



SUPPORTING THE PLAYERS. BUILDING THE GAME.



ALM

REPORT 2021/22



Professional Footballers Australia

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In the spirit of reconciliation, Professional Footballers Australia acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia.

We also acknowledge and pay our respects to the Traditional Owners and Elders past, present, and emerging throughout Australia, and recognise their continuing connection to land, waters, laws, and culture. They hold the memories, traditions, cultures, and hopes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of Australia.



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SUPPORTING THE PLAYERS BUILDING THE GAME



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Kathryn Gill & Beau Busch

Co-Chief Executives

The next 12 months represent a unique opportunity for Australian football. The Socceroos have qualified for a fifth consecutive FIFA Men's World Cup. The FIFA Women's World Cup arrives on our shores next July. And our A-Leagues can hit the rebuild button after three arduous campaigns affected by COVID-19.

Without anticipating the future, the next A-League Men campaign will hopefully be the first full season without major disruption caused by the pandemic. If anything, the last three seasons have proven that our domestic competitions – and its players, staff, and administrators – are incredibly resilient. After riding a tsunami of uncertainty, the A-League Men and Women survived.

Ensuring the survival of the professional game has required immense sacrifice from players, coaches and staff, with this generation being owed a debt that can only be adequately repaid by ensuring that the professional game transitions from surviving to thriving.

While regular discussion in our game and critique of the A-League Men competition has focused on what Australian football doesn't possess in comparison to other football markets, the core findings outlined in this Report, which uses data analysis, evidence, and player feedback to build a picture of the top tier of Australian football, paints a positive picture.

The findings include:

- the A-League Men leads all other Asian competitions for providing opportunities for young talent;

- the competition is the most competitively balanced league in Asia;
- investment into player payments has returned to pre-pandemic levels; and
- player churn continues to trend downwards following the establishment of a five-year collective bargaining agreement (CBA).

Equally, the Report signposts the areas we need to address. The emergence of players such as Kye Rowles, Jordan Bos, Bernardo Oliveira, Kusini Yengi and Nestory Irankunda highlight that our collective challenge is to now turn opportunity into sustained development of these players on and off the pitch.

In addition, despite the clear impact of the CBA, a minority of clubs continue to operate as if the rules do not apply to them. The feedback from some players and their club's ladder position reflects that non-compliance acts only as a means of self-sabotage for them and the professional game in this country. The opportunities of the next 12 months will not be realised if the practices of the few continue to distract the majority from the positive and productive work that is required.

Finally, the past three seasons have required immense courage and it is truly an honour to work on behalf of players so committed to both the profession and the game. This courage has been sustained through a belief in what our game can and should be and the PFA remains committed to helping our game transition from not just surviving, but to thriving.

Beau Busch



Kathryn Gill

FOREWORD



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Summary
- Strategic Context

For players, understanding the game of football and the industry within which they are employed is critical to building meaningful lives and careers – in Australia and abroad. Equally important is the regular assessment and benchmarking – through player feedback and analysis – of our domestic competitions to ensure Australian football is progressing against its objectives and meeting the game's collective ambition of international competitiveness and success.

Since 2016, the PFA has conducted research of Australia's domestic competitions – now known as A-League Women and A-League Men – and gathered anecdotal feedback from its members for the dual purpose of supporting our players and shaping a better professional game.

Across the past six Reports charting the evolution of the A-League Men's competition, the PFA has focused on four key areas of analysis and assessment, exploring the players' employment framework, conducting a league assessment and composing a technical report before finally exploring the level of player development on and off the pitch.

To build this report, several sources of data were utilised: the PFA's A-League Men end of season survey, statistical data sourced from InStat, research sourced from the CIES Football Observatory and FIFA, and research conducted in partnership between the PFA and Twenty First Group.



332

The number of players contracted with A-League Men clubs during the 2021/22 season



45%

The percentage of contracted players under the age of 23 for the 2021/22 season



25

The average age of an A-League Men player for the 2021/22 season



16

The number of scholarship contracts available on A-League Men rosters, increased from 9



68.7%

The percentage of players contracted at their club for the 2022/23 season, representing record low levels of 'player churn' and improved contract stability



\$150,400

The average A-League Men salary for the 2021/22 season



A-LEAGUE MEN SURVEY

Every A-League Men player was sent a link to a PFA online survey at the conclusion of the 2021/22 season. Between June and July, 170 players responded to the survey.

The survey covered a broad range of areas impacting their career, from contract status, to work and study outside of football, transition-readiness, assessments of their club, the A-League Men competition, collective bargaining, player development and the performance of their union, the PFA.

Statistical Data

InStat

INSTAT

The PFA partners 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. For the first time for the 2021/22 Technical Report, the PFA engaged an external analyst to provide an analysis of the competition's prevailing technical trends

TWENTY FIRST GROUP

TWENTY FIRST GROUP

Twenty First Group are global leaders in bespoke B2B sports intelligence based in London, UK.

cies FOOTBALL OBSERVATORY

CIES FOOTBALL OBSERVATORY

The CIES Football Observatory is a research group created in 2005 within the Swiss-based Centre International d'Étude du Sport (CIES). It specialises in the statistical analysis of football, in particular in the areas of demographics, transfer values and performance.



The 2021/22 season was the third consecutive A-League Men campaign severely impacted by COVID-19. Despite the expectation of a new season under the Australian Professional Leagues (APL) administration, a freshly inked five-year Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) and a five-year broadcast agreement, the Omicron variant of COVID-19 caused interruption by week five of the campaign.

That disruption resulted in the rescheduling of over 50% of matches, or 80 of the 156 A-League Men's regular season fixtures. Players and staff regularly tested positive to the virus and state border closures caused havoc with team travel.

Given the global nature of COVID-19, elite and grassroots sport world-wide have continued to experience the ongoing impact of the pandemic since early 2020. According to Deloitte's Annual Review of Football Finance published in 2021, the European football market contracted by 13% in 2019/20: the first reduction in the market since the global financial crisis in 2008/09. In Australia, the AFL – the biggest football code in the country – reported losses of \$43 million, with its clubs spending an additional \$76 million in the past two years due to the pandemic.

The impact on clubs, the players and the A-League Men has been perhaps more devastating. While the European football market has already rallied and the AFL largely avoided the impacts of Omicron in the early stages of its 2022 season, the 2021/22 A-League Men season was heavily impacted.

While most of the focus was on the storylines that accompanied COVID-19's impact, the A-League Men competition again demonstrated its resilience in the face of disruption. An increased number of scholarship players available on club rosters resulted in an increase in the number of Australian players receiving match minutes at the top level.

Total player payments have recovered to near pre-pandemic levels, the A-League Men remains the most competitively balanced league in Asia, the average age continues to hover around 25 and opportunities for young Australian players receiving match minutes at the top level continues to increase.

STRATEGIC CONTEXT



EMPLOYMENT FRAMEWORK

In this section we highlight the impact of the five-year CBA on the employment conditions in the A-League Men, including player payments, contracting practices as well as match minutes played by age groups and the number and origin of foreign players within squads.

- *CBA Overview*
- *Player Payments*
- *Player Analysis*
- *Player Migration*
- *Player Churn*
- *Match Minutes*
- *Foreign Players*
- *Players' Survey*

The new five-year CBA signed between the APL and the PFA ahead of the 2021/22 season

delivered a wide variety of improvements to the working conditions of A-League Men players.

CBA OVERVIEW



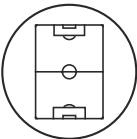
Player Payments

Salary cap to increase from \$2.5m to \$2.6m between 2021 – 2023. Two new categorised 'Designated Players' to have salaries (between \$300,000 to \$600,000) outside of salary cap, in addition to two marqueees whose salaries are outside the salary cap (no limit to salary)



Player Insurance Scheme

78 weeks of income protection coverage and career ending insurance capped at \$500,000



Enhanced Minimum Workplace and Performance Standards

Clubs are required to meet the minimum workplace and performance standards



Guaranteed Player Development Funding

Commencing at \$700,000, and increasing over the first three seasons to \$800,000

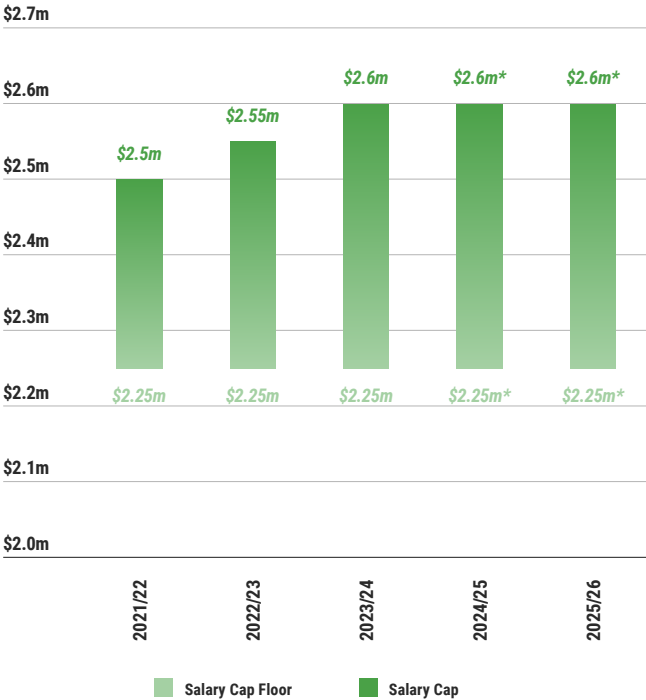


Review Trigger

To ensure players continue to receive a fair share of the game's revenues, the CBA includes a Review Trigger. If agreed revenue benchmarks are met, the PFA will then have the right to renegotiate the following matters:

- the minimum wage
- salary cap (both maximum and minimum)
- player payments
- prize money allocation to players
- Player Development Program funding

SALARY CAP PROJECTIONS



*Subject to Review Trigger, these are guaranteed minimum amounts

PLAYER PAYMENTS

PLAYER PAYMENTS ANALYSIS

2021/22 A-League Men Average Salary	
Average Salary	\$150,400

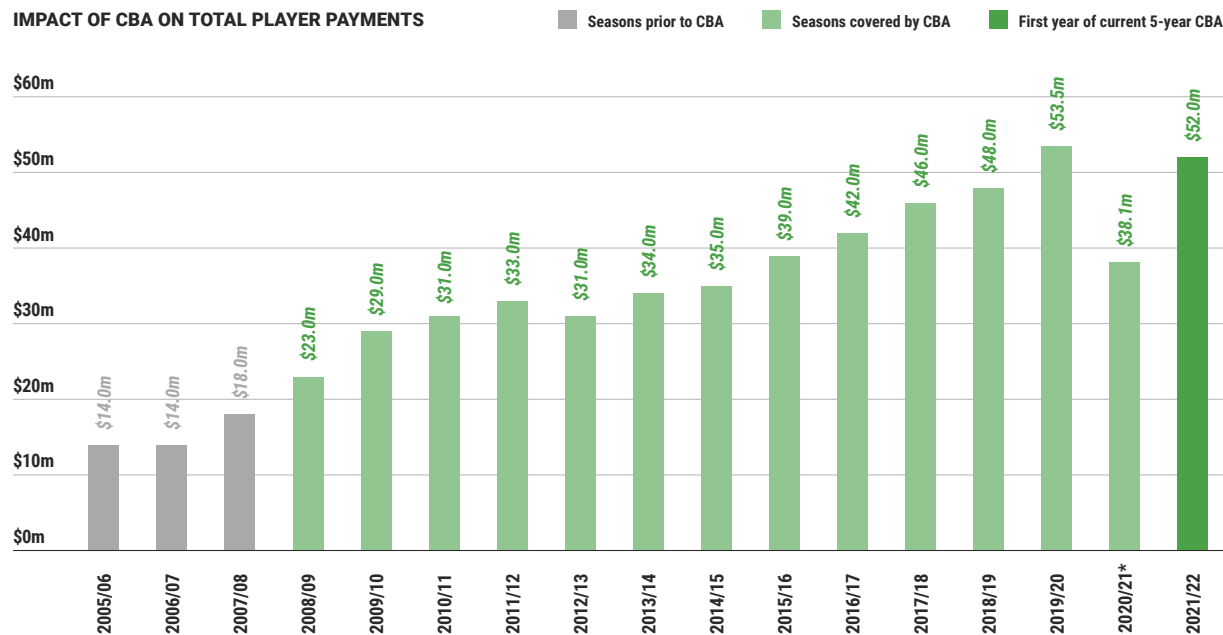
Note: Around 90% of player contracts have been provided to the PFA for this analysis

Average Salary by Position	
Goalkeeper	\$107,500
Defender	\$123,300
Midfielder	\$153,600
Forward	\$201,300

Average Salary by Nationality	
Australian	\$124,800
Foreign Player	\$226,500

2021/22 has resulted in a 2.2x increase in the spend on scholarship players.

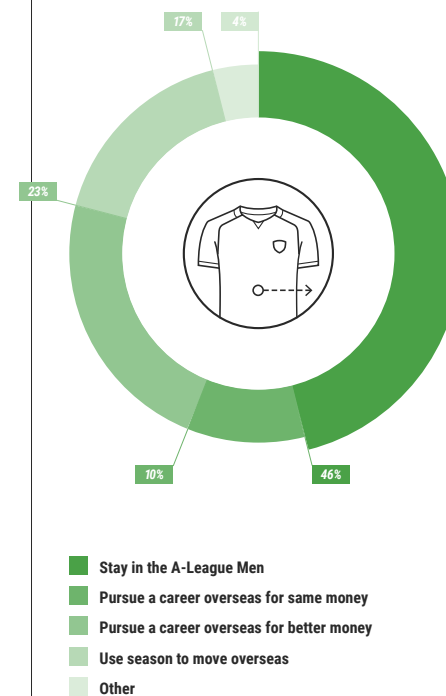
IMPACT OF CBA ON TOTAL PLAYER PAYMENTS



*reduction in overall player payments due to financial impact of COVID-19



WHAT ARE YOUR PLANS FOR NEXT SEASON?



PLAYER ANALYSIS



332

Total number of players contracted



321

Total number of players used



50%

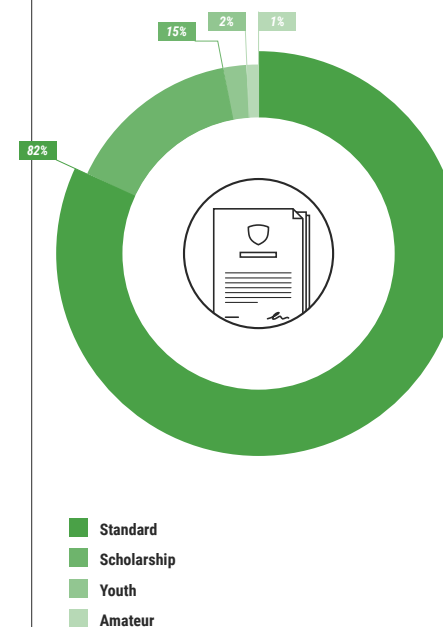
The percentage of players in the first year at their club

CLUB BY CLUB BREAKDOWN

Club	Players Used	Players Contracted	Average Age
Adelaide United	30	32	23.9
Brisbane Roar	26	23	25.2
Central Coast Mariners	28	26	23.9
Macarthur FC	24	25	26.6
Melbourne City	25	28	24.2
Melbourne Victory	24	26	25.7
Newcastle Jets	25	26	25.0
Perth Glory	36	34	25.3
Sydney FC	28	29	26.8
Wellington Phoenix	25	25	23.3
Western Sydney Wanderers	28	30	25.0
Western United	22	28	25.5



WHAT TYPE OF CONTRACT ARE YOU ON?





Since the pandemic has impacted Australian football, the average age of players in the A-League Men has dropped significantly. Players aged 23 or under represented 45% of all contracted players during the 2021/22 season. Consequently, the average age is 25.

Through the CBA signed last September, the A-League Men clubs and the PFA agreed to extend the number of scholarship contracts from nine to 16, which is likely to have contributed to the average drop in age, as well

as providing opportunity for younger players.

In fact, the A-League Men leads all other leagues in the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) for providing opportunities for its emerging talent, according to a 2022 report released by the Football Observatory, a research group which specialises in the statistical analysis of football.

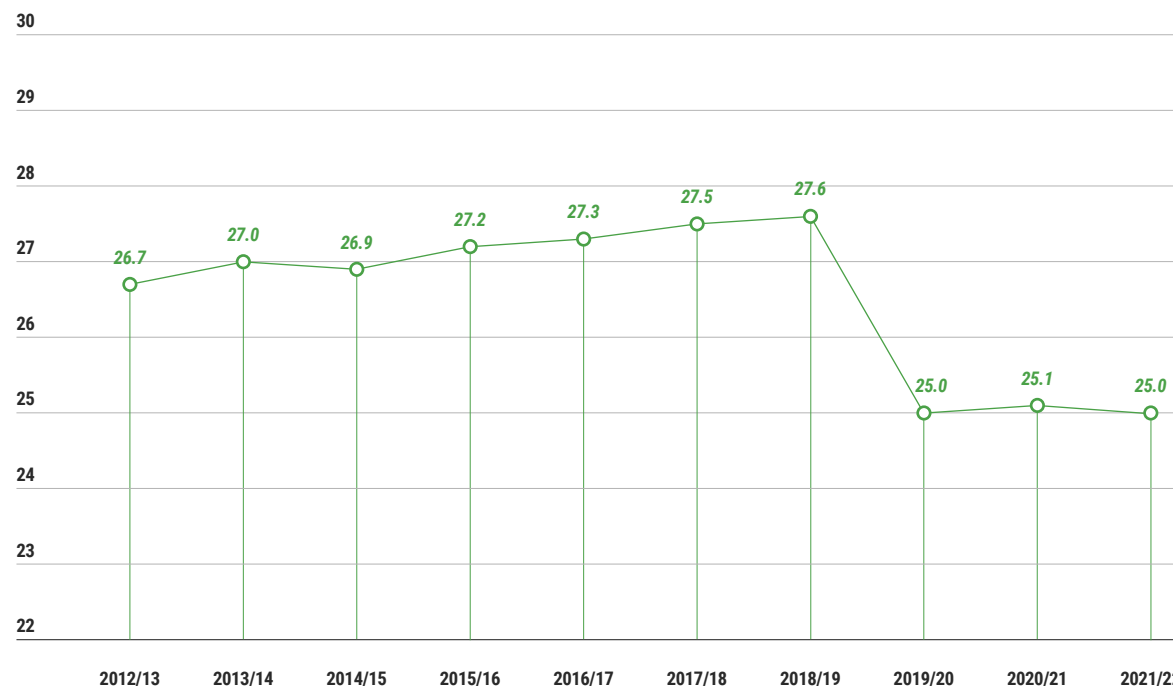
In another CIES Report released in May this year, the Mariners' Jacob Farrell (52nd) and Sydney FC's Patrick

Yazbek (67th) were listed in the top 100 footballers under the age of 20 who gained the most playing experience during the first semester of the year, joining a list of players including the likes of Jude Bellingham (1), Pablo Gavi (2) and Fabio Carvalho (7).



Source: <https://www.football-observatory.com/IMG/sites/b5wp/2021/wp383/en/>

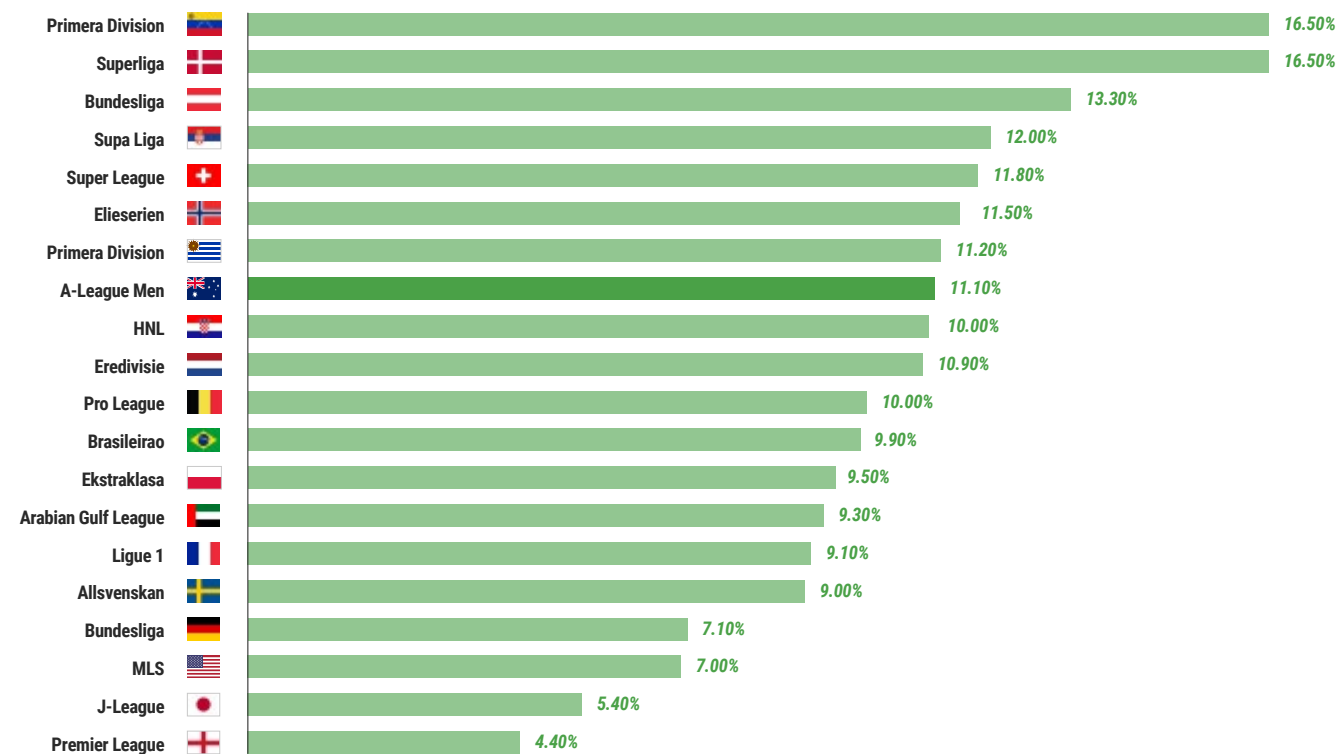
AVERAGE AGE OF A-LEAGUE MEN PLAYERS PER SEASON



Name	Club	Age	Matches Played	Minutes Played	Position
Kai Trewin	Brisbane Roar	21	25	2,416	CD
Jacob Farrell	Central Coast Mariners	19	25	2,338	LD
Sam Sutton	Wellington Phoenix	20	22	1,944	LD
Joshua Rawlins	Perth Glory	18	22	1,593	RD
Marco Tilio	Melbourne City FC	21	25	1,515	LM
Ben Waine	Wellington Phoenix	21	25	1,452	F
Thomas Aquilina	Western Sydney Wanderers	21	17	1,372	RD
Maximilien Balard	Central Coast Mariners	21	21	1,341	DM
Benjamin Old	Wellington Phoenix	20	24	1,178	RM
Callum Talbot	Melbourne City FC	21	16	1,162	RD
Finn Surman	Wellington Phoenix	18	15	1,158	CD
Bernado Oliveira	Adelaide United	18	23	1,152	RM
Lachlan Brook	Wellington Phoenix	21	19	1,104	RM
Patrick Yazbek	Sydney FC	20	13	1,064	DM
Phillip Cancar	Western Sydney Wanderers	21	12	1,022	CD
Harrison Steele	Central Coast Mariners	19	23	1,002	DM
Alexander Popovic	Adelaide United	20	10	939	CD
Louis D'Arrigo	Adelaide United	20	22	929	DM
Taras Gomulka	Melbourne City FC	20	20	867	DM
Joel King	Sydney FC	21	8	753	LD



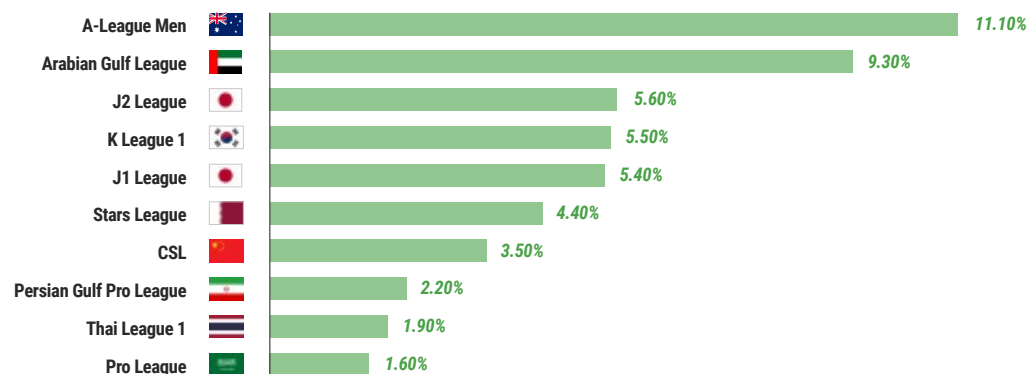
PERCENTAGE (%) OF MINUTES PLAYED BY U21 PLAYERS (LEAGUES COMPARISON)



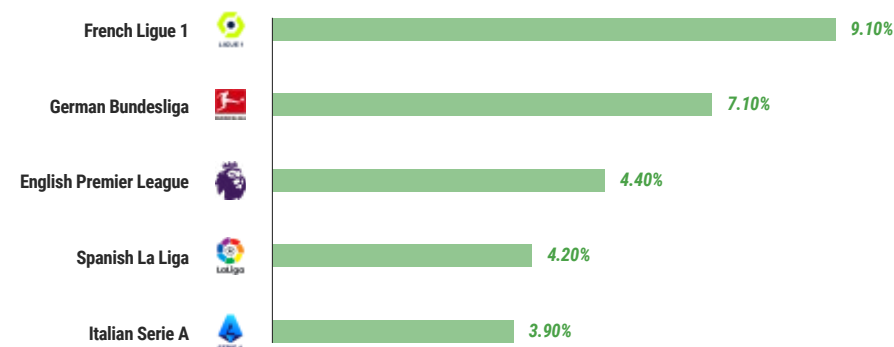
The A-League Men leads all AFC domestic competitions for fielding players aged 21 or under and eighth on a list of 60 leagues around the world: 11.1% of minutes in 257 matches were recorded by players who had not yet celebrated their 21st birthday.

Source: <https://www.football-observatory.com/IMG/sites/b5wp/2021/wp374/en/>

PERCENTAGE (%) OF MINUTES PLAYED BY U21 PLAYERS (AFC COMPARISON)



PERCENTAGE (%) OF MINUTES PLAYED BY U21 PLAYERS (BIG 5 LEAGUES)



CLUB TRAINED PLAYERS GLOBAL BENCHMARKING

% OF MINUTES BY CLUB-TRAINED PLAYERS, 40 LEAGUES WORLDWIDE

SEASON 2021/22 OR 2022, DOMESTIC LEAGUE MATCHES UNTIL 19/04/2022

Club	Global Rank	# of Club Trained Players	% of Minutes Played by Club Trained
MSK Zilina (SVK)	1	23	85.5%
Envigado FC (COL)	2	24	76.4%
CA Banfield (ARF)	3	16	66.6%
Dinamo Kiev (UKR)	4	12	62.9%
CA Lanus (ARG)	5	15	62.6%
Rosario (ARG)	6	15	60.2%
Athletic Club (ESP)	7	15	55.8%
CA Union (ARG)	8	12	52.9%
Cortulua (COL)	9	15	52.5%
Corinthians (BRA)	10	8	51.3%
Guadalajara (MEX)	11	18	51.1%
Pirin Blagoevgrad (BUL)	12	10	50.6%
Elfsborg (SWE)	13	6	50.5%
Debreceni (HUN)	14	15	49.6%
Sigma Olomouc (CZE)	15	17	49.3%
Velez Sarsfield (ARG)	16	13	48.0%
Central Coast Mariners (AUS)	17	11	47.1%

CLUB TRAINED PLAYERS BY CLUB

Club	# of Club Trained Players	% of Minutes Played by Club Trained
Central Coast Mariners	11	47.1%
Brisbane Roar	8	35.5%
Perth Glory	16	31.0%
Wellington Phoenix	8	29.3%
Newcastle Jets	6	24.2%
Sydney FC	10	20.8%
Western Sydney Wanderers	10	19.7%
Melbourne Victory	6	18.9%
Melbourne City	6	12.0%
Adelaide United	6	9.7%

Note: Club-trained footballers are defined as players who have been at their employer clubs for at least three (3) years between the seasons during which they celebrated their 15th and 21st birthday.

The CIES research also identified Central Coast Mariners and Perth Glory as two of the best-performing clubs in 40 of the biggest leagues worldwide in providing opportunities to "club-trained" players, ranking them among the best in the world for promoting their own academy-produced players.

Source: <https://www.football-observatory.com/IMG/sites/b5wp/2021/wp378/en/>



INTERNATIONAL TRANSFERS

A selection of players have departed the A-League Men for overseas clubs for international transfer fees in the past 12 months, with Scottish Premier League clubs a popular destination for Australian talent.

PFA analysis of Australian international transfer receipts for men's players since 2006 reveals the two most recent transfer windows (January 2022 and May-September 2022) represent the highest in transfer receipts in the past four years. Australian clubs have received over \$3m

in transfer receipts during the two most recent transfer windows.

The combination of young players receiving match minutes in the A-League Men and exposure for Australia's national teams is likely to have placed the likes of Lewis Miller (Hibernian), Kye Rowles (Heart of Midlothian), Connor Metcalfe (St Pauli), Joshua Rawlins (FC Utrecht), Mohamed Toure (Reims) and Yaya Dukuly (Reims) in the 'shop window' for European clubs.

AUSTRALIAN INTERNATIONAL TRANSFER RECEIPTS (AUD \$)



Where does Australia sit within the International Transfer Market?

To gain a better understanding of where Australia sits within the global transfer market, the PFA examined the FIFA *Ten Years of International Transfers Report – A Report on International Football Transfers Worldwide 2011-2020*. While this Report excludes an analysis of the most recent windows (2021-22), and the broader cultural, social and economic analysis of global football markets, it provides a long-term overview of Australia's position within the global transfer market in terms of fees received and spending on transfers against 200 other countries. The following conclusions can be drawn from an analysis of the data:



Australia made US\$26.6m profit on the international transfer market between 2011-2020, receiving a total of US\$30.5m for outgoing transfers and spending US\$3.9m on incoming transfers;



This placed Australia in 38th position globally in terms of its net position (+\$26.6m), which is closely behind the likes of Nigeria (34th, +\$35m), Costa Rica (35th, +\$30.4m), Tunisia (36th, +\$30m) and Finland (37th +\$28m), but ahead of Bosnia & Herzegovina, Senegal, Montenegro, Cameroon, Belarus and Hungary;



Within the AFC, Australia ranks second in terms of its **net position from transfer** activity (+\$26m), behind only South Korea (+\$78m);

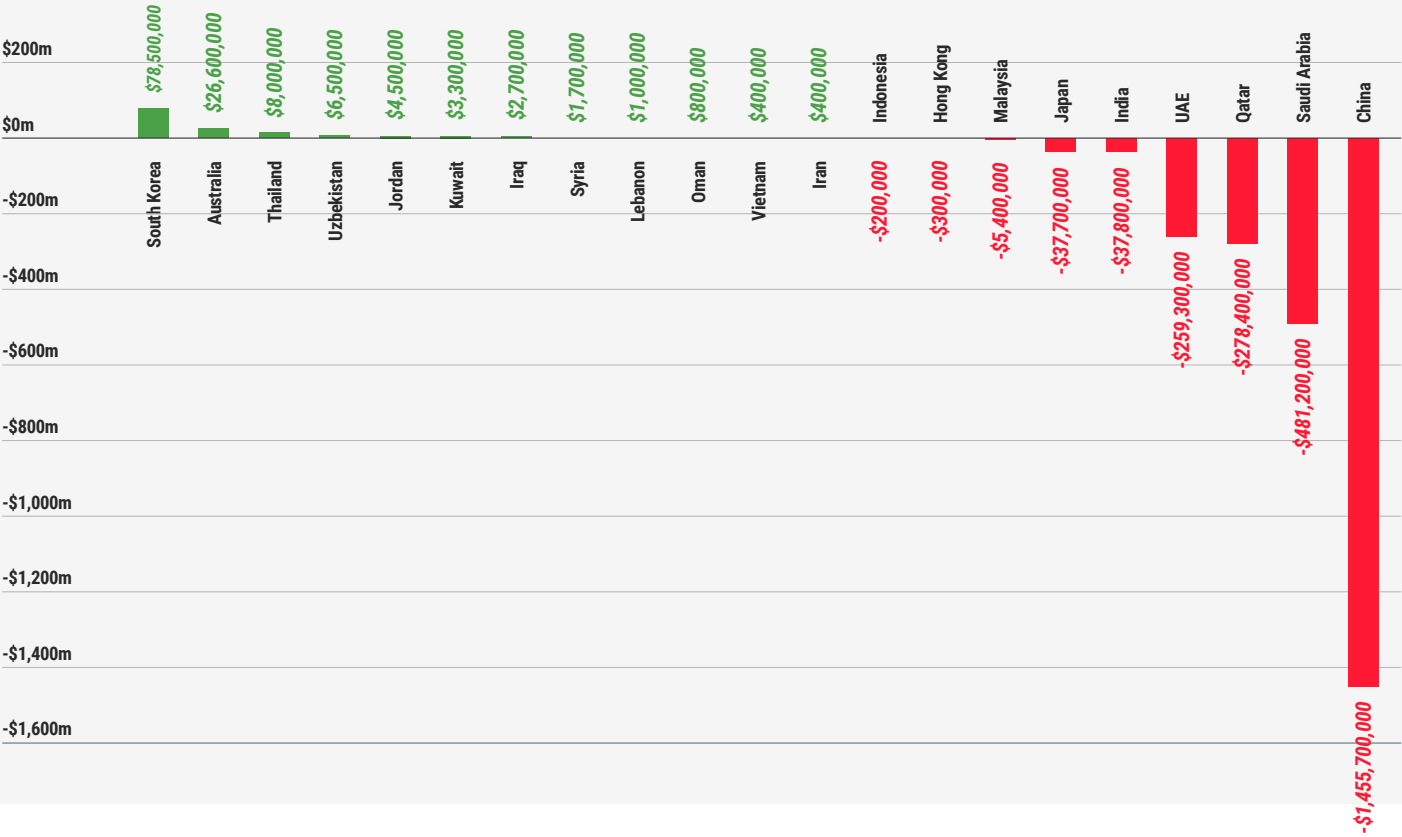


Australia's AFC rivals Japan (-\$37.7m), India (-\$37.7m), UAE (-\$259.3m), Qatar (-\$278.4m), Saudi Arabia (-\$481.2m) and China (-\$1.45bn) made combined losses of \$2.55bn;



In a comparison against profitable countries on the transfer market, Australia is ranked 38th, despite not spending or generating the significant sums many established football countries in Europe and South America do.

NET POSITION ON TRANSFER MARKET FOR AFC NATIONS BETWEEN 2011-2020



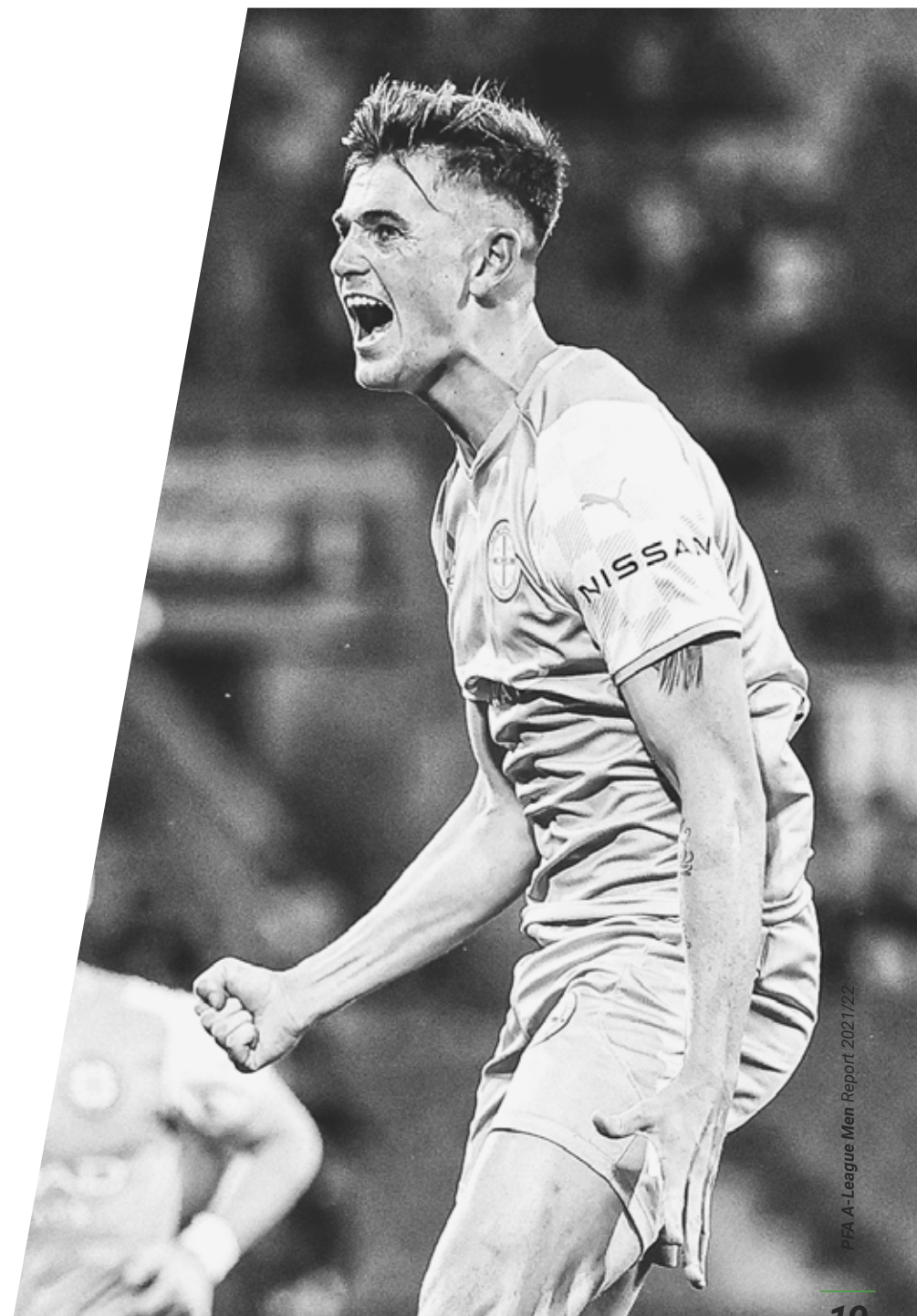
European clubs made the most transfers – both incoming and outgoing – as well as paying and receiving the largest amounts in transfer fees. Where transfer fees were concerned, European clubs' share was 87% of the total amount paid and 83% of the total fees received in the last ten years, indicating the international transfer market is dominated almost exclusively by clubs in UEFA competitions. Across the decade analysed by FIFA, US\$40.4bn in transfer fees were received by clubs in UEFA, versus US\$885.6m in the AFC region: just over 20% of the fees received in Europe. Of the US\$3.3bn spent on transfers in the AFC region, over half is accounted for by China's spending to bolster the Chinese Super League with talent: US\$1.69bn was spent by Chinese clubs between 2011-2020.

TRANSFERS AND TRANSFER FEES BY CONFEDERATION: 2011-2021

Outgoing Transfers	Incoming Transfers	Confederation	Spending on Transfer Fees (USD)	Receipts from Transfer Fees (USD)	Associations Involved
73,561	75,720	UEFA	\$42,168.5m	\$40,475.4m	54
22,087	18,447	CONMEBOL	\$1,515.1m	\$5,722.5m	10
13,876	18,317	AFC	\$3,305.8m	\$885.6m	46
15,080	10,480	CAF	\$185.7m	\$525.5	53
8,396	10,176	CONCACAF	\$1,296.2m	\$860.6m	30
225	85	OFC	\$0.1m	\$1.7m	7

INTERNATIONAL TRANSFERS OF A-LEAGUE MEN PLAYERS INVOLVING A TRANSFER FEE (2022)

Name	Moving From	Moving To
Connor Metcalfe	Melbourne City	St Pauli (Germany)
Joshua Rawlins	Perth Glory	Utrecht (Netherlands)
Phillip Cancar	Western Sydney Wanderers	Livingston (Scotland)
Liam Rose	Macarthur FC	El Paso Locomotive (USA)
Mohamed Toure	Adelaide United	Reims (France)
Yaya Dukuly	Adelaide United	Reims (France)
Kye Rowles	Central Coast Mariners	Heart of Midlothian (Scotland)
Lewis Millar	Macarthur FC	Hibernian (Scotland)
Keanu Baccus	Western Sydney Wanderers	St Mirren (Scotland)
Mark Birighitti	Central Coast Mariners	Dundee United (Scotland)
Brendan Hamill	Western United	ATK Mohun Bagan (India)
Aaron Calver	Western United	Gwangju (Korea)
Diesel Herrington	Brisbane Roar (NPL)	Aarhus Gymnastikforening (AGF)
Elvis Kamsoba	Sydney FC	Sepahan (Iran)
Nathaniel Atkinson	Melbourne City FC	Heart of Midlothian (Scotland)
Stefan Mauk	Adelaide United	Fabiano Okayama (Japan)
Joel King	Sydney FC	Odense BK (Denmark)
Ben Halloran	Adelaide United	FC Seoul (South Korea)



DOMESTIC MOVEMENT

Analysing the movement of players between A-League Men clubs and the tier below the A-League Men, the National Premier Leagues, indicates that most players move down from the A-League Men, the A-League Youth competition and A-League academies into the NPL. Only a small percentage across the analysed period (2016 – 2022) move from the NPL into the A-League Men, at an average of 8.16 per season.

The data regarding player movement indicates that A-League Men clubs are increasingly reliant on their own academies and/or youth teams to produce A-League Men players.

The professional game also supplies more players to the NPL competition than the inverse by a ratio of 9 to 1. This finding has important policy implications and pushes back against the notion that a fee paying Domestic Transfer System and revised training compensation framework are likely to result in significant revenue redistribution within Australian club football. The data indicates the professional game is better equipped to spot and develop talent than the lower tiers of the game or is at least more likely to focus on developing and promoting talent from within. Subsequently, significant revenue redistribution within the Australian football ecosystem is extremely unlikely.

In combining available data for the 2020/21 and 2021/22 seasons in relation to the movement of players into A-League Men competition from the NPL, the PFA developed the following player profile:

- Average Salary for player joining the A-League Men from the NPL: \$43,808.97
- Average contract length for player joining A-League Men from NPL: 1.59 seasons
- Average number of matches played in first A-league Men season from NPL: 11.8 matches
- Average number of match minutes in first A-League Men season from NPL: 556.05 minutes

What is clear from this profile is that the first move a player makes into the A-League Men competition is often the most fragile and volatile one, in terms of salary, contractual stability and playing opportunities. If that is the case with relatively low barriers to entry, then the likely implication of increasing the barriers is that the movement of players will become more difficult and create a self-defeating cycle that denies players access to the professional game.

In addition:

- 60% of the current NPL players across the country paid fees in excess of \$1,000 per year between the ages of 12 and 18; and
- 50% of NPL players are paid less than \$500 per week.

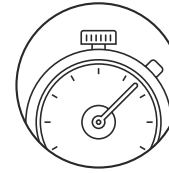
DOMESTIC MOVEMENT: SEASON COMPARISON

Season	NPL to A-League	A-League Youth to NPL	A-League Academy / Youth to A-League Men
2016/17	6	79	23
2017/18	4	71	21
2018/19	12	73	20
2019/20	12	N/A	29
2020/21	16	N/A	22
2021/22	11	N/A	32
Average Per Season	8.16	74.3	24.5



\$43,808

The average salary for a player joining the A-League Men from the NPL



556.05

The average number of match minutes played by players in their first season in the A-League Men after joining from the NPL



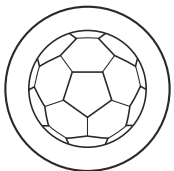
1.59

The average number of seasons in the A-League Men for players joining from the NPL



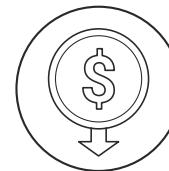
60%

The percentage of current NPL players across the country who paid fees in excess of \$1,000 per year between the ages of 12 and 18



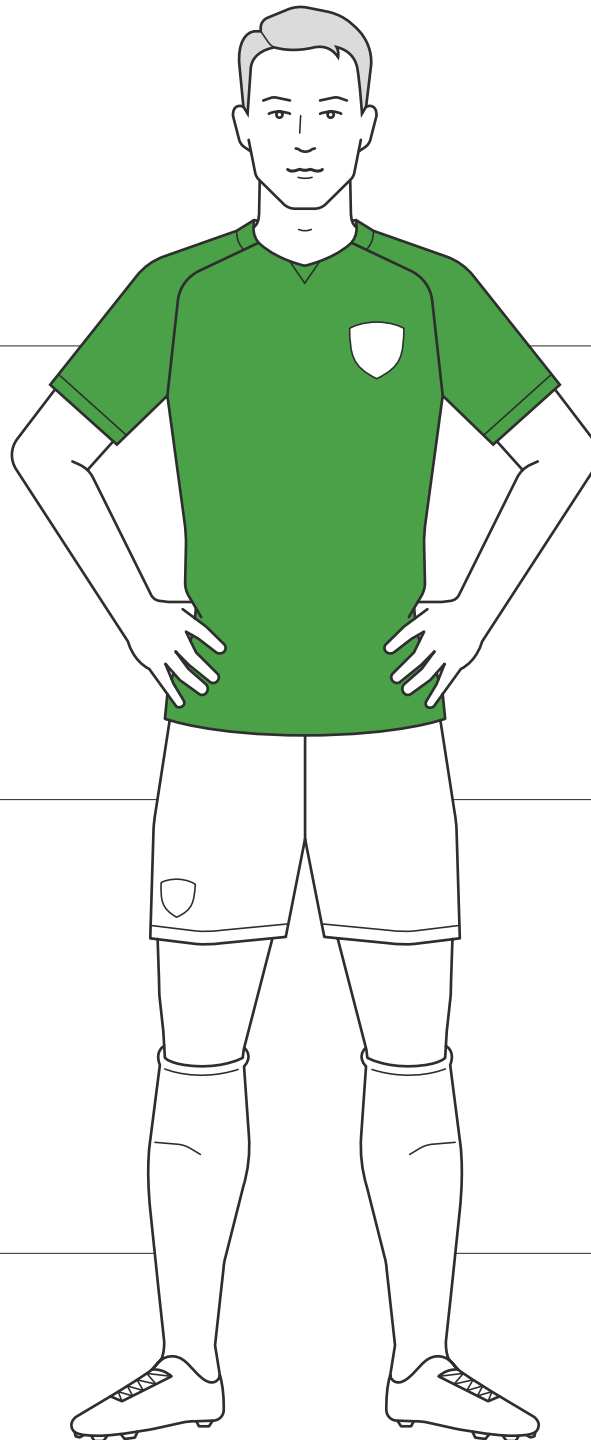
11.8

The average number of matches played by players in their first season in the A-League Men after joining from the NPL



50%

The percentage of NPL players that are being paid less than \$500 per week

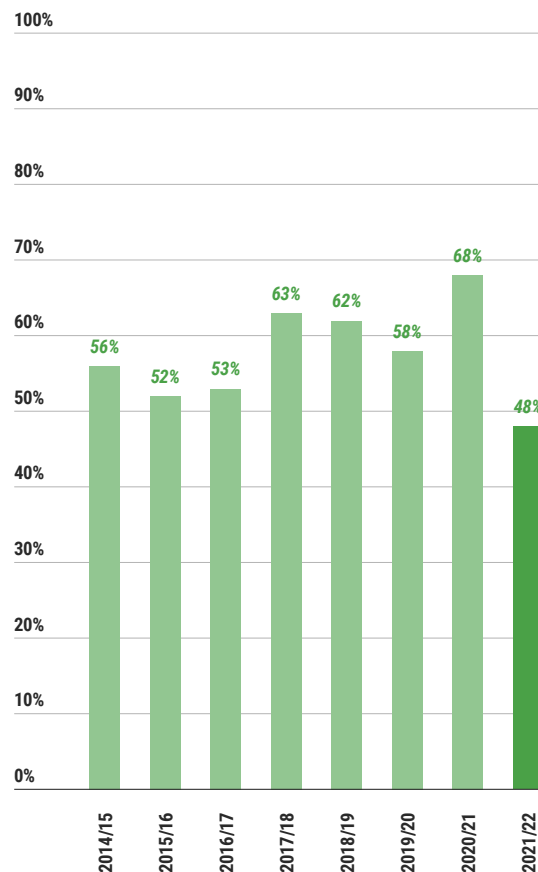


PLAYER CHURN

The percentage of players coming off contract at the start of the 2021/22 season was the lowest in eight years (since the PFA has analysed player contract data). Given the negative impact of churn on players' careers and the impact to on-field performance via squad instability, this is a positive outcome for players, clubs, and the league.

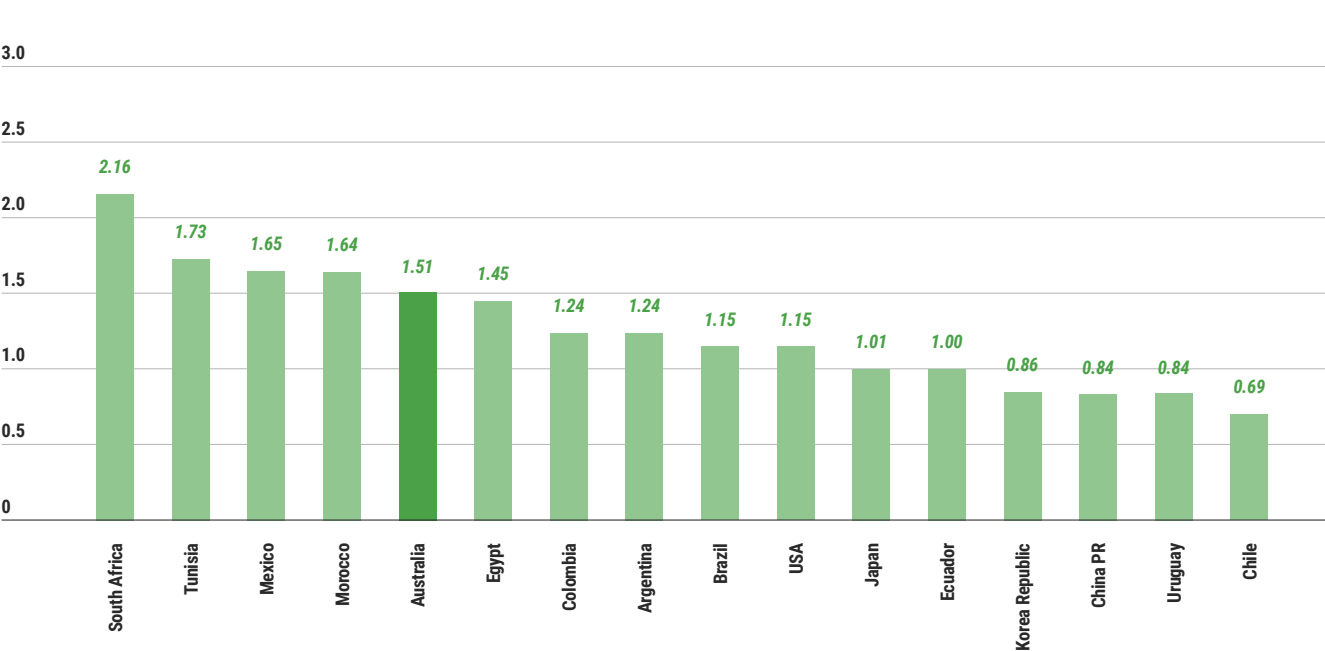
While a variety of factors could be at play, the five-year CBA currently in place has provided clubs and players with a significant amount of certainty.

NUMBER OF PLAYERS OFF CONTRACT: SEASON COMPARISON



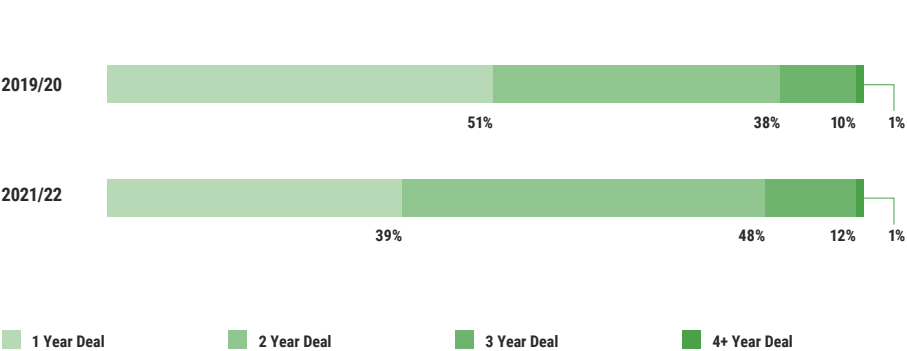
In research conducted by Twenty First Group in partnership with the PFA, the current contract length of Australian players in the A-League Men was found to be the among the highest in comparator leagues from Africa, South America, North America and Asia, and was the highest in the AFC region.

AVERAGE LENGTH OF EXISTING CONTRACTS, 2022, SELECTED MARKETS



The contracting practices of clubs have also changed dramatically since the pandemic and owing to the new level of certainty delivered by the long-term CBA. The number of players on one year deals has reduced – from 51% to 39% - and those on two-year deals have increased to 48%, providing more career certainty for players and more roster certainty for clubs.

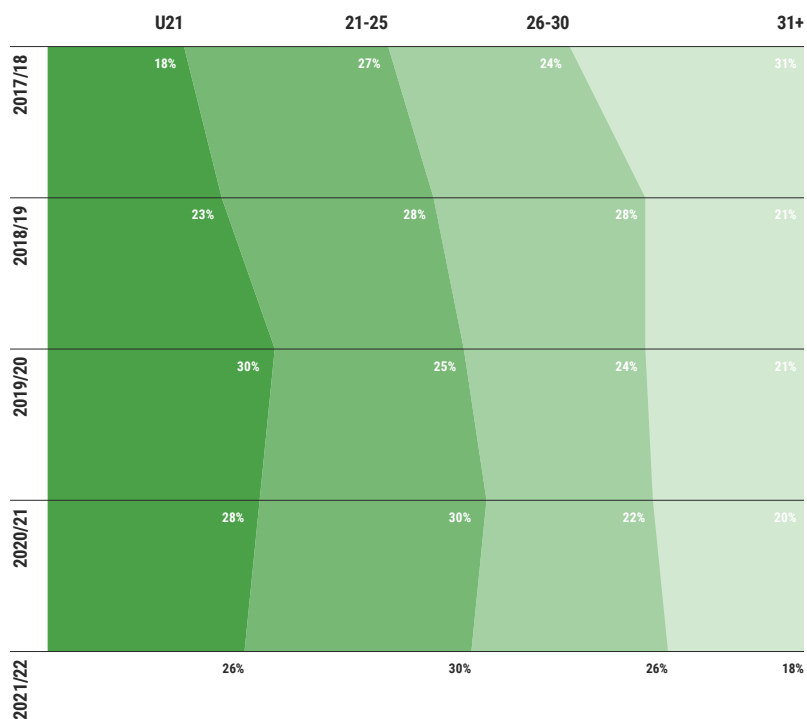
CONTRACT LENGTH PERCENTAGE



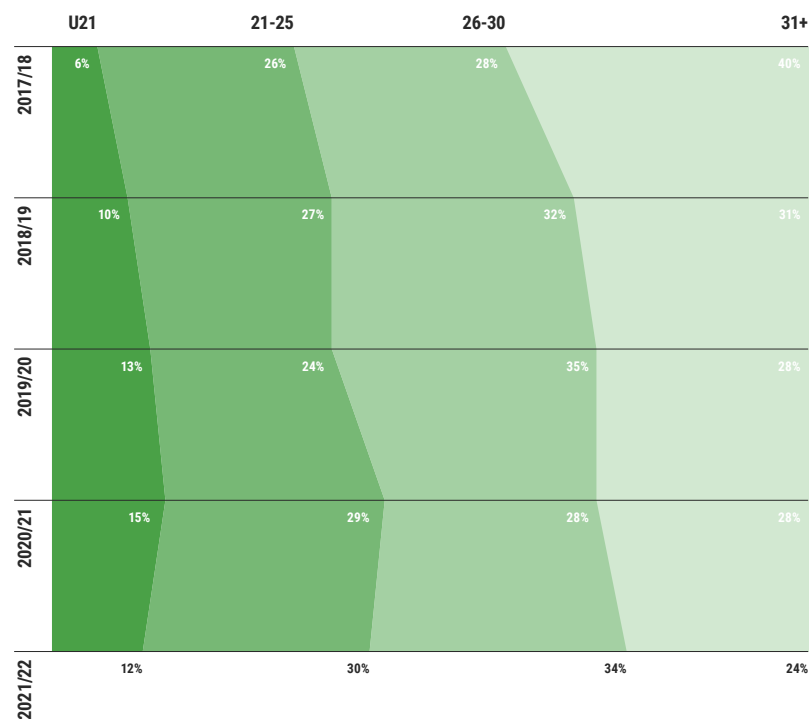
MATCH MINUTES

While 45% of contracted players were aged under 23 this campaign, 42% of match minutes were occupied by players under 25. Players aged between 26-30 played 34% of the total match minutes available, while there was a decline in the number of match minutes played by players over the age of 30 – with just 24% occupied by this cohort: the lowest percentage in past five seasons compared.

AGE GROUP OF PLAYERS WHO MADE AN APPEARANCE: SEASON COMPARISON



AGE GROUP OF PLAYERS' TOTAL MINUTES: SEASON COMPARISON





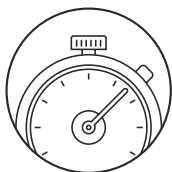
66

Total number of foreign players in the A-League Men for season 2021/22



29.6

Average age of foreign players in the A-League Men for season 2021/22

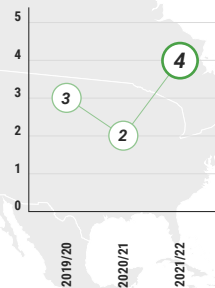


25.9%

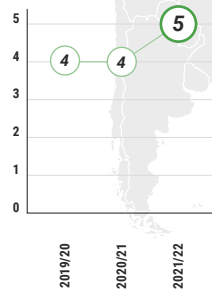
Percentage of total minutes played by foreign players in the A-League Men for season 2021/22

ORIGIN OF FOREIGN PLAYERS IN THE A-LEAGUE MEN

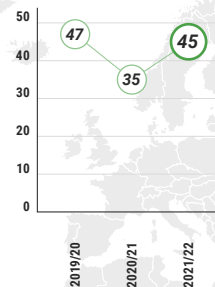
NORTH AMERICA



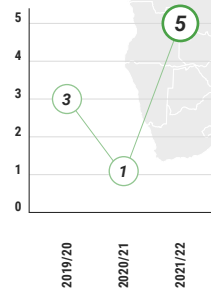
SOUTH AMERICA



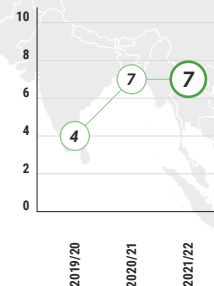
EUROPE



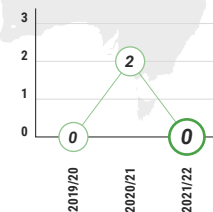
AFRICA



ASIA



OCEANIA

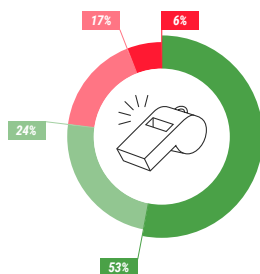


FOREIGN PLAYERS

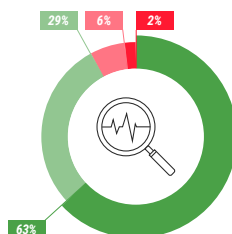
PLAYERS' SURVEY

HOW WOULD YOU RATE THE WORKPLACE STANDARDS AT YOUR CLUB?

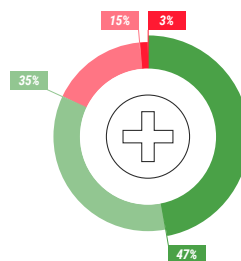
COACHING



SPORTS SCIENCE

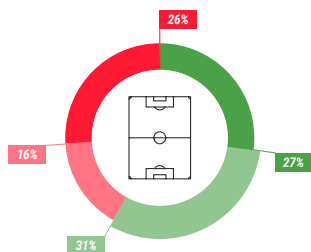


MEDICAL

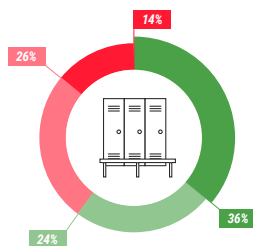


HOW WOULD YOU RATE THE PERFORMANCE STANDARDS AT YOUR CLUB?

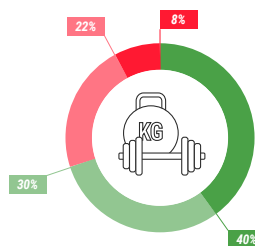
TRAINING PITCH



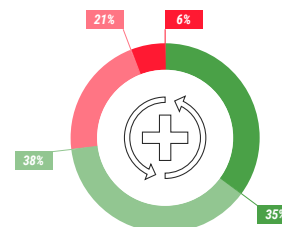
DRESSING ROOM



GYM

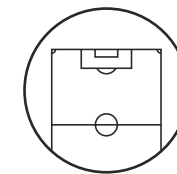


RECOVERY



■ Very Satisfied
 ■ Slightly Satisfied
 ■ Slightly Dissatisfied
 ■ Very Dissatisfied

Complementing the analysis of the A-League Men competition is feedback from the players on their employment and their workplace conditions. While across the A-League Men 80% of players on average said they would recommend their club to another player in the competition, there is obvious room for improvement at some clubs. Better training pitches and communication from staff are among the top areas players earmarked for improvement.



60%

said a better quality training pitch would provide a better training environment



43%

said better communication from coaching staff would improve the club environment for players



80%

would recommend their club to other players



LEAGUE ASSESSMENT

Within the League Assessment, we explore the competitive balance across the season, winning margins within games and an assessment of the players' match day workplace – the football pitch – via our annual pitch ratings survey results. We also analyse where the A-League Men attendances rank historically against AFC rivals and global competitions.

- › *Competitive Balance*
- › *Attendance*
- › *Attendance Analysis*
- › *Pitch Ratings*

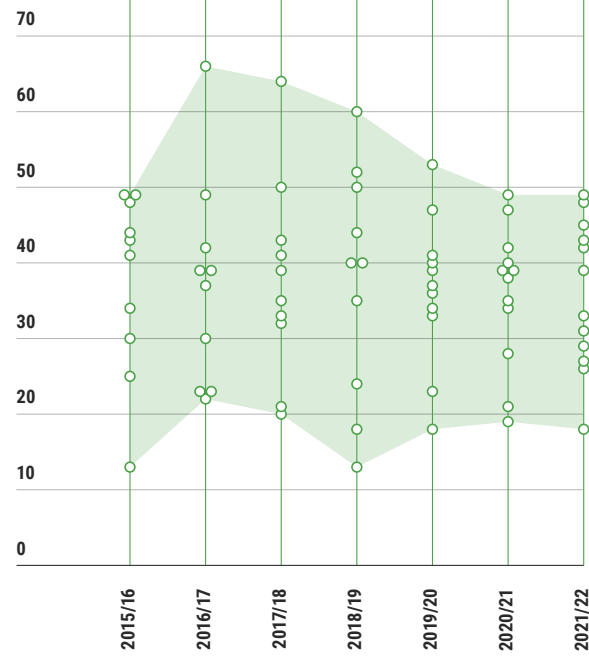
COMPETITIVE BALANCE

FINALS SERIES APPEARANCES 2015/16 - 2021/22

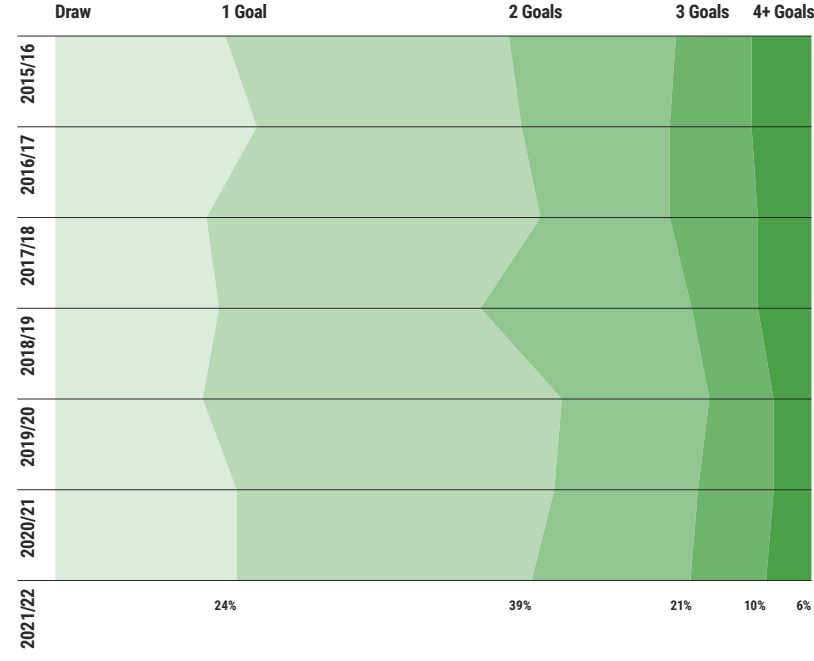


* Western United entered the competition in 2019/20 and Macarthur in 2020/21

POINTS SPREAD COMPARISON

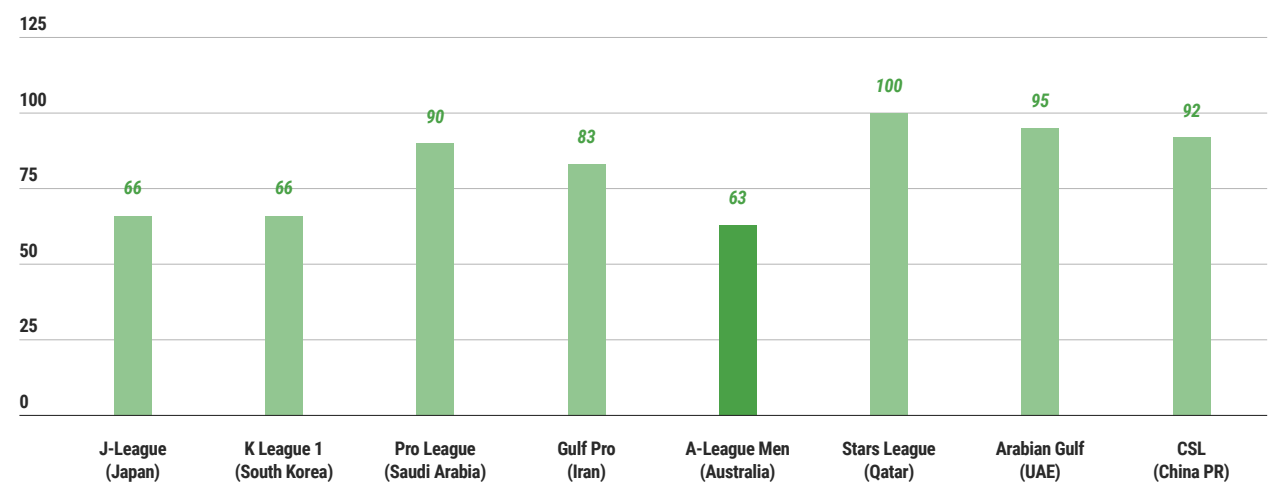


WINNING MARGIN



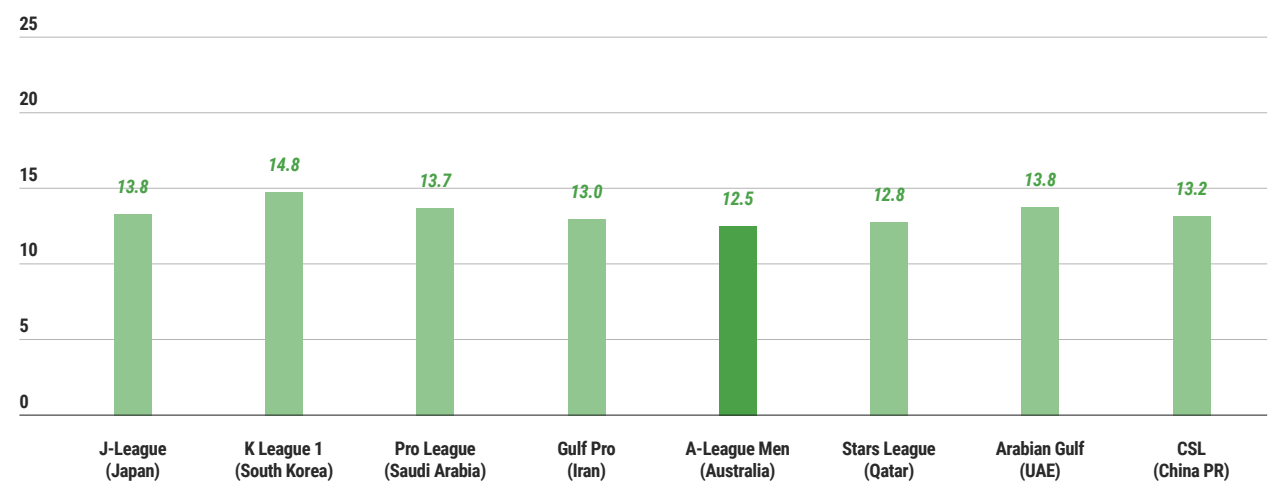
Through research conducted by the PFA in partnership with Twenty First Group, the A-League is the most competitive among the top leagues in Asia across the past decade. Through its club quality benchmarking tool, Twenty First Group analysed the quality gap between clubs within the top AFC leagues.

GAP IN CLUB QUALITY, TOP ASIAN LEAGUES (2012 - 2022)



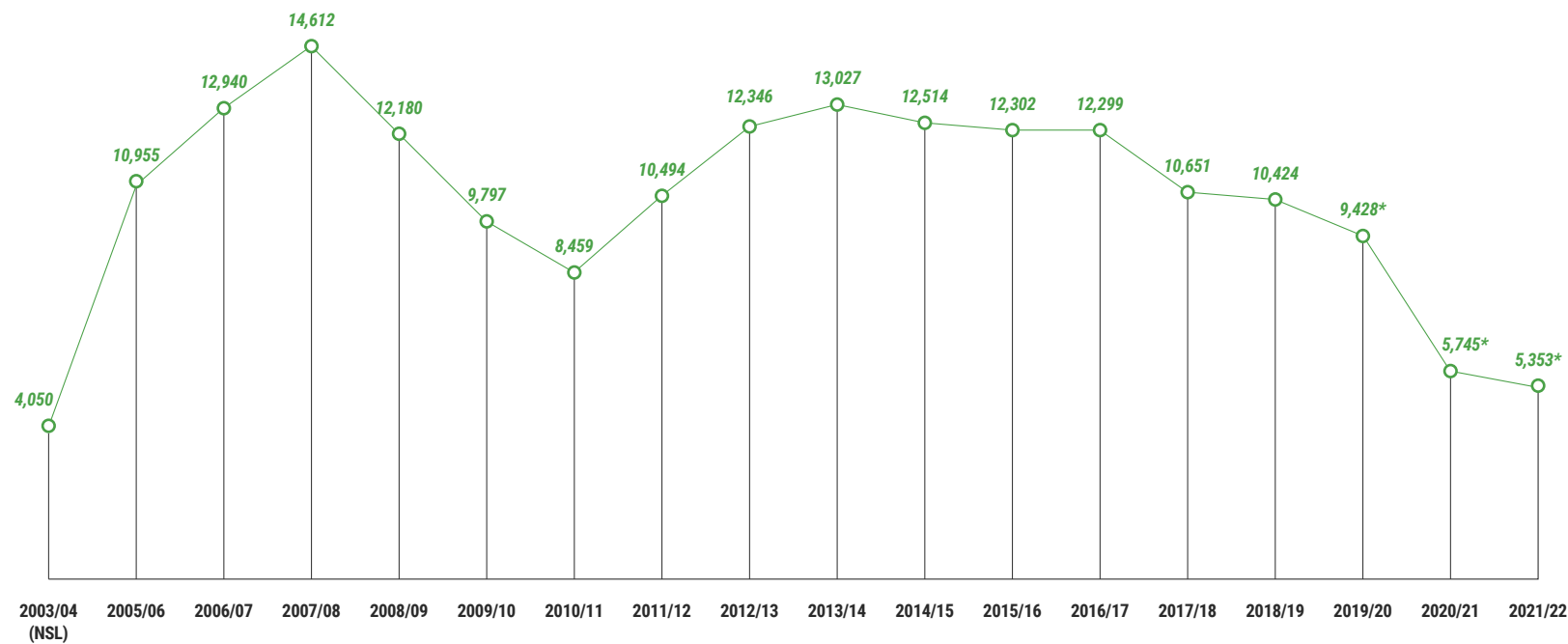
The research delivered two important findings: that the ALM has the closest level of quality among its 12 teams and the ALM's competitiveness is demonstrated by the tightest points spread in Asia across the past 10 seasons analysed (2012-2022).

STANDARD DEVIATION OF POINTS ACROSS LEAGUE, TOP ASIAN LEAGUES (2012 - 2022)



AVERAGE A-LEAGUE MEN ATTENDANCE, HOME-AND-AWAY SEASON COMPARISON

*Attendances affected by COVID-19



TOP FIVE ATTENDANCES FOR THE 2021/22 A-LEAGUE MEN SEASON

Date	Home Team	Away Team	Stadium	Attendance
11/20/2021	Western Sydney Wanderers	Sydney FC	CommBank Stadium	23,118
18/12/2021	Melbourne City	Melbourne Victory	AAMI Park	19,640
17/04/2022	Wellington Phoenix	Central Coast Mariners	Sky Stadium	18,184
19/03/2022	Melbourne City	Melbourne Victory	AAMI Park	18,080
09/04/2022	Melbourne Victory	Melbourne City	AAMI Park	17,754

With A-League Men attendances in gradual decline prior to COVID-19 and suffering a significant decrease due to COVID-19 between 2020 – 2022, the APL will be seeking to entice fans and members back through the gates in increasing numbers when the 2022/23 season kicks off. With COVID-19 restrictions likely to be entirely lifted and a fixed schedule, there is an expectation that the competition will experience an uptick in attendances following three COVID-19 impacted campaigns.

But the question remains: what is an acceptable number of fans for the A-League Men to attract and aspire to in the short term as the league continues to rebuild post-pandemic? The A-League Men cannot hope to pack out stadia like Premier League or Bundesliga powerhouses can, nor go close to competing with the AFL for record spectators (before the pandemic, the AFL consistently ranked as the fourth highest attended league globally, behind America's National Football League (NFL), England's Premier League and Germany's Bundesliga).

For the A-League Men, respectable crowd figures are important. Revenue from ticketing and memberships provide clubs with a significant portion of their overall operating revenues, so it is imperative to deliver 'bums on seats'. Eyeballs on the league also helps to attract commercial partners in a crowded sporting marketplace. For the players a colourful atmosphere can lift and motivate the team, and for TV viewers, atmosphere excites fans beyond the action on the

pitch. For fans in the stadium, being part of passionate displays can enhance the match day experience.

Taking into account these factors, and to consider an achievable average attendance target for the 2022/23 campaign, the PFA has benchmarked the A-League Men against the average attendances of 14 AFC domestic leagues between 2010-2022. These attendances were then compared against research into average attendances in football stadia across 51 countries from Europe, North America and Asia, conducted by the CIES Football Observatory between 2013 – 2018.

Contrary to widely accepted opinion in Australia, the research demonstrates that the A-League Men, in comparison to both AFC and global football competitions, attracts respectable average attendances.

In the AFC region, Australia ranks fourth in average attendances (for the period recorded), behind the world's two most populous countries, India and China, and Japan and Indonesia, which have five- and ten-times Australia's population to draw their attendances from, respectively. In a per capita comparison, the A-League Men leads all other AFC competitions.

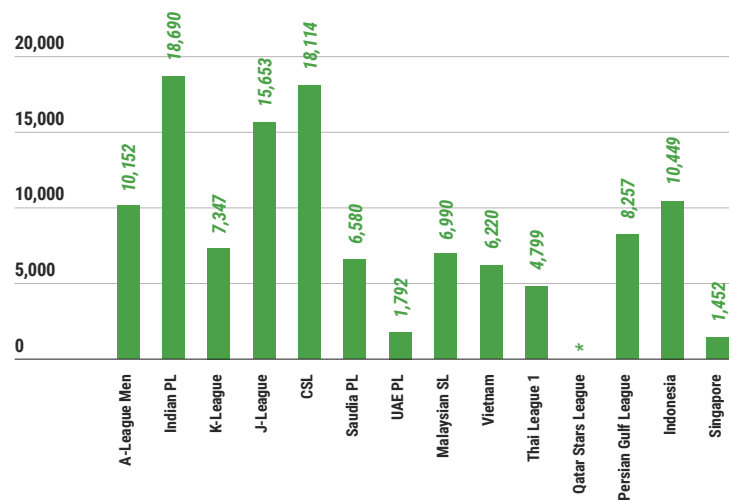
Measured against CIES Football Observatory research of global league attendances, Australia would rank 14th in the world when compared with 51 other football leagues globally, with an average attendance of over

11,875 during the period analysed (2013-2018) and above the 11,355 average across 51 comparison leagues.

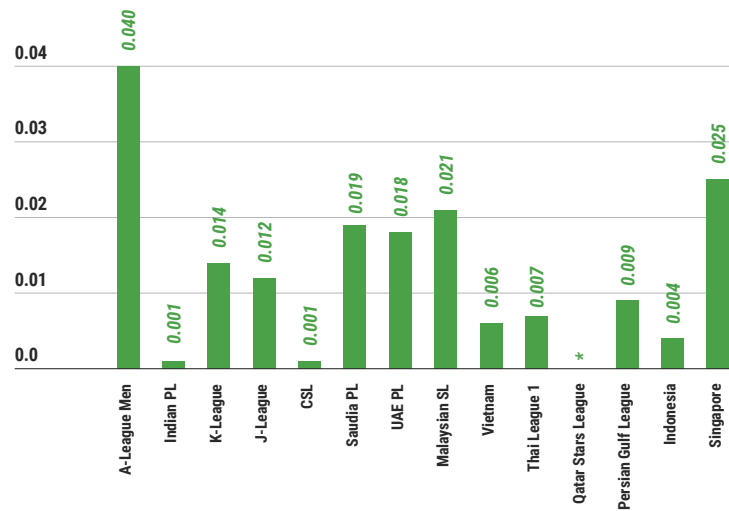
When considering the population crowds are drawn from within Australia's competitive sporting marketplace, they suggest a healthy opportunity for the sport to build upon. What it also says is that Australian domestic club football does not need to compete with other sports to draw crowds that rate well against regional and global comparisons within our own sport. A target of 10,000 average spectators across the 2022/23 season would be a realistic platform for future growth, and elevate the A-League Men back within the top 20 best attended football leagues in the world.

The objective for A-League Men clubs and the Australian football community should be to cast aside erroneous comparisons with other sport attendances, ignore the attempts to stir up 'code wars' and instead refocus on creating an unrivalled atmosphere on match days which attracts people through the turnstiles not once, but for a lifetime. For some clubs, this is achievable now, particularly through their current fanbase, connection to community and unique stadia. Others face challenges when playing in unsuitable stadia and in building community connection, but with time, investment and commitment to a long-term strategy, the A-League Men can once again be ranked among the top leagues worldwide for average attendance.

AFC COMPETITIONS AVERAGE ATTENDANCES (2010 - 2022)



PER CAPITA COMPARISON (A-LEAGUE MEN VS AFC COMPETITIONS)
(attendances as percentage of population)



*Sources for attendance figures for the Qatar Stars League were incomplete

CIES RESEARCH: AVERAGE ATTENDANCES IN FOOTBALL STADIA (2013 - 2018)

League	Ave. Attendance
GER / D1	43,302
ENG / D1	36,675
ESP / D1	27,381
MEX / D1	25,582
ITA / D1	22,967
CHN / D1	22,594
FRA / D1	21,556
USA / MLS	21,358
NED / D1	19,154
GER / D2	18,814
ENG / D2	18,526
JPN / D1	18,227
BRA / D1	17,402
AUS / D1	11,875
SCO / D1	11,697
RUS / D1	11,650
BEL / D1	11,551
POR / D1	11,000
SUI / D1	10,705
POL / D1	8,959
SWE / D1	8,586
ESP / D2	7,994
IRN / D1	7,949
ENG / D3	7,483
KOR / D1	7,104
FRA / D2	7,062
JPN / D2	6,892

League	Ave. Attendance
ITA / D2	6,708
NOR / D1	6,632
AUT / D1	6,581
GER / D3	6,427
DEN / D1	6,391
RSA / D1	6,345
UKR / D1	6,257
ECU / D1	5,996
THA / D1	5,180
CZE / D1	5,064
ENG / D4	4,630
GRE / D1	3,896
PER / D1	3,741
ROM / D1	3,510
CRO / D1	2,852
HUN / D1	2,733
SRB / D1	2,635
FIN / D1	2,390
SVK / D1	2,170
PAR / D1	2,115
BUL / D2	2,019
BLR / D1	1,806
IRL / D3	1,727
BIH / D1	1,582
SVN / D2	1,212
Average	11,355

Source: <https://football-observatory.com/IMG/sites/mr/mr44/en/>

PITCH RATINGS

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. A total of 19 stadia were utilised and rated during the 2021/22 season.

TOP 5 ATMOSPHERE RATINGS FOR 2021/22

Stadium	Atmosphere
Coopers Stadium	4.14
HBF Park	3.75
AAMI Park	3.64
GMHBA Stadium	3.5
CommBank Stadium	3.1

Note: Venues with only 1 game have been excluded

UTAS Stadium		★★★★★	5.00
AAMI Park	  	★★★★★	4.36
HBF Park		★★★★★	4.25
WIN Stadium		★★★★★	4.25
Coopers Stadium		★★★★★	4.14
Ballarat Regional Soccer Facility*		★★★★★	4.00
GMHBA Stadium		★★★★★	4.00
Sky Stadium*		★★★★★	4.00
McDonald Jones Stadium		★★★★★	3.67
Central Coast Stadium		★★★★★	3.57
Campbelltown Stadium		★★★★★	3.50
Moreton Daily Stadium		★★★★★	3.17
Eden Park*		★★★★★	3.00
Panthers Stadium*		★★★★★	3.00
Netstrata Jubilee Stadium		★★★★★	2.89
Mars Stadium		★★★★★	2.50
CommBank Stadium		★★★★★	2.20
Leichhardt Oval		★★★★★	1.67
Pointsbet Stadium*		★★★★★	1.00
Average		★★★★★	3.38

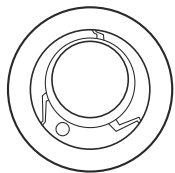
*Only 1 game played at venue



TECHNICAL REPORT

For the first time, the A-League Men technical report has focused on defining the prevailing style of play within the league, according to an analysis of the data as well as feedback from the players.

- *Summary*
- *Players' Survey*
- *Possession & General Style*
- *Defensive Output*



Champions

Western United FC
(Defeated Melbourne City
FC 0-2 at AAMI Park)



163

The number of matches
played over the 2021/22
season



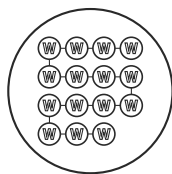
56.5%

The percentage of highest
team average possession
(Newcastle Jets)



Premiers

Melbourne City FC
(Finished with 49 points. 14
wins, 7 draws and 5 losses)



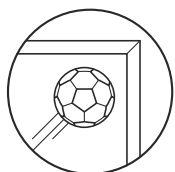
15

The longest unbeaten run
(Melbourne Victory)



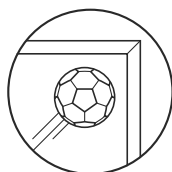
10

The highest number
of clean sheets for the
2021/22 season (Western
United)



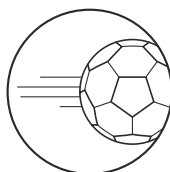
15

The number of goals from
the leading goal scorer
(Jamie Maclaren - 16
including finals)



473

The number of goals scored
over the 2021/22 season
(2.9 per match)



11

The highest number of
assists for the 2021/22
season (Daniel Penha -
Newcastle Jets)

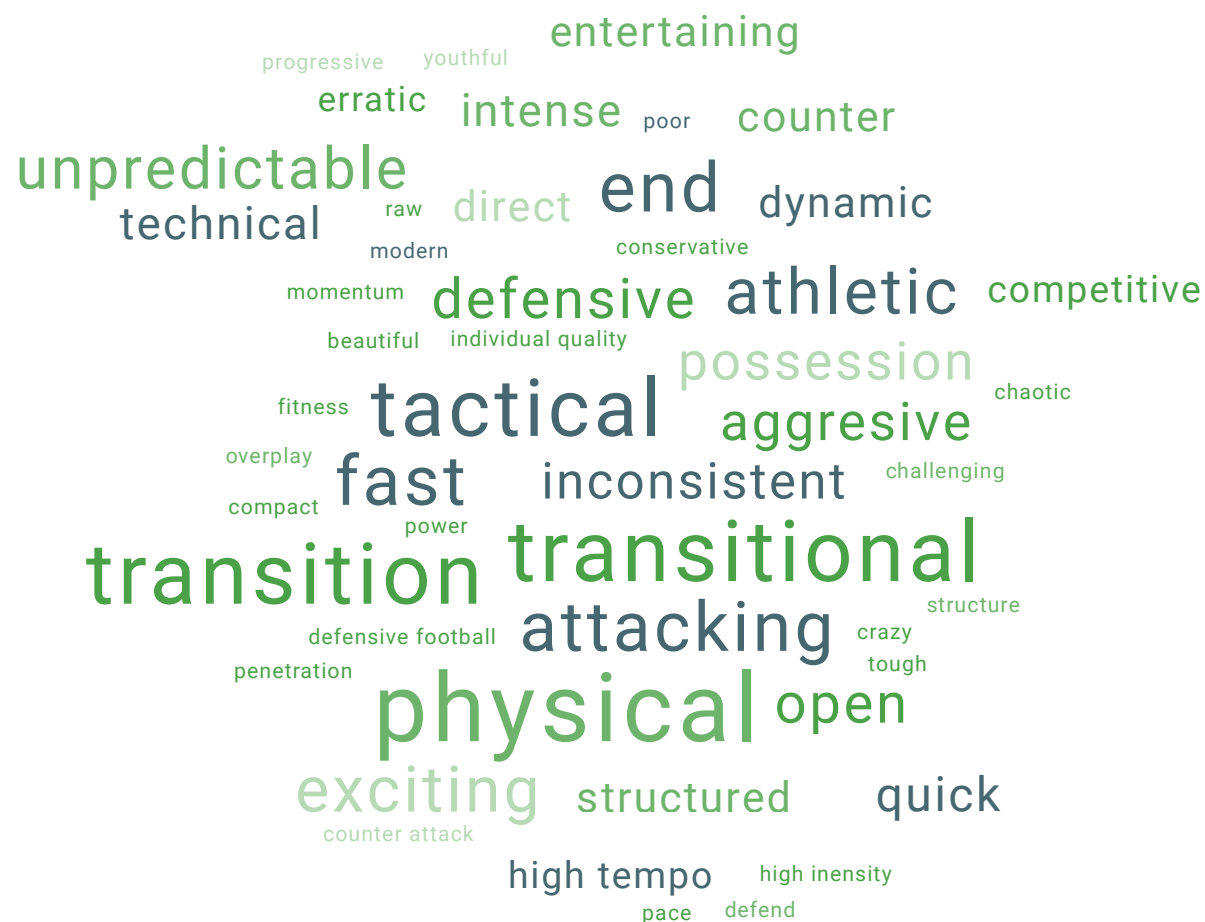


PLAYERS' SURVEY

For the first time in composing this Report, the PFA asked players in its annual survey to define the prevailing style of football in the A-League Men competition in three words. The results have been collated into the following visual word cloud, which indicates the descriptors utilised - with the most frequently used emphasised by their increasing size.

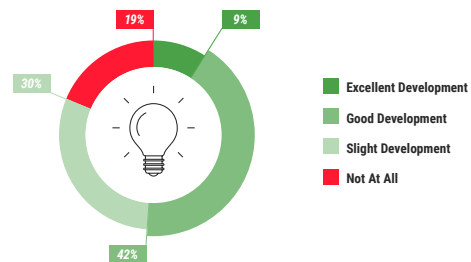
The most common phrases to describe the style of play were transition or transitional (37 mentions), physical (28), tactical (14) and fast (12). While those familiar with the A-League Men are likely to agree with those descriptors, the use of the following terms – entertaining, exciting, high tempo, intense, unpredictable, dynamic, erratic and inconsistent – indicates that the players view the A-League Men competition as one that provides a level of theatre, competitiveness and randomness. Those are ingredients which provide for a compelling on-field experience for the players and perhaps a developmental environment that challenges players.

While this is a limited analysis of the phrases used by the playing cohort (for example, the use of the term 'tactical' does not explore what tactics are deployed by teams), the limited use of the term possession (5 mentions) and passing (no mentions) indicates there is less focus on possession maintenance versus transition.

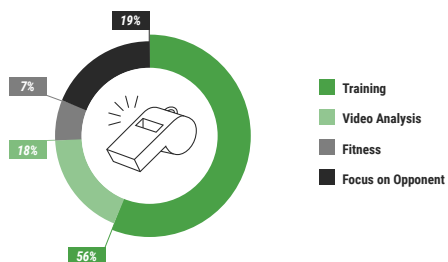


Through the survey, the PFA also explored areas of focus in training, match preparation and individual development for players:

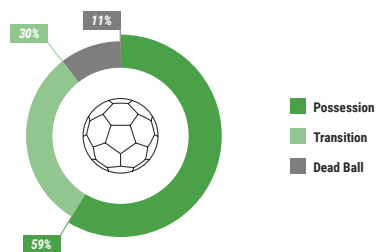
TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU FEEL YOU DEVELOPED AS A PLAYER THIS SEASON?



WHAT WOULD BE THE MAIN FOCUS POINTS OF COACHING IN MATCH PREPERATION?

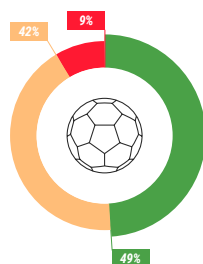


IN WHICH GAME PHASE DO YOU BELIEVE YOUR TEAM WAS MOST EFFECTIVE IN GENERATING AND RESTRICTING GOAL SCORING OPPORTUNITIES?

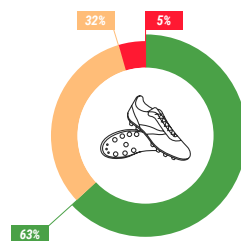


DO TRAINING SESSIONS IMPROVE THE FOLLOWING THREE ASPECTS ON AN INDIVIDUAL BASIS?

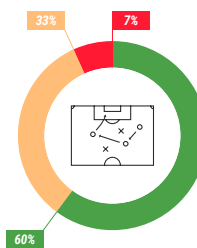
TECHNICAL



PHYSICAL



TACTICAL ASPECTS



Strongly Agree Neutral Strongly Disagree



POSSESSION & GENERAL STYLE

With the players defining the A-League Men competition as predominantly transitional and physical, the PFA conducted further analysis of the competition, exploring data around possession, playing styles, defensive output and shot creation across 12 clubs.

The A-League teams were compared against the performance and trends of clubs from four other competitions: North America's Major League Soccer, Japan's J-League, the Scottish Premiership and the Swedish Allsvenskan. Those four leagues were selected due to the following factors:

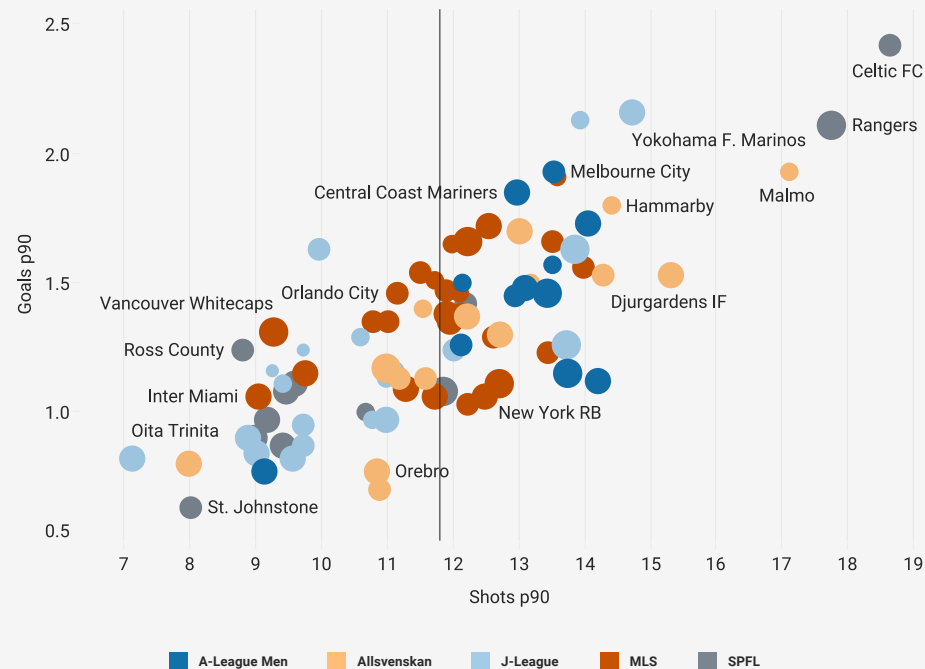
- **MLS** – the league possesses similar labour market regulations, such as a salary cap
- **J-League** – the top-ranked competition in the AFC
- **Scottish Premiership** – given recent Australian player migration to the Scottish Premiership
- **Swedish Allsvenskan** – the Allsvenskan is ranked 27th globally, two places ahead of the A-League Men (29th) (based on Football Rankings)

Save for exceptions in Adelaide United and the Newcastle Jets, the prevailing defensive approach across the A-League Men is driven by containment and therefore teams tend to avoid substantial pressing of their opponent.

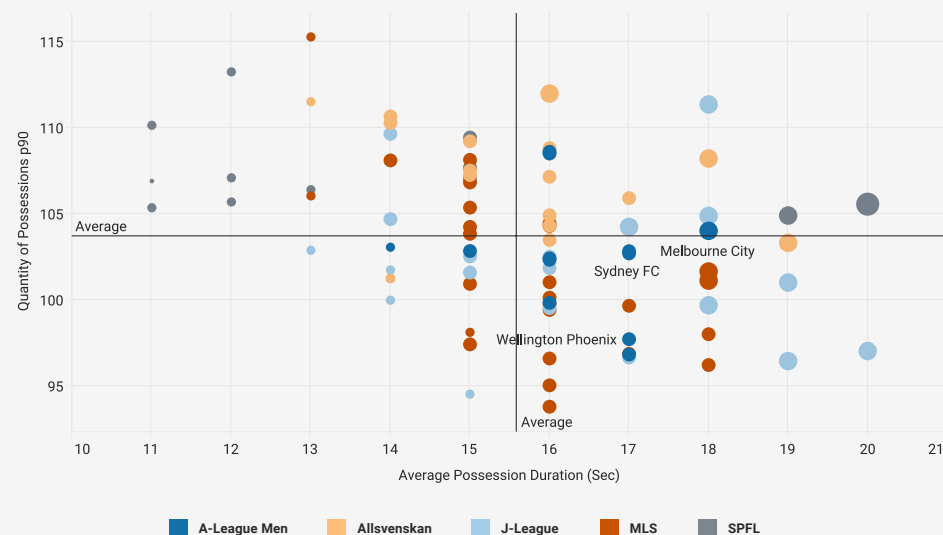
This contributes to a lower volume and longer duration of possession per team, as evidenced in comparison to the other four leagues in the sample data. Six of the 12 A-League Men teams last season accumulated lower than the total average of 103.67 possessions per match, however, 10 averaged a possession duration longer than the average 15.59 seconds.

Where teams in the A-League Men differentiate are in the phases where shots are created, with one example being Adelaide generating a shot from 21.5% of transition attacks but only 9.2% percent of attacks against a set defence.

SHOT VOLUME/EFFICIENCY



POSSESSION VOLUME/TIME



DEFENSIVE OUTPUT

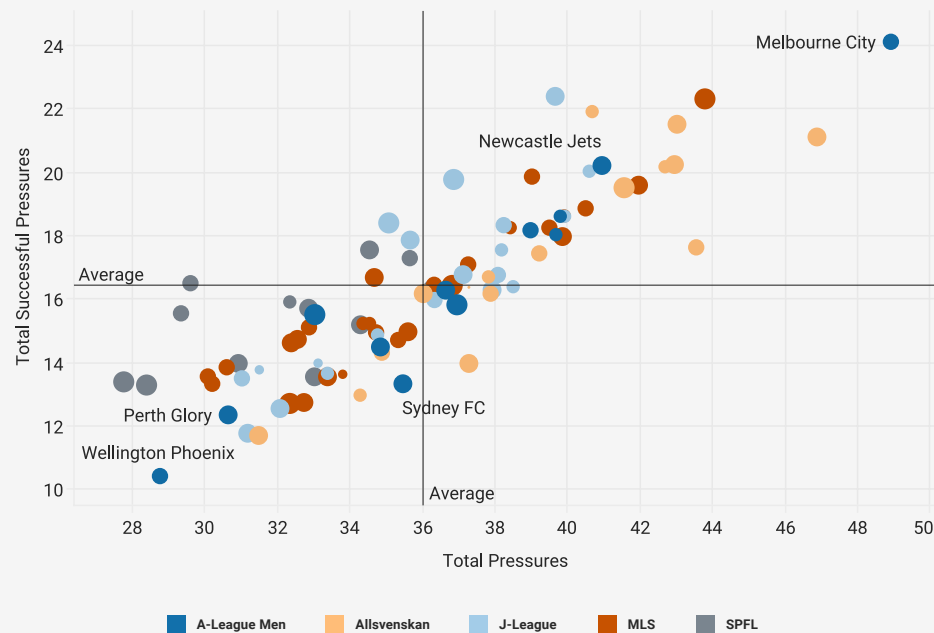
The league's prevalent possession style is ultimately a consequence of the defensive approach, where to defend means to contain instead of pressing into mistakes.

It is not unnoticeable that in the sample data, Western United's average of 7.38 passes per defensive action ranks among the lowest in the five leagues compared, with Brisbane Roar (7.43) and Wellington Phoenix (7.4) the only two teams with higher volumes in that category. This is before considering game state and whether a team is having to protect or chase a result.

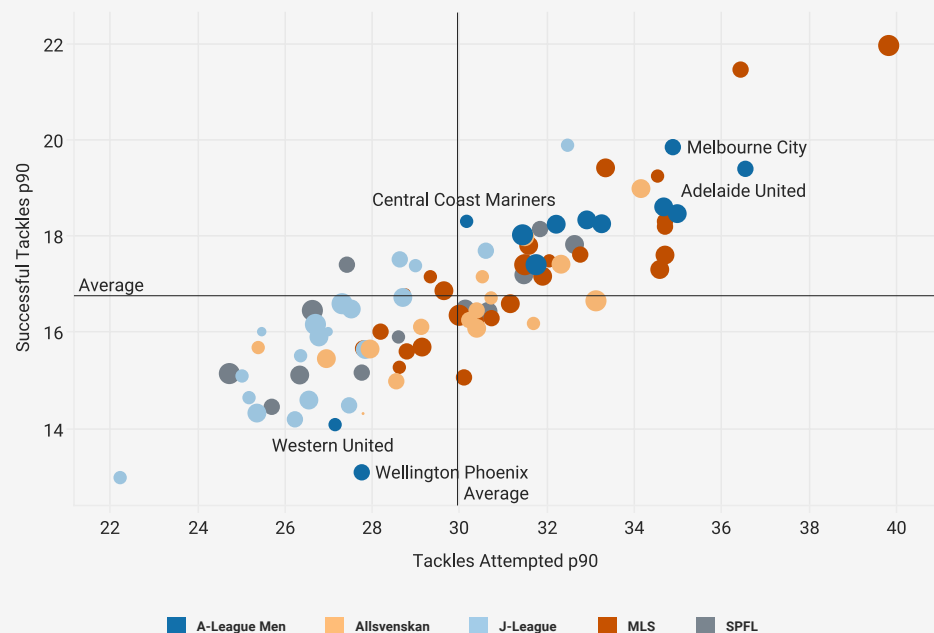
Along with Adelaide United and Newcastle Jets, Melbourne City are the only side in the A-League Men generally concerned with territory from a defensive standpoint, while the rest are willing to concede it, in the hope of both absorbing opposition phases of possession while potentially creating more space to attack in transition.

Melbourne City, Sydney FC, Adelaide United and Newcastle Jets attempt the most tackles per 90 minutes and only rank behind LA and New York Red Bull in the MLS.

PRESSING



TACKLE VOLUME/EFFICIENCY





PLAYER DEVELOPMENT

Players' development off the pitch remains an area of critical importance to the PFA. Countless studies have shown that engagement with off field pursuits such as education and wellbeing leads to longer and more successful careers as well as a greater understanding of the industry within which players are employed. The PFA aims to ensure players get the most out of their career both on and off the pitch and the PFA Player Development Program is central to this mission.

- *Program Engagement*
- *Career & Transition*

PROGRAM ENGAGEMENT



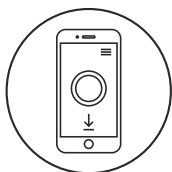
187

Number of education grants provided



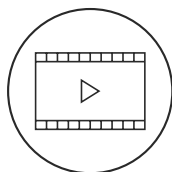
72

Number of players who attended the PFA Concussion Workshop



72

Number of players who attended the PFA Red Button App Workshop



49

Number of highlight packages provided

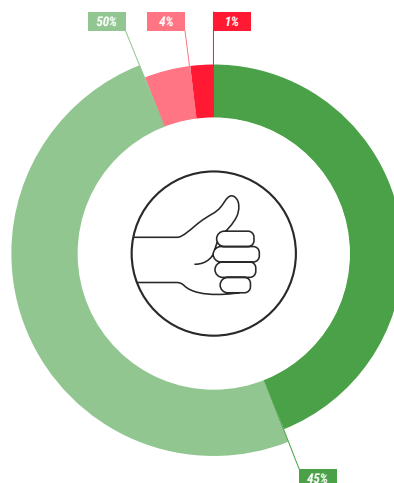


25

Number of players who completed coaching courses



HOW SATISFIED ARE YOU WITH THE PLAYER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM?



■ Extremely satisfied
■ Slightly satisfied
■ Slightly dissatisfied
■ Extremely dissatisfied



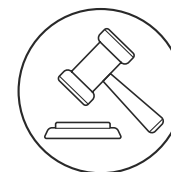
85%

of players were 'Very Satisfied' with the PFA this season



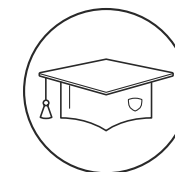
86%

of players were 'Satisfied' with Collective bargaining-player payments for 2021/22



95%

are 'Satisfied' with the PFA resolving individual player issues



86%

are 'Satisfied' with the Player Development Program



35%

of players said PDM could better support them by having a stronger relationship with the club



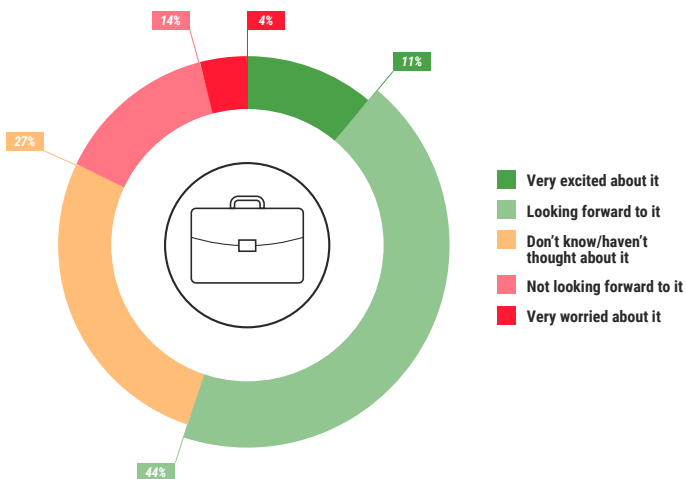
29%

said more 1 on 1 time & more communication about the PFA/PDP programs/services

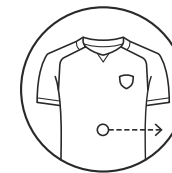
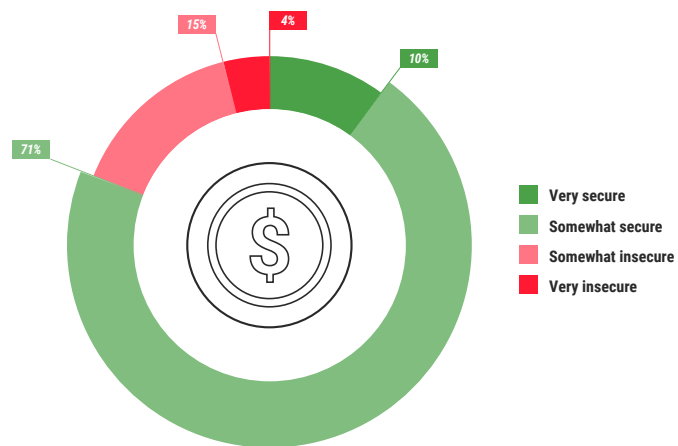
CAREER & TRANSITION



WHAT BEST DESCRIBES YOUR GENERAL FEELINGS ABOUT LIFE AFTER FOOTBALL?



HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR FINANCIAL SITUATION?



48.0%

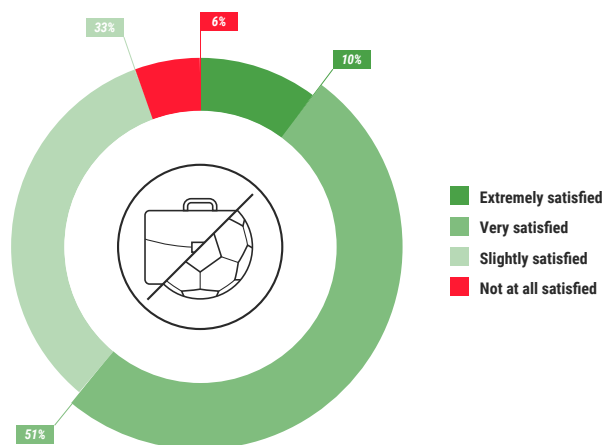
are 'very confident' about the direction of their football career. 6.4% are 'not at all confident'



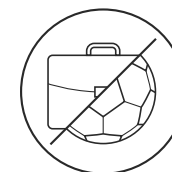
70.5%

of players are 'somewhat secure' with their financial situation.

HOW SATISFIED ARE YOU WITH YOUR CURRENT BALANCE BETWEEN FOOTBALL/WORK/STUDY/LIFE?



IN GENERAL, HOW CONFIDENT ARE YOU ABOUT THE DIRECTION OF/ YOUR CONTROL OVER YOUR FOOTBALL CAREER?



44.6%

of players are looking forward to 'life after football'. 26.6% haven't thought about it

COURAGE
WORLD CLASS
INTELLIGENCE
TRUST
RESPECT



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