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RESEARCH NOTE

#PARG 2026-72RN

2026 Men's FIFA World Cup

An examination of a major event

François Brouard, DBA, FCPA, FCA
Adrian Movileanu

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Introduction

FIFA stands for Fédération Internationale de Football Association (French for International Federation of Association Football). The 2026 FIFA World Cup is a landmark event on the world stage, bringing together three host nations, Canada, Mexico, and the United States, for the first tri-nation tournament in the competition's history. As preparations accelerate and public debate intensifies, the World Cup has become more than a sporting spectacle: it is a catalyst for political negotiation, economic planning, cultural expression, and social transformation across North America. Governments, cities, corporations, and institutions are all working to leverage the tournament's visibility and economic potential, while navigating the controversies, expectations, and pressures that accompany a mega-event of this scale.

This study examines the 2026 FIFA World Cup through its key dimensions and controversies, with the goal of deepening our understanding of the event. Drawing on a Canadian perspective, it explores how the tournament both shapes and is shaped by the political, economic, financial, ecological, social, and cultural dynamics of its host countries.



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Methodology

Source of information

This research note is based on publicly available information gathered through open-source documentation. The methodology involves collecting, evaluating, and synthesizing credible materials, including government reports, news articles, organizational publications, and official websites. Sources are selected for their reliability, transparency, and relevance, with priority given to primary documents, such as official FIFA releases, government economic assessments, and municipal planning reports, supplemented by reputable journalism and expert commentary. Information is cross-checked across multiple sources to reduce bias and verify accuracy. Findings are then organized thematically, drawing connections across political, economic, social, and environmental dimensions. Throughout, careful citation and documentation ensure traceability, allowing the note to present a concise, evidence-based interpretation.

Limitations of Economic Projections

Many of the figures in this report are based on forward-looking projections and should therefore be interpreted with caution. Economic forecasts for mega-events often rely on assumptions about visitor spending, infrastructure timelines, and sector-specific growth that may not fully materialize. External factors, such as global economic conditions, exchange rates, or unforeseen logistical challenges, can also influence actual outcomes. While the estimates provide a useful sense of scale, they should be understood as informed predictions rather than guaranteed results and readers are encouraged to verify evolving information with trusted sources.

A key point to underline is that the economic impact of the 2026 World Cup will not be uniform across the three host countries. The United States, with the largest number of matches and the most extensive tourism and service infrastructure, is positioned to capture the greatest share of GDP growth and labor income. Canada, hosting fewer games but benefiting from strong multipliers and concentrated urban investment, will experience a more modest yet proportionally significant boost, particularly in cities like Toronto and Vancouver. Mexico, while also hosting fewer matches than the US, will still see meaningful gains through tourism, hospitality, and local business activity, though on a smaller scale due to differences in economic size and sectoral capacity. These regional variations highlight how the same global event can generate distinct economic outcomes depending on national context, market structure, and the scale of local hosting responsibilities.

This research note is one component of a wider series analyzing FIFA as an organization, alongside related notes addressing governance (PARG-2026-70RN), finances (PARG-2026-71RN), and the 2026 Men's FIFA World Cup (PARG-2026-72RN).

Perspectives of analysis

Several perspectives are adopted to examine the event, namely political, economic, financial, ecological, social, and cultural.

Political

Political analysis focuses on how the 2026 FIFA World Cup has become intertwined with international diplomacy, immigration policy, and national image-building across Canada, Mexico and the United States. The tournament is framed as a soft-power opportunity, yet it also exposes tensions around border controls, security coordination, and differing political priorities among the three host nations. Governments are using the event to project stability and global leadership, but debates over public spending, policing, and international relations reveal how mega-events inevitably become political arenas where national interests and global expectations collide.

Economic

Economic analysis highlights the scale of projected benefits. Across North America, the tournament is forecast to generate billions in tourism spending, infrastructure investment, and hospitality revenue. However, independent economists caution that mega-event projections often exceed actual outcomes, and some cities are already facing cost overruns. The economic story is therefore one of both opportunity and risk: a major short-term stimulus paired with long-term questions about who benefits and how evenly gains are distributed.

Financial

From a financial standpoint, the World Cup represents a complex balance between public expenditure and anticipated returns. Host cities are investing heavily in stadium upgrades, transportation improvements, and security operations. While FIFA and local governments emphasize revenue generation through tourism, sponsorships, and global exposure, the financial burden falls largely on municipal and provincial budgets. The key financial debate centers on whether increased tax revenue and long-term economic activity will offset these substantial upfront costs and who benefit from the event.

Ecological

Ecological analysis raises concerns about the environmental footprint of a tournament spread across 16 cities and three countries. Long-distance travel between venues, increased air traffic, and expanded tourism contribute significantly to carbon emissions. Host cities must also manage waste, energy consumption, and pressure on local ecosystems during peak visitor periods. Although some cities are incorporating sustainability measures, such as public transit expansions and energy-efficient stadium

upgrades, the overall ecological impact remains a major challenge, prompting calls for stronger environmental accountability in global sporting events.

Social

Socially, the 2026 World Cup is expected to generate excitement, community engagement, and national pride, particularly in Canada where soccer participation is rapidly growing. The event can strengthen local identity, inspire youth involvement in sport, and create shared cultural experiences across diverse communities. At the same time, concerns persist about displacement, rising housing costs, and the strain on public services in host cities. The social impact will depend on how effectively cities manage crowding, accessibility, and equitable community benefits.

Cultural

Culturally, the tournament offers an opportunity for Canada, Mexico and the United States to showcase their diversity, traditions, and global identities. With millions of international visitors and extensive media coverage, the World Cup has become a platform for cultural exchange and national storytelling. It also reinforces soccer's growing cultural presence in North America, potentially reshaping the region's sporting landscape. Yet cultural critics warn that commercialization and tourism-driven narratives may overshadow local voices, raising questions about authenticity and representation.

FIFA World Cup and 2026 World Cup

Since the World Cup began in 1930 in Uruguay, the tournament featured 16 teams or fewer for decades; it expanded to 24 teams in 1982, then to 32 teams starting in 1998 and 48-team in 2026 (Wikipedia, 2026a). Over the years, this has broadened global representation, moving the tournament away from its earlier, mostly Europe-centric makeup.

The World Cup is an international football tournament contested by the senior men's national teams of the member associations of FIFA and become the world's most influential football tournament. Over time, the World Cup evolved into a truly global event, showcasing diverse playing styles, iconic moments, and the rise of new footballing nations. 2026 marks the 23rd edition of the tournament.

The 2026 FIFA World Cup (or FIFA World Cup 2026™) marks a historic turning point for the tournament, not only because it will be the first edition hosted by three countries, Canada, the United States, and Mexico, but also because it introduces an expanded 48-team format. This shift dramatically increases the scale of the event, bringing more nations into the global spotlight and reshaping the competitive landscape. Organizers and host governments have framed the tournament as an unprecedented opportunity for economic growth, tourism, international visibility, and cultural celebration across North America.

At the same time, the 2026 World Cup has sparked debate and scrutiny. The expanded format raises questions about competitive balance, environmental impact, and the logistical challenges of coordinating matches across vast distances and multiple jurisdictions. Cities such as Toronto and Vancouver are preparing major fan zones, transportation upgrades, and security operations, each navigating its own political, financial, and social pressures. As excitement builds, the tournament stands as both a massive sporting spectacle and a complex political and economic project, one that will shape North American sports culture and global football narratives long after the final whistle.

The awarding of the 2018 World Cup to Russia and the 2022 World Cup to Qatar intensified scrutiny, as critics argued that the bidding processes lacked transparency and may have been influenced by improper incentives (Becker, 2013; Youd, 2014). The “decision to grant the 2034 World Cup to Saudi Arabia despite the country’s human rights abuses and the opacity of executive decision making, as examples of concerning trends” (MacInnes, 2025). The 2026 North American World Cup was awarded under FIFA’s newly articulated strategic vision (Bar-On and Reiche, 2026; Beissel and Ternes, 2024). The “decision to grant the 2034 World Cup to Saudi Arabia despite the country’s human rights abuses and the opacity of executive decision making, as examples of concerning trends” (MacInnes, 2025). While FIFA has consistently denied wrongdoing in these selections, the controversies contributed to a broader perception of systemic governance failures.

Countries and teams

The 2026 FIFA World Cup will feature 48 national teams, an increase from the 32 that competed in Qatar 2022. These teams will come from FIFA’s six continental confederations: sixteen (16) from Union of European Football Associations (UEFA), ten (10) from Confederation of African Football (CAF), nine (9) from Asian Football Confederation (AFC), six (6) from Confederation of North, Central American and Caribbean Association Football (CONCACAF), six (6) from South American Football Confederation (CONMEBOL), one (1) from Oceania Football Confederation (OFC).

Table 1 presents the teams / countries from various regions.

Table 1 - Teams / Countries from various regions

<i>Regions</i>	<i>Teams / Countries and World ranking</i>		<i>Regions</i>	<i>Teams / Countries and World ranking</i>	
AFC (9)	Australia	27	CONMEBOL (6)	Argentina	3
	Iran	21		Brazil	6
	Iraq	57		Columbia	13
	Japan	18		Ecuador	24
	Jordan	63		Paraguay	40
	Qatar	55		Uruguay	17
	Saudi Arabia	61	OFC (1)	New Zealand	85
	South Korea	25	UEFA (16)	Austria	23
	Uzbekistan	50		Belgium	9
CAF (10)	Algeria	29		Bosnia and Herzegovina	65
	Cape Verde	68		Croatia	11
	Côte d'Ivoire	34		Czech Republic	41
	DR Congo	46		England	4
	Egypt	28		France	1
	Ghana	73		Germany	10
	Morocco	8		Netherlands	7
	Senegal	14		Norway	31
	South Africa	60		Portugal	5
	Tunisia	45		Scotland	43
CONCACAF (6)	Canada	30		Spain	2
	Caraçao	83		Sweden	38
	Haiti	82		Switzerland	19
	Mexico	15		Türkiye	22
	Panama	33			
	United States	16			

Source: FIFA (2026a); FIFA/Coca-Cola (2026) (ranking as of April 1, 2026)

Note: AFC = Asian Football Confederation; CAF = Confederation of African Football; CONCACAF = Confederation of North, Central American and Caribbean Association Football; CONMEBOL = South American Football Confederation; OFC = Oceania Football Confederation; UEFA = Union of European Football Associations

Stages, rounds, matches and dates

The tournament is expanding from 64 games in Qatar 2022 with 32 teams to 104 games in 2026 with 48 teams, an increase of 40 matches. “In 2022 the group stage featured 48 games to eliminate 16 teams. This time there will be 72 matches in the first round to filter tout the same number.” (Scott, 2026) Some observers bring the dilution of spectacle argument, especially in the first round. This will “making it highly unlikely than any of the tournament’s traditional big guns will be eliminated at the first hurdle” (Woollard, 2026).

The 2026 World Cup will run from June 11 to July 19, lasting 39 days compared with the 32-day schedule of Qatar 2022. Table 2 presents stages, rounds, matches, dates and final venues. Table 3 outlines the groups and participating teams, with twelve (12) groups in total. The top two teams from each group, along with the eight best third-place teams, advance to the round of 32.

Table 2 – Stages, Rounds, Matches, Dates and Finals Venues

<i>Stages</i>	<i>Matchday and rounds</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Venues</i>
Group stage	Matchday 1 (1 vs 2; 3 vs 4)	June 11-27, 2026	
	Matchday 2 (1 vs 3; 4 vs 2)	June 11-27, 2026	
	Matchday 3 (4 vs 1; 2 vs 3)	June 11-27, 2026	
Knockout stage	Round of 32	June 28 - July 3, 2026	
	Round of 16	July 4-7, 2026	
	Quarterfinals	July 9-11, 2026	Boston, Los Angeles, Miami, Kansas City
	Semifinals	July 14-15, 2026	Dallas, Atlanta
	Match for third place	July 18, 2026	Miami
	Final	July 19, 2026	New York New Jersey

Source: FIFA (2026b); Wikipedia (2026b)

Table 3 - Groups and Teams

<i>Group</i>				
A	Czechia (A4)	Mexico (A1)	South Africa (A2)	Korea Republic (A3)
B	Bosnia & Herzegovina (B2)	Canada (B1)	Qatar (B3)	Switzerland (B4)
C	Brazil (C1)	Haiti (C3)	Morocco (C2)	Scotland (C4)
D	Australia (D3)	Paraguay (D2)	Türkiye (D4)	United States (D1)
E	Caraçao (E2)	Ecuador (E4)	Côte d'Ivoire (E3)	Germany (E1)
F	Japan (F2)	Netherlands (F1)	Sweden (F3)	Tunisia (F4)
G	Belgium (G1)	Egypt (G2)	Iran (G3)	New Zealand (G4)
H	Cabo Verde (H2)	Saudi Arabia (H3)	Spain (H1)	Uruguay (H4)
I	France (I1)	Iraq (I3)	Norway (I4)	Senegal (I2)
J	Algeria (J2)	Argentina (J1)	Austria (J3)	Jordan (J4)
K	Columbia (K4)	DR Congo (K2)	Portugal (K1)	Uzbekistan (K3)
L	Croatia (L2)	England (L1)	Ghana (L3)	Panama (L4)

Source: FIFA (2026a); Wikipedia (2026b)

Cities, stadiums and number of games

Sixteen cities will host matches in 2026, two in Canada, three in Mexico, and eleven in the United States, marking the first time the World Cup is co-hosted by three countries. Canada and Mexico will each stage 13 matches, while the United States will host 78. This will be Canada's first time hosting the World Cup, Mexico's third (after 1970 and 1986), and the United States' second (following 1994).

Stadium capacity is a defining feature of the 2026 FIFA World Cup, as the tournament will rely on some of the largest venues ever used in World Cup history. Because Canada, Mexico, and the United States are hosting, many of the selected stadiums, especially in the US, were originally built for American football and therefore offer significantly higher seating capacities, often exceeding 70,000 seats. Mexico's Estadio Azteca remains one of the most iconic and spacious venues, while Canada's stadiums in Toronto and Vancouver are being upgraded to meet FIFA standards. Collectively, these large-scale venues will allow the 2026 tournament to accommodate record-breaking crowds and deliver one of the most attended World Cups to date. The Toronto Stadium is the smallest venue of the 2026 tournament.

Table 4 presents the cities and stadiums by country and the number of games. Figure A shows a map of the various 2026 FIFA World Cup cities and venues.

Table 4 - Cities, stadiums and number of games

<i>Countries</i>	<i>Cities</i>	<i>Stadium</i>	<i>Capacity</i>	<i>Number of games</i>	
Canada	Toronto	BMO Field	45,000	6	13
	Vancouver	BC Place	54,000	7	
Mexico	Guadalajara	Estadio Akron	48,000	4	13
	Mexico City	Estadio Banorte / Azteca	83,000	5	
	Monterrey	Estadio BBVA	53,500	4	
United States	Atlanta	Mercedes-Benz Stadium	75,000	8	78
	Boston	Gillette Stadium	65,000	7	
	Dallas	AT&T Stadium	94,000	9	
	Houston	NRG Stadium	72,000	7	
	Kansas City	GEHA Field at Arrowhead Stadium	73,000	6	
	Los Angeles	SoFi Stadium	70,000	8	
	Miami	Hard Rock Stadium	65,000	7	
	New York New Jersey	MetLife Stadium	82,500	8	
	Philadelphia	Lincoln Financial Field	69,000	6	
	San Francisco Bay Area	Levi's Stadium	71,000	6	
	Seattle	Lumen Field	69,000	6	
	Total				

Source: FIFA (2026a); Wikipedia (2026b)

Figure A - Map of the various 2026 FIFA World Cup cities and venues



Performance-based prize pool and non-performance-based distribution package

The FIFA World Cup 2026 financial framework is divided into two distinct components for teams: a *performance-based* prize pool USD 655 million (FIFA Council, 2025b) and a *non-performance-based* financial support USD 871 million team-distribution package (FIFA Council, 2026). Unlike the baseline distribution package, which guarantees equal support to all teams, the prize pool introduces a merit-based incentive structure that rewards on-field performance and competitive achievement.

Performance-Based Prize Pool

The USD 655 million Performance-Based Prize Pool, approved by the FIFA Council on December 17, 2025, is entirely performance-based and distributed according to sporting results among the 48 participating teams (FIFA Council, 2025b). Payments increase as teams advance through the competition, from USD 9 million for group-stage exits to USD 50 million for the tournament champion. The 2026 prize money is “an almost 50% increase compared to the previous edition” (FIFA Council, 2025b). The allocation is presented in Table 5.

Table 5 - Prize money to teams for 2026 World Cup (US\$)

<i>Place</i>	<i>Team #</i>	<i>Per team</i>	<i>Total</i>
Champions	1	\$50,000,000	\$50,000,000
Runners-up	1	\$33,000,000	\$33,000,000
Third place	1	\$29,000,000	\$29,000,000
Fourth place	1	\$27,000,000	\$27,000,000
Quarter-finals (5th-8th)	4	\$19,000,000	\$76,000,000
Round of 16 (9th-16th)	8	\$15,000,000	\$120,000,000
Round of 32 (17th-32nd)	16	\$11,000,000	\$176,000,000
Group stage (33rd-48th))	16	\$9,000,000	\$144,000,000
Total	48		\$655,000,000

Source: FIFA Council (2025b)

Non-performance-based Team Distribution Package

In contrast, the USD 871 million Team Distribution Package consists of non-performance-based financial support provided equally to all 48 participating associations in the 2026 FIFA World Cup. This package includes preparation funding, participation (qualification) payments, and a range of operational subsidies such as accommodation, domestic transportation, training-site access, insurance, and administrative support. The purpose of this package is to ensure that all federations, especially those with limited financial capacity, can meet the logistical and operational demands of the expanded tournament. By standardizing these baseline contributions, FIFA aims to promote financial parity and reduces disparities in resources among participating nations.

The FIFA documentation reviewed does not provide a full breakdown of the components of the Team Distribution Package for the 2026 World Cup; however, Table 6 includes partial details.

According to the FIFA Council’s April 28, 2026 media release (FIFA Council, 2026):

“Given the commercial success of FIFA’s flagship men’s tournament, the FIFA Council agreed to increase the resources to be distributed to all 48 participating teams by a further 15%, totalling USD 871 million. The increased pot will be broken down as follows:

- Preparation money: increase from USD 1.5 million to USD 2.5 million
- Qualification money: increase from USD 9 million to USD 10 million
- Additional team contributions: subsidies for team delegation costs and increased team ticketing allocations totalling over USD 16 million”

Additionally, under the “Club Benefits Programme” (CBP), FIFA will compensate football clubs when players are called up for international duty for all players present at the World Cup. FIFA has set aside a total fund of \$355 million USD to distribute to clubs around the world for the 2026 cycle (Ewing, 2025).

Table 6 – Components of Team Distribution Package for 2026 World Cup (US\$)

<i>Components</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Per team</i>	<i>Total</i>
Preparation Funding	Covers training camps, travel, logistics	\$2.5M	\$120,000,000
Participation / Qualification Funding	Paid upon qualification	\$10M	\$480,000,000
Delegation & Operational Subsidies	Accommodation, domestic transport, training sites		?
Other Team Services & Support	Insurance, admin support, ticketing allocations		?
Total			\$871,000,000

Source: FIFA Council (2026)

Tickets

FIFA tickets follow a high-demand, limited-supply system: fans submit a demand during the lottery phases, then compete in first-come, first-served sales for remaining seats. Prices shift widely by match, category, and location, ranging from affordable group-stage options to premium packages costing far more. Securing tickets usually comes down to timing, flexibility, and luck.

Tickets supply, process and demand

Fans around the world can purchase ticket(s) during the FIFA World Cup 2026™ sales phases, all of which are or will be available exclusively at FIFA.com/tickets. (VancouverFWC26, 2026b) FIFA offers several ticket products, including Single Match Tickets, Venue-Specific Ticket packages, and Team-Specific Tickets for fans following one nation through the group stage.

The ticket supply for the FIFA World Cup 2026 is organized through several official channels, each intended to manage exceptionally high global demand and ensure secure, verified access to matches. FIFA releases tickets in multiple sales phases rather than all at once, allowing availability to be distributed over time and across different fan groups. The official avenues for obtaining tickets are: A) General-public sales (A.1) Visa Presale Draw, A.2) Early Ticket Draw, A.3) Random selection draw, A.4) PMA Supporters, A.5) PMA Late Qualifier Supporter, A.6) Last-Minute Sales Phase, A.7) FIFA Resale/Exchange Marketplace), B) Official Hospitality Programme, and C) Qatar Airways travel packages.

A) General-public sales on FIFA.com/tickets

General-public tickets are released in phases. Nearly two million tickets were purchased during the early phases alone, reflecting unprecedented demand. After the final draw, fans can apply for single-match tickets, supporter tickets for specific national teams, or various ticket categories. Ticket categories may vary depending on the sales phase. For example, some ticket categories may not be available in all sales phases due to availability.

A.1) Visa Presale Draw (10 - 19 September 2025) (FIFA Support, 2026c,d)

The Visa Presale Draw is the first sales phase and was for individuals with a valid, unexpired Visa debit card, credit card, or reloadable prepaid card enabled with 3D Secure. Following a random selection process, FIFA Ticketing will begin notifying applicants via email whether they have been successful in the Visa Presale Draw no earlier than 29 September 2025.

If they are successful, clients will be informed of a specific date and time slot during which they can purchase tickets (subject to availability). Additionally, successful entrants may receive a notification up to 48 hours before their designated time, with time slots starting from 1 October. If successful, it is strongly recommended that they complete their purchase as soon as their designated date and time slot opens, as tickets are sold on a first-come, first-served basis and are subject to availability.

A.2) Early Ticket Draw (27 - 31 October 2025) (FIFA Support, 2026e,f)

The Early Ticket Draw is the second sales phase, and it is open to any individual interested in purchasing tickets. To be an eligible person for the draw, the applicant must have a FIFA ticketing account, be the cardholder (primary or secondary) in good standing of a valid, unexpired debit card, credit card, or reloadable prepaid card that satisfies all the eligibility requirements. During the Early Ticket Draw, a maximum of four tickets per household for each match, and no more than 40 tickets in total for the entire FIFA World Cup may be purchased.

A.3) Random selection draw (11 Dec 2025 – 13 Jan 2026) (FIFA Support, 2026g,h,i)

The Random Selection Draw is the third sales phase and was open to anyone interested in applying to purchase tickets. The phase operates as a draw-based ticket allocation process. During the application phase, a person will need to choose which match(es), category(ies) and number of ticket(s) they wish to apply for, subject to terms and conditions.

As part of the application, they will need to submit their payment card details. Following the draw, FIFA will allocate tickets to applicants; they may be successful, partially successful, or unsuccessful. If they are successful or partially successful, FIFA Ticketing will inform them by email of the tickets allocated. The payment card provided in the application will be automatically charged for those tickets. Please note that FIFA Ticketing will charge the card, and applicants will not have the option to choose whether to purchase the allocated tickets after being informed of their successful or partially successful application.

A.4) PMA Supporters (11 Dec 2025 – 13 Jan 2026) (FIFA Support, 2026j,k)

A Participating Member Association (PMA) Supporter is a fan who meets the eligibility criteria established by the relevant PMA and/or applies for purchases Supporter and/or Conditional Supporter Tickets allocated specifically to that PMA. A PMA is also known as a national team competing in the tournament.

During this phase, fans will be able to submit applications for specific matches once the group-stage matchups have been revealed. Each PMA sets its own criteria for fans to be recognized as PMA Supporters and establishes its own process for obtaining tickets through its sales methods.

“The ticket products available for Participating Member Association (PMA) supporters, subject to applicable terms and conditions, are as follows:

- *Supporter Ticket(s)* are available for all three group stage matches that the selected PMA will play (these tickets are not considered conditional).
- *Conditional Supporter Ticket(s)* are available for all six types of knockout stage matches (round of 32, round of 16, quarter-final, semi-final, bronze final and Final) that the selected PMA may play (provided they qualify for the knockout stage matches, as these tickets are considered conditional).” (FIFA Support, 2026l).

Fans taking advantage of the Conditional Supporter Ticket(s) for the knockout stage had to prepay the entire set through to the final with refunds available at the conclusion of the tournament for games that country was not involved in less a refund fee per ticket as seen in Table 7.

Table 7 – Refund fees based on country of residence

<i>Residency</i>	<i>Fee</i>
Residents of Canada	\$15 CAD
Residents of Mexico	\$200 MXN
Residents of the United States	\$10 USD
Residents of other countries (outside Canada, Mexico and the USA)	\$10 USD

Source: FIFA Support (2026s)

A.5) PMA Late Qualifier Supporter (1- 21 April 2026) (FIFA Support, 2026m,n)

The PMA Late Qualifiers are DR Congo, Iraq, Sweden, Türkiye, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Czechia. Fans of these PMAs are considered Late Qualifier Supporters, and each PMA sets its own criteria for fans to be recognized as such and communicates its guidelines directly to them.

Additionally, the methods for purchasing PMA Late Qualifier Supporter tickets were determined by each PMA in accordance with the following sales methods:

- *Access Code*: In this sales method, PMAs distributed access codes to their fan base, which could be used when purchasing tickets on FIFA.com/tickets.
- *Fan Of*: In this sales method, PMAs allowed fans to select their specific/preferred team when purchasing tickets on FIFA.com/tickets.

The ticket products available are similar to the Participating Member Association (PMA) supporters.

A.6) Last-Minute Sales Phase (1 April – 19 July 2026) (FIFA Support, 2026o,p)

The Last-Minute Sales Phase is the fourth (and final) sales phase and fans will be able to purchase any remaining inventory. Additional tickets continue to be released during the Last-Minute Sales Phase. This sales phase is open to anyone interested in purchasing tickets. Tickets are offered on a first-come, first-served basis, and purchases are processed as real-time transactions, subject to availability. All successfully purchased tickets are confirmed immediately to the ticket purchaser via email. During the purchasing process, clients will need to choose the matches, seat locations and number of tickets they wish to purchase.

A.7) FIFA Resale/Exchange Marketplace (2 Oct 2025 -...) (FIFA Support, 2026q,r)

FIFA operates an official Resale/Exchange Marketplace, allowing fans who can no longer attend to resell their tickets securely. This protects buyers from invalid or unauthorized resale. The FIFA Resale Marketplace is available to Canadian, American and international residents, while the FIFA Exchange Marketplace (*Mercado de Intercambio de la FIFA*) is intended for residents of Mexico. This initiative is designed to protect you from invalid or unauthorized resale/exchange and is subject to federal and local regulations, as well as the applicable terms and conditions.

Residents of Mexico may list tickets on the FIFA Exchange Marketplace only at the original price paid to FIFA Ticketing (including applicable taxes and fees), or for less. Others may select the price they are asking. The price on the marketplace also includes a FIFA 15% resale fee.

B) Official Hospitality Programme

Fans seeking a more exclusive matchday experience can choose official hospitality packages that include match tickets along with premium seating, private suites or shared lounges, high-quality food and drinks, entertainment, concierge support, and faster entry into the stadium. Each package is designed to reflect the unique character of the 16 Host Cities. The FIFA Official Hospitality Programme brings all these elements together, offering a range of options—from VIP lounges to private suites—suited for individuals, groups, and corporate guests. Fans can select single-match packages, venue-specific series, “Follow My Team” options, or multi-match bundles, giving them flexible ways to enjoy the World Cup across Canada, Mexico, and the United States. (FIFA, 2025a,c)

The firm On Location is the only official source for FIFA World Cup™ Hospitality, In Canada, the approved Sales Agents are CF Montréal, Maple Leafs Sports & Entertainment, Toronto Host Committee, Vancouver Whitecaps and Overseas Network.

C) Qatar Airways travel packages

“The FIFA World Cup 26™ ticket-inclusive travel programme was designed to provide football fans with a seamless and elevated tournament experience. As an official airline partner, Qatar Airways Holidays offered curated, all-inclusive travel packages that combined international flights, accommodation, ground transfers and official match tickets. Guests could choose between Gold and Silver package options, each thoughtfully curated to provide distinct levels of comfort, accommodation and match access.” It has ended. (Qatar Airways, 2026a,b)

Options (Qatar Airways, 2026b):

Gold travel package

“offers Category 1 match tickets and luxury hotel accommodation”

Silver travel package

“offers Category 2 match tickets and premium hotel accommodation”

Four travel packages were offered, namely: Follow My Team, Knockout Series, Final Round Series, and Single Match Package.

“The exclusive *Follow My Team* packages provided fans with a curated, all-inclusive journey across host cities during the FIFA World Cup 2026™ Group Stage. Each package featured confirmed itineraries, accommodation, travel arrangements and official match tickets.” (Qatar Airways, 2026b)

Knockout Series packages were offered to fans eager to experience the Round of 32 and Round of 16 matches. Two itineraries were available: the West Coast package included Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Seattle, while the East Coast package covered New York, Miami, and Atlanta. Each package included official

match tickets, accommodation, and domestic travel across these key host cities.” (Qatar Airways, 2026b)

“The *Final Round Series* gave fans the chance to attend one semi-final in either Dallas or Atlanta, followed by the FIFA World Cup 2026™ Final in New York. The package included official match tickets, hotel accommodation, domestic flights, and dedicated transfers between host cities. It offered a seamless way to experience the tournament’s iconic moments.” (Qatar Airways, 2026b)

“*Single Match Packages* allowed fans to choose individual FIFA World Cup 2026™ matches across the 16 host cities. Each package included an official match ticket, hotel accommodation, flights from selected regional airports, and ground transfers to simplify travel. These packages offered a flexible way to experience the tournament while securing tickets, travel, and accommodation in one convenient package.” (Qatar Airways, 2026b)

The demand for tickets is high with [o]ver 500 million ticket requests submitted as FIFA World Cup 2026™ Random Selection Draw application period conclude” (FIFA, 2026d). This may be “compared with fewer than 50 million combined for 2018 and 2022” (AFP, 2026 May 7). Among the top applicant countries are the hosts United States, Mexico and Canada, alongside Germany, England, Brazil, Spain, Portugal, Argentina and Colombia (FIFA, 2026d).

As of April 2026, “more than five million tickets have already been sold for this edition of the tournament” (FIFA, 2026e), while the total ticket availability is around seven million tickets (Woollard, 2026).

In the US, there are reports of lower demand for Cup tickets due to the price and other factors (Stacey, 2026). Vancouver officials have predicted as many as 350,000 fans will visit this city during the tournament. (AFP, 2026 April 29; Culbert, 2026a) Toronto is expecting at least 300,000 out-of-town visitors for the 2026 FIFA World Cup (Hwang, 2026), but Harrison (2026) mentioned 65,000 soccer fans.

Pricing Tickets

The FIFA products are available in different price categories (1–4), plus accessible seating areas for fans with disabilities. The FIFA World Cup 2026 uses a category-based ticketing system, dividing stadium seating into four main price tiers plus accessibility options.

Category 1 offers the highest-priced seats, located primarily in the lower tier and closest to the pitch.

Front Category 1 offers the highest-priced seats in Category 1, located in the first two rows of the Category 1 sections

Category 2 sits just outside Category 1 in both lower and upper tiers, providing strong views at a slightly lower price.

Front Category 2 offers the highest-priced seats in Category 2, located in the first two rows of the Category 2 sections

Category 3 includes upper-tier and behind-the-goal areas, offering more distant but still comprehensive views.

Category 4 is the most affordable option, positioned in the upper tier and available only to residents of host countries.

All stadiums also include Accessible Seating Areas for fans with disabilities or limited mobility.

Appendices A, B, and C present the seating layouts for the Toronto, Vancouver, and Los Angeles stadiums, respectively, highlighting the locations of the various ticket categories. Across these three examples, Category 4 seating appears to be limited.

In April 2026 just weeks before the start of the World Cup, FIFA introduced additional premium ticket categories called “Front Category 1” and “Front Category 2” tickets for all matches (AP News, 2026 April 13). Prior to this rollout, front row tickets were bundled into the standard categories. For example, “FIFA added seats at up to \$3,360 in front category 1 for Canada’s opener against Bosnia and Herzegovina on June 12 in Toronto” (AP News, 2026 April 13). The introduction of these exclusive front-row tickets represented a significant shift and caused additional frustration among fans who had already purchased tickets in earlier sales phases (AP News, 2026 April 13; Nixon, 2026; NY Times, 2026).

Fans that purchased tickets in the early sale phases were unhappy with seat assignments as original mappings of the various seating categories were replaced with new ones. Fans were also unhappy with FIFA not disclosing that most sideline seats in Category 1 would not be distributed to buying fans (Bushnell, 2026). Those seats were instead blocked off for corporate partners, VIP’s, hospitality and possibly last-minute sales. Most fans reported receiving Category 1 tickets only in the upper bowl or in the corner areas of the lower bowl at all venues.

The Football Supporters Europe (FSE) filed a lawsuit over “excessive ticket prices” (AFP, 2026 May 7). Apparently per FIFA President Infantino, FIFA was “obliged to take advantage of American laws that allow tickets to be resold for thousands of dollars above face value” (AFP, 2026 May 7). “With limited availability, fans are now competing for some steep ticket prices. Canada’s opening match tickets are going for at least \$6,375 per person on the official FIFA website. Tickets for the other four Group Stage games are starting at upwards of \$3,000, while the Round of 32 game tickets start at \$4,350.” (Silva Ponte, 2026)

FIFA secretary general Mattias Grafstrom “said high ticket prices for this year’s tournament reflected ‘the reality of the market in North America’ ” AFP (2026 May 2). With the anger over the skyrocketing prices for the 2026 World Cup, “FIFA said it will review its ticketing strategy for 2030 World Cup” (AFP, 2026 May 2).

Another pathway was a Right-to-Ticket (RTT), which is an official FIFA digital collectible (digital images and video snippets) giving a right to claim an official FIFA World Cup 2026 ticket for a specific match and category indicated on the collectible (FIFA Collect, 2025b; FIFA World Cup 2026, 2026b). RTT are available exclusively on the FIFA Collect Marketplace.

The ticket pricing for games at the Toronto venue took a significant turn on April 23, 2026 when amendments of the *Ticket Sales Act* came into effect from the Ontario legislature (*Ticket Sales Act*, 2017). The act made it illegal to resell ticket for more than the original purchase price (including fees, service charges, and taxes). Tickets listed at significant markups on the FIFA resale platform as well as other secondary market platforms like StubHub and VividSeats had to be removed and repriced causing a significant market shift.

During various ticket sale phases for the 2026 World Cup, FIFA instituted dynamic pricing based on a demand-driven ticketing model (Bourne and Miller, 2025). The cost of match tickets fluctuates in real-time based on aggregate demand, remaining inventory, and market interest. Instead of having fixed face values, the algorithm raises prices when demand is high and lowers them to stimulate sales when interest dips. The system is heavily influenced by the secondary market and official fan-to-fan exchanges, pushing top-tier game prices to a premium. While prices have continued to increase on the official FIFA ticket portal, downwards pressure from the secondary market has not yet translated into lower ticket prices on the official FIFA ticket portal beyond the original sale price. The gap between the FIFA Marketplace prices and the Last-Minute Sales (original tickets) prices could suggest that FIFA is apply dynamic prices in only one direction, artificially maintaining a pricing floor equal to the original values in the Visa Presale draw window in September 2025.

Figure B illustrates how prices for the final match fluctuated on the secondary markets during the various ticket sale phases available in the FIFA Ticket Portal from the first offerings on October 1, 2025 until June 5, 2026 on the eve of the start of the tournament.

Figure B – Chart of price fluctuations on secondary market – Final match (M104)



Source: Ticketdata.com (2026)

Canada as a host

Canada previously hosted the Women's World Cup in 2015 and the FIFA U20 World Cup in 2007, but the 2026 tournament marks its first time hosting the men's FIFA World Cup. The Canadian men's team has appeared in only two World Cups so far: Mexico 1986 and Qatar 2022 (Bar-On and Reiche, 2026).

Organizing just 13 matches in Canada is expected to cost taxpayers more than a billion dollars, largely because of FIFA's extensive demands per Vancouver and Toronto projections (Schué, 2026).

Games in Canada

Table 8 presents the list of Canadian games in Toronto and Vancouver.

Table 8 – Canadian games in Toronto and Vancouver

<i>Date 2026</i>	<i>Cities</i>	<i>Team</i>	<i>Team</i>
Group stage			
June 12 (#3)	Toronto	Canada (B1)	Bosnia and Herzegovina (B2)
June 13 (#6)	Vancouver	Australia (D3)	Türkiye (D4)
June 17 (#21)	Toronto	Ghana (L3)	Panama (L4)
June 18 (#27)	Vancouver	Canada (B1)	Qatar (B3)
June 20 (#33)	Toronto	Germany (E1)	Côte d'Ivoire (E3)
June 21 (#40)	Vancouver	New Zealand (G4)	Egypt (G2)
June 23 (#46)	Toronto	Panama (L4)	Croatia (L2)
June 24 (#51)	Vancouver	Switzerland (B4)	Canada (B1)
June 26 (#64)	Vancouver	New Zealand (G4)	Belgium (G1)
June 26 (#62)	Toronto	Senegal (I2)	Iraq (I3)
Round of 32			
July 2 (#83)	Toronto	Runner-up Group K	Runner-up Group L
July 2 (#85)	Vancouver	Winner Group B	3 rd Group E/F/G/I/J
Round of 16			
July 7 (#96)	Vancouver	Winner Match #85	Winner Match #87

Source: FIFA (2026b); Wikipedia (2026b)

Toronto

Six (6) games will be held in Toronto at Exhibition Place. "BMO field had to be renamed the Toronto Stadium for the World Cup, since FIFA does not want commercial names to be used during the event." (CBC News, 2026a) The stadium will welcome teams such as Canada, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ghana, Panama, Germany, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Senegal, and Iraq.

Toronto City Council has been involved in the opportunities and decisions since 2014 (2022a,b,c). "Toronto city council approved funding for the stadium upgrades as part of

the city's World Cup hosting agreements. The total project cost was \$157.9 million, with \$132.9 million coming from the city and \$25 million from MLSE." (Carter, 2026) "The latest modifications to the stadium included a temporary expansion of 17,000 seats that increases capacity to 45,000 in total, alongside a new FIFA-regulation grass pitch, new dugout and upgraded player areas." (Carter, 2026)

"We gave them a blank cheque," Matlow [Toronto city councilor] said. "It's the worst agreement I've ever seen." (CBC News, 2026b) "In 2018, he said, the city was presented with a plan that called for spending between \$30 million to \$45 million to co-host the World Cup [...]." (CBC News, 2026b) "The price tag for the Toronto portion of the tournament is estimated at \$380 million." (Silva Ponte, 2026) "Toronto is also spending \$1.7 million in grants to sponsor about 60 community celebrations around the city during the tournament. " (Silva Ponte, 2026)

Maple Leaf Sports & Entertainment (MLSE), the company that operates the stadium, oversaw the renovation project, which cost nearly \$160 million. The upgrades include new giant screens, improved lighting, and expanded lounge and reception areas — all of which will remain in place after the World Cup (Bérubé, 2026). Some of the harsher critics even go so far as to call it the '*worst stadium*' because of the appearance of the temporary stands added to the tournament (Bérubé, 2026). With a capacity of 45,000 seats, 28,000 permanent plus an additional 17,000 temporary, the Toronto stadium is the smallest venue of the 2026 World Cup (Simon, 2026).

Vancouver

Vancouver is set to play a major role in the 2026 FIFA World Cup, hosting seven (7) matches at BC Place. The stadium will welcome teams such as Canada, Australia, Türkiye, New Zealand, Egypt, Belgium, and Switzerland, with Canada playing two of its Group B matches there.

BC Place has undergone significant upgrades ahead of the event—including improved accessibility, new hospitality spaces, enhanced technology, and the installation of a hybrid grass pitch—to ensure a world-class experience for players and fans alike. Beyond the stadium, Vancouver is preparing for a city-wide celebration. The FIFA Fan Festival Vancouver at Hastings Park will feature live match screenings, music, cultural programming, and food experiences, welcoming up to 25,000 visitors at a time.

Montréal

Even if it was in the initial plan, Montréal didn't accept the FIFA offer (De Lancer and Shué, 2026; Enquête, 2026; Schué, 2026). "It's the worst agreement I've ever seen", according to a city councillor in Toronto (Enquête, 2026). In Montréal, the initial budget being discussed was 150 million dollars, to be shared among the three levels of government, Montréal, Québec, and Ottawa. It had already risen to 300 million just three years after the country was named host. And we were potentially talking about

three matches at Montréal's Olympic Stadium. Because, as mentioned, there were ten matches allocated to Canada as a whole. Three cities had initially raised their hands: Edmonton, Montréal, and Toronto. So the matches would have been divided among them. (De Lancer and Shué, 2026, 00:9:12)

"Here are some of the conditions *Enquête* uncovered in a September 2020 report from Quebec's Tourism Ministry. For context, keep in mind that the World Cup will run from June 11 to July 19:

- No events, activity or programming would be allowed at the Olympic Stadium between April 25 and July 19, 2026.
- Fields used for the FIFA World Cup could not be used for other purposes for a period of 23 months, from September 2024 to July 2026.
- FIFA would have access to Parc Jean-Drapeau and the city's Old Port from May 22 to July 17 of this year to organize events.
- "No major sporting events" would be allowed in Montreal in the week prior to the World Cup's final game as well as the week that followed it." (CBC News, 2026b)

Major Montréal events for which the city is renowned, and which could have been affected by such restrictions, include the Canadian Grand Prix, the International Jazz Festival, the Montréal Triathlon, and the Francos de Montréal festival.

Just like Montréal, the City of Chicago also withdrew its bid as the "FIFA could not provide a basic level of certainty on some major unknowns that put our city and taxpayers at risk" (ESPN Staff, 2018).

Mexico and the United States as World Cup hosts

"Mexico has hosted two previous soccer World Cup competitions in 1970 and 1986, respectively, while the US last hosted the World Cup more than 30 years ago in 1994." Mexico is hosting 13 matches in three cities, namely Guadalajara, Mexico City and Monterrey. The United States is hosting 78 matches in eleven cities. "The tournament in the US in 1994 was the first time the men's World Cup was not hosted by a European, a South American country, or Mexico." (Bar-On and Reiche, 2026)

"Mexico will become the first country to host three World Cups (1970, 1986 and 2026) – a theme of great relevance for soccer historians. This speaks to the tremendous passion for soccer in Mexico, but also the expert negotiation skills, business acumen and political weight of Mexico in relation to FIFA." (Bar-On and Reiche, 2026, p.6) "By hosting the World Cup for a record third time, Mexico has cemented its place in FIFA's political corridors and increasingly paid attention to global sport diplomacy." (Bar-On and Reiche, 2026, p.8) Mexico has participated in all editions, except five since 1930 (Wikipedia, 2026c). "In contrast, the US has participated in 11 editions of the World Cup." (Bar-On and Reiche, 2026, p.5) First, there were appearances in 1930 and 1934, 1950, then a 40-year gap until 1990–2014, failed to qualify in 2018 before returning in 2022 (Wikipedia, 2026a,d).

Political Uncertainties

“[T]he 2026 World Cup presents a unique set of challenges as it is also the first World Cup coordinated between three sovereign states and the first World Cup consisting of 48 participating national teams, a breakthrough in making the world’s greatest sporting event more inclusive.” (Bar-On and Reiche, 2026)

“The political implications for the 2026 World Cup are related to regional cooperation and diplomacy, soft power and global image, and political dynamics in the three host countries. Regional co-operation in North America has been historically skewed towards the special relationship between the US and Canada. The relationship has been cemented by common liberal values, historical struggles against fascism and communism, common membership in NATO, shared borders, and a robust trade relationship (i.e. ‘Canada was the top destination for U.S. exports and the third-largest source of U.S. imports.’) (Bar-On and Reiche, 2026, p.7)

Political tensions surrounding the 2026 FIFA World Cup center on immigration restrictions, Middle East conflict, and growing fears of boycotts, creating an atmosphere of uncertainty around the tournament.

“Various scholars have pointed to the way sports events and the hosting of World Cups can act to enhance a country’s *soft power*, but also potentially undermine a country’s image. Hosting the World Cup is a powerful form of soft power, allowing the North American host nations to project a positive global image, promote democratic values (especially in contrast to more authoritarian hosts) and assert global leadership in sport diplomacy.” (Bar-On and Reiche, 2026, p.8)

Situation in the United States

“The US increasingly understands the power of global soccer. It hosted the 1994 World Cup and will jointly host the 2026 World Cup with its two neighbours. The World Cup will allow the US to cement its relationship with FIFA as a marker of sport diplomacy, capture the imagination of millions of soccer fans, and project a positive global image. The US will use 11 venues in all corners of the country and thus give opportunities for tourists to visit cities as diverse as Seattle, Miami, New York, Houston, and Kansas City. Some fans might stay away because they would prefer to visit the US before or after the World Cup [...].

High crime rates (particularly gun related murder) and increasing restrictions at the borders and deportations are other issues that tourists might consider. After the 2021 Capitol riots and the controversial pardons under the Trump administration, as well as multiple convictions against the US president, people both in the US and abroad will look at the way the US handles the high volume of soccer fans from around the world. In terms of the US’s image, given the US bombing of Iran’s nuclear facility in 2025, the US-Israeli attacks against Iran in 2026 and the fact Iran has qualified for the 2026 World

Cup, it will be important to see how Iranian players and fans are treated by US authorities and how, in general, the travel ban on 19 countries, issued by the Trump administration in June 2025,³⁴ will affect players, officials and fans from the affected countries.” (Bar-On and Reiche, 2026, p.8-9)

“Domestic political actors may use the tournament to garner public support, channel nationalism and boost electoral prospects. Those domestic political actors include civil society actors in the three countries, which are concerned with the lack of transparency in FIFA, human rights issues, immigration policies, or the spending of host countries and host cities on a global soccer tournament as opposed to assisting indigenous communities, fighting poverty, investing in public schools, medicare or public housing, labour standards, or environmental initiatives.

However, issues like immigration policies, border tensions, or illegal drugs could become politically sensitive during the games, particularly between the US and Mexico. Increasingly, there are also tensions between the US and Canada due to the US’s application of tariffs against Canada, intervention in Canada’s recent federal elections, and Trump’s declaration that Canada would be better off as the 51st US state.” (Bar-On and Reiche, 2026, p.9) Trade wars, threats to annex Greenland, Trump administration’s immigration policies (Woollard, 2026).

Tensions in the United States under Trump

With the excessive personality of Donald Trump and the main role of the United States, the 2026 FIFA World Cup is submerged by several uncertainties. A notable example often cited to illustrate the unusually close relationship between FIFA and Donald Trump is FIFA president Gianni Infantino’s decision to award Trump a “Peace Award”.

“In a Trumpian era when ‘resurgent nationalism’ prevails, including tariffs against allies and enemies alike (e.g. US tariffs against Canada and Mexico), the ‘North American World Cup’ acts as a hopeful unifying moment. However, it should be pointed out that the decision to jointly host the World Cup precedes Trump’s second tenure as president. The United 2026 FIFA World Cup bid was first proposed in 2016 and unveiled in 2017. It was selected to host the World Cup at the FIFA Congress in Moscow in 2018 after defeating Morocco’s bid. While initially all three North American countries wanted to submit separate bids to host the World Cup, they ultimately settled on a joint North American bid. Together the three North American countries had a great combined track record of hosting 14 FIFA events.” (Bar-On and Reiche, 2026, p.7-8)

American immigration policies have drawn global criticism because several qualifying nations face bans or heavy entry restrictions, raising the possibility that teams and their supporters may struggle to participate or require special permissions. The White House’s expanding and continually shifting travel ban has halted immigrant-visa processing indefinitely for seventy-five countries as of January 21, 2026 (Ferragamo, 2026; U.S. Department of State, 2026). Nearly half of the countries set to compete in

the 2026 World Cup fall under some form of restriction: two face a full ban, two are subject to partial limits, and eighteen have had their visa issuance temporarily paused (see Table 9). Germany has even raised the possibility of a boycott in response, drawing parallels to the politically charged Olympic disputes of the Cold War era.

Table 9 - Countries affected by a full travel ban or partial / visa restrictions in the US

<i>Teams / Countries</i>	<i>Banned</i>	<i>Partially Restricted</i>	<i>Pause on visa issuance</i>
Algeria			Pause on visa issuance
Bosnia and Herzegovina			Pause on visa issuance
Brazil			Pause on visa issuance
Cape Verde			Pause on visa issuance
Columbia			Pause on visa issuance
DR Congo		Suspended	Pause on visa issuance
Egypt			Pause on visa issuance
Ghana			Pause on visa issuance
Haiti	Banned		Pause on visa issuance
Iran	Banned		Pause on visa issuance
Iraq			Pause on visa issuance
Côte d'Ivoire		Partially Restricted	Pause on visa issuance
Jordan			Pause on visa issuance
Morocco			Pause on visa issuance
Senegal		Partially Restricted	Pause on visa issuance
Tunisia			Pause on visa issuance
Uruguay			Pause on visa issuance
Uzbekistan			Pause on visa issuance

Source: Ferragamo (2026); U.S. Department of State (2026); U.S. Embassy in the Democratic Republic of Congo (2026)

FIFA has indicated for their own protection a note regarding visa / entry permit.

“Please note that a FIFA World Cup 2026™ match ticket does not guarantee the issuance of a visa or entry permit to Canada, Mexico, or the United States, nor does it guarantee admission to these countries. Visa processing is handled independently by the immigration authorities of each host country. FIFA World Cup 2026™ ticket purchasers are responsible for complying with all applicable entry requirements. No refunds will be provided for unused tickets due to visa denial, entry refusal, or travel document issues.” (FIFA Support, 2026f)

Together, these tensions show how the 2026 World Cup has become a focal point for debates over security, diplomacy, and human rights, revealing that global sport cannot be separated from the political realities in which it unfolds.

Iran team

Doubt has risen over the Iranian team's attendance at the World Cup because of the Middle East war. Geopolitical instability has further intensified concerns. A major war involving the United States, Israel, and Iran has sparked discussions within football governance circles about symbolic boycotts or even contingency replacements should a qualified team withdraw. Although such scenarios remain speculative, they highlight how deeply the tournament is entangled with global conflict. FIFA president Gianni Infantino says that "Iran's matches will be played where they are supposed to be, according to the draw" (Banet, 2026).

Due to the bombing of Iran by the United States, Iranian players are in Türkiye for their training camp and after they will be based in Arizona (Balaban, 2026 19 May). Despite Trump parsing problematic presidential posts (for example, "I really don't believe it is appropriate that they be there, for their own life and safety"), Arizona will open their arms to the Iranian "Team Melli" (Fonsegrives, 2026). "U.S. officials have insisted Iran is welcome at the tournament, while the FIFA organizers have rejected Iranian suggestions that their games be moved to co-hosts Mexico or Canada." (Balaban, 2026 19 May)

"U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio said any problems would not be with Iranian players but 'some of the other people (they) would want to bring with them,' suggesting some may have ties to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, which Washington has branded a terrorist organization." (Balaban, 2026 19 May). The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps is also considered a terrorist organization by Canada and several other governments (Balaban, 2026 19 May).

On May 23, 2026, Iran confirmed they will relocate their planned base camp from Tucson, Arizona to Tijuana, Mexico to ensure potential visa issues will not hamper team preparations for the World Cup (AP, 2026 May 23). Players and staff will still require visas to enter the United States but the shorter duration of their stay would fall under a different entry category.

Ebola Outbreak

In response to the May 2026 Ebola disease outbreak in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and increasing risks in Uganda and South Sudan, the Government of Canada in coordination with American and Mexican governing agencies took decisive action by introducing temporary border measures to reduce the risk of the virus entering and spreading within Canada. The Government of Canada suspended immigration documents for residents of countries that have a high or very high risk of outbreak of Ebola disease for the next 90 days beginning at midnight May 28, 2026 (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2026). Additional measures are expected where Canadian citizens, permanent residents and foreign nationals who have visited these areas and do not have symptoms will have to quarantine for 21 days upon arrival in Canada.

Human rights issues

Human rights issues add to another layer of political strain (Widiyantari, Nababan, Santosa and Santosa, 2025). Reports highlight abusive immigration enforcement in U.S. host cities, threats to press freedom, and discriminatory policies that could endanger journalists, fans, and immigrant communities. These conditions challenge FIFA's promise of a human rights-centered tournament and risk defining the event through exclusion rather than unity. "Concerns among supporters have intensified amid continuing ICE operations targeting undocumented migrants." (AFP, 2026 April 25)

A coalition of "[m]ore than 120 rights groups, including the American Civil Liberties Union, issued a travel advisory this week warning that visitors to the World Cup could face 'serious rights violations' as a result of the American government's immigration policies" (AFP, 2026 April 25). "The advisory said visitors potentially face 'suppression of speech and protest and increased surveillance cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment – an even death' while detained by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement" (AFP, 2026 April 25).

"Of the several controversies that have been attributed to Qatar, the serious human rights violations against migrant workers in the process of building seven giant stadiums that would be used for the 2022 World Cup, resulting in a death toll of 65,000 people, has attracted a lot of public attention." (Widiyantari, Nababan, Santosa and Santosa, 2025, p.432).

For the first time in the tournament's history, host cities were required to meet defined sustainability and human rights standards as part of the bidding process. The City of Toronto (2021) has prepared an engagement report, a response to the template provided by FIFA for candidate host city. As part of a university research partnership in Toronto, CITY (2026) "will investigate both the promised and actual impacts of FIFA 2026 before, during, and after the event". Toronto is still finalizing their plan a couple of days/weeks before the start of the event. FWC26 (2024), which is the collective of FIFA and the 3 countries organizing committees has developed a framework as a guidance.

Vancouver responded by identifying 14 priority areas in its Action Plan that reflect the city's most pressing needs (City of Vancouver, 2026). These priorities include combating discrimination, preventing housing displacement, promoting diversity and reconciliation, addressing gender-based violence, improving sex-worker safety, supporting MMIWG2S+ responses, preventing human trafficking, ensuring rights-respecting security practices, protecting freedom of expression and assembly, enhancing accessibility, safeguarding people experiencing homelessness, promoting responsible procurement, and providing accessible grievance mechanisms (City of Vancouver, 2026; Judd, 2026).

Security

Security concerns surrounding the 2026 World Cup largely revolve around counterterrorism, crowd management and health, given the tournament's scale and global visibility (Bar-On and Reiche, 2026). With millions of fans traveling across the United States, Canada, and Mexico, the event presents an attractive target for terrorism, gun violence and cyberattacks. This requires extensive intelligence-sharing, coordinated surveillance systems, and strengthened cybersecurity infrastructure across all three host nations. As the most prominent geopolitical actor among the hosts, the United States is expected to be especially alert to threats linked to global conflict zones as well as potential domestic extremist activity. It's important to confirm evolving security information with trusted official sources. Amid episode of violence in parts of Mexico, tensions have escalated in the host city of Guadalajara following the army's killing of Nemesio "El Mencho" Oseguera, leader of the Jalisco New Generation Cartel (CJNG), a criminal organization responsible for extensive harm and violence (AFP, 2026 February 26).

Managing crowds and policing across 16 venues in three countries over an expanded match schedule adds another layer of complexity (Alexander, 2025). Local police forces, national security agencies, and international partners must coordinate closely to maintain safety while still respecting civil liberties—an issue that matters deeply to the public in all three countries. At the same time, FIFA, host governments, and corporate sponsors have strong incentives to protect their reputation by ensuring smooth fan experiences, which means investing in robust but responsible security measures. Advanced technologies, including drones and other monitoring tools, are likely to play a growing role in both threat detection and crowd management (Alexander, 2025). "Mexico said it would deploy nearly 100,000 security personnel to protect fans at the World Cup in three host soccer cities, one of which, Guadalajara, has been plagued by cartel violence." (AFP, 2026 March 10)

Health security planning for the 2026 FIFA World Cup must address the strain the tournament will place on Toronto's already pressured emergency departments, which are likely to face sharp surges in demand. Large crowds and festival-style fan activity increase the risk of substance misuse, injuries, heat-related illness, and potential mass-casualty incidents, while international travel raises concerns about infectious-disease transmission (Hwang, 2026; Murti, 2025). Ensuring preparedness will require coordinated surge-capacity planning, rapid triage systems, real-time public-health surveillance, and strong links between hospitals, paramedic services, and event organizers to manage risks effectively and maintain continuity of care.

Economic Impact

“During the World Cup, billions of people from around the world focus their attention on the host nation. The incentives to host the World Cup are both monetary and non-monetary; many of which are outside the standard economical evaluations.

Hosting the World Cup guarantees the host nation a spot in participating in the event. This along with the unity and nationalism synonymous with hosting the event, unite the host nation in a way no other event could. The national pride achieved through hosting the World Cup can produce a much greater benefit to the host nation than any other benefit. In addition to the national unity, if the World Cups is planned properly and responsibly can result in immediate short-term boost to the nation’s economy, as well as, significant long-term benefit for the host nation. The largest incentive is not money, but rather, it is the international prestige bestowed upon it by the world community.” (Becker, 2013, p.8)

“FIFA president Gianni Infantino is confidently predicting a commercial bonanza from the tournament, which is expected to generate record revenues of \$11 billion, comfortably eclipsing the \$7 billion earned through the 2022 tournament in Qatar.” (Woollard, 2026) FIFA is probably overstating the tournament’s impact by claiming that the 2026 World Cup will be equivalent to “104 Super Bowls” (Woollard, 2026).

Evaluating economic impact is a complex and time-consuming process, as illustrated by studies of Qatar 2022 (Bibolov, Miyajima, Rehman and Yuan, 2024), Germany 2006 (Ahlert and Preuss, 2010), and South Korea and Japan 2002 (Lee and Taylor, 2005).

Economic activity will be particularly interesting for tourism, hospitality, transportation, and retail sectors (Trevino, 2026). “The 2026 FIFA World Cup will likely attract over 5.5 million spectators to the host cities, with billions more anticipated to tune in to the global broadcasts, while the economic impact is expected to range from \$5 billion to \$6 billion across the host nations.” (Bar-On and Reiche, 2026, p.9)

In the months leading up to the World Cup, FIFA released 70-80% of their initial hotel bookings in host cities. This is a normal process in the context of the World Cup, however the magnitude of it across all host cities points to FIFA overstating the overall demand and interest in the tournament host cities. During the period between June 11 and July 19, 2026, that works out to be about 15,000 nightly room cancellations in Vancouver alone (CBC News, 2026c).

Globally, the tournament is projected to create 823,474 FTE jobs, with Canada leading in jobs per match at approximately 1,850 positions per game. Together, these figures underscore the World Cup’s role as a powerful economic catalyst across North America and beyond. (Ernesto, 2025) While the US relies mostly on existing stadiums, all three countries are investing in transportation, stadium upgrades, and public services that create both temporary and long-term jobs.

Economic impact in Canada

Canada alone is estimated to gain up to CAD 3.8 billion in economic output (Davidson, 2024; FIFA, 2024). Canada will also experience a significant economic boost, with the tournament expected to contribute CAD 2 billion to national GDP. The country benefits from a strong multiplier effect: every dollar spent on preparations or by visitors is estimated to add CAD 1.09 to GDP. Employment impacts with the creation or preservation of jobs are similarly notable, with 24,100 FTE jobs projected nationwide from 2023 to 2026. British Columbia anticipates more than 13,700 jobs due to Vancouver's seven matches, while Ontario expects over 8,700 jobs tied to Toronto's six games. Canadian workers are projected to gain CAD 1.3 billion in labor income, supporting local businesses and strengthening regional economies. (Davidson, 2024; Ernesto, 2025)

Hosting the tournament is projected to deliver a major and enduring economic boost to the GTA, with an estimated \$940 million in total economic output that will continue to benefit the region long after the event concludes (Toronto World Cup 26, 2026). This growth extends beyond tourism alone: the local job market is expected to expand across sectors such as hospitality, trades, and event services, generating new jobs and creating broad opportunities for workers and businesses throughout the region.

"The Soccer For All Legacy Program is raising money for mini pitches in priority neighbourhoods across Toronto. Fostering our city's inherent love for soccer for the next generation." (Toronto World Cup 26, 2026)

Economic impact in Mexico

Mexico is also positioned for substantial benefits, with estimates ranging from \$3–7 billion in economic impact fueled by tourism, stadium upgrades, and urban development (Ernesto, 2025; Özgür Töre, 2026). Mexico's economic contribution is part of the broader global impact, which is projected to reach \$40.9 billion in additional GDP worldwide. Sectors such as wholesale and retail (\$2.6 billion) and real estate (\$2.3 billion) are expected to see meaningful gains across advanced and developing economies. (Ernesto, 2025)

Economic impact in the United States

"Estimates suggest that the US alone could benefit by \$5–10 billion in economic impact." (Bar-On and Reiche, 2026, p.10) In the United States, the 2026 World Cup is expected to deliver a substantial economic lift (GoalEconomy, 2025), with the largest gains, with expected gross output of \$30.5 billion and projections estimating \$17.2 billion in added GDP. Key industries such as accommodation and food services (\$2.4 billion), real estate (\$1.95 billion), and wholesale and retail trade (\$1.5 billion) are positioned to benefit the most. (Ernesto, 2025)

This economic activity will also translate into major employment gains, with an estimated 184,679 full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs created across sectors including accommodation (31,660 FTEs), air transport (20,055 FTEs), and technical services (17,097 FTEs). Labor income is projected to rise by \$10.2 billion, circulating through local economies and supporting consumer spending. As always, it's wise to confirm evolving economic projections with trusted sources. (Ernesto, 2025)

Volunteers

FIFA relies on tens of thousands of volunteers to manage tournament logistics, fan experience, and daily operations across its major competitions. The global volunteer community numbers in the millions. For the 2026 FIFA World Cup, more than 50,000 individuals are supporting tournament delivery across North America. For FIFA World Cup 2026, the Canadian host cities of Toronto and Vancouver recruited a combined 6,000 volunteers from a nationwide applicant pool exceeding 387,000, with around 248,000 for Toronto (FIFA World Cup 26 Volunteer Centre, 2025).

Recruitment followed a structured, multi-stage selection process. Applications were accepted during the summer of 2025, after which the field was substantially narrowed. Approximately 10% of candidates were subsequently invited to participate in Volunteer Team Tryouts at the Humber Polytechnic's Lakeshore Campus in November 2025. Successful candidates then advanced to a final matching stage, where applicants were assigned to volunteer roles based on their availability and tournament requirements.

Tourism and travel

The 2026 FIFA World Cup is expected to generate a major economic boost across Canada, Mexico and the United States, with increased tourism. Millions of fans are expected to spend heavily on lodging, transportation, food, and entertainment, contributing billions across host cities. A group "were flabbergasted at how expensive the tickets are and how much people are seemingly paying for them" (Charlebois, 2026)

An expert specialized in hospitality management says: "My hunch is the World Cup will be a huge success as a sporting tournament. On TV, the stadiums will appear full or almost full—but that's not necessarily the same thing as a tourism success" (Rowan Kelleher, 2026).

Whether traveling by air, sea, or land to Canada, Mexico, or the United States, a participant must have: (1) a valid (unexpired) passport and (2) a valid (unexpired) visa, travel authorization (e.g. eTA (Electronic Travel Authorization) for Canada, or ESTA (Electronic System for Travel Authorization) for USA, if eligible for visa waiver travel), or visa exception (if eligible). Conscious of the visa issue, FIFA (2026f) has introduced a FIFA Pass. "The FIFA PASS is a voluntary, opt-in process that allows FIFA World Cup 2026™ ticket holders travelling to the United States the opportunity to obtain an expedited visa interview, if needed." (FIFA, 2026f)

An estimated 350,000 spectators are expected to pass through downtown Vancouver across the seven match days, supported by expanded transit services and dedicated spectator routes designed to keep the city moving smoothly. These events highlight Vancouver's reputation as an inclusive, vibrant host city blending urban energy with natural beauty. "Mexico's drug violence, crime and human rights record might deter some fans from visiting the country." (Bar-On and Reiche, 2026, p.8)

For transportation with a city, some US cities have outrageous commuter fares, such as the special fare of \$100 by New Jersey Transit compared to the regular \$12.90 fare for a round-trip train ride from Manhattan's Penn Station to the MetLife Stadium in East Rutherford or the special fare of \$80 by the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority compared to the usual event-day price of \$20 for a round-trip ride from Boston to the Gillette Stadium in Foxborough would cost \$80 (AFP, 2026 April 16; Engineer, 2026).

Hospitality

The Toronto fan zone will be located at the Fort York National Historic Site and The Bentway, while Vancouver's fan zone will be held on the historic grounds of the Pacific National Exhibition (PNE) at Hastings Park (Laroye, 2026).

The FIFA 2026 World Cup is set to generate an unprecedented surge in hospitality demand across host cities, transforming the sector into a focal point of global attention. Hotels, short-term rentals, and luxury accommodations are already preparing for record-breaking occupancy levels as millions of fans, teams, media, and corporate partners converge on North America. Beyond lodging, the hospitality industry is gearing up to deliver elevated guest experiences, from enhanced food and beverage offerings to culturally tailored services and large-scale event hosting. With extended stays, premium travel packages, and high-spending international visitors, the World Cup represents a rare opportunity for hospitality operators to showcase world-class service while capturing significant economic gains. The tournament's scale will not only test operational capacity but also set new benchmarks for service excellence and destination appeal.

However, not all hotels in cities hosting games see a bump in the room reservations during the World Cup period (Miller and Clark, 2026). "[T]he level of visitor demand is not what many anticipated" (Hett, 2026). Hotels say World Cup economic boon isn't materializing (Rowan Kelleher, 2026). Hotel room rates will be higher than the regular rates. "Cost of accommodation also likely pricing some visitors out [...]" (Charlebois, 2026)

Toronto will experience one of the highest hospitality impacts among host cities, driven by matches at BMO Field. Hotels, restaurants, and entertainment districts are preparing for heavy visitor traffic and strong international demand. With its multicultural appeal and extensive tourism infrastructure, Toronto is positioned to become a central hub of World Cup activity and economic benefit.

Vancouver is set to see a major spike in hospitality demand during the FIFA 2026 World Cup. Hotels and short-term rentals are expected to fill quickly as international fans seek both match access and the city's signature tourism experiences. Local operators are preparing to scale services, expand event programming, and showcase Vancouver as a premier global host. Demand for accommodation in Vancouver has surged, reaching levels comparable to the 2010 Winter Olympics and the recent influx driven by Taylor Swift's concert (Laroye, 2026). "Destination Vancouver says June hotel bookings in the city are down 20 per cent this year when compared with the same time in 2025. However, it said in a statement that it remains hopeful they will fill up closer to kickoff." (Charlebois, 2026)

Financial Constraints

"Hosting the World Cup is a lucrative deal for many nations. A great long-term financial incentive is attached for nations hosting the event. Because of the large amount of money surrounding the World Cup, it would behoove FIFA to have strict and transparent standards in the bidding procedures. Unfortunately, under the current FIFA rules, such transparency is non-existent." (Becker, 2013, p.7) What we discovered through message exchanges is that FIFA requires complete confidentiality regarding its content, its requests, its demands, and its contracts. (De Lancer and Shué, 2026, 00:05:23)

The 13 FIFA World Cup matches that will take place on Canadian soil are expected to cost at least \$1 billion in taxpayer money (Enquête, 2026). "Based on the most recent information, PBO estimates total government support to co-host the 2026 FIFA Men's World Cup to be \$1,066 million, of which federal support will be \$473 million, with the remainder of \$593 million funded by other levels of government. Because Canada will be hosting 13 games, the estimated cost per game is \$82 million. This amount is aligned to past public spending to host World Cup events." (Cabral and Vrhovsek, 2026, p.1) Table 10 presents the total planned spending for the 2026 FIFA Men's World Cup and Table 11 presents a provisional breakdown of federal support by department and purpose.

The city of Toronto signed the worst deal that I've ever seen a city make when it signed on to the FIFA games without having any idea whether it would be able to pay to put on the games in the first place. It was reckless and irresponsible to sign on to an agreement having no idea how much the federal or provincial governments were going to contribute. And remember, this city doesn't have a sales tax like other cities in North America do. (De Lancer and Shué, 2026, 00:06:22)

In Toronto, at the beginning, the estimate was between 30 and 45 million dollars to host six matches. In the end, because of stadium renovations and all of FIFA's requests, the bill climbed to potentially more than 380 million, so from 30 to 380 (City of Toronto, 2026). In Vancouver, the cost went from about 260 million to more than 600 million dollars. So it's a considerable increase for seven matches. And still, no major matches, no quarter-final, no semi-final, no final. (De Lancer and Shué, 2026, 00:13:13)

Table 10 - Total planned spending for the 2026 FIFA Men's World Cup

<i>Item</i>	<i>Federal support (including SEU allocations)</i>	<i>Other levels of Government (net)</i>	<i>Total cost (millions of dollars)</i>
Toronto – budgeted hosting cost	149.3	230.6	380.0
Vancouver – budgeted hosting cost	215.7	362.3	578.0
Preparation for FIFA Men's World Cup (Canada Soccer)	3.6		3.6
Budget 2025	100.0		100.0
Public Safety Canada (internal reallocation)	3.6		3.6
Spring Economic Update - Invest in Canada	1.0		1.0
Total	473.2	593.0	1,066.1

Source: Cabral and Vrhovsek (2026, p.2 - Table 1) based on City of Toronto, Government of British Columbia, Finance Canada, Canadian Heritage, Public Safety Canada, Parliamentary Budget Office
 Note: "Totals may not add due to rounding. SEU = Spring Economic Update. The midpoint of upper- and lower-bound estimates are used for all Government of British Columbia figures. Funds under Preparation for FIFA Men's World Cup (Canada Soccer)" were spent in the 2018-19 and 2019-20 fiscal years. Of the funds under "Public Safety Canada (internal reallocation)", \$3.1 million was spent between 2022-23 and January 2026. Of the remaining federal funding \$46.0 million was spent in 2024-25 with the rest being spent between 2025-26 and 2027-28."

Table 11 - Provisional breakdown of federal support by department and purpose

<i>Department</i>	<i>Purpose</i>	<i>Total cost (millions of dollars)</i>
Canadian Heritage	Transfers to other levels of government – support event delivery costs (operations and infrastructure)	220.0
Public Safety Canada	Transfers to other levels of government – support security activities	145.0
Royal Canadian Mounted Police	Security costs	79.0
Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada	Visitor visas	6.4
Canadian Heritage – Budget 2025	Multiple uses	5.8
Canada Border Security Agency	Border security	4.3
Canadian Heritage	Preparation for FIFA Men's World Cup	3.6
Public Safety Canada – internal reallocation	Multiple uses	3.6
Canadian Air Transport Security Authority	Security screening	3.4
Canadian Food Inspection Agency	Border food safety	1.2
Invest In Canada	Investment promotion	1.0
Total		473.2

Source: Cabral and Vrhovsek (2026, p.4 - Table 2)

FIFA Entities

A few FIFA's subsidiaries are specifically related to FIFA 2026 World Cup. Table 12 presents three service companies as FIFA's subsidiaries as at 31 December 2025.

Table 12 - FIFA's subsidiaries related to FIFA 2026 World Cup

<i>Name of organization</i>	<i>Location of incorporation</i>	<i>Activity</i>	<i>Ownership Interest 2025</i>	<i>Ownership Interest 2024</i>
FWC2026 US, Inc.	Wilmington, USA	Service company	100%	100%
FWC26 Canada Football Ltd.	Victoria, Canada	Service company	100%	100%
FWC2026 Mexico, S. de R.L. de C.V.	Mexico City, Mexico	Service company	100%	100%

Source: FIFA (2025d)

Ecological Challenges

The FIFA World Cup 2026 presents significant ecological challenges, largely due to the scale of travel, construction, and energy use associated with hosting matches across multiple North American cities. Air travel is expected to be the largest contributor to the tournament's carbon footprint, as millions of fans, teams, and officials move between widely dispersed venues. Stadium operations, temporary event infrastructure, and increased demand for food, water, and waste management will further strain local ecosystems. The tournament will also take place during the peak North American summer, raising concerns about extreme temperatures, increased cooling demands, and additional strain on local energy systems. These pressures raise concerns about emissions, resource consumption, and the long-term environmental impact on host communities.

At the same time, the tournament has prompted heightened scrutiny and expectations around sustainability. Host cities are being pushed to adopt greener practices, such as renewable energy use, low-emission transportation options, improved waste diversion, and environmentally responsible procurement. Transit-only lanes on some streets, road closures, shuttle bus, empty trains waiting after games, ridesharing, parking restrictions, and encouraging visitors to walk or bike to the games are examples of potential traffic solutions (Arcadis, 2026; Harrison, 2026). While these measures can help mitigate impacts, the ecological footprint of a mega-event of this scale remains substantial. The 2026 World Cup may test whether large-scale sporting events can meaningfully balance global excitement with genuine environmental responsibility.

Social Pressures

The FIFA World Cup 2026 is expected to bring major social pressures to host cities across North America, particularly around housing, affordability, and community displacement. Large-scale tourism and short-term rental demand often drive temporary spikes in accommodation prices, intensifying existing housing shortages and disproportionately affecting low-income residents. Cities are also preparing for increased strain on public services, including transit, policing, and social support systems, as they work to balance visitor needs with the well-being of local communities. Local communities have also voiced concerns about widening social inequalities and the pressure mega-events place on vulnerable groups, even as many hope the tournament will inspire youth through increased access to sport, global visibility, and community-driven programming.

Beyond housing and infrastructure, the tournament raises broader social concerns related to equity, safety, and human rights. Issues such as discrimination, labour protections, gender-based violence, and the treatment of vulnerable populations, including people experiencing homelessness, migrant workers, and sex workers, remain central to public debate. Host cities are under pressure to ensure that security practices respect civil liberties and that the event's benefits are shared equitably rather than

reinforcing existing inequalities. The World Cup will ultimately test whether mega-events can be delivered in a way that strengthens, rather than strains, the social fabric of host communities.

Cultural Opportunities

The FIFA World Cup 2026 will serve as a major cultural crossroads for North America, bringing together fans, traditions, and identities from around the world. With matches spread across Canada, the United States, and Mexico, the tournament will highlight the region's multicultural character and create opportunities for cultural exchange on an unprecedented scale. Host cities are preparing to showcase local arts, music, food, and Indigenous cultures, using the global spotlight to celebrate their unique identities while welcoming diverse international communities.

Beyond celebration, the World Cup is expected to spark deeper conversations about cultural representation, inclusion, and belonging. The event offers a platform to elevate underrepresented voices, promote cross-cultural understanding, and inspire youth through sport and community engagement. At the same time, it challenges host cities to ensure that cultural programming is authentic, respectful, and accessible to all residents, not just visitors. In this way, the 2026 tournament becomes not only a sporting spectacle but also a catalyst for cultural connection and reflection across North America.

“Home advantage allows Canada to potentially demonstrate its soccer progress. Its two victories against Mexico in World Cup qualifying for the 2022 World Cup were watershed moments in the history of soccer in the country. The 2026 World Cup will be an opportunity for Canada to underscore the safe, orderly, friendly, tolerant and multicultural nature of the country. It could also inspire young generations of Canadians towards promising soccer careers in North America or abroad. Hosting will also provide a chance for Canadians to deal with a more difficult past: the treatment of its indigenous peoples. In addition, Canadians will also be concerned with the environmental legacy, gender and racial equality practices, children's rights and human rights, and hosting costs (Here it is instructive to point to the spiraling costs and debt associated with hosting the 1976 Olympics in Montreal), and balancing security and civil liberties. By hosting the women's World Cup in 2015 and in 2026 the men's World Cup, Canada, is emerging as a more significant player in global sport and diplomacy.” (Bar-On and Reiche, 2026, p.8)

“The ‘cultural’ dimension here must be seen broadly to include the performance and styles of play of various national teams, the culture of fandom, the culture and ethics of the sport, the artistry and aesthetics of soccer, soccer as a ‘pagan religion’, the leadership dimensions of soccer, and the philosophy and meaning of life people attach to the game.” (Bar-On and Reiche, 2026, p.10)

“Soccer can simultaneously unite and divide cultures, nations and peoples. It unites through promoting racial and gender equality in soccer-related jobs or teams, or divides through national soccer matches between ‘enemies’ or historical rivals. It upholds the status quo, but also destabilizes existing power relations.” (Bar-On and Reiche, 2026, p.10)

Changing the game of football

To better appeal to the North American market, FIFA is implementing a list of changes for the betterment of the game at the World Cup and beyond:

- Every match at the 2026 World Cup, including those played at indoor venues, will include a water break midway through each half, around the 23-minute mark. Each break will last three minutes. This is particularly relevant given the heat concerns at several host venues, and broadcast networks are expected to use the time for additional advertising.
- A 10-second substitution rule is being introduced, designed to speed up the process and reduce time-wasting during player changes. Players taking longer than 10 seconds to leave the field will see their replacement miss at least 60 seconds of game action, only entering the game at the first stoppage in play beyond those 60 seconds.
- FIFA referees will take a more proactive approach to preventing teams from gathering around coaches while a player receives treatment, with instructions to ensure injury breaks are used solely for medical purposes and not as opportunities for tactical discussions.
- Video Assistant Referee - VAR's scope is being expanded beyond its original mandate of reviewing goals, potential red cards, and penalties. IFAB (International Football Association Board) has approved three new situations where VAR can intervene: clearly incorrect second yellow cards, cases of mistaken identity on yellow and red cards, and incorrectly awarded corner kicks.
- The World Cup final will have a Superbowl like half time show, expanding the break from the normal 15 minutes to over 25 minutes.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the FIFA World Cup 2026 represents far more than a global sporting event. It is a transformative moment for host cities across North America. The tournament brings significant opportunities for economic growth, cultural expression, and international visibility, while also introducing complex challenges tied to sustainability, social equity, and community well-being. How countries and cities navigate these pressures, balancing visitor demand with local needs, and short-term excitement with long-term responsibility, will shape the event's true legacy.

Ultimately, the World Cup offers an opportunity, though not a guarantee to demonstrate that mega-events can be delivered in ways that strengthen communities rather than strain them. By prioritizing inclusive planning, responsible resource management, and meaningful engagement with residents, host cities can ensure the benefits extend well beyond the final whistle. The success of the 2026 tournament will be measured not only by the matches played, but by the lasting economic, financial, ecological, social, cultural impact it leaves behind.

“As the monetary and non-monetary benefits of hosting the World Cup increase, the risk of corruption and bribery will also continue to increase.” (Becker, 2013, p.9) Several controversies surrounding the 2026 FIFA World Cup highlight political tensions, human rights concerns, and logistical challenges that risk overshadowing the tournament. Major issues include uncertainty over Iran's participation due to security fears amid regional conflict, soaring ticket and travel costs that have angered fans, and widespread criticism of the United States' immigration enforcement practices, which have raised concerns about the safety of journalists, immigrant communities, and international supporters.

Further controversies involve extreme heat conditions affecting player welfare, travel bans that complicate attendance for fans from several qualified nations, and disputes over host city stability as political pressure threatens venue changes. Together, these issues illustrate how the 2026 World Cup is unfolding in a climate of fear, exclusion, and escalating public frustration, making it a critical case study for examining the intersection of global sport, politics, and human rights.

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

François Brouard, DBA, FCPA, FCA is a Full professor in the Sprott School of Business, Carleton University, founding director of the Sprott Centre for Social Enterprises / Centre Sprott pour les entreprises sociales (SCSE/CSES), director of the Professional Accounting Research Group (PARG) and co-director of Philab Ontario. francois.brouard@carleton.ca

Adrian Movileanu is a referee, player and lifelong football enthusiast whose analytical approach combined with years of meticulous planning, research, and logistics preparation has him ready to attend his fourth World Cup this summer. adrian@soccerinfo365.com

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Research notes on FIFA (June 2026)

PARG #2026-70RN, *FIFA - An examination of governance*

PARG #2026-71RN, *FIFA - An examination of finances*

PARG #2026-72RN, *2026 Men's FIFA World Cup - An examination of a major event*

Note: FIFA maintains trademark protection (™) over the names of all its events and products.

Appendix A – Toronto Stadium – Location of various categories of tickets


TORONTO STADIUM

Category 1	●
Category 2	●
Category 3	●
Category 4	●
Accessible Seating Area	



Appendix B – Vancouver Stadium – Location of various categories of tickets

VANCOUVER STADIUM

Category 1	
Category 2	
Category 3	
Category 4	
Alcohol-Free Area	
Accessible Seating Area	



Appendix C – Los Angeles Stadium – Location of various categories of tickets

LOS ANGELES STADIUM

Category 1	
Category 2	
Category 3	
Category 4	
Accessible Seating Area	

