At the time of our survey, the uptake and use of digital knowledge exchange appeared to be relatively unpopular as a device for coach development across MAs. COVID-19 will also have had a major impact on this approach to learning.



Coach identification and development

- The most innovative MAs are using specific talent identification programmes to manage and develop the talent pool of coaches but, overall, these MAs are in the minority across the global ecosystem.
- There is evidence that coaching competency frameworks are being used by coaches to help focus on strengths and weaknesses as part of an approach to lifelong learning as well as a commitment to CPD. This innovation is not yet widely applied across the ecosystem.
- Some of the most advanced MAs deploy coach educators to conduct club visits and support coaches in their own environment, emphasising reality-based learning. They also create specific programmes and networks which enable emerging talented coaches to be mentored and supported as they develop.
- An increasing number of professional elite clubs employ their own heads of coaching. The primary focus of the head of coaching is to develop the coaches working at the club. They work with the MA to develop licensing courses as well as directly with the club coaches to build a coherent – and holistic – development plan for each coach employed at the club.
- Many MAs have sought to find creative ways to bring former players into the coaching workforce. MAs, confederations and FIFA should seek out similarly creative innovations to attract future talented coaches from a diverse talent pool. There is a particular need to develop more female coaches as the women's game expands rapidly.

### 6.3 The multidisciplinary team

The successful deployment of a multidisciplinary team requires both clear leadership from the technical coach and an implementation of integrated processes between the team's specialists. These two aspects ensure that support for each player and the team is maximised.

The contemporary approach adopted by elite academies, professional clubs and successful MAs is to build a holistic support team around the technical coaches and players. Typically, the multidisciplinary team is made up of doctors, physiotherapists, strength and conditioning coaches, psychologists, sports scientists and data analysts. Successful multidisciplinary teams support the delivery of individual development plans for players which focus on their medical, physical, technical, tactical, psychological and social development. This approach has proved to be highly successful at youth development level.

#### Education programmes for multidisciplinary teams

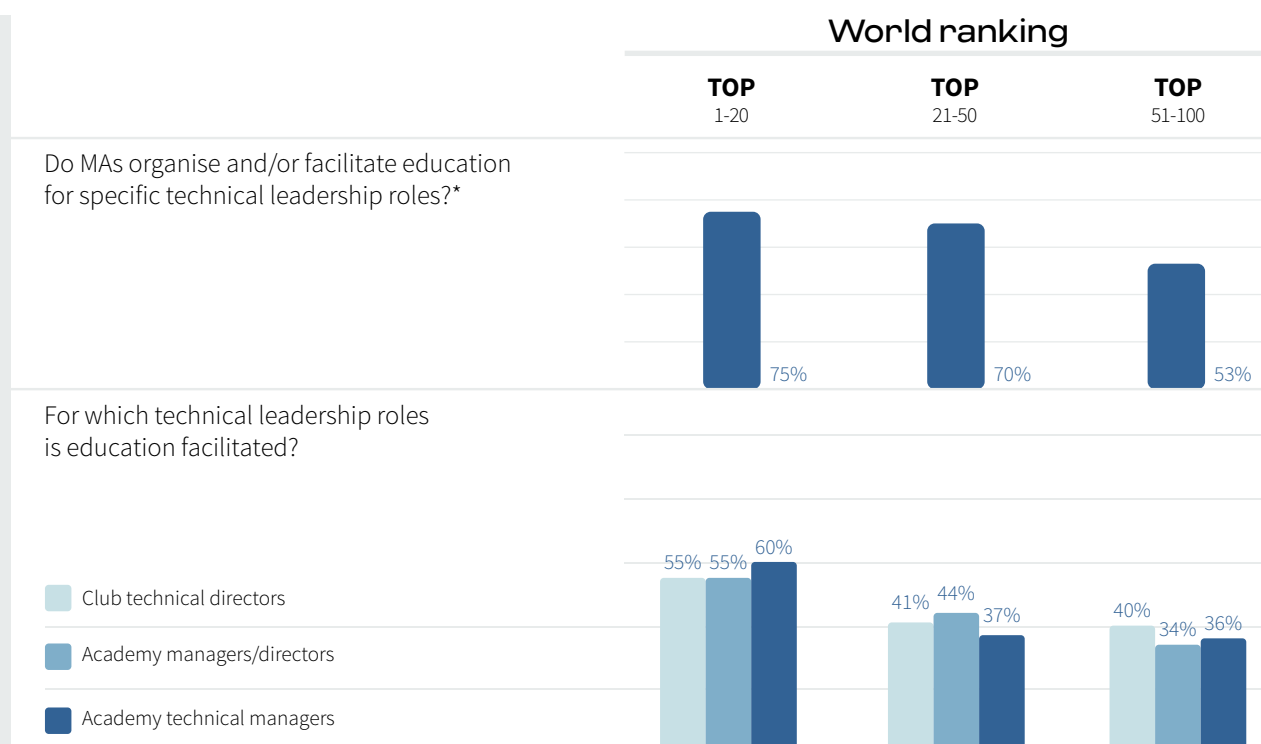
The specialist nature of the roles within the multidisciplinary team means that much of the initial training and development of these staff members takes place in settings outside of football. However, this group of specialists actively seeks and requires football-specific training and development. There is currently very mixed availability of courses and programmes for these staff across MAs worldwide.

#### There is widespread provision for the development of technical leadership roles.

75% of associations in the top 20 offer specific technical leadership courses, with course provision being relatively similar (55%-60%) for individuals in club-level positions. This provision is drastically reduced across lower-ranked MAs.

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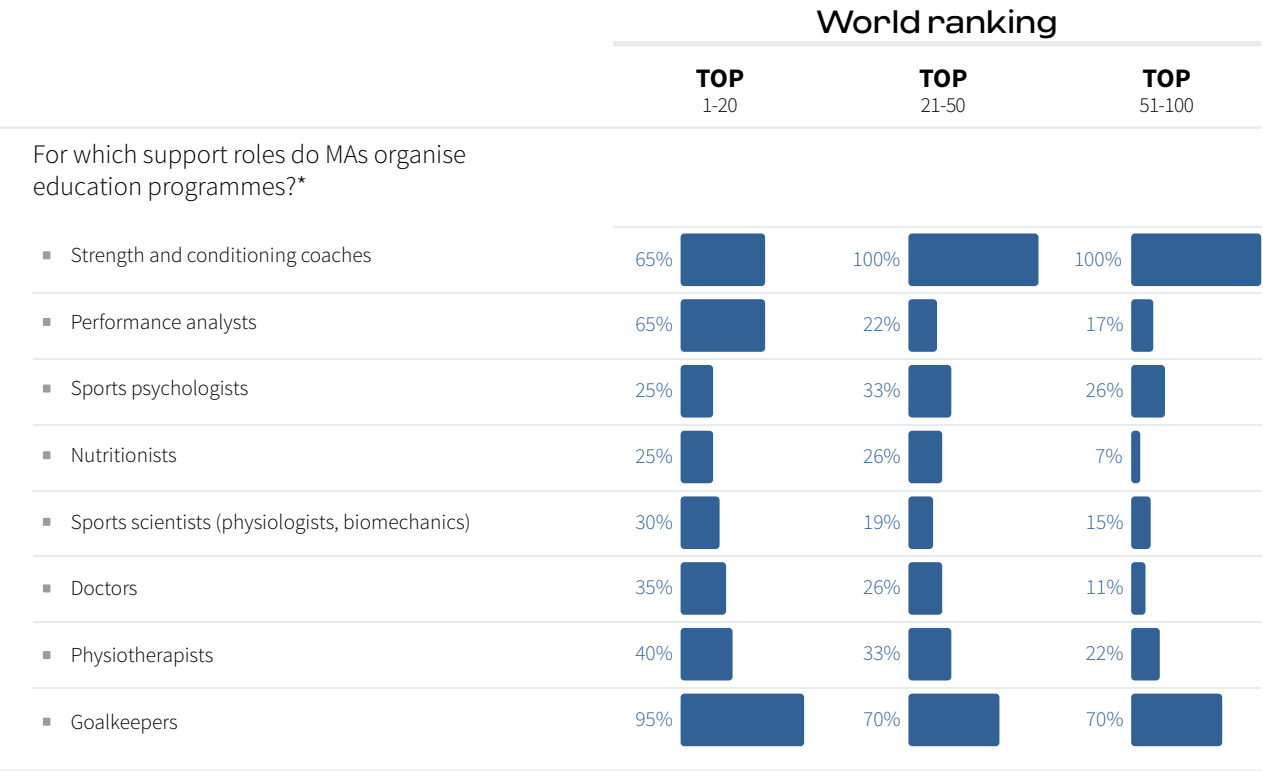
Illustration 6.8



\* For example, courses, workshops and seminars

There is generally a poor provision of education courses for members of the multidisciplinary team.

The vast majority of the associations in the top 100 have a strong focus on the education of goalkeeper and strength and conditioning coaches. Top 20 MAs make greater provision for performance analysts than those ranked lower (65% v. 17%). However, the lowest provision of education across the top 100 MAs is for sports psychology, nutrition and sports science (7-33%).



\* For example, courses, workshops and seminars

Training and education of specialist roles

- There is a need to develop a wide range of specialist courses or pathways offering plenty of opportunities for further development and specialisation (goalkeeping, fitness, talent identification, youth, medical, refereeing, executive leadership at academy and first-team levels, administration).
- There remains a relatively limited understanding of the multidisciplinary approach to the delivery of football development programmes to academy and elite players. The multidisciplinary approach requires all relevant support staff to adopt an integrated method. This is predicated on the implementation of regular and formal feedback meetings, which involve capturing data on player progress and setting development targets for players, which are agreed with the players and overseen by coaches.
- It is evident that there is a global lack of organised education programmes for the MAs’ specialist staff. This reflects the same trend seen in coach education: an opportunity is missed by not investing in lifelong learning. By being exposed to opportunities that go beyond traditional educational practices, such as obtaining licences and attending refresher courses, staff can reach new levels of development which have great positive effects on themselves and on the players with whom they work.

# Education

## Recommendations

- While the vast majority of MAs in the top 100 have a head of coach education and an associated department, it is apparent that many MAs do not have a written vision, mission or strategy for the development of education of coaches, technical leaders and specialists. It is hard to envisage how an MA can effectively develop its coaches without this.
- It is apparent that some MAs may need additional technical support to write the curriculum and meet the criteria for the coaching convention. The confederations and FIFA should consider strategies to achieve this.
- In order to guarantee access to the coach licensing programme, home-grown coach educators with a specific skillset need to be developed. The FIFA Coach Educator Programme assists MAs to deploy and develop this workforce.
- Overall, the MAs' understanding of the multidisciplinary approach to player development appears to be poor. This is reflected in the lack of education in technical areas such as sports science and performance analysis. MAs, confederations and FIFA have an opportunity to enhance training and development across these areas.
- There is an opportunity to develop additional training and education programmes beyond the core coaching licences. We found innovative examples of MAs supporting coach development through the self-assessment of coaching competency and by using experienced or master coaches to mentor up-and-coming coaches. The game could benefit from this type of commitment to lifelong learning for coaches and other technical staff being adopted more widely.
- A significant number of MAs need to continue to create incentives for female coaches to access training and development opportunities. The widespread adoption of these innovations to increase the overall number of active female coaches as well as coaches from diverse backgrounds would enhance the quality of the coaching workforce across the global football ecosystem.



# Glossary

<b>AFC:</b>	Asian Football Confederation
<b>CAF:</b>	Confederation of African Football
<b>CONMEBOL:</b>	South American Football Confederation
<b>Concacaf:</b>	Confederation of North, Central America and Caribbean Association Football
<b>OFC:</b>	Oceania Football Confederation
<b>UEFA:</b>	Union of European Football Associations
<b>FIFA:</b>	Fédération Internationale de Football Association

## Academy

Typically the part of a football club that trains young players who might one day become part of the first team. An academy may also be based at the national association. In this context, it may be referred to as a centre of excellence. Its role is still to develop young players for the senior team, but the focus is on the national team rather than on a particular club. There are also examples of private academies and schools, which can also be a focus for the development of young footballers. These environments all have one thing in common: they select and train the players based upon their potential to make it at the professional level of the game.

## Academy Performance Plan (APP)

A long-term strategy developed by an academy that provides coaches and support staff with clearly defined performance targets closely aligned to a club/association's football philosophy

## Club Academy Monitoring Platform (CAMP)

System that was used by Double Pass to monitor academies throughout the Global Ecosystem Analysis

## Continuous professional development (CPD)

A planned, continuous and lifelong process whereby coaches further develop their personal and professional qualities, and improve their knowledge, skills and practice. CPD is often a prerequisite to maintain a coaching licence and is offered by many MAs as part of their licensing programme

## Data management system

The platform(s) used to record all performance-related data for the effective functioning of football systems

## Domestic player

A player who is eligible to represent the national association in which their club resides

## Fast-track approach

The practice of accelerating the learning pathway for certain target groups. In the context of coach education, it is typically used to enable former professional players to speed up the process of achieving their coaching qualifications.

## Foreign player

A player who is not eligible to represent the national association in which their club resides

## Full-time equivalent (FTE)

Refers to an employee's scheduled hours divided by the employer's hours for a full-time working week

## Home-grown player

A player who, regardless of their nationality, has been trained by their club or by another club in the same national association

## Licensed coach

An individual who holds an up-to-date and valid coaching qualification endorsed by the national association. The licence should be commensurate with the level at which the coach is coaching in order for it to be valid.

**Long-term player development (LTPD)**

The concept of designing appropriate coaching programmes for players subject to the stage of their development. Typically, LTPD is divided into phases, from foundation phase through to youth development (which may be sub-divided into pre- and post-pubescent stages) and finally professional development. The LTPD model will usually seek to capture all aspects of a player's development, including technical, tactical, physical, psychological and social aspects.

**Member association (MA)**

FIFA member association

**Player care**

Term used for a range of services that focus on the mental and physical well-being of players. These services will relate to the wider health and well-being of the player rather than the football-specific aspects of a player's development.

**Playing philosophy**

Usually a document that shows how the MA has embedded an approach to playing the game. It will impact upon the tactical approach adopted by the national teams and it is likely to impact upon other aspects of football policy within the MA, such as the approach to coach education, coaching and player recruitment, and development.

**Relative age effect (RAE) (also known as the birth date effect)**

The process by which children born in the earliest part of the year are more likely to be selected for representative teams or academy squads. The RAE is most pronounced in sports that select early developers (i.e. pre-pubescent). It has been identified as a significant bias in many football systems around the world.

**Return-to-play protocols**

Standardised process that national teams and clubs will usually have for bringing a player back to fitness after injury

**Sports science support**

The range of services available designed to support the performance of players. Typically, this will include physiology, strength and conditioning (athletic training), psychology, physiotherapy and nutrition.

**Talent identification**

A key discipline within the wider scouting process, referring to processes and programmes that are set up to identify players who have the potential to be professional/national team players. Talent identification aims to detect, select, recruit and develop players who have the skills and competencies to succeed at the predetermined level. Referred to as "TID" in combination with talent development.

**Technical division**

The departments that are responsible for the delivery of all technical football aspects of the work of the association (typically this will be coaching, player development, recruitment, scouting, performance analysis, etc.)

**Technical leaders**

Those staff, other than coaches, who have specific technical duties to carry out in support of the MA, for example the director of coaching, the head of coach education or the technical director him/herself

**Top league**

The senior competition for men and for women in a country. This will usually be the professional league. If there is a senior professional league that has multiple divisions, the top league refers to the highest division.

**Top-tier competition**

The highest national championship in a country, regardless of professional/amateur status

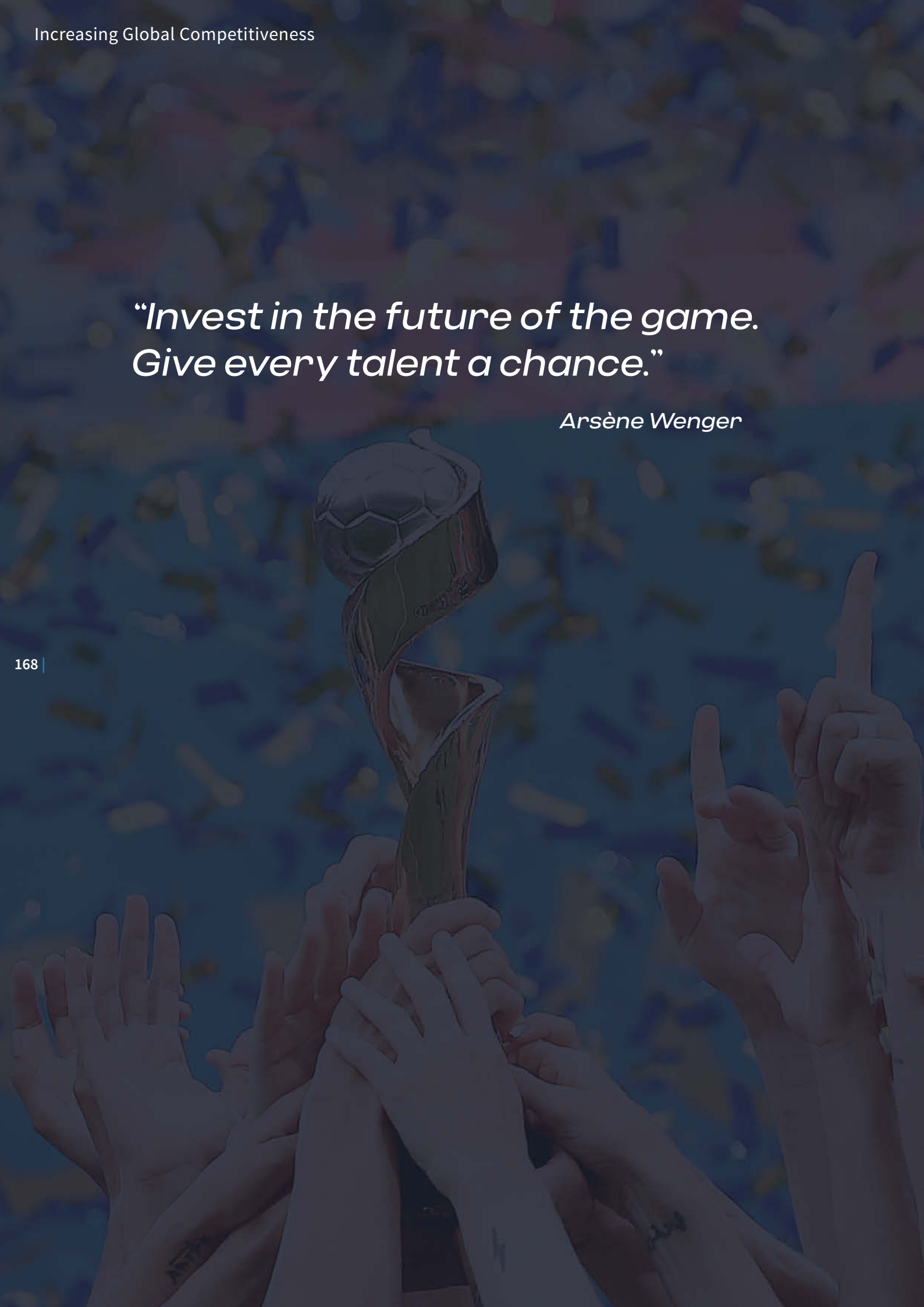
**Youth league**

An age-restricted competition usually subject to maximum age criteria, but it may also have minimum age criteria as well

**Abbreviations used in the infographics:** Y = Youth S = Senior M = Male F = Female

*“Invest in the future of the game.  
Give every talent a chance.”*

*Arsène Wenger*



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