

Sports Trends

African Women's Soccer

An Outlier special report
on the women's game

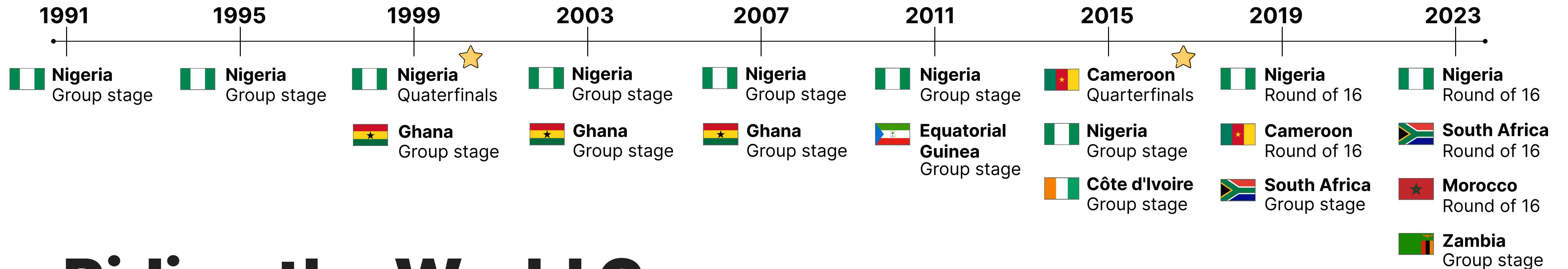
THE OUTLIER

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Photo: Caf.com

Highest finish reached by African teams



Riding the World Cup wave

There's little doubt 2023 will go down as a breakout year for women's football – and **for African teams in particular**. The Fifa Women's World Cup in July and August 2023 delivered record viewership and attendance numbers as well as a reported \$570-million in revenue.

Despite entering the tournament as the lowest-ranked teams in their groups, Nigeria, South Africa, Morocco and Zambia took the opportunity to stir things up. For the first time in World Cup history, **3 African teams progressed** to the Round of 16.

- Eight African teams have qualified to play in the World Cup since 1991: **Nigeria** (9 times), **Ghana** (3 times), **Cameroon** and **South Africa** (twice) and **Equatorial Guinea**, **Côte d'Ivoire**, **Morocco** and **Zambia** (once).
- Nigeria is **one of only 7 countries** to appear in every World Cup. The others are Brazil, Germany, Japan, Norway, Sweden and the United States.
- The best performing African teams are **Nigeria** and **Cameroon**, which have both made it to the quarterfinal stage. Nigeria in 1999 and Cameroon in 2015.

Moving on up

Fifa has 186 countries listed in its global women's rankings. Among them are 44 African countries, although only 13 of them are in the top 100.





The 2023 World Cup led to big moves for Africa's 4 qualifying teams:

- Morocco made the **biggest jump** from 72 to 58, moving up 14 places
- The **second-best** improvement was South Africa, who are now 45th
- Nigeria remains the **top-ranked** African nation. The Super Falcons moved up 8 places to 32
- Zambia's Copper Queens moved 8 places, from 77 to 69

Fifa ranking	Pre-2023 World Cup	Post-2023 World Cup	Difference
Nigeria	40	32	8
South Africa	54	45	9
Morocco	72	58	14
Zambia	77	69	8

Fifa's global rankings

Last updated 13 November 2023

1		Sweden
2		Spain
3		United States
4		England
5		France
6		Germany
7		Netherlands
8		Japan
32		Nigeria
45		South Africa
58		Morocco
69		Zambia

Africa's showcase

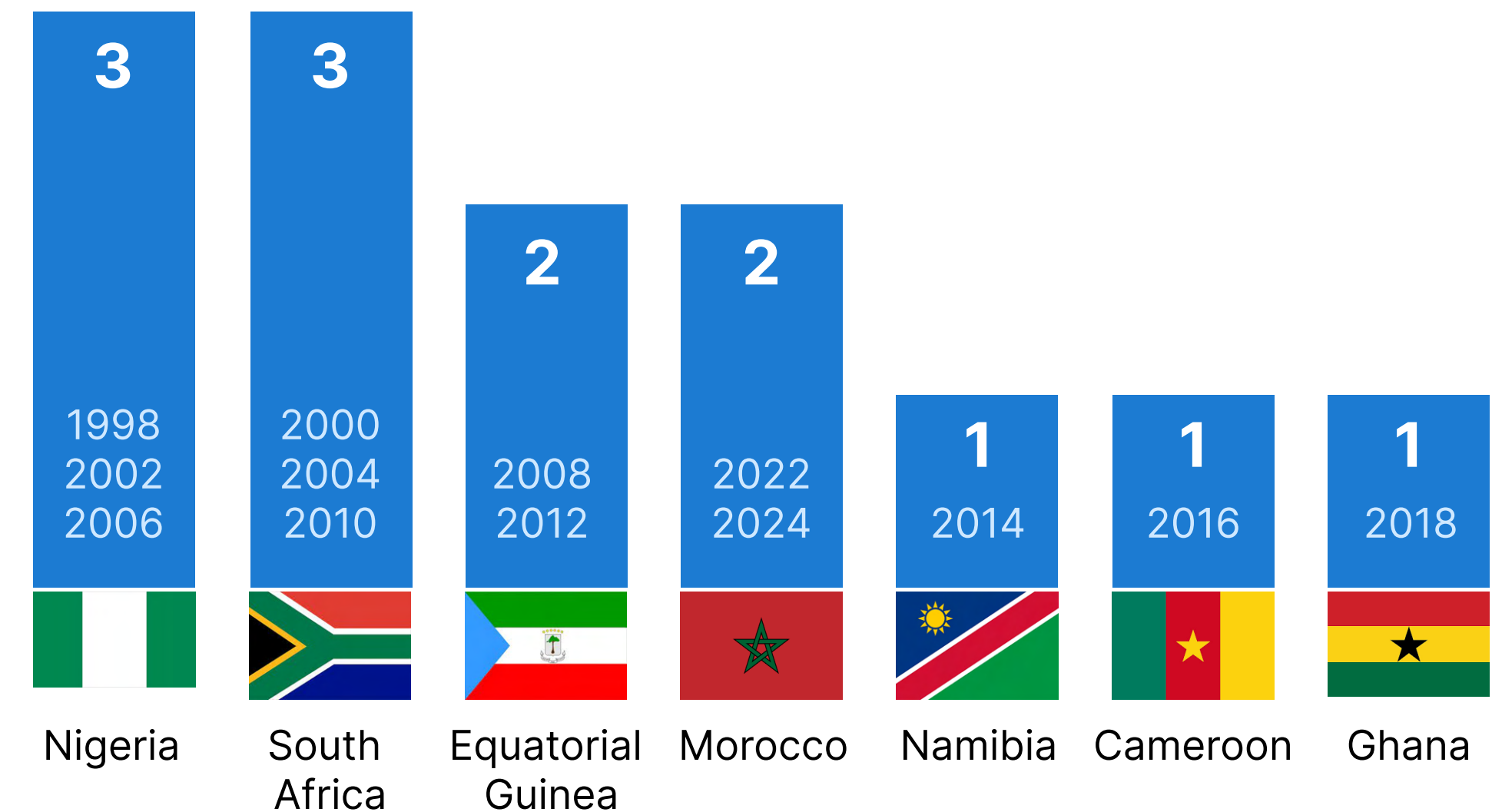
The **Confederation of African Football** (Caf), the sport's governing body, was founded in 1957. It has 54 member countries across 6 regions, 47 of which have women's national teams.

Caf organises the **Women's Africa Cup of Nations** (Wafcon), the continent's biggest women's sports event. The biennial competition acts as a **qualification tournament** for the Fifa Women's World Cup.

From a starting pool of over 40, **only 12 teams play** in the tournament, which are drawn into 3 groups of 4 teams each. The top 4 teams (the semifinalists) go through to the World Cup.

Wafcon 2024 will be held in Morocco.

Wafcon tournament hosts



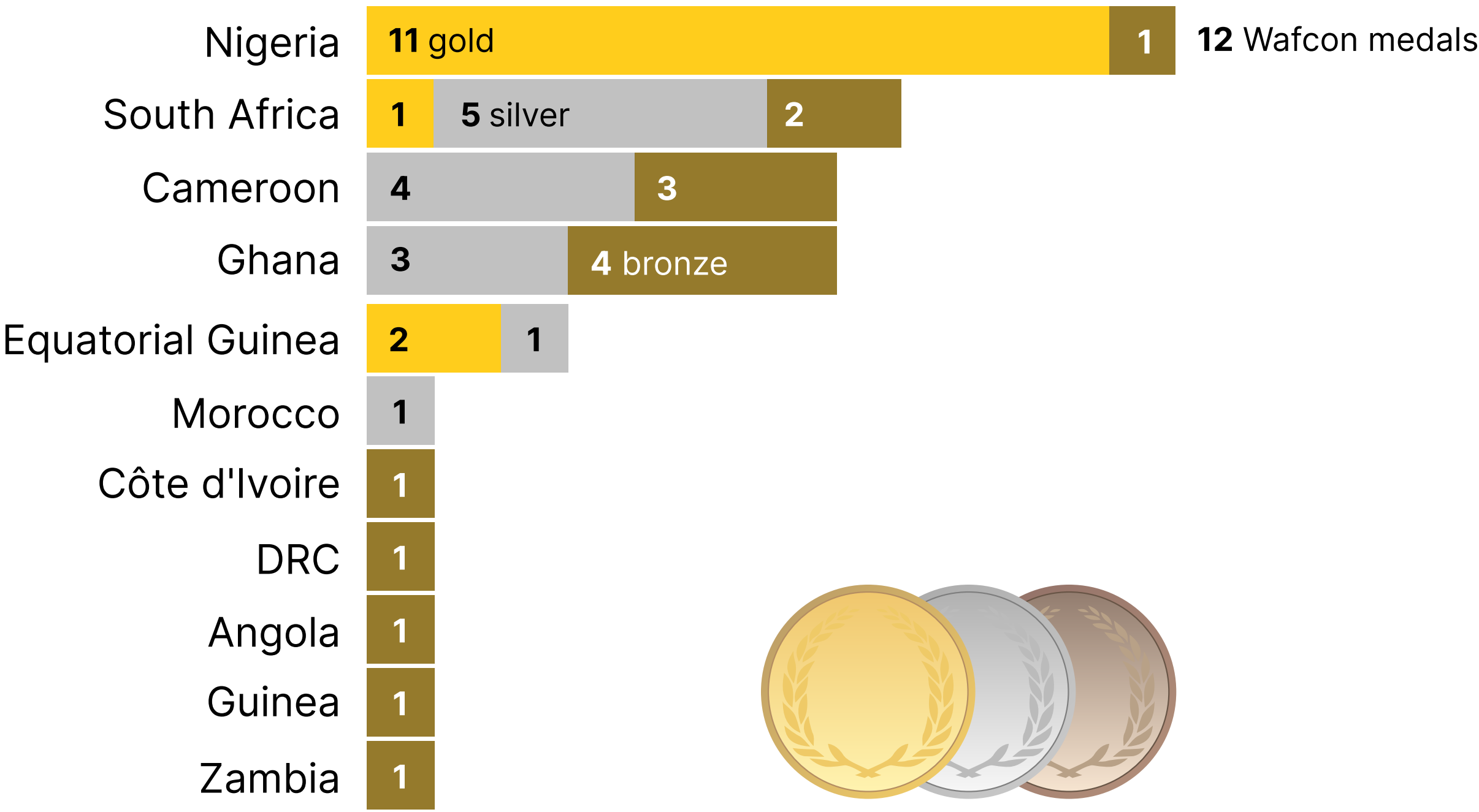
Since 1998, only 7 countries have hosted Wafcon. The host country automatically qualifies to play in the tournament. In 1991 and 1995, teams played home-and-away matches to qualify for the World Cup. Wafcon in 2020 was cancelled because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Wafcon winners



- A total of **30 countries** have participated in Wafcon, with 14 qualifying for the World Cup
- In the 14 editions of the competition, **only 3 countries have won** the title
- Nigeria is the **most successful** nation, winning 11 gold medals (and 1 bronze)
- Equatorial Guinea **won as hosts** in 2008 and 2012. They were runners-up in 2010
- South Africa **won for the first time** in 2022, beating Nigeria 2-1. They have been runners-up 5 times

14 tournaments, 3 winners

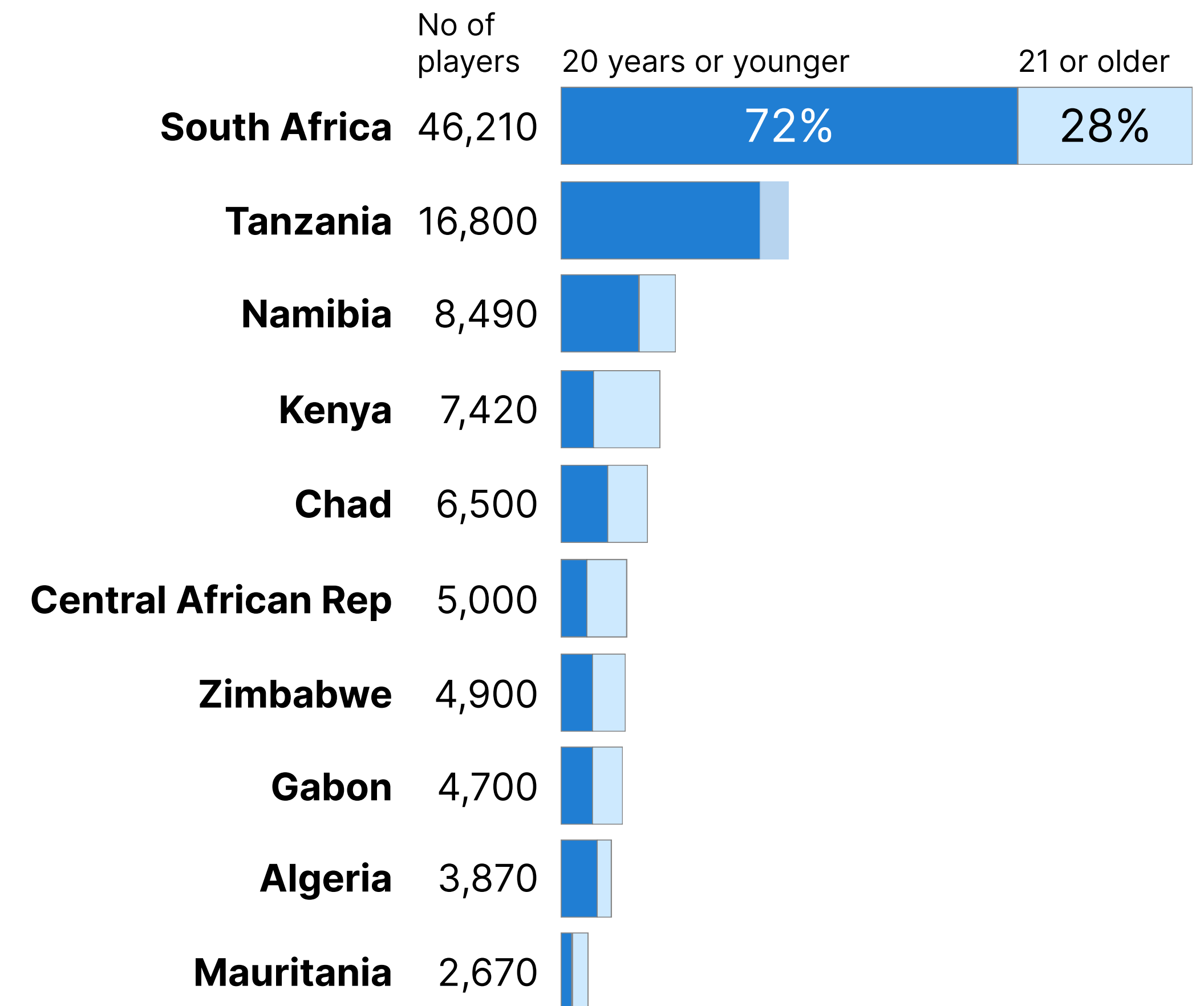


The talent pool

There are about 151,000 female footballers registered with the Confederation of African football (Caf) – more than 60% of them are 20 years old or younger. **South Africa** accounts for over 30% of the talent pool on the continent. This is largely because other countries have very few locally based female players. Even Nigeria, Ghana, Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea, who are dominant on the international stage, have very little to show domestically.

- Only 9 countries have a **sponsored women's football league**: Botswana, Cameroon, Eritrea, Eswatini, Ghana, Liberia, Mali, South Africa and Tanzania
- 62% of the talent pool is made up of **development players** below the age of 20, while 38% are experienced players 21 years and older
- Of the 52 Caf members that participated in a 2022 survey, 71% had **grassroots programmes** to cultivate talent and 82% had partnered with schools to give young footballers a start

Registered players



Figures rounded to nearest 10
CAF Women's Football Landscape Report 2022

Club football

Competitions are the greatest drivers of football development. The only continental platform that exists for female club footballers to showcase their talents is the **Women's Champions League**. There are 4 such competitions for male teams.

The Women's Champions League is part of Caf's 2021-2025 Action Plan to grow the women's game.

- The 8-team competition was **first held in Egypt** in 2021
- Top-division clubs from **13 countries** have participated in 3 editions of the Champions League
- South Africa's **Mamelodi Sundowns Ladies** won the inaugural edition in Egypt in 2021. Morocco's **AS FAR** dethroned Sundowns to win the competition in 2022
- The **2023 edition**, hosted in November by Côte d'Ivoire, was won by Mamelodi Sundowns, who beat first-time finalists SC Casablanca 3-0

Champions League participants

- Côte d'Ivoire
- DRC
- Egypt
- Equatorial Guinea
- Ghana
- Kenya
- Liberia
- Mali
- Morocco
- Nigeria
- South Africa
- Tanzania
- Zambia





Cosafa Women's Cup

Organised by the Council of Southern Africa Football Associations, the Cosafa Women's Cup was first held in 2002. The **12-team tournament** now serves as a qualifier for the Women's Champions League.

- South Africa has won the competition 7 times
- Zimbabwe, Tanzania, Zambia and Malawi have each won the title once
- In 2023, Malawi's She-Flames beat the Copper Queens from Zambia 2-1 to take the title

Growing the game

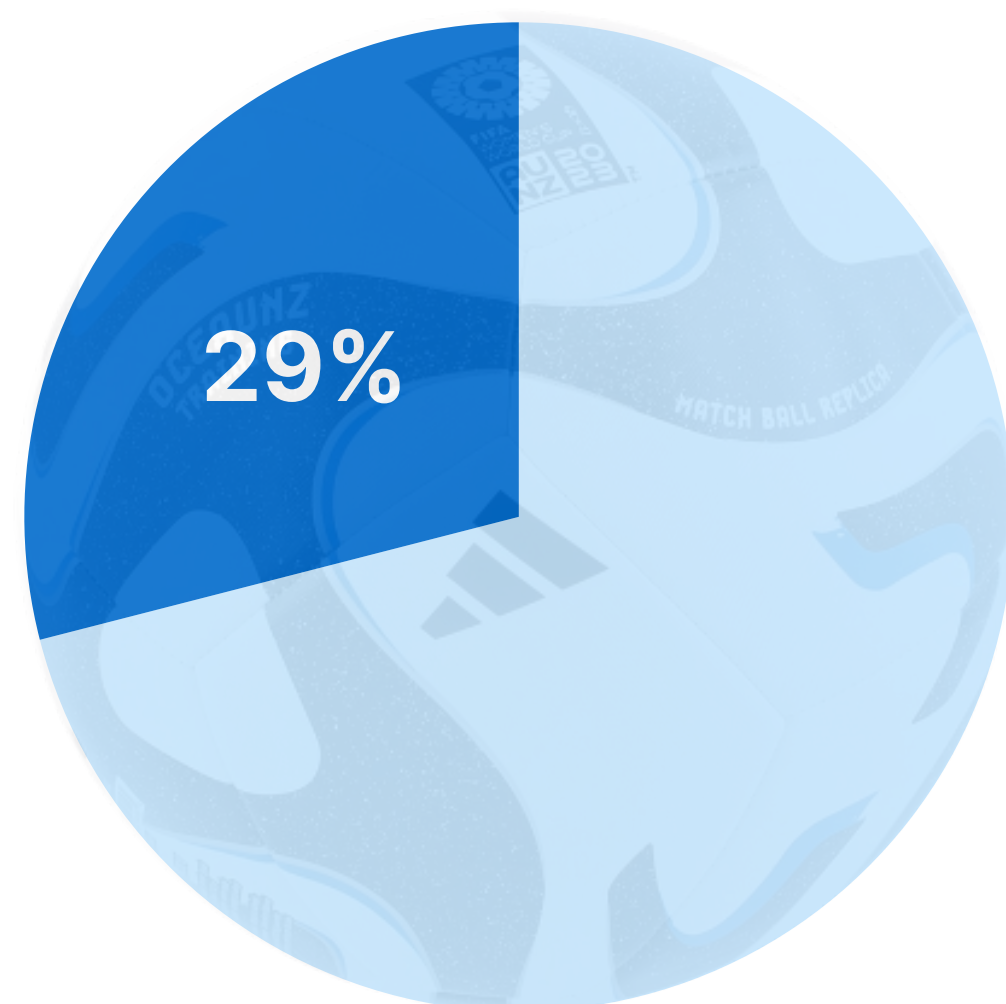
With only 21 African countries receiving government support for women's football, the development of the women's game is being driven mostly by Caf.

- 49 African countries have a **first-division competition** for women
- Caf's African Schools Football Championship features **180,000 girls** from different countries, playing at grassroots level
- The winning boys' and girls' **schools are rewarded equally**, each receiving \$300,000 for a continental title, and \$100,000 for winning at regional level

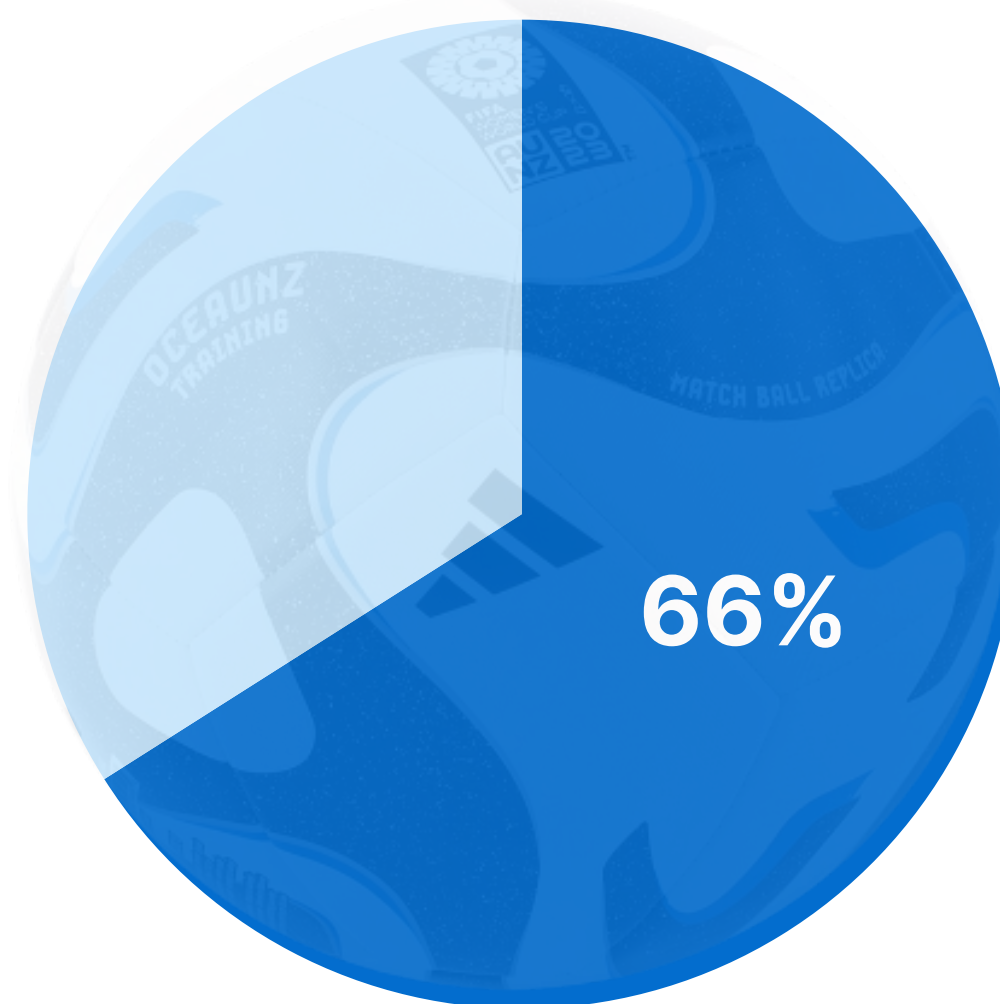


How women footballers are paid

Trade union Fifpro surveyed international players in 2022



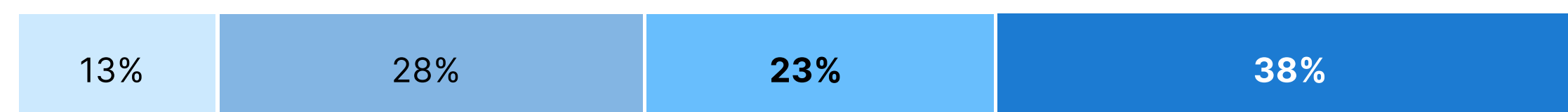
Almost a third of female players did not receive any payment from their national team in World Cup qualifying matches



Two out of three female players had to take unpaid or holiday leave to participate in qualifying tournaments

How CAF footballers feel about pay

African women players were asked what improvements were needed



No improvement

Extreme improvement

Show me the money

There is a genuine interest in football in Africa, but because the women's game is a long way from being fully professional, players are unable to dedicate all their energies to the game and are often forced to play outside the continent to make a decent living.

Caf's survey of member associations shows that in 2022

- Only 12 of Africa's national leagues had contracts with all their players
- Of those 12, **only 4 paid all their players a salary**

A player survey by Fifpro, a trade union representing international professional footballers, showed that

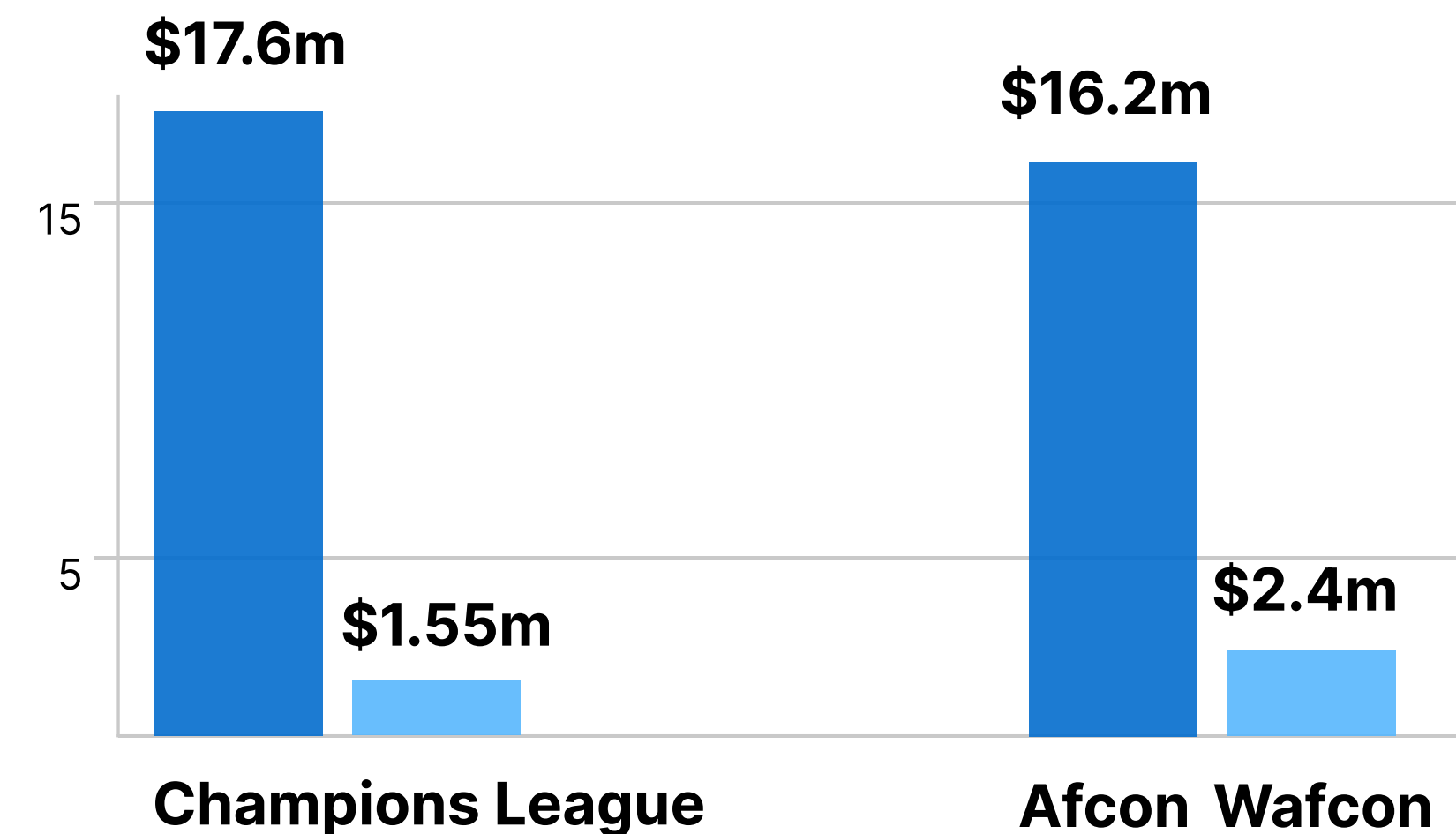
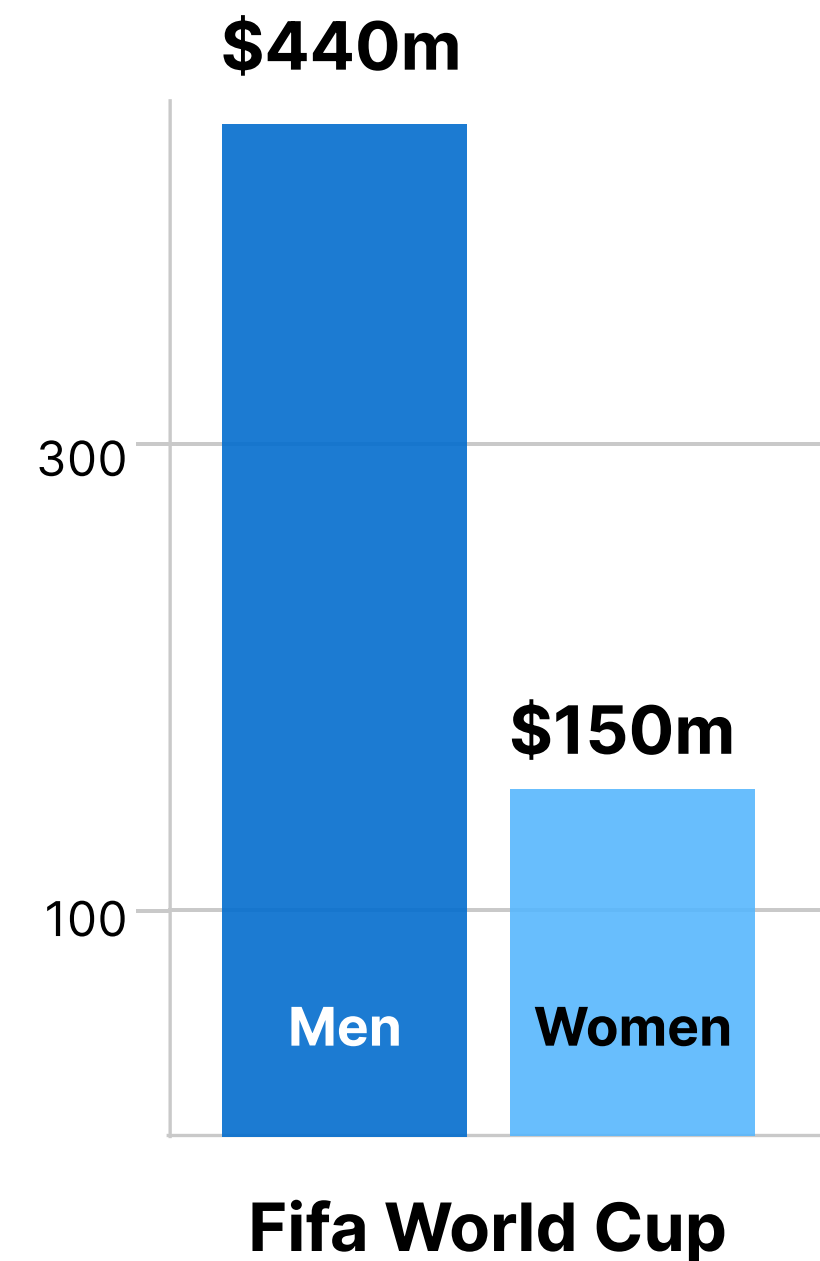
- 38% of Caf's female footballers believed payments need 'extreme improvement'
- 29% of female international players **were not paid** for participating in World Cup qualifying matches
- 66% had to take **unpaid leave** or holiday leave from another job to play for their national team

Prize parity

Women players across the continent are increasingly **raising their voices against inequality**. In the build-up to the 2023 World Cup, Nigeria and South Africa protested against the lack of contracts, poor pay and sub-par pitches. Zambia and Sierra Leone are the only 2 African countries who pay their national players equally.

- Fifa increased the women's prize money pool to \$150-million in 2023. The men's purse in Qatar in 2022 was \$440-million. The global body says it is **aiming for parity** by the next men's and women's tournaments in 2026 and 2027, respectively
- When the Senegalese men's team won Afcon 2021, they received \$2.5-million. Wafcon 2022 winners **South Africa made just 16%** of that (\$400,000)
- The prize money for Wafcon has been increased to \$2.4-million in 2024, with the winners earning \$500,000
- Caf introduced a **purse for the Women's Champions League** of \$1.55-million in 2022. The prize money for the men's tournament was \$17.6-million in 2021

Tournament prize money



African football at the Olympics

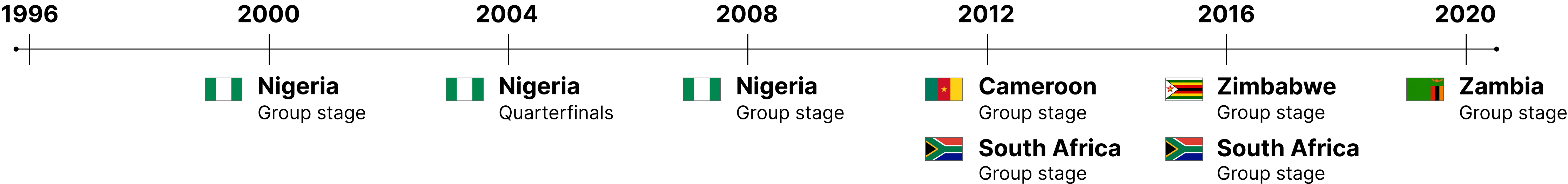
Football has been part of the Olympics since 1900, but it was only at the Summer Games in Atlanta in **1996** that women's football was finally included in the global showcase.

Of the 12 qualifying women's teams at the Olympics, **2 will be African** in 2024. The final round of tournament qualifying matches will be played by four teams in April 2024 and the two winners will head for Paris in July.

In the 7 editions of the Summer Olympic Games that women's football has been played

- Africa has been represented by **5 countries**: Nigeria, South Africa, Cameroon, Zimbabwe and Zambia
- **Nigeria** has represented Africa at 3 Olympic Games: 2000, 2004 and 2008 **South Africa** has participated in 2 Games: 2012 and 2016
- **Zambia was the only African country** to make it through to the 2020 Games in Tokyo.

Olympic Games record



Strong support

As the sport grows in Africa, so too does the need to develop and support female referees, coaches and administrators.

Coaches

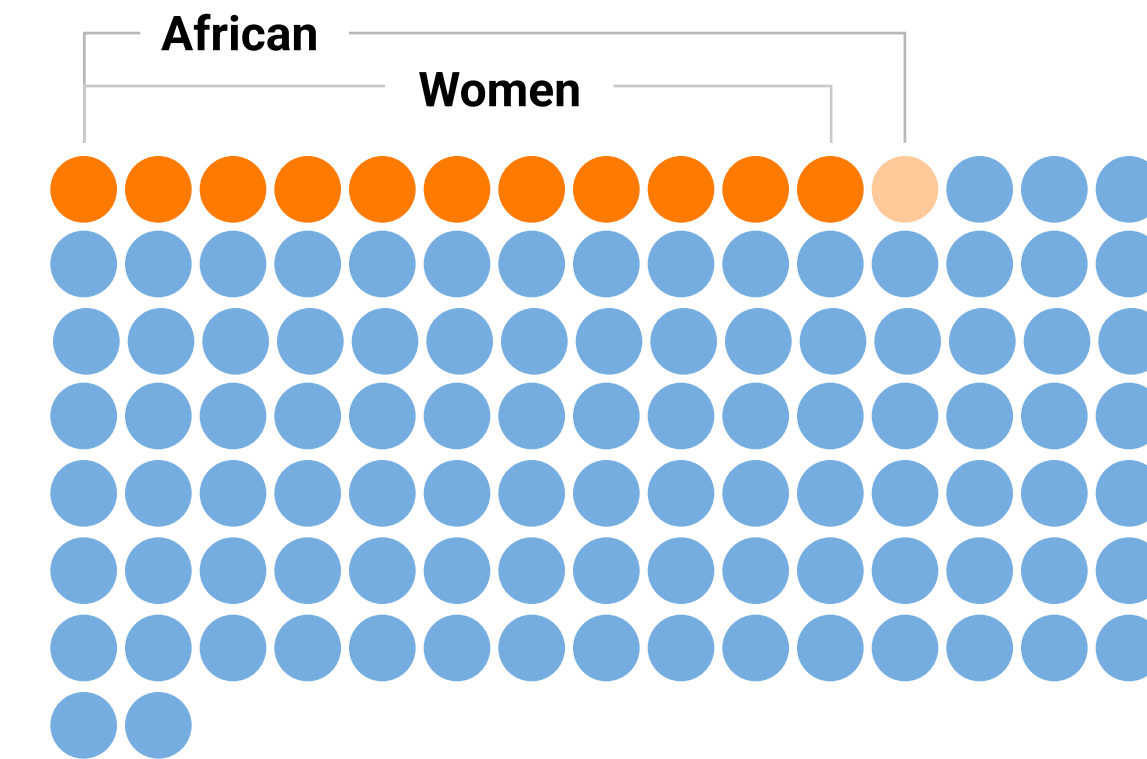
- There are 4,140 Caf-registered **female coaches** in Africa. Just over half are licensed coaches
- 287 of Africa's female coaches are **A-licence holders**, meaning that they can coach at national team level
- **35% of national team coaches are women**, while 6 out of 10 assistant coaches are women
- Of the 43 teams surveyed by Caf, 39 have head coaches of the **same nationality** as the team they coach



Photo: @afrosporttv/
Instagram

World Cup officials

12 of the 107 match officials at the 2023 Women's World Cup were from Africa
11 of those were women



Referees

- Africa has just over **4,720 female referees**, who work on both women's and men's matches
- 3,346 referees are licensed and are qualified to officiate in Caf-sanctioned fixtures: 3,119 at national level and **227 at international level**
- Caf says 325 female referees were assigned to at least 1 men's match in 2022
- **Salima Mukansanga** of Rwanda (left) was the first African female referee to officiate at a men's World Cup (2019)

Credits and references

Research

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About

The Outlier is published by Media Hack Collective. The Outlier publishes new charts daily: Our World in Charts

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