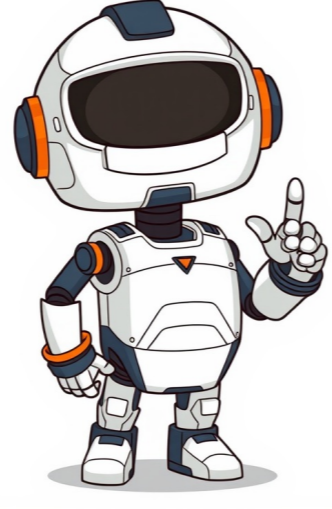


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Discover your world of SBS*Sign in or create an account*Watch all 104 games of the FIFA World Cup 26 LIVE, FREE and EXCLUSIVE on SBS, SBS VICELAND and SBS On Demand.The changes to FIFA World Cup qualificationThe FIFA World Cup 26 is on the horizon, and the tournament, which is set to be held in the United States of America, Canada, and Mexico, will bring a host of firsts. SBS will again be th exhaustivestrialian broadcaster for the world's biggest sporting event: an expansion to 43 nations for the FIFA World Cup 26 from the current structure of 32 teams will see growth beyond the normal countries seen at the event. Take a look at the nations that have already booked their ticket to Canada, Mexico and the USA - including some statistics and trivia from past appearances.The increase to the number of teams has meant their game has seen an increase in their quota of nations that qualify for the FIFA World Cup.Asia:8 (+4 compared to 2022)Africa:9 (+4)North, Central America and Caribbean:6 (+3)Europe:16 (+3)South America:6 (+2)Oceania:1 (+1)Automatic QualificationThese countries qualified automatically as hosts of the tournament, though unlike previous FIFA World Cups - their qualification allotment was deducted from the CONCACAF qualification quota.CanadaKANSAS CITY, KANSAS - SEPTEMBER 7: Alphonso Davis in action for Canada against the United States Credit: Bill Barrett/ISI Photos/USF/Getty ImagesNickname: Les Rouges (The Reds)How qualified: Host nationBest World Cup Finals performance: Group stage (1982, 2022)World Cup Appearances: 1982, 2022FIFA World Cup trivia: Alphonso Davis is the only Canadian to score a goal at a FIFA World Cup, opening the scoring in their fifth-ever World Cup fixture, a 4-1 loss against Croatia in 2022. Canada hadn't scored in the previous four matches, and their only other goal was an own goal by Morocco's Nayef Aguerd.MexicoLUSAIL CITY, QATAR - NOVEMBER 30: Hirving Lozano of Mexico during their only win of the 2022 World Cup, a 2-1 victory over Saudi Arabia. (Photo by Harry Langer/DeFodi Images via Getty Images) Credit: DeFodi Images/DeFodi Images via Getty ImagesNickname: El Tri (The Three, a reference to the red, green and white of the Mexican flag)How qualified: Host nationBest World Cup Finals performance: Quarter-finals (1970, 1986)World Cup Appearances: 1930, 1950, 1954, 1958, 1962, 1966, 1970, 1978, 1990, 1994, 1998, 2002, 2006, 2010, 2014, 2018, 2022FIFA World Cup trivia: Mexico will become the first World Cup to host three editions of the FIFA World Cup, having previously hosted the 1970 and 1986 tournaments, the latter coming after Colombia pulled out from hosting duties.USARIRLINGTON, TX - MARCH 24: Christian Pulisic at the United States Mens National team with the CONCACAF Nations League Finals Winner's Trophy (Getty Images) Credit: Robbi Alam/ISI Photos/Getty ImagesNickname: The Stars and StripesHow qualified: Host nationWorld Cup Finals performance: 1st round (1930)World Cup Appearances: 1930, 1934, 1950, 1990, 1994, 1998, 2002, 2006, 2010, 2014, 2022 FIFA World Cup trivia: USA's Bert Patenaude was the first hat-trick scorer at the FIFA World Cup, completing the feat in a 3-0 victory against Paraguay on July 1, 1930.Asian Football Confederation (AFC) qualificationThese countries qualified via a series of group formats, with eight direct spot, and one play-off tournament place assigned to the AFC.AustraliaSYDNEY, AUSTRALIA - MARCH 21: Harry Souttar, Kusini Yengi and Jackson Irvine of Australia are defended by Lebanon's Bassel Jradl during the FIFA World Cup 2026 Qualifiers (Photo by Steve Christo - Corbis/Corbis via Getty Images) Credit: Steve Christo - Corbis/Corbis via Getty ImagesNickname: SocceroosHow qualified: Australia finished second in their group, clinching qualification in June after a comeback 2-1 win against Saudi Arabia. Best World Cup Finals performance: Round of 16 (2006, 2022)World Cup Appearances: 1974, 2006, 2010, 2014, 2018, 2022 FIFA World Cup trivia: The qualification for the FIFA World Cup 26 was the first time Australia has secured direct qualification since their 2014 campaign. On both occasions the Socceroos reached the World Cup Round of 16, they were eliminated by the eventual champions (Italy in 2006 and Argentina in 2022).Saudi ArabiaBURAYDAH, SAUDI ARABIA - OCTOBER 14: Players of Saudi Arabia celebrate after FIFA World Cup 2026 qualifier match between Saudi Arabia and Iraq at King Abdullah Sport City Stadium on October 14, 2025 in Buraydah, Saudi Arabia. (Photo by Yasser Bakhs/Getty Images) Credit: Yasser Bakhs/Getty Images) Credit: Yasser Bakhs/Getty ImagesNickname: The Green FalconsHow qualified: Saudi Arabia were third in the second round of qualifying behind Japan and Australia, but made the most of the third round chance, ultimately securing a World Cup berth with a 0-0 draw against Iraq as they topped their group. Best World Cup Finals performance: Round of 16 (1994)World Cup Appearances: 1994, 1998, 2002, 2006, 2018, 2022FIFA World Cup trivia: Mohamed Al-Deayea holds the joint record for most goals conceded by a goalkeeper at FIFA World Cups, as much a tribute to the goalkeeper's longevity in seeing four World Cups as the fact that Saudi Arabia were very leaky at the back. Their 8-0 loss to Germany as part of Al-Deayea's record is the largest in FIFA World Cups this side of 1974.QatarAlimosh Ali of Qatar celebrates after the team's victory in the FIFA World Cup 2026 AFC Asian qualifiers. playoffs group A match between Qatar and United Arab Emirates at Jassim Bin Hamad Stadium in Doha, Qatar, on October 14, 2025. (Photo by Noushad Thekkavil/NurPhoto via Getty Images) Source: NurPhoto / NurPhoto/NurPhoto via Getty ImagesNickname: The MaroonsHow qualified: Qatar were third out of their second round qualifying group, but went on to make it through to the World Cup as they topped their third round group, beating UAE 2-1 to confirm qualification. Best World Cup Finals performance: Group Stage (2022)World Cup Appearances: 2022FIFA World Cup trivia: Qatar are the only nation to play in a FIFA World Cup without qualifying for one, and went on to perform poorly in their home tournament in 2022. They were the hosts to score the fewest goals (1), the first to lose all three group games, and the lowest-ranked team in the tournament (ranked 32nd).IR IranDOHA, QATAR - NOVEMBER 25: Iran prior to the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 Group B match between Wales and IR Iran. (Photo by Matteo Ciambelli/DeFodi Images via Getty Images) Credit: DeFodi Images/DeFodi Images via Getty ImagesNickname: Team MellihHow qualified: Iran won an impressive seven from ten matches in their qualifying group, their only loss 1-0 away to Qatar when going down to 10-men. Their 2-2 draw with group rivals Uzbekistan on March 25 confirmed their qualification.Best World Cup Finals performance: Group stageWorld Cup Appearances: 1978, 1998, 2006, 2014, 2018, 2022FIFA World Cup trivia: Mehdi Taremi scored the latest goal in a non-extra time match at a FIFA World Cup, a 90+13th minute goal in a loss against England that made the result 6-2.UzbekistanPARIS, FRANCE - JULY 24: Eldor Shomurodov of Team Uzbekistan celebrates scoring during the Olympic Games Paris 2024 (Photo by Tnani Badredine/DeFodi Images via Getty Images) Credit: DeFodi Images/Getty ImagesNickname: White WolvesHow qualified: A 0-0 draw against the United Arab Emirates in Abu Dhabi was enough for Uzbekistan to take the second automatic qualification spot behind Iran in their group with a game to spare.Best World Cup Finals performance: N/AWorld Cup Appearances: N/AFIFA World Cup trivia: Eldor Shomurodov is Uzbekistan's top scorer of all-time, recording 42 goals in just 82 games, at 30 years of age with plenty more time to add to his tally. JordanMuscat, Oman, June 5, 2025) Jordan's Musa Al-Taamari takes on Oman's goalkeeper Faiz Al-Rusheidi and defender Khalid Al-Braiki during the 2026 FIFA World Cup qualifiers (Photo by Ameen Ahmed/NurPhoto via Getty Images) Source: NurPhoto / NurPhoto/NurPhoto via Getty ImagesNickname: Al Nashama (The Chivalrous Ones)How qualified: An Al Olwan hat-trick against Oman saw Jordan advance after favourable results elsewhere help them qualify from their group with a game in hand, finishing behind Korea Republic.Best World Cup Finals performance: N/AWorld Cup Appearances: N/AFIFA World Cup trivia: Jordan were managed briefly by former Premier League coach Harry Redknapp during qualification for the 2018 FIFA World Cup, his two-game stint a very high-scoring one with a 8-0 win over Bangladesh followed by a 5-1 loss to Australia.Korea RepublicHARRISON, NJ - SEPTEMBER 06: Son Heungmin #7 of Korea Republic during the game against the United States of America (Photo by Rich Graessle/Icon Sportswire via Getty Images) Credit: Icon Sportswire/Icon Sportswire via Getty ImagesNickname: The Taeguk WarriorsHow qualified: Korea Republic did not lose any games in their 16-match qualification, and qualified with a game in hand with a 2-0 win over Iraq.Best World Cup Finals performance: 4th (2002)World Cup Appearances: 1954, 1998, 2002, 1990, 1994, 1998, 2002, 2006, 2010, 2014, 2018, 2022 FIFA World Cup trivia: Korea have the unwanted record of conceding the fastest World Cup goal in history, when Hakan Kkr scored after just 11 seconds for Trkiye in the 2002 third-placed play-off.JapanOAKLAND, CALIFORNIA - SEPTEMBER 06: Takafusa Kubo of Japan in action during a friendly against Mexico. (Photo by Koji Watanabe/Getty Images) Credit: Koji Watanabe/Getty ImagesNickname: Samurai BlueHow qualified: Japan were the first nation to qualify for the FIFA World Cup, finishing comfortably top of their group ahead of Australia, with a 2-0 win over Bahrain securing qualification.Best World Cup Finals performance: Round of 16 (2002, 2010, 2018, 2022)World Cup Appearances: 1998, 2002, 2006, 2010, 2014, 2018, 2022FIFA World Cup trivia: Yo Nagatomo could enter a select group of players to participate in five men's World Cup tournaments. Currently, just six players ever have managed the feat - Lionel Messi (Argentina), Cristiano Ronaldo (Portugal), Lothar Matthaus (Germany), Andrs Guardado, Rafael Mrquez and Antonio Carbajal (all Mexico).Confederation of African Football (CAF) qualificationThese nations qualified as the winners of groups with direct spots, with the four best second-place finishers headed to a second round play-off for the one Play-Off Tournament spot for CAF.AlgeriaAlgerian player Mohamed El Amine Amoura celebrates his goal during the 2026 FIFA World Cup qualifying match between Algeria and Mozambique in Tizi Ouzou, Algeria, on March 25, 2025 (Photo by Billem Bensalem / APP/NurPhoto via Getty Images). Source: NurPhoto / NurPhoto/NurPhoto via Getty ImagesNickname: Carthage EaglesHow qualified: As the clear favourites in Group G of World Cup qualification, Algeria only had an early slip-up against Guinea to really blot their campaign, as they qualified with a game to spare ahead of Uganda.Best World Cup Finals performance: Round of 16 (2014)World Cup Appearances: 1982, 1986, 2010, 2014FIFA World Cup trivia: In 1982, Algeria upset powerhouses West Germany on the opening day, but subsequent results meant that by the final match of the group Austria v West Germany, both teams knew that they would progress with a low-scoring win for West Germany. After West Germany took an early lead, the rest of the match was played out without contest. Algeria protested to FIFA, who ruled that the result be allowed to stand, but it led to a revised qualification system at subsequent World Cups in which the final two games in each group were played simultaneously.Algeria were the first team to win two games in the first round and not advance to the knockout stage.Cape Verde (Cape Verde)Praia , Cape Verde - 13 October 2025: Roberto Lopes, left, and Garry Rodrigues of Cape Verde celebrate their side's qualification for the 2026 FIFA World Cup after the FIFA World Cup 2026 African qualifying match between Cape Verde and Eswatini at Estadio Nacional de Cabo Verde in Praia, Cape Verde. (Photo by Cristiano Barbosa/Sportsfile via Getty Images) Credit: Sportsfile/Sportsfile via Getty ImagesNickname: The Blue SharksHow qualified: A 3-0 win over Eswatini in October sealed qualification for Cabo Verde's first ever World Cup finals, as they finished top of a group including past World Cup participants in Cameroon and Angola.Best World Cup Finals performance: N/AWorld Cup Appearances: N/AFIFA World Cup trivia: Cabo Verde have become the second-least populous nation to qualify for the global finals, with a population of just over 500,000.Egypt(10) Mohamed Salah of Egypt team battle for possession with (17) Moussa Araita Hamadou of Djibouti team during the 2026 FIFA World Cup Africa qualifiers football match between Egypt and Djibouti at the Cairo International Stadium in Cairo, Egypt on November 20, 2025. (Photo by Ayman Aref/NurPhoto via Getty Images) Source: NurPhoto / NurPhoto/NurPhoto via Getty ImagesNickname: The PharaohsHow qualified: Egypt were strong in Group A of African World Cup qualification, with Mohamed Salah leading the way for the Pharaohs. He took the scoring record for this African World Cup qualification period, and also the all-time record, reaching goal number 20 and surpassing Didi Drogba, Islam Slimani, Samuel Eto'o and Moumouni Dagnano, who all have 18.Egypt wrapped up their berth at the FIFA World Cup 26 with a 3-0 win over Djibouti, leaving them with a game in hand.Best World Cup Finals performance: Group StageWorld Cup Appearances: 1934, 1990, 2018FIFA World Cup trivia: In their final group match against Saudi Arabia in 2018, goalkeeper Essam El Hadary became the oldest player to appear in a World Cup match at 45 years and 161 days old.GhanaBRENTFORD, ENGLAND - MAY 28: Jordan Ayew of Ghana at Gtech Community Stadium on May 28, 2025 in Brentford, England. (Photo by Richard Pelham/Getty Images) Credit: Richard Pelham/Getty ImagesNickname: Black StarsHow qualified: As one of the powerhouse footballing nations of Africa, Ghana were shocked by their failure to qualify for AFCON, coupled with an early World Cup qualification loss to Comoros, and their coach Otto Addo had to resist widespread calls to resign. They bounced back after that thanks to a well-timed scoring spree from Jordan Ayew, whose seven goals in qualification helped Ghana qualify for their fifth World Cup.Best World Cup Finals performance: Quarter-finals (2010)World Cup Appearances: 2006, 2010, 2014, 2022FIFA World Cup trivia: What is Asamoah Gyam famous for at FIFA World Cups? Well statistically, it should be converting penalties, as he scored three of four times he stepped up to the spot in the 2010 World Cup. 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