



# A-LEAGUE REPORT



2020/21





# SUPPORTING THE PLAYERS BUILDING THE GAME



## Professional Footballers Australia

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# A-LEAGUE FOREWORD

**KATHRYN GILL & BEAU BUSCH**

CO-CHIEF EXECUTIVES

*In fact, the A-League thrived on the pitch throughout the 2020/21 season. Whether it was the interest surrounding a new expansion team, fresh faces or novel storylines, the season was widely celebrated as one of the most entertaining yet.*



**For the past half decade, the PFA has been analysing and evaluating the A-League and the players' experience in the competition through its annual A-League Reports.**

It has been an immensely valuable exercise that has helped the PFA and the players better understand the industry in which they are employed, monitor the application of high performance standards, assess technical progress and survey the players' experience.

The process has helped to formulate evidence-based positions to advance and further professionalise the league through collective bargaining in partnership with the players. To date, the Reports remain the most comprehensive industry analysis of any sporting competition in Australia.

The fifth A-League annual Report could perhaps prove to be the most beneficial of all following the

unprecedented set of circumstances endured since the COVID-19 pandemic swept across the world in late 2019 and early 2020.

The events of the past 18 months have been the most unique in the competition's 16-year history and consequently the complexion of the A-League is very different today than two seasons ago.

Before the pandemic, the A-League was already experiencing a gradual but seismic strategic shift to independence and toward ownership and operation by the Australian Professional Leagues.

That premeditated change exposed aspects of instability within the existing competition model but was considered by many – including the majority of players – as a necessary transfer of power to maximise Australian domestic football's potential.

While COVID-19 added an entirely new layer of complexity and challenged the competition like never before, the A-League – largely through the performances of the players – preserved solid foundations and sits at a fascinating juncture, primed to capitalise on new beginnings.

The 2020/21 A-League Report reflects on a season that, while disrupted by off-field challenges, delivered great intrigue on the pitch and ensured it is in a position to create future growth off it.

In fact, the A-League thrived on the pitch throughout the 2020/21 season. Whether it was the interest surrounding a new expansion team, fresh faces or novel storylines, the season was widely celebrated as one of the most entertaining yet.

Several key findings within this Report illustrate the data behind these stories and also creates a vital timestamp of where the competition is at before

it enters a new independent future and with a new broadcast agreement. The findings include:

- 312 players were contracted and 300 used by clubs throughout the season, the most in competition history
- The average age of players in the A-League was 25.1, arresting the trend of an ageing competition
- 107 players aged 21 and under featured throughout the season

One of the most insightful aspects of our annual Report is delivered through our annual player survey.

Of the A-League's 312 players, 200 responded to the 2020/21 A-League survey – approximately 70% of the playing cohort – a record number of respondents of any PFA survey to date. The record number of players responding to this year's survey reflects the engagement and desire of the players to help influence and shape their competition and their careers.

Promisingly, the results of the survey suggest that despite recent uncertainty and upheaval, players are indicating a future in the A-League is more enticing than this time last year:

- 55% of players said they would like to stay playing in the A-League next season, up from 45% from the 2019/20 annual survey
- 56% of players are confident about the direction of their football careers, up from 33% in 2019/20
- Only 4% of players would move to an overseas league even if it was for similar money and or playing standard, down from 14% last season

- 16% of players who would prefer to move to an overseas league would do so only if the money and standards were better

Clearly the feedback from players indicates that they are much more certain about the potential security and opportunity of the A-League now than they were just a year ago.

Having made significant sacrifices and endured challenges throughout the pandemic, the players are again ready to play their part in harnessing the competition's potential as it enters a new era.

It's important to also take this opportunity to thank several players who decided to hang up their boots after remarkable careers in this competition. Andrew Durante, Nigel Boogaard and Mark Milligan have left an indelible mark on the A-League and their peers, both on and off the pitch. They have long been strong advocates for advancing the competition and were invaluable during this COVID affected period. Those three legends of the game, alongside the many club delegates across the A-League, played an incredibly crucial role in service of their peers during such challenging times.

We'd also like to pay tribute to Wellington Phoenix who relocated for the majority of the season to Australia. The sacrifices of the players and staff were immense and kept the competition afloat.

Finally, it's important to acknowledge the broadcaster of the A-League for its first 16 seasons, Fox Sports, who brought so many incredible and memorable moments to our screens and helped build our game. They provided an important platform to showcase the A-League and the feats of its clubs and the varied stories behind our players. Now with a new era in front of us, we look forward to the A-League building on the foundations preserved.

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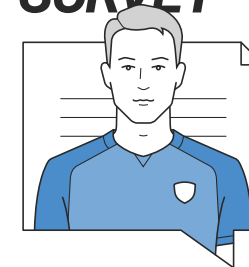
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## A-LEAGUE SURVEY



### METHODOLOGY

Where this symbol appears, you will see data from our major annual survey of A-League players. Every A-League player was sent a link to the online survey at the conclusion of the 2020/21 season. In June, 200 players responded to the survey, around 70% of the playing cohort.

The survey covered a broad range of areas impacting players' careers, from contracts, work and study outside of football, transition-readiness, assessments of their club, the A-League, Collective Bargaining and the PFA.

### STATISTICAL DATA

This year the PFA has partnered with InStat to provide performance data for sections of this Report. InStat is a global sports performance analysis company, providing statistical data Reports and in-depth analysis for football clubs and leagues around the world.

**InStat**





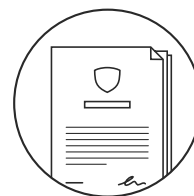
# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



200

The number of players who responded to the 2020/21 A-League survey – approximately 70% of the playing cohort and a record number of respondents



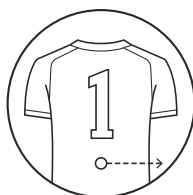
312

The number of players contracted in the A-League in 2020/21



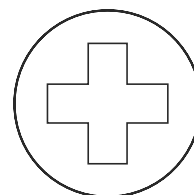
51

The number of foreign players in the A-League, down 12 from last season



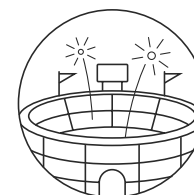
33%

The percentage of players in their first year at their 2020/21 club



4.3

The average number of matches missed per injury, down 0.6 from last season (a 12% decrease)



5,660

The average attendance of home and away matches this season



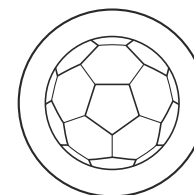
\$136,791

The average salary of an A-League player in 2020/21



68%

The percentage of players who were coming off contract at the start of the 2020/21 season



42%

The percentage of matches decided by a one-goal margin







# STRATEGIC CONTEXT

# STRATEGIC CONTEXT



The 2020/21 season will likely endure as an important historical signpost of a competition that underwent significant disturbance during a period of strategic transition.

COVID-19's impact on the A-League and Australian football arrived when the domestic competitions were experiencing a fundamental shift to a new era under independent ownership, with the global pandemic providing an untimely interruption to a competition that was seeking strategic reinvention after a period of stagnation.

The economic impact on the game resulted in a reduced broadcast deal – both in terms of revenues and contract length – and a shifted season window – from October through May to December through June. In a unique season, all teams were based in Australia throughout the campaign, with Wellington Phoenix relocated in Wollongong for all but two home matches, to avoid any potential trans-Tasman disruption. COVID-19's impact extended to match attendances, with the lowest average attendance in the league's history at 5,660.

The 2020/21 season was also the first to involve 12 teams, with the introduction of southwest Sydney expansion outfit Macarthur. Previously the A-League had 11 teams in 2010/11, before the competition experienced its most stable period of membership of 10 teams for seven consecutive seasons between 2012 - 2019, prior to Western United's introduction to the competition. As Western and Macarthur build fan bases and identities, the legacy of back-to-back expansion will continue to build over several years.

Positively, expansion has delivered more professional opportunities for players. In 2020/21, 52 players across Macarthur and Western United's squad lists were utilised. Those opportunities did not exist at the elite professional level two seasons ago in Australia. The number of contracted players in 2020/21 is the highest number in the competition's history. Over 312 players were contracted this season, and 300 used across the competition.

The change in governance from Football Australia to the Australian Professional Leagues provides an intriguing crossroad for the A-League's future. The players and football's stakeholders will be interested to see how the club owners steer the competition forward after a period of great uncertainty.

One important outcome has already been delivered by the APL that has steadied the ship. Following the renegotiation of the Fox Sports agreement, a new era of broadcast under ViacomCBS and Network 10 will commence from next season. That five-year broadcast agreement provides a level of assurance for players not experienced in recent seasons.

While reduced in value in comparison to previous broadcast deals, it secures an opportunity for revenues to flow into the game in the short term and into the future, and establishes platforms through which the game will be promoted to new and existing audiences.







# EMPLOYMENT FRAMEWORK

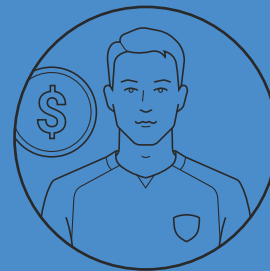
- ▶ *Snapshot*
- ▶ *Player Payments*
- ▶ *Player Analysis*
- ▶ *Age Analysis*
- ▶ *Squad Stability*
- ▶ *Player Churn*
- ▶ *Match Minutes*
- ▶ *Players' Survey*
- ▶ *Foreign Players*

# SNAPSHOT



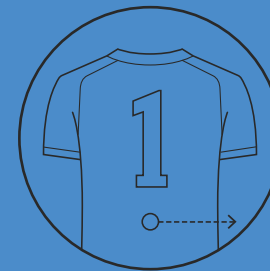
312

The number of players contracted in the A-League in 2020/21



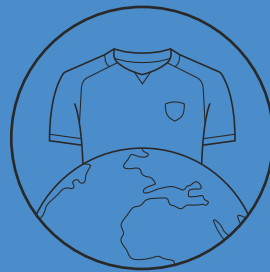
\$136,791

The average salary of an A-League player in 2020/21



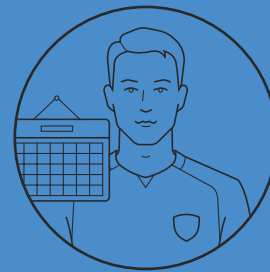
33%

The percentage of players in their first year at their 2020/21 club



51

The number of foreign players in the A-League, down 12 from last season



25.1

The average age of players in the A-League this season, reflecting a drop of 2.5 years across the past two campaigns: from 27.6 to 25.1



68%

The percentage of players who were coming off contract at the start of the 2020/21 season





# PLAYER PAYMENTS



## A-LEAGUE SURVEY



A reduction in club and league revenues during the 2019/20 and 2020/21 COVID-19-impacted seasons subsequently reduced player salaries.

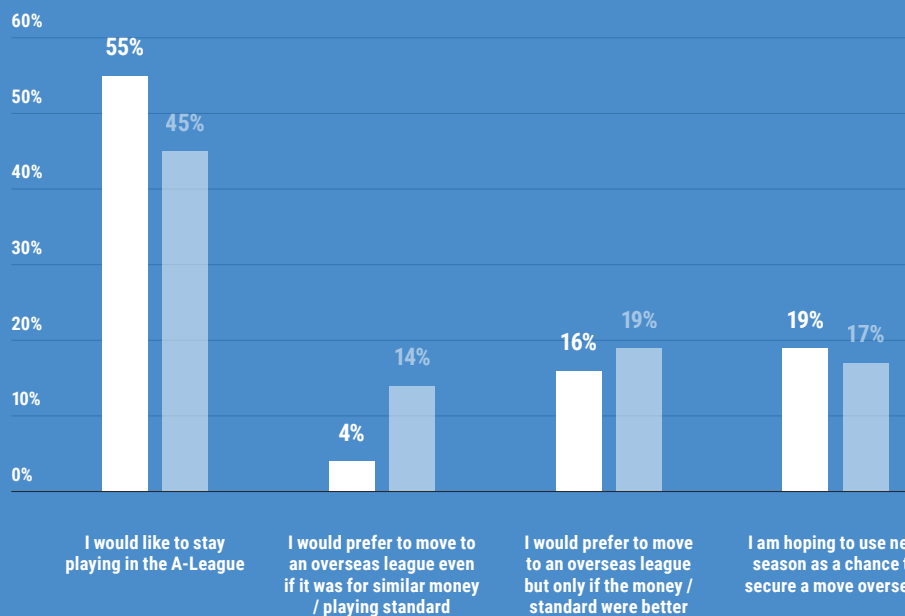
As the Australian Professional Leagues aim to build a recovery plan for the sport over the course of the new five-year broadcast agreement, the potential for salaries to return to pre-COVID-19 levels will be contingent on the recovery of the game's key revenue streams. World football has not been immune to the impacts of COVID-19 and as such A-League players understand the wellbeing of the clubs and the league – and the subsequent flow of revenues to players – is critical to the sport's success and their careers.

Positively, the new five-year broadcast agreement for the A-League and W-League provides a level of certainty which was not present last season.

Several A-League based players pursued opportunities overseas instead of participating in the 2019/20 restart, accelerating concern regarding the suitability of the A-League in attracting and retaining talent. Promisingly, the PFA end of season survey revealed an increase in players wanting to stay in the A-League and interest in pursuing contracts overseas declining.

Please select the statement below which best describes your preference towards the next A-League season?

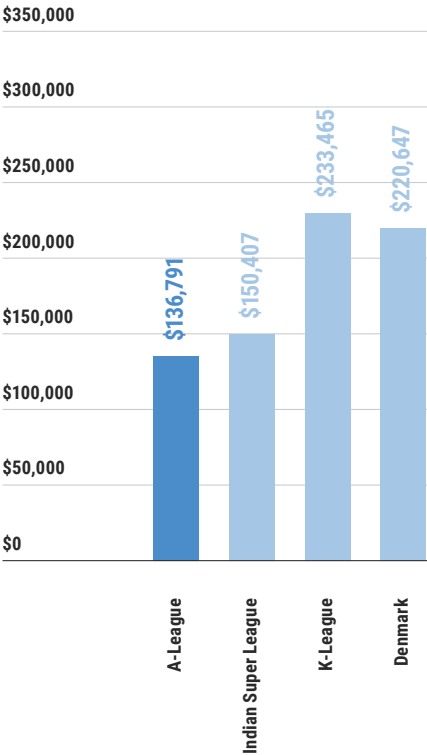
2020/21 ■  
2019/20 ■



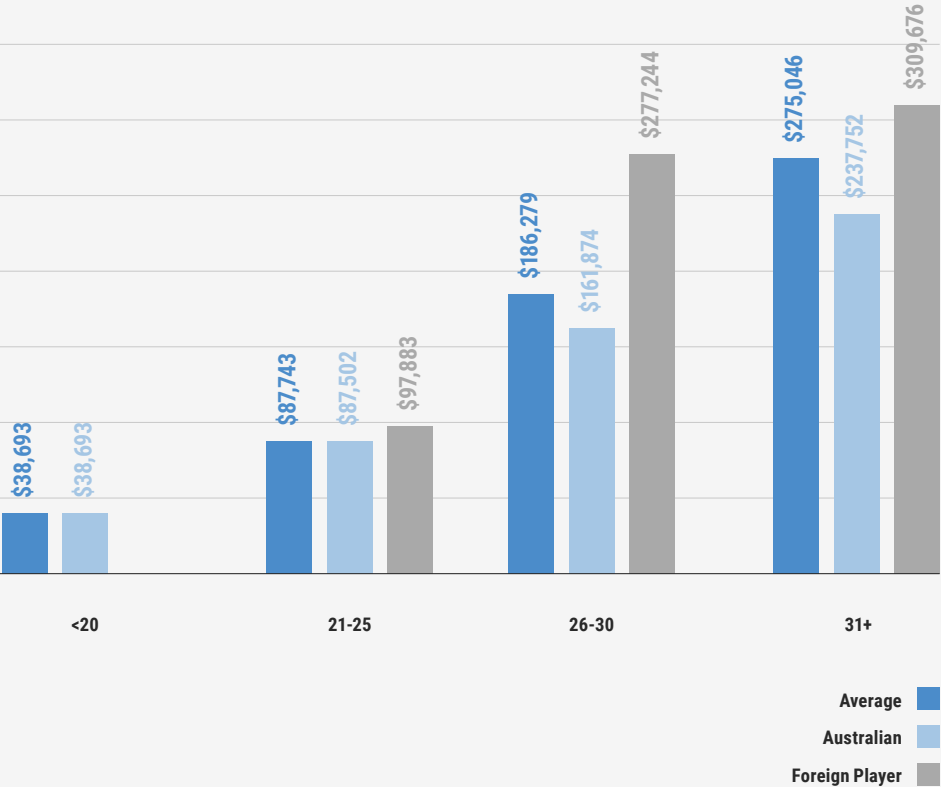


# PLAYER PAYMENTS

Average player salary: league comparison



Average A-League player salary by age group





# PLAYER ANALYSIS

The 12 A-League clubs contracted 312 players across the league, with 300 provided match minutes across the course of the season - a record in competition history.

Given the A-League’s expansion, Macarthur FC provided professional opportunities for 27 players, with consecutive years of expansion providing over 50 new contracts across the two new clubs – Macarthur and Western United.



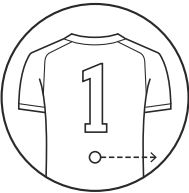
Total Players Contracted

312



Total Players Used

300



Percentage of players in first year at club

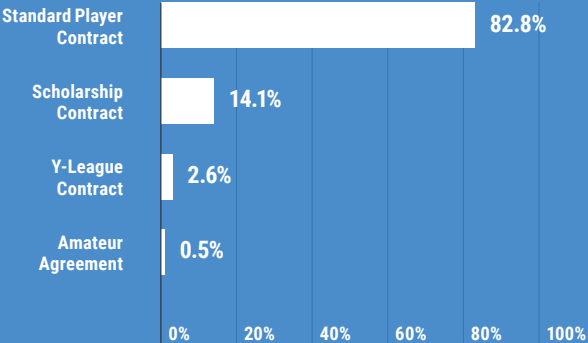
33%



## A-LEAGUE SURVEY



What type of contract are you on?



### Club by club breakdown

Club	Players Contracted	Players Used	First Year at Club	Average Age
Adelaide United	29	26	12	23.9
Brisbane Roar	25	28	7	24.6
Central Coast Mariners	20	22	10	23.6
Macarthur FC	27	24	-	26.6
Melbourne City	26	26	9	23.7
Melbourne Victory	22	26	12	24.2
Newcastle Jets	29	26	6	24.7
Perth Glory	29	27	13	26.1
Sydney FC	26	25	6	26.8
Wellington Phoenix	23	24	7	24.8
Western Sydney Wanderers	36	24	13	26.0
Western United	26	28	7	25.9

After trending older for its first 14 seasons, the average age of an A-League player has dropped by two whole years across the past two campaigns: from 27.6 to 25.1. Of the 300 players utilised this season, 35% - or 107 players - were aged 21 and under.

Perhaps the best indicator of the shift towards youth was Melbourne City, who started the 2021 Grand Final with the youngest starting 11 of any Grand Final team since 2011 and had the second youngest average squad at 23.7 years.

Central Coast Mariners (23.6 years) and Adelaide United (23.9) had the first and third youngest squads on average, respectively.

For context, the average age of National Soccer League players across the league's 28 seasons was

25.6. During the A-League's first 14 seasons, the average age was 27 years.

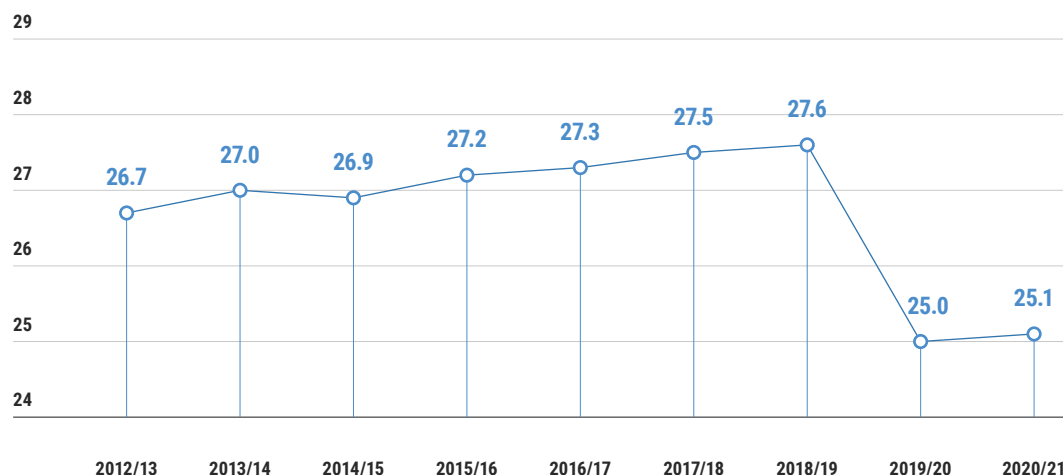
Several factors have been at play in the past two seasons which may have contributed to a drop in the average age; expansion has increased the number of available opportunities within the A-League - with 54 more squad positions available through Western United and Macarthur - providing openings for young players. However, Macarthur's squad had the second highest average age at 26.6 years, skewed by several players aged over 30, such as Adam Federici (36), Mark Milligan (35) and Matt Derbyshire (35).

COVID-19 has also meant that clubs have had to look at local talent from within their academies and the National Premier Leagues to fill gaps that have been occupied by players who had been previously scout-

ed from overseas. In addition, some clubs, such as Adelaide United, have taken a strategic focus on producing local talent.

Regardless of the cause, players such as Melbourne City's 15-year-old Max Caputo - the fourth youngest debutant in A-League history - Adelaide's 15-year-old Johnny Yull, and 16-year-olds Archie Goodwin and Joshua Rawlins were among 50 debutants under the age of 21 that featured in the A-League for the first time. A total of 82 players made their A-League debuts in 2020/21 with an average age of 22.6.

**Average player age: season comparison**







# AGE ANALYSIS

Melbourne City's Max Caputo – who made his debut against Melbourne Victory at age 15 years, 9 months and 20 days – became the fourth youngest debutant in A-League history.

Top 10 youngest debutants 2020/21

Player	Club	Match	Age	Matches
Max Caputo	Melbourne City	MC 1-1 MV 6 Jun 2021	15y 09m 20d	1
Jonny Yull	Adelaide United	PG 5-3 AU 20 Jan 2021	15y 10m 15d	2
Archie Goodwin	Newcastle Jets	MV 0-1 NJ 21 Feb 2021	16y 03m 14d	8
Joshua Rawlins	Perth Glory	PG 5-3 AU 20 Jan 2021	16y 08m 28d	12
Zaydan Bello	Melbourne Victory	MV 2-0 WP 24 Feb 2021	17y 06m 00d	4
Tete Yengi	Newcastle Jets	CCM 1-0 NJ 31 Dec 2020	17y 09m 23d	9
Yaya Dukuly	Adelaide United	WU 0-0 AU 28 Dec 2020	17y 11m 11d	10
Ayom Majok	Western United	WU 0-0 AU 28 Dec 2020	17y 11m 26d	1
Kerrin Stokes	Melbourne City	MC 2-1 WU 16 Jan 2021	18y 01m 05d	4
Mark Natta	Western Sydney Wanderers	CCM 0-1 WSW 19 Jan 2021	18y 01m 22d	19



# SQUAD STABILITY

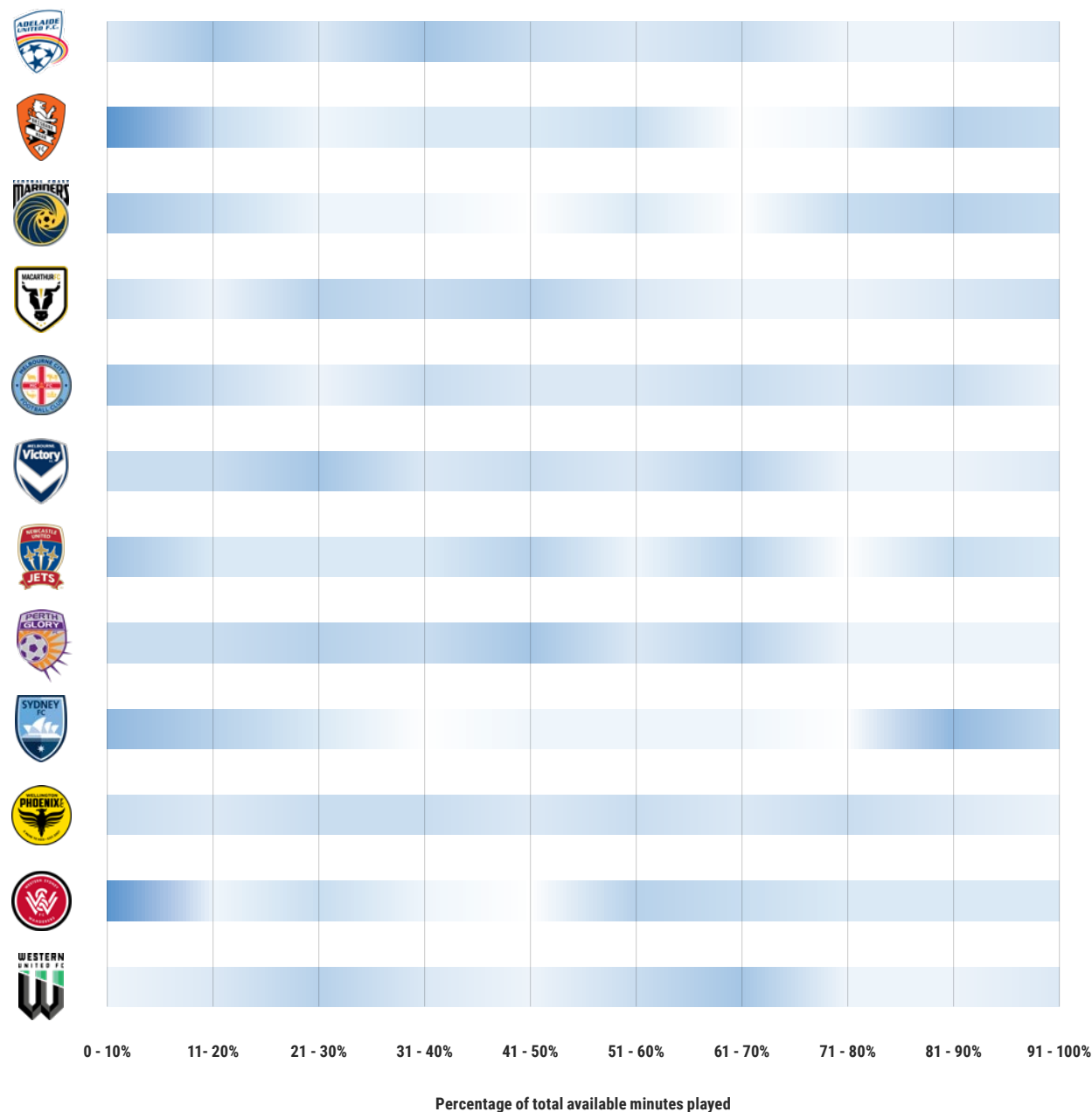
The correlation between squad stability and success was displayed once again this season. With the exception of Adelaide United, the remaining five finalists were among the most stable squads.

Central Coast Mariners' remarkable season was underpinned by 10 of their players playing over 70% of available match minutes, the highest in the league. When comparing this metric with a teams' table position, the correlation is  $-0.65$ , indicating a strong negative correlation, meaning in general the more players a team has playing over 70% of minutes, the higher they finish on the table.



Squad stability: club comparison

Number of Players: 10 0





# PLAYER CHURN



Player turnover remains a significant issue of concern for the A-League and players. Research conducted by the PFA at the start of the 2020/21 season demonstrated that the A-League’s labour market is as volatile as ever for professional footballers. A record 68% of players were coming off contract at the start of the campaign: the equivalent of nearly eight players out of every starting XI being in the final year (or only year) of their current contract.

Despite regular research demonstrating the negative impact of player turnover – or churn – frequently clubs commence each season with over half their players coming off contract at the end of that season.

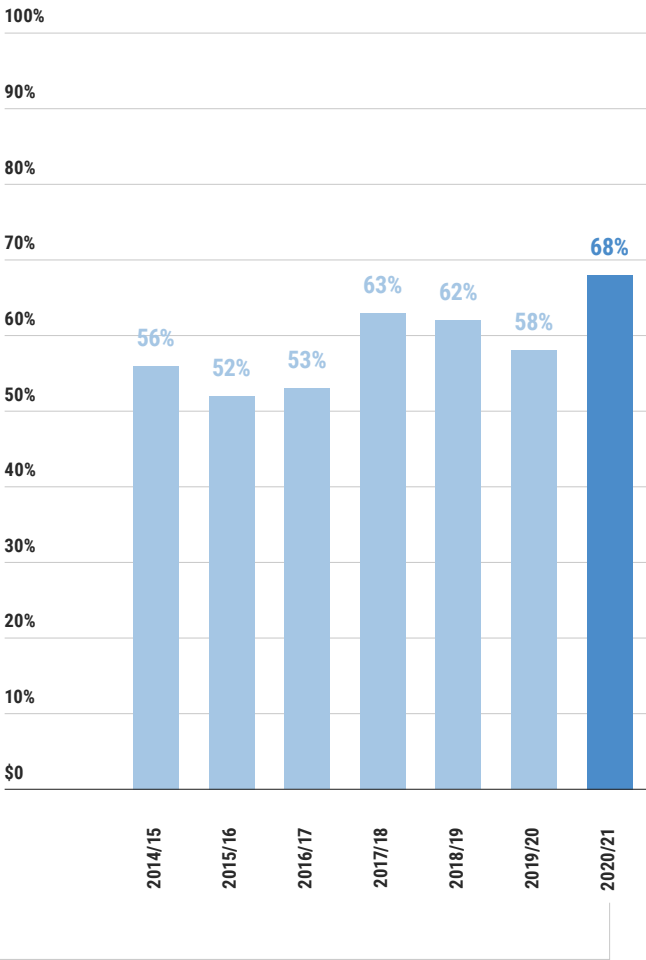
With the A-League dependent on a relatively small pool of professional players to ensure international competitiveness, the extreme churn reduces the attractiveness of the career path with players unsure whether they will have a job beyond this season, which side of Australia they will be living on (or will they move to New Zealand?), or whether their salary will radically change. This instability has flow-on effects to all aspects of players’ lives and those of their immediate families.



Players coming off contract in 2020/21

68%

Number of players off contract: season comparison



1

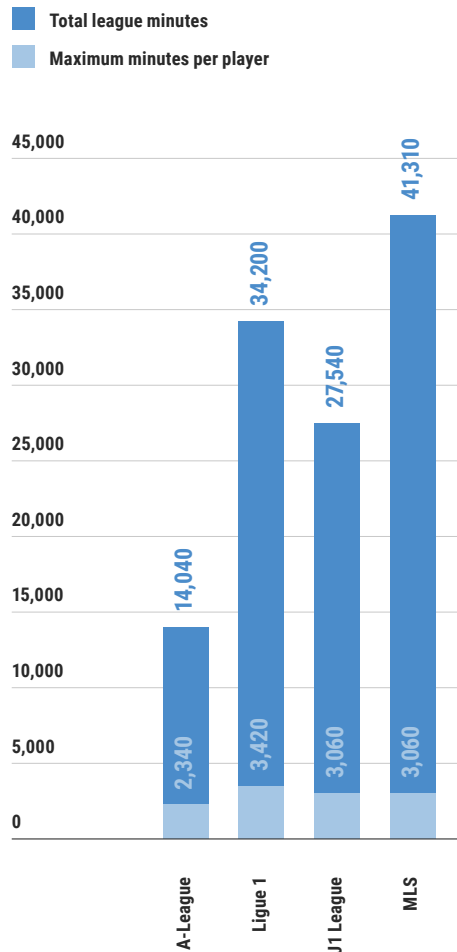
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# MTACH MINUTES



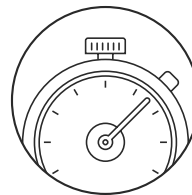
Players under 25 continued to enjoy an increase in match minutes. 83 players under the age of 21 made an appearance – an increase of one player from last season – while the number of players aged 21-25 receiving match minutes increased by 19 from the 2019/20 campaign. Despite the positive increase, the number of match minutes available in the A-League remains significantly less than many other comparative leagues, due to the shorter season length.

## Match minutes: league comparison



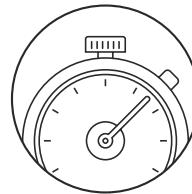
Total players who made an appearance

300



Total minutes played

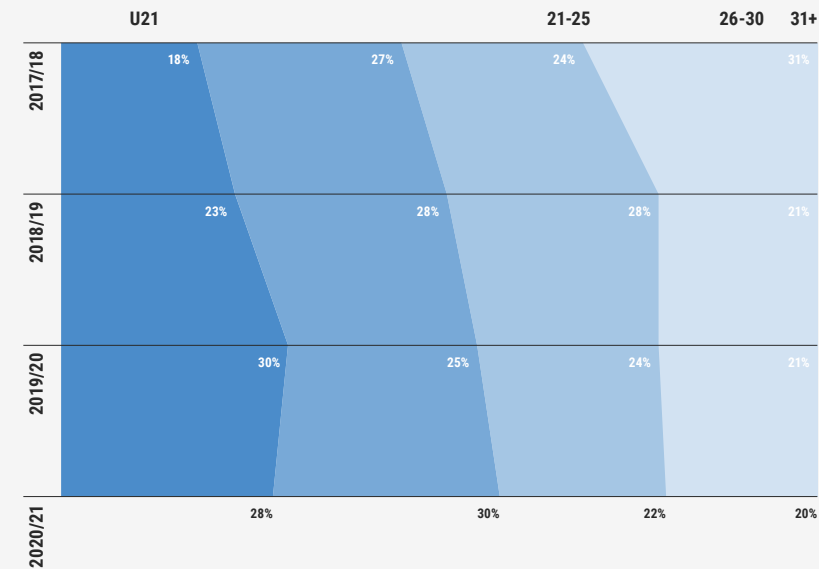
308,020



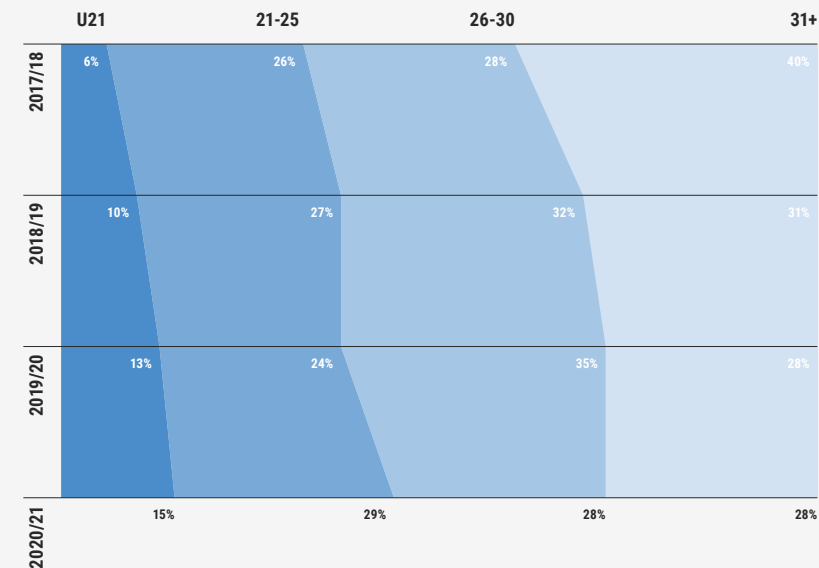
Average minutes played per player

1,027

## Age group of players who made an appearance: season comparison



## Age group of players' total minutes: season comparison





# FOREIGN PLAYERS

There was a 16% decrease in foreign players featuring during the 2020/21 season, with 51 players from overseas representing clubs throughout the campaign, down from 61 the previous season. The majority of foreign players (72%) hailed from the European continent, while recruitment of players from Asian and Oceania increased.



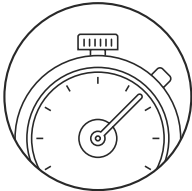
Number of foreign players in the A-League

51



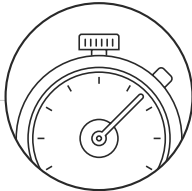
Average age of foreign players

30.8



Average minutes played per game

70.8



Percentage of total minutes by foreign players

21.2%

Origin of Foreign Players in the A-League



# PLAYERS' SURVEY

With a record number of respondents to the 2020/21 player survey, the PFA has been able to build the most comprehensive picture of the players' experience of workplace and performance standards within the A-League. Promisingly, the feedback on the performance standards was satisfactory across almost every category.

The survey did reveal a lower level of satisfaction with sport psychology, but coaching, sports science and performance analysis were at high satisfaction levels from the players' perspective.

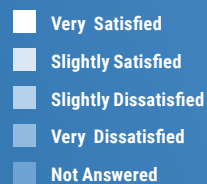
Within workplace standards, there is room for improvement in a number of areas. Of those surveyed across the competition, approximately 20% were very dissatisfied with the training pitch at their club, the gym facilities (20.56%) and dining (19.44%) and social areas (21.11%).

Reflecting the low dissatisfaction within these categories were the areas the players identified as priorities for improvement; almost 70% said the biggest gains to performance and workplace standards could be achieved via addressing the training pitch.

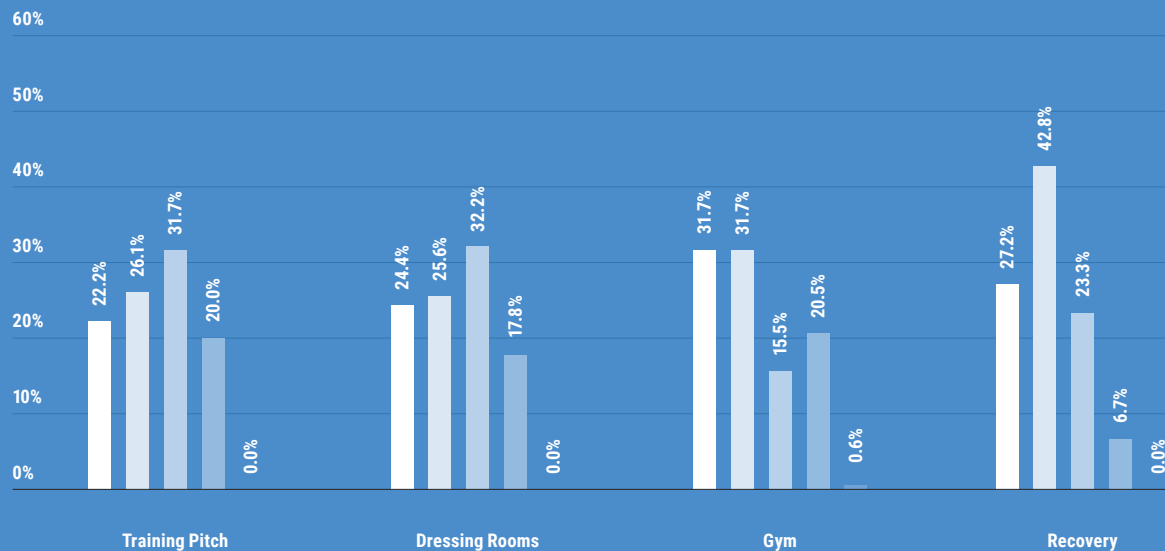


# PLAYERS' SURVEY

## A-LEAGUE SURVEY



### Workplace standards



### In what areas do you feel the biggest gains could be made to improve the club's performance standards? (Multiple answers allowed)







# LEAGUE ASSESSMENT

- ▶ *Snapshot*
- ▶ *Competitive Balance*
- ▶ *Attendance*
- ▶ *Broadcast*
- ▶ *Pitch Ratings*

# SNAPSHOT

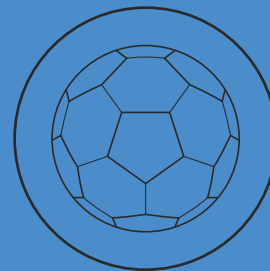


This section explores the A-League's competitive balance, attendance and viewership and the players' collective feedback on pitch quality and atmosphere.



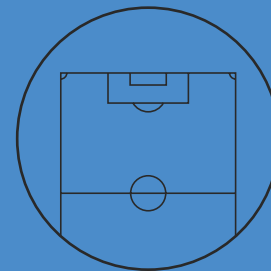
**30 POINTS**

*The gap between Premiers Melbourne City FC (49 points) and bottom-placed Melbourne Victory (19 points)*



**42%**

*The percentage of matches decided by a one-goal margin*



**4.73**

*The overall rating of Coopers Stadium, voted the best overall pitch for the second season running*

# COMPETITIVE BALANCE



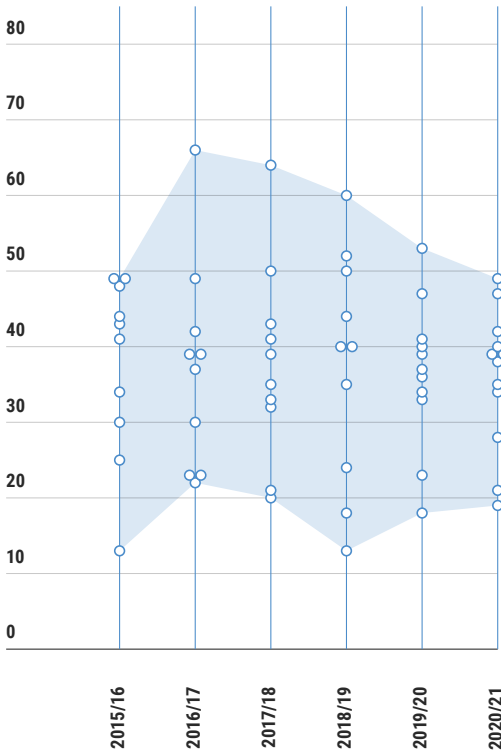
In the past two seasons, the points spread across the competition has gradually decreased. Premiers Melbourne City FC and bottom-placed Melbourne Victory were seprated by 30 points, with the rivals finishing in first and last place, respectively, for the first time in their club histories. That gap was the lowest in seven seasons and bucks a trend where the increase between top and bottom was widening each season (between 2016 – 2019, the gap was 44, 44 and 47 points, respectively), despite in game compet-

itiveness being significant with City triumphing 14-1 on aggregate across the teams' three encounters during the season.

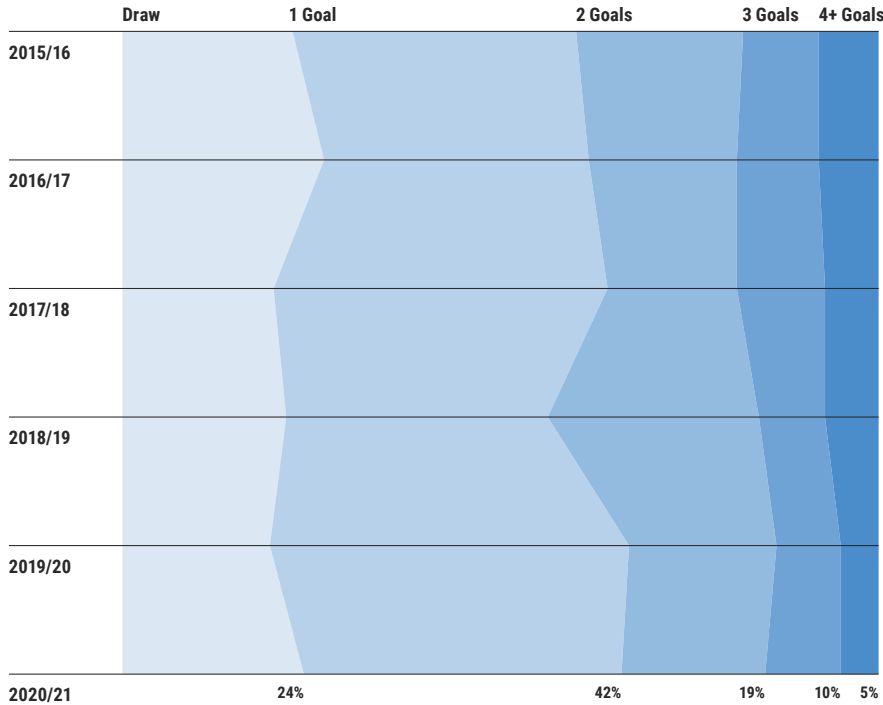
With Victory missing out on finals for consecutive seasons and Central Coast Mariners, Macarthur and Adelaide qualifying alongside City, Sydney and Brisbane, the composition of finalists has shifted away slightly from 'big market' teams.

However, with Sydney FC qualifying for four and winning three of the past five Grand Finals, and Melbourne City building on the success of the past few seasons, it appears unlikely that there will be an overwhelming transformation of the dominant teams at the top of the ladder.

Points spread comparison



Winning margin







# ATTENDANCE



This season's average attendance was the lowest in competition history. The obvious impact of COVID-19 resulted in reduced crowd capacities due to respective state government restrictions – as well as last minute changes to the fixture to accommodate for border closures. Five matches were also played behind closed doors.

However, when restrictions were lifted, there were several matches throughout the season that illustrated the power and passion of the fans, particularly in boutique stadia, which provides a point of difference to other sporting codes in Australia.

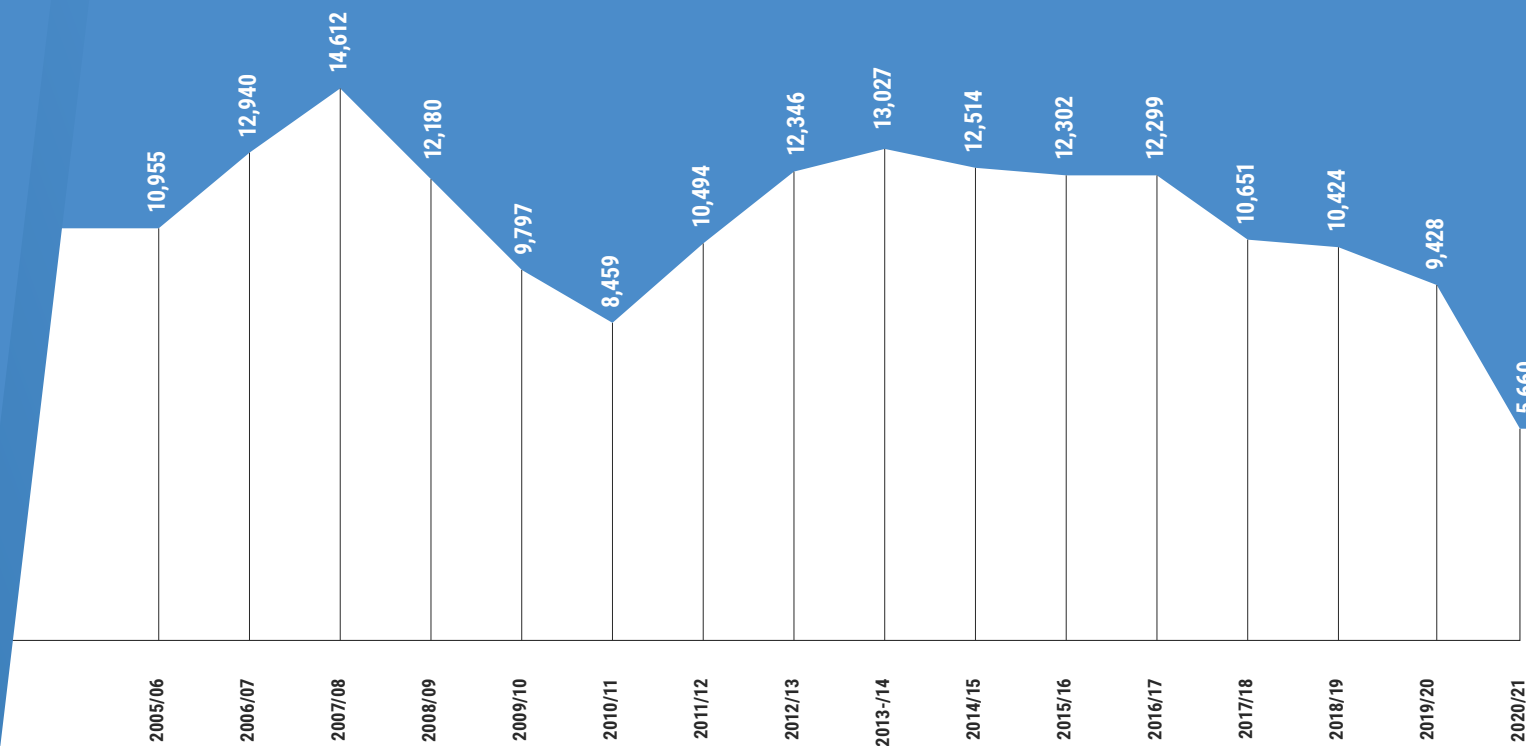
Wellington's return to New Zealand produced the two highest crowds of the season with a combined total of over 46,000 fans turning out to cheer on the 'Nix during their homecoming matches at Sky Stadium and Eden Park.

Brisbane Roar and Adelaide United's home grounds continue to provide exceptional atmosphere and despite finishing outside the top six, Western Sydney Wanderers had the highest cumulative attendance across the season, attracting 104,801 fans to its 13 home matches.

From next season, crowds are likely to recover and skew upwards. This will depend on Australia's recovery from the pandemic – and the success of its national vaccine program - but relaxed crowd restrictions could provide the opportunity for growth. Capturing the fans' passion for the A-League when they return in greater numbers will be the game's greatest opportunity to reinvigorate match days.

# ATTENDANCE

Average A-League attendance: season comparison



**Note:** 5 matches were closed to the public owing to restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. These matches have been removed, and the attendance average for season 2020/21 adjusted accordingly. Moreover, with the COVID-19 pandemic casting an ever-present shadow over everyday life, people may have chosen to forgo sporting events. Therefore, any analysis of crowd figures this season needs to keep this in mind.

Top 5 attendances in 2020/21

Match Week	Home Team	Away Team	Stadium	Attendance
22	Wellington Phoenix	Western United	Sky Stadium	24,105
23	Wellington Phoenix	Perth Glory	Eden Park	22,223
19	Western Sydney	Sydney FC	Bankwest Stadium	20,336
22	Sydney FC	Western Sydney	SCG	17,121
4	Sydney FC	Western Sydney	Stadium Australia	14,402



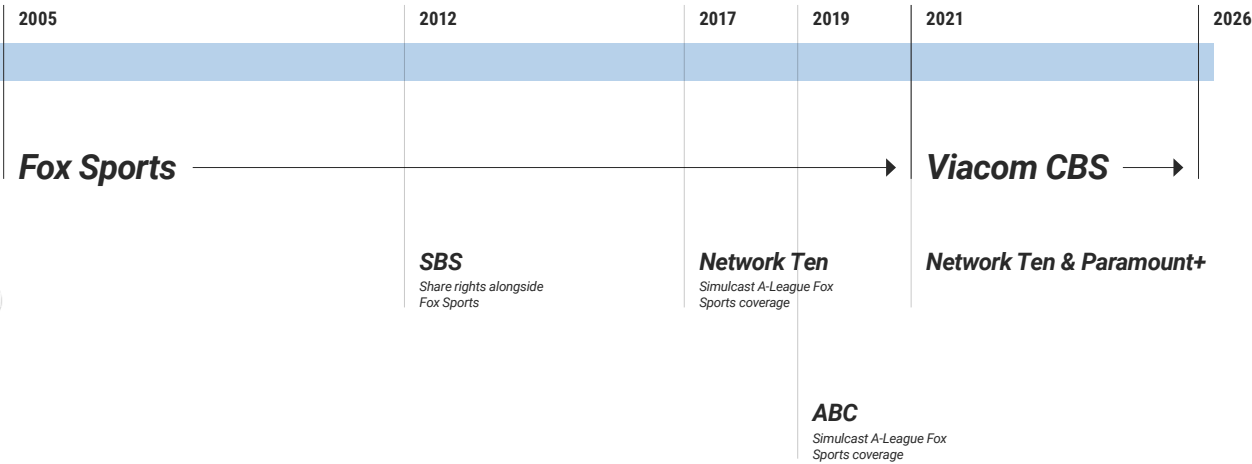


# BROADCAST

The 2020/21 season was the last A-League season broadcast by Fox Sports, after a 16-year partnership. From August 2021, ViacomCBS will broadcast the A-League and W-League through Network 10 (one A-League match per week on Network 10, one W-League on 10 Bold) and all other games will be streamed via Paramount+.

The new era presents an opportunity for the Professional Leagues to be broadcast through a fresh editorial lens and via new platforms, providing an opportunity to attract new audiences while retaining existing fans of both competitions.

## Australian football broadcast timeline





# PITCH RATINGS

## Pitch Ratings Key



The PFA A-League Pitch Ratings are voted on by selected away team players at the conclusion of each match. Players rate the playing surface on four measures: pace, hardness, smoothness, and overall quality. Pace and hardness are measured on a scale where the ideal score sits at the middle, while smoothness and overall quality are simply scored out of five. A total of 21 stadia were utilised during the 2020/21 season.



Pace  
Hardness  
Smoothness  
Overall Quality  
Atmosphere

Coopers Stadium



Pace  
Hardness  
Smoothness  
Overall Quality  
Atmosphere

Coffs International Stadium



McDonald Jones Stadium



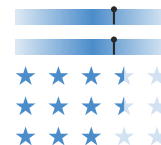
Pace  
Hardness  
Smoothness  
Overall Quality  
Atmosphere

Moreton Daily Stadium



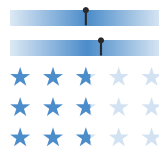
Pace  
Hardness  
Smoothness  
Overall Quality  
Atmosphere

HBF Park



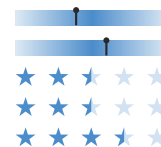
Pace  
Hardness  
Smoothness  
Overall Quality  
Atmosphere

Central Coast Stadium

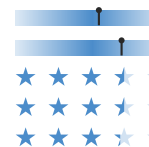


Pace  
Hardness  
Smoothness  
Overall Quality  
Atmosphere

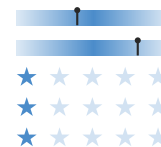
Leichhardt Oval



Netstrata Jubilee Stadium



Sydney Cricket Ground



Stadium Australia



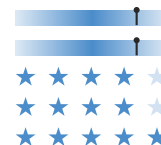
Pace  
Hardness  
Smoothness  
Overall Quality  
Atmosphere

Campbelltown Stadium

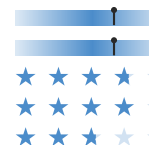


Pace  
Hardness  
Smoothness  
Overall Quality  
Atmosphere

Eden Park



WIN Stadium



Sky Stadium



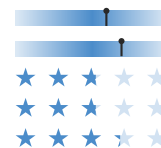
Pace  
Hardness  
Smoothness  
Overall Quality  
Atmosphere

AAMI Park



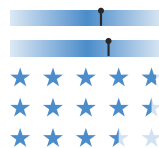
Pace  
Hardness  
Smoothness  
Overall Quality  
Atmosphere

Bankwest Stadium

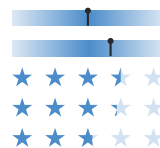


Pace  
Hardness  
Smoothness  
Overall Quality  
Atmosphere

AAMI Park

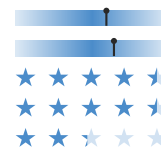


Marvel Stadium

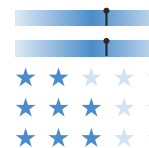


Pace  
Hardness  
Smoothness  
Overall Quality  
Atmosphere

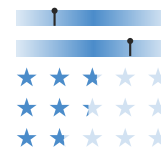
AAMI Park



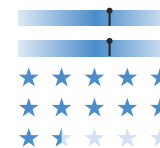
GMHBA Stadium



Mars Stadium



UTAS Stadium



Averages:

Pace  
2.85

Hardness  
3.44

Smoothness  
3.39

Overall Quality  
3.41

Atmosphere  
2.95

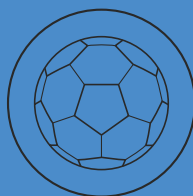


# TECHNICAL REPORT

- ▶ Snapshot
- ▶ Goals
- ▶ Creation & Passing
- ▶ Possession & Refereeing

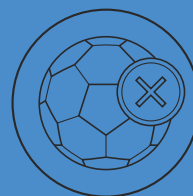


# SNAPSHOT



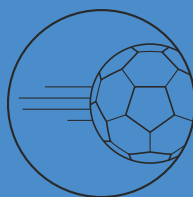
2.93

The average number of goals scored per match



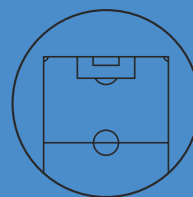
5.8%

The percentage of matches ending in goalless draws



944.7

The average number of passes per match



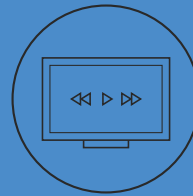
55.7%

The highest average possession across the season, achieved by Macarthur FC



58.9%

The average percentage of tackle success



3.2

The average rating of VAR implementation, out of a maximum rating of 5

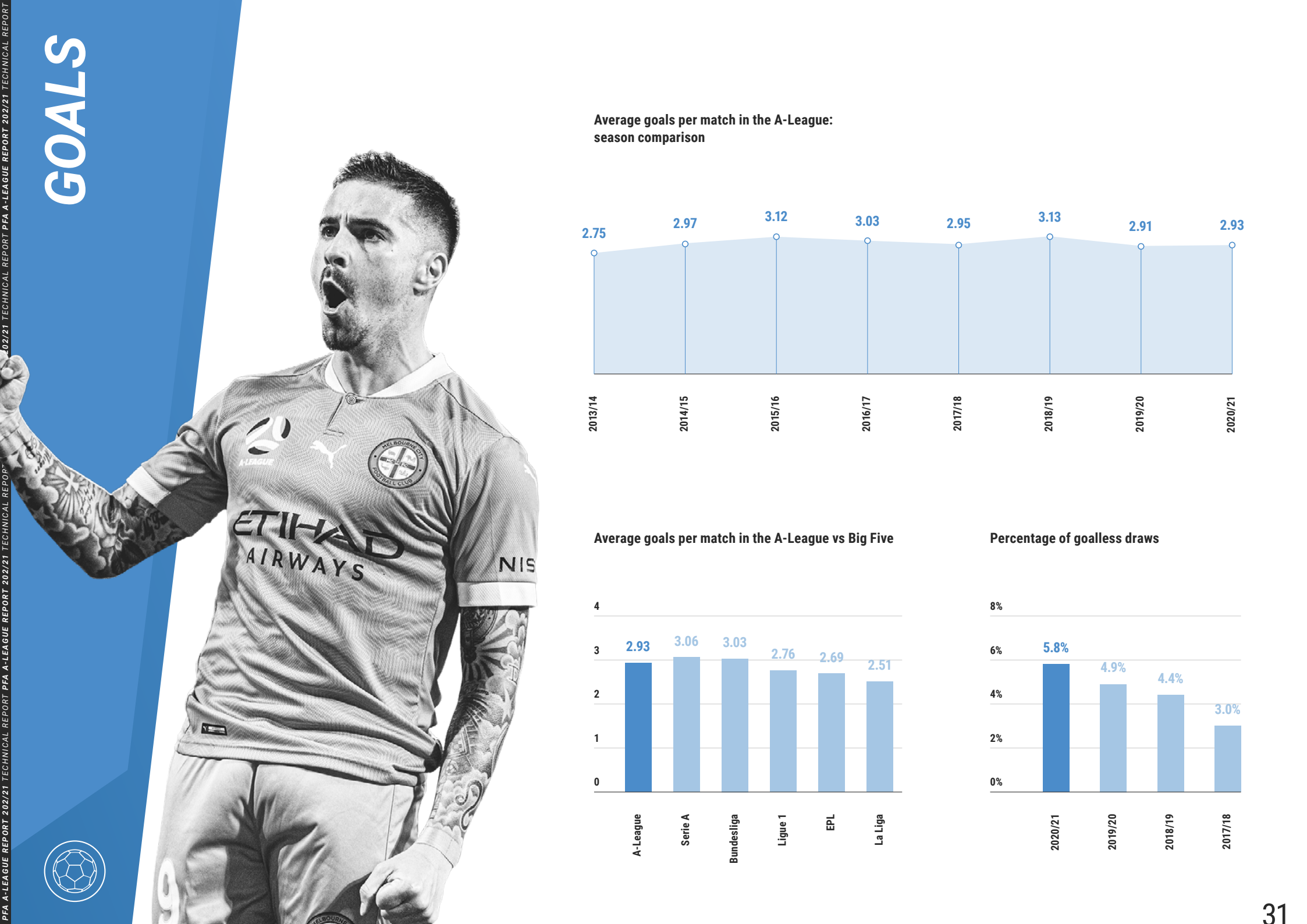
The 2020/21 season was widely touted by fans and media as one of the 'most entertaining' to date. Placing a finger on the attributes or technical data that supports that assumption is challenging, however. The entertainment factor this season perhaps was more subjective. Whether it was the emergence of new, youthful and exuberant talent across almost every team, the free-flowing exploits of Golden Boot winner Jamie Maclaren, high-scoring thrillers or the unexpected results from Central Coast Mariners, observers had countless reasons to be engrossed by the 2020/21 season.

The Technical Report seeks to provide a snapshot of the key attributes from the season, not provide subjective evidence to support the 'entertainment' theory. With an average of 2.93 per game, the A-League continues to produce a high number of goals. In a comparison against European football's Big Five, the A-League comfortably sits mid-table when it comes to goals per game.

In the past three seasons, the number of passes per match has increased, with close to 1000 passes per match, while key passes in the past two seasons have increased by nearly two per match, while the percentage of short passes played has also increased.



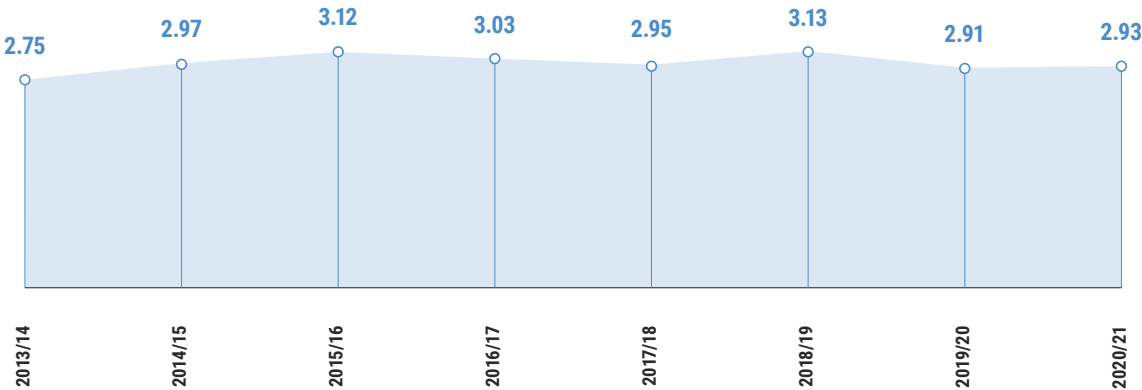




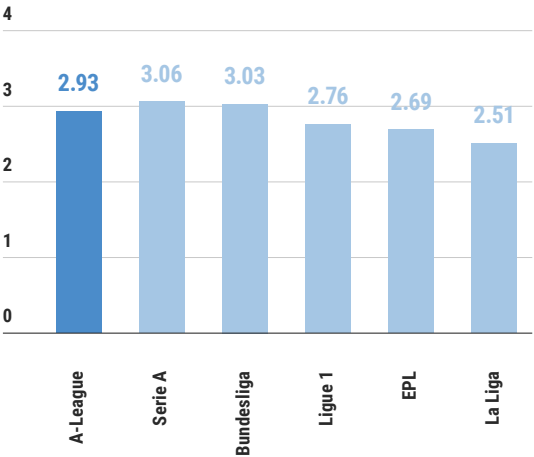
# GOALS



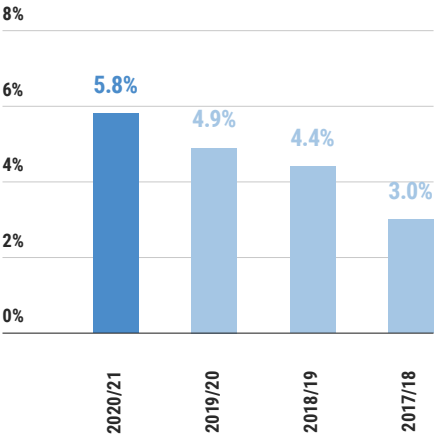
Average goals per match in the A-League:  
season comparison



Average goals per match in the A-League vs Big Five

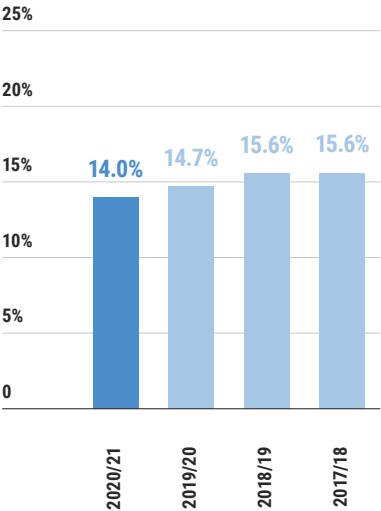


Percentage of goalless draws

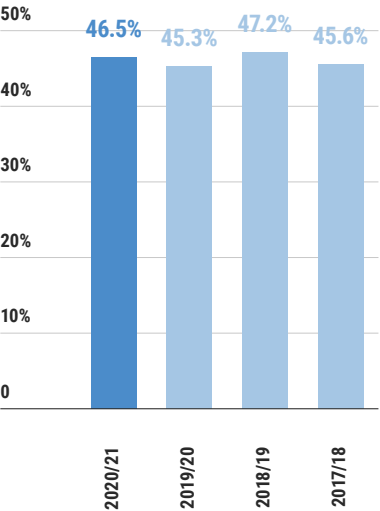




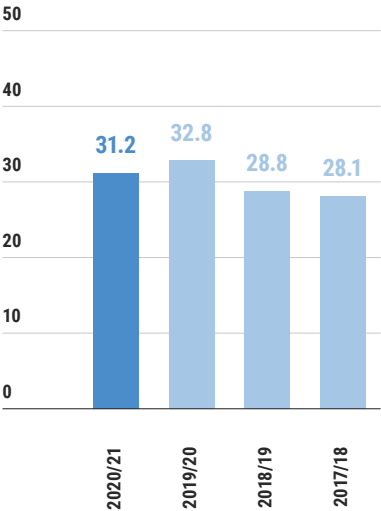
Ratio of shots to goals



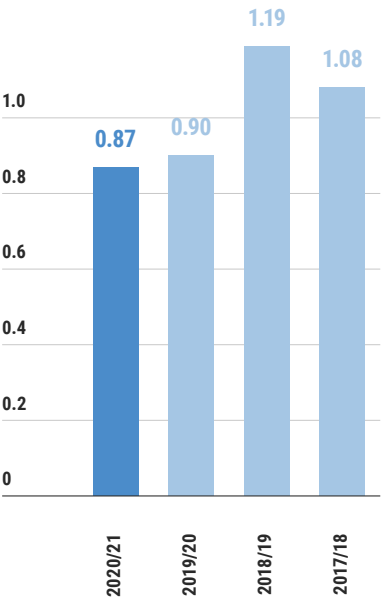
Shooting accuracy



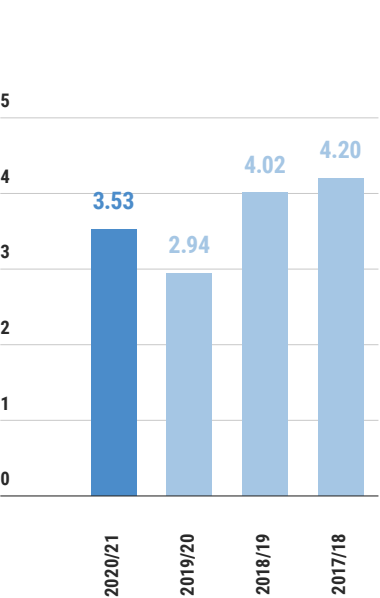
Crosses per match



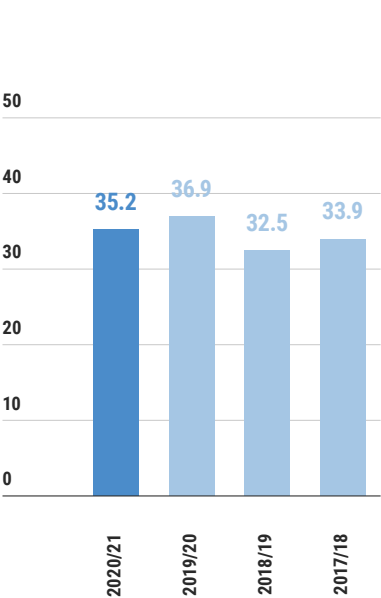
Through balls per match



Offsides per match

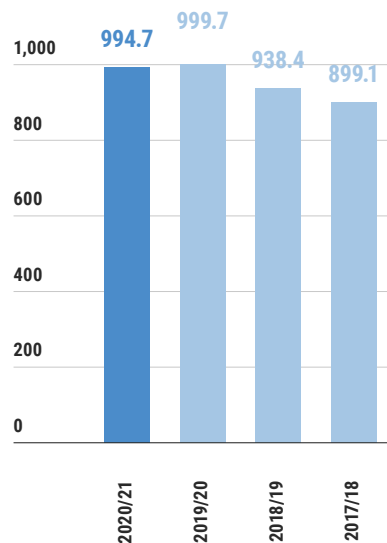


Dribbles per match

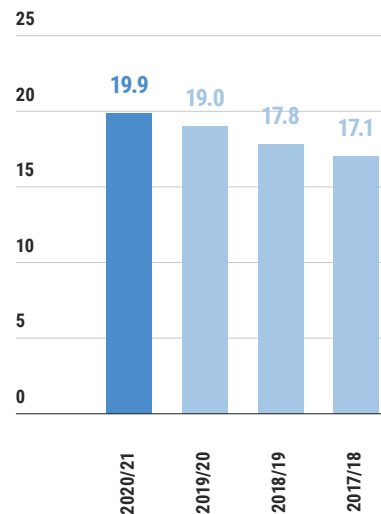


# PASSING & POSSESSION

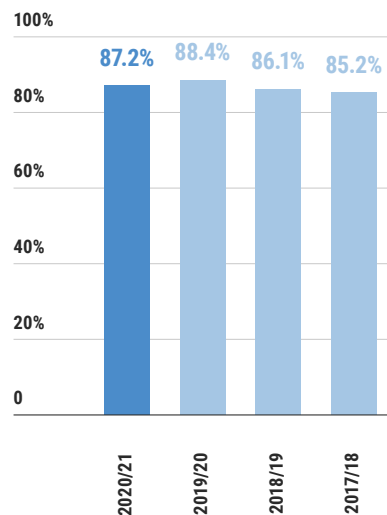
Passes per match



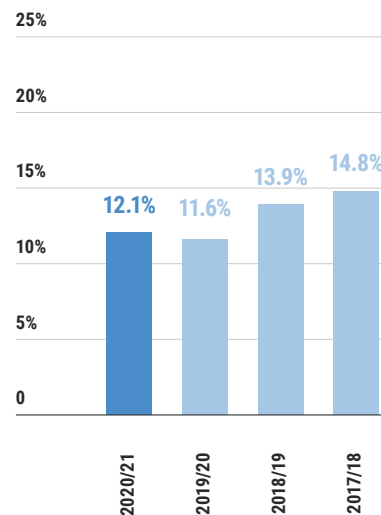
Key passes per match



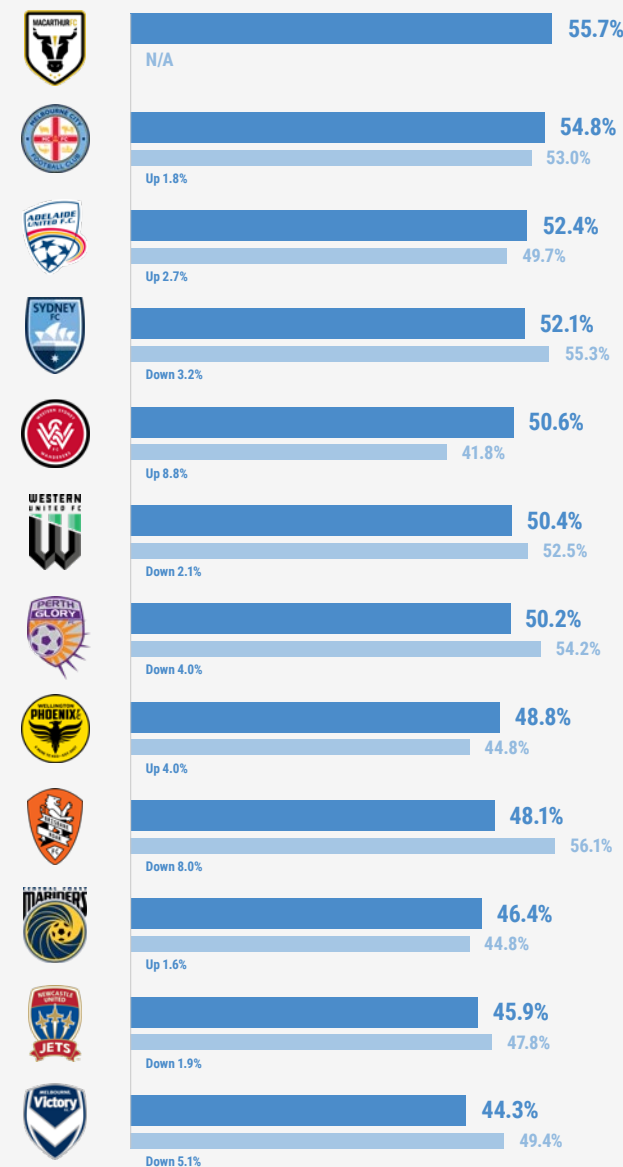
Passes short per match



Passes long per match



Average possession per match: club comparison



2020/21  
2019/20

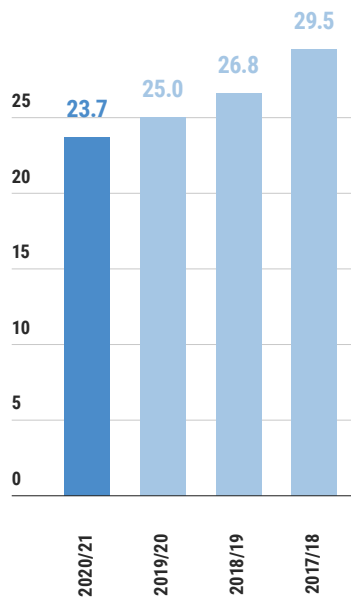




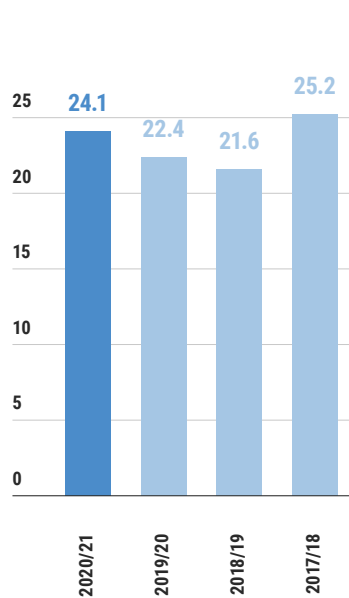
# DEFENDING & REFEREEING



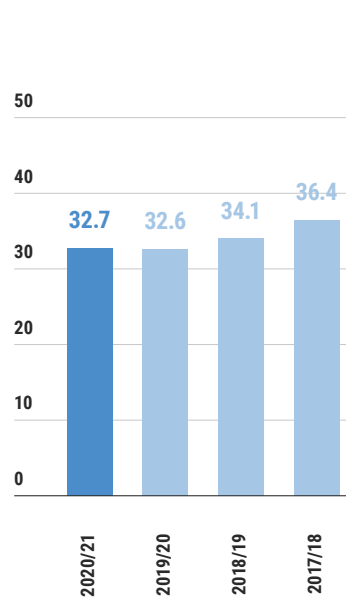
Fouls per match



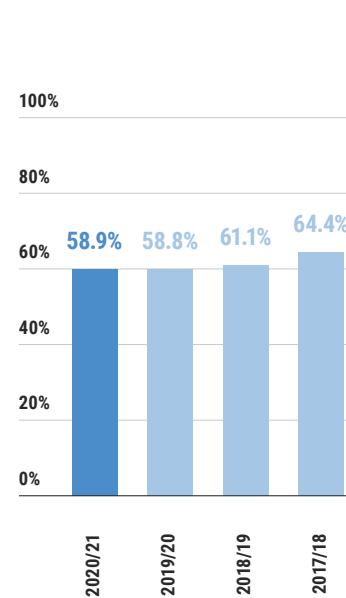
Interceptions per match



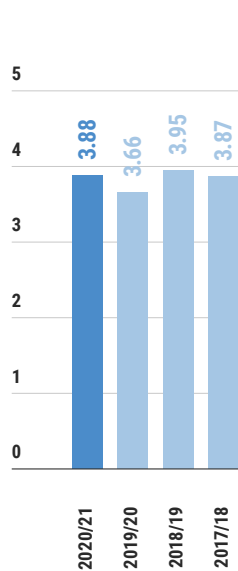
Tackles per match



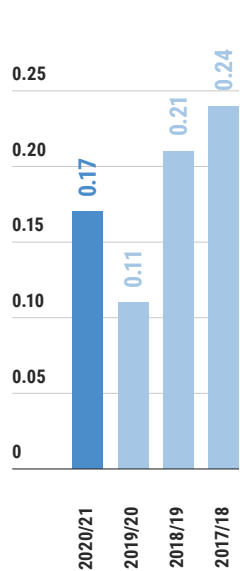
Percentage of tackle success



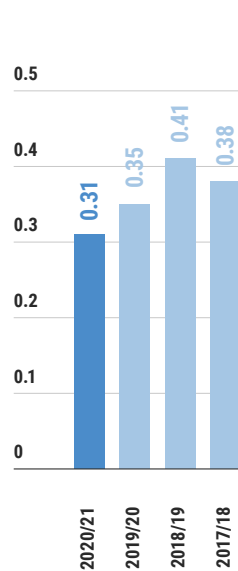
Yellow cards per match



Red cards per match



Penalties per match



## A-LEAGUE SURVEY



Referee assessment (from the PFA's post-match player surveys)

Decisions

★★★★★ 3.3

Communicating

★★★★★ 3.3

Safety

★★★★★ 3.7

VAR

★★★★★ 3.2



# INJURY REPORT

- ▶ *Snapshot*
- ▶ *Methodology*
- ▶ *Season Overview*
- ▶ *Location of Injuries*

# SNAPSHOT



Since 2005, the PFA's A-League Injury Report has been a fundamental tool in the PFA's efforts to ensure the health and safety of our members. The Report has underpinned the PFA's advocacy for fairer scheduling, safer playing surfaces and improved conditions at clubs, headlined by the introduction of the Minimum Medical Standards in 2011.

This season saw a 10% rise in injuries per club, with an average of 15.3 injuries occurring per club this season. However, the silver lining is that there was a 2% decrease of matches missed per club, so despite an increase in the number of injuries, slightly less game time was missed by players.

Ultimately, the cost of injuries dropped to \$4.5 million, down 17% from the \$5.4 million recorded in 2019/20, however this is mainly due to the salary cap being lowered this season.

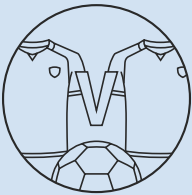
Hamstring injuries were responsible for 148 matches missed this season, an increase of 50% from 2019/20, while other soft tissue injuries such as calf and groin injuries also saw significant increases in occurrence. Promisingly, knee injuries were down 53% from last season in terms of matches missed.



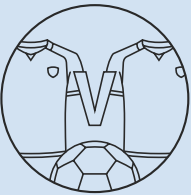
# METHODOLOGY

During the 2020-21 A-League season (excluding finals), the PFA collected and recorded the occurrence and location of all injuries causing players to miss matches.

The PFA Injury Report was formulated from publicly available information and private feedback, specifically through the following key sources:



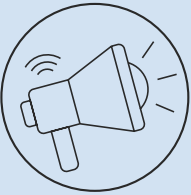
**Football Australia  
(FA) Weekly Match  
Previews**



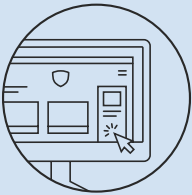
**Official A-League  
Club Match  
Previews / Reviews**



**Direct Commu-  
nication from  
A-League Players**



**Official Media  
Releases**



**Official Websites**

In this Report, injury is defined as “any physical complaint sustained during a competitive game or training that resulted in a player being unable to take part in, at a minimum, the player’s next official A-League

game.” Based on the data collected about injury occurrence and related games missed, descriptive analyses were conducted.

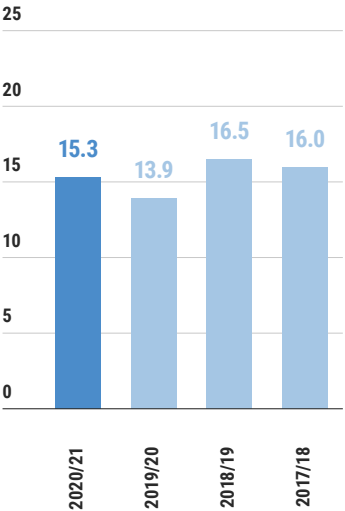
**Note:** The accuracy of the PFA A-League Injury Report’s results and analysis is dependent upon the accuracy of the sources of information from which it is derived. Accordingly, the PFA does not warrant that the results are an exact and complete record of player injuries. They are, however, an accurate summation of the publicly available information provided by FA and club sources. This Report does not include injuries players sustained while playing for the Australian Men’s National Teams.



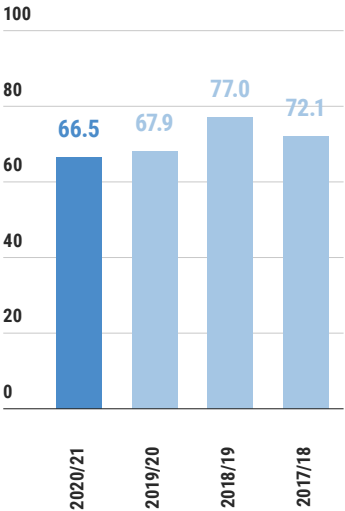
# SEASON OVERVIEW



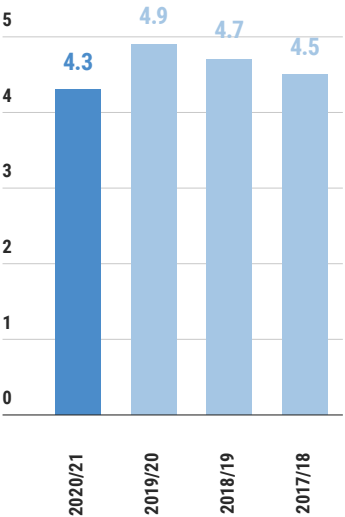
Injuries per club



Matches missed per club



Matches missed per injury



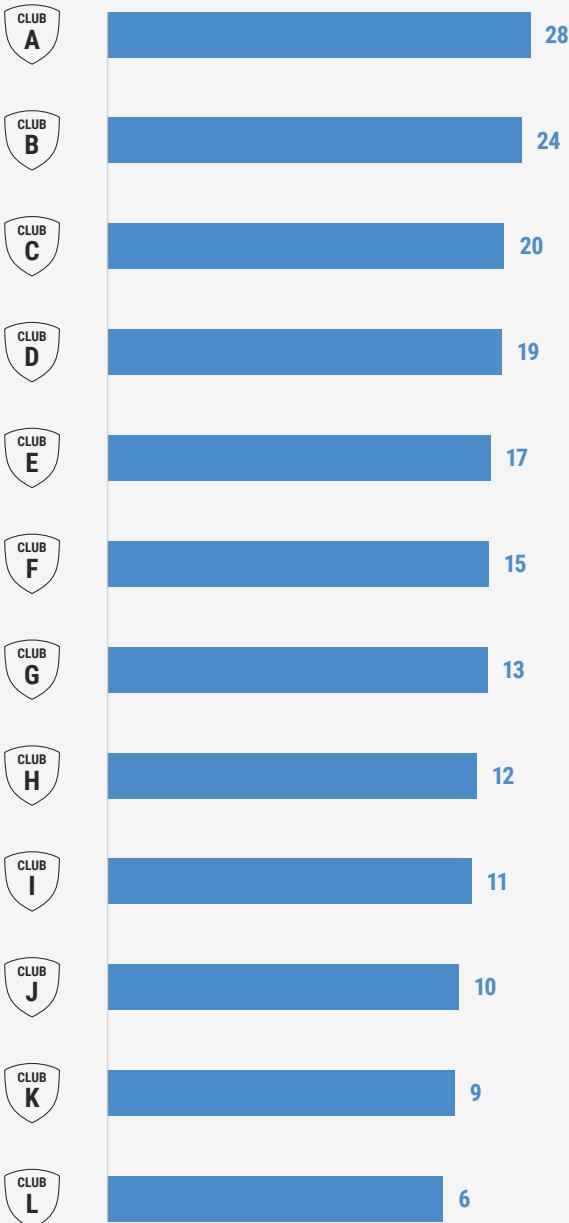
Total cost of injuries

**\$4,512,998**

Down \$908,029 from last season

**Note:** Cost of injuries is defined as the average wage spend on players unavailable to participate in matches due to injury. It is calculated by dividing the total player payments at each club by 432 (16 players x 26 rounds) to find the average cost to that club of each match missed due to injury, then multiplying by the recorded number of matches missed. Finals, Asian Champions League and FFA Cup matches are not included, nor are payments to marquee and guest players; so the true cost is likely much higher.

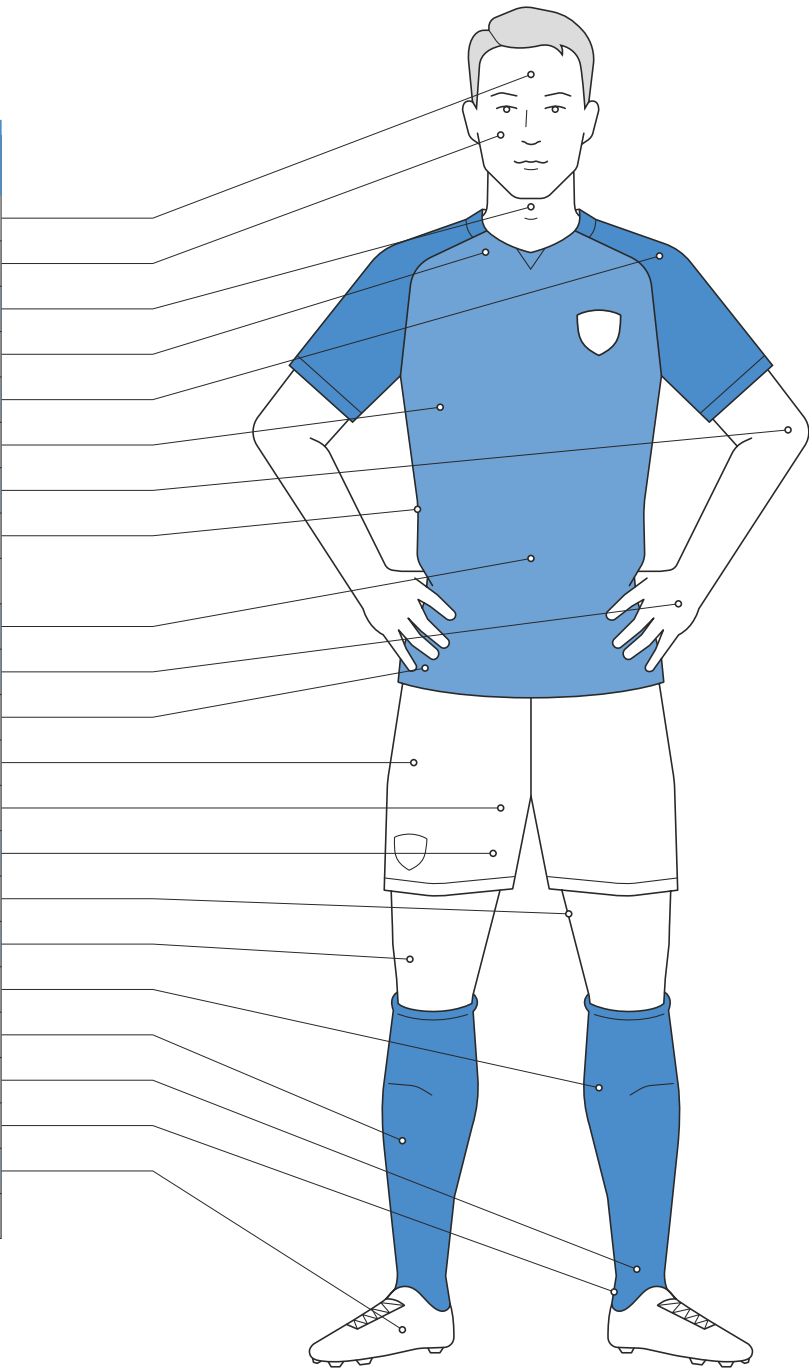
Number of injuries: club comparison



# LOCATION OF INJURIES



Location	Injuries	Matches Missed	Matches Missed: Change from 2019/20
Concussion	3	4	0
Face	1	1	+1
Illness	7	7	-1
Collar Bone	1	18	+18
Shoulder	7	46	-21
Ribs	1	3	+3
Elbow	0	0	-2
Back	4	29	+29
Soreness	2	2	0
Abs	0	0	-2
Hand	0	0	-7
Hip	5	21	+11
Quad	4	10	+28
Groin	18	62	+29
Adductor	4	10	-14
Hamstring	34	148	+49
Knee	21	146	-162
Calf	15	95	+73
Leg	5	43	+33
Ankle	22	72	+23
Achilles	1	5	+5
Foot	5	30	-2
Unstated	24	46	+16







# PLAYER DEVELOPMENT

- Program Engagement
- Survey Feedback
- PFA A-League Delegates



# PROGRAM ENGAGEMENT



Players' development off the pitch remains an area of critical importance to the PFA. By ensuring players are supported within their football careers, they can better perform on the pitch, while balancing their personal development as people off it. Countless studies have proven that players can excel through balancing their careers with wellbeing support, access to education and benefit from a greater understanding of the industry within which they are employed. In addition, the sport has a responsibility to support the people who are central to it – the players – and ensure their skills and identity extends beyond football.

The PFA's Player Development Program is central to professional players' development. This season, the players continued to access vital support services and also accessed for the first time:



A concussion workshop, based on FIFPRO's global protocols of recognising concussion, reporting it and removing a concussed player from the pitch;



Media 101 workshop for players interested in building their media literacy skills; and



Respectful relationships education.



Education Grants:

**61 players**



Coaching Courses, C/B Licence:

**57 registrations\***



Beyond the 90 Work placements:

**2 players**

*Nick Sullivan (Perth Glory) at Trio Homes and Tando Velaphi (Perth Glory) at Perth Heat Baseball Club*



Highlights Packages:

**63 players**

\*Course completion dependent on state-by-state COVID-19 restrictions

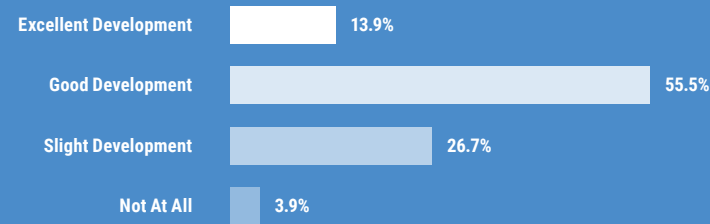


# SURVEY FEEDBACK

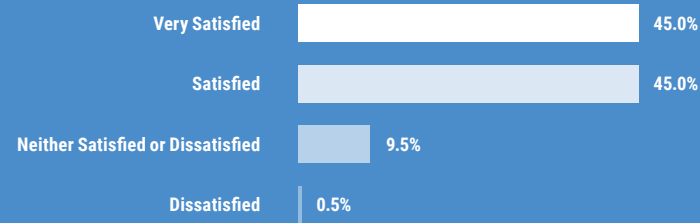
## A-LEAGUE SURVEY



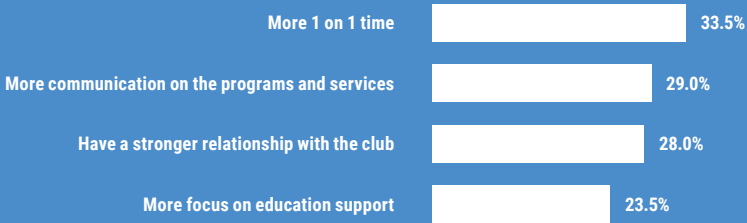
To what extent do you feel you developed as a person this season?



What is your overall satisfaction with the PFA?



How do you believe your Player Development Manager (PDM) could better support you?



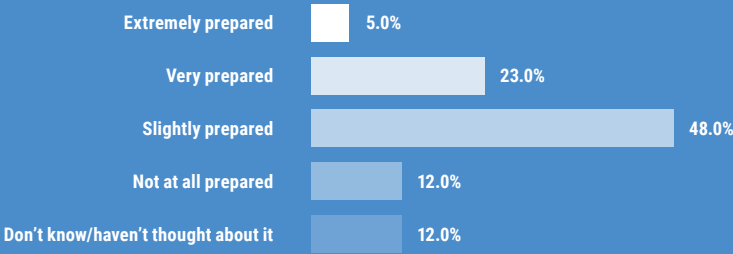




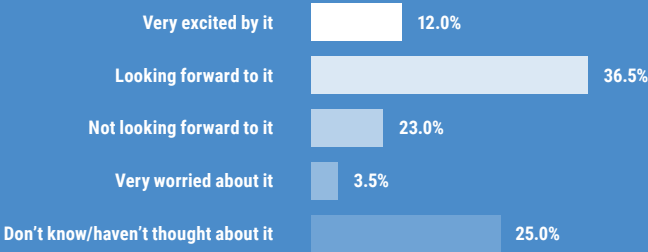
## A-LEAGUE SURVEY



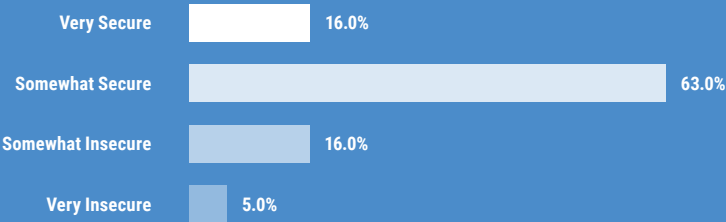
### How prepared do you feel for life after football?



### What best describes your general feelings about life after football?



### How would you describe your financial situation?



## Adelaide United



Michael  
Jakobsen

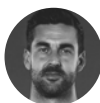


Michael  
Marrone



Stefan  
Mauk

## Macarthur FC



Adam  
Federici



Denis  
Genreau



Mark  
Milligan

## Newcastle Jets



Ben  
Kantarovski



Jason  
Hoffman



Lachlan  
Jackson

## Wellington Phoenix



Alex  
Rufer



Louis  
Fenton



Luke  
DeVere



Tim  
Payne

## Brisbane Roar



Jack  
Hingert



Jamie  
Young



Jesse  
Daley

## Melbourne City



Rostyn  
Griffiths

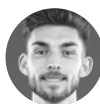


Scott  
Jamieson



Tom  
Glover

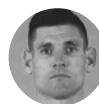
## Perth Glory



Brandon  
Wilson



Jonathan  
Aspropotamitis



Liam  
Reddy



Neil  
Kilkenny

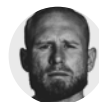
## Western Sydney Wanderers



Dylan  
McGowan



Tass  
Mourdoukoutas



Ziggy  
Gordon

## Central Coast Mariners



Gianni  
Stensness



Jack  
Clisby



Matt  
Simon

## Melbourne Victory



Leigh  
Broxham



Marco  
Rojas



Matt  
Acton

## Sydney FC



Andrew  
Redmayne



Joel  
King

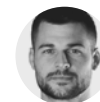


Michael  
Zullo



Paulo  
Retre

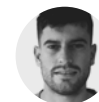
## Western United



Brendan  
Hamill



Joshua  
Risdon



Ryan  
Scott

*"As our sport was faced with its most challenging period, genuine leaders emerged.  
We thank each and every delegate who continued to put the interests of the game  
and their peers first no matter how difficult it became."*

Kathryn Gill & Beau Busch, PFA Co-Chief Executives



***COURAGE***  
***WORLD CLASS***  
***INTELLIGENCE***  
***TRUST***  
***RESPECT***



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