

History of the FIFA World Cup Preliminary Competition (by year)

Recap FIFA World Cup™ 1930 World Cup Preliminary Competition

YEAR
1930

No preliminary competition played, 13 participants qualified without playing

Background FIFA World Cup™ 1930 World Cup Preliminary Competition

The great resonance of the Olympic Football Tournaments in 1924 and 1928 intensified FIFA's wish for its own World Championship. FIFA President Jules Rimet was the driving force in the search for the means to realise this dream. Following a proposal of the Executive Committee, the FIFA Congress in Amsterdam on 28 May 1928 decided to stage an official FIFA World Championship: the World Cup was born.

One year later Uruguay, twice Olympic Champion, planning the celebration of its 100th anniversary of independence in 1930, was assigned the organisation of the first FIFA World Cup. FIFA's decision to hold the first World Cup in Uruguay did not meet universal acclaim, as Europe was in the midst of an economic crisis. Participation in a World Cup taking place overseas involved a long sea journey.

Moreover, for some clubs it meant having to go without their best players for two months - a problem that is still topical today. The organisation of the first World Cup looked rather different from today's tournament - with no qualifying competition the 13 teams entered by invitation and the final draw was not made until the teams arrived in Uruguay.

Finalists FIFA World Cup™ 1930: 13

Argentina	Belgium	Bolivia	Brazil
Chile	France	Mexico	Paraguay
Peru	Romania	United States	Uruguay (H)
Yugoslavia			

Legend

(H) Host country

History of the FIFA World Cup Preliminary Competition (by year)

Recap FIFA World Cup™ 1934 World Cup Preliminary Competition

YEAR	TEAM ENTRIES	DID NOT PLAY	QUALIFIED*	TEAMS PLAYED°	MATCHES	GOALS	Ø
1934	32	5	0	27	27	141	5.22

*Qualified ex officio: defending champions Uruguay declined to participate, hosts Italy also had to qualify
°16 teams qualifying by preliminary competition

Background FIFA World Cup™ 1934 World Cup Preliminary Competition

The inaugural World Cup had been so successful that the entry for the second was rather more encouraging. Thus, this became the first FIFA World Cup with a preliminary round, needed because thirty-two teams wanted to play in Italy, and FIFA organised a qualifying competition to reduce the field to sixteen.

Uruguay, the titleholders were still sulking about the poor European entry in 1930 and Bolivia and Paraguay were missing too. This meant that Argentina and Brazil were through to the final round in Italy without having to play qualifying matches.

Some of the matches to decide who would represent Europe were very hard fought. Even Italy, who under later rules would automatically have qualified as the host country, had to play off against Greece and defeated them 4-0 in the San Siro Stadium. They were spared the trouble of making a trip to Athens for the return match - Greece withdrew from the competition, discouraged after that heavy loss. Austria and Hungary were two of Europe's strongest nations at that time and they were drawn together in the same group; they both managed to qualify without having to play against each other, at the expense of Bulgaria. The team from the Irish Free State (known as Ireland Republic since 1937) were edged out by Belgium on the grounds of their poorer goal difference - just one goal in it.

The USA, who had submitted their entry too late, first had a play-off against Central American qualifiers Mexico in Rome, before going into the first round ... and a 7-1 defeat by Italy.

Facts & Figures FIFA World Cup™ 1934 World Cup Preliminary Competition

An unusual last-minute qualifier took place just days before the World Cup kicked off in the Stadio Nazionale in Rome, in which the USA and Mexico battled for the right to represent that part of America, with the USA winning 4-2 and securing the final place in the tournament.

In another decisive game, Yugoslavia needed only to draw against Romania but lost the match 2-1 after hitting the woodwork eight times in their efforts to score.

Stanley Rous, later FIFA President, refereed a 1934 qualifying match between Belgium and the Netherlands, which ended 4-2 for the Netherlands - Belgium just managed to qualify.

History of the FIFA World Cup Preliminary Competition (by year)

Entries FIFA World Cup™ 1934 World Cup Preliminary Competition

- **Europe 21:** Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Irish Free State, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Yugoslavia

- **South America 4:** Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Peru

- *Withdrawal:* Chile and Peru

- *Qualified without playing:* Argentina, Brazil

- **North and Central America 4:** Cuba, Haiti, Mexico, USA

- **Africa and Asia 3:** Egypt, Palestine (British mandate), Turkey

- *Withdrawal:* Turkey

No. of teams participating for the first time in the Preliminary Competition: all, i.e. 27

Remarks:

- Only six of the teams qualifying for the final competition - Argentina, Belgium, Brazil, France, Romania, and the USA - had already attended the World Cup in 1930.
- The Irish Free State has been called Éire (Ireland Republic) since 29.12.1937.
- The modern Palestine, an Arab state, has no connection with the Jewish delegation from Palestine (at the time a British mandate).
- Argentina and Brazil qualified for the final competition without having to contest any preliminary matches since they were the sole representatives from the South American region following Chile and Peru's withdrawals.
- Czechoslovakia split up into the Czech Republic and Slovakia in 1993. After the split, the politically separated countries still fielded a joint team, the RCS (Representation of Czechs and Slovaks), for the 1994 remaining qualifying matches. First entered separately as Czech Republic and Slovakia in 1998.
- Greece withdrew after playing one match, Poland after two matches.

Finalists FIFA World Cup™ 1934: 16

Argentina (N)	<i>AUSTRIA</i>	Belgium	Brazil (N)
<i>CZECHOSLOVAKIA</i>	<i>EGYPT</i>	France	<i>GERMANY</i>
<i>HUNGARY</i>	<i>ITALY (H)</i>	<i>NETHERLANDS</i>	Romania
<i>SPAIN</i>	<i>SWEDEN</i>	<i>SWITZERLAND</i>	United States

Legend

NEWCOMERS TO FINALS in upper case italics

(H) Host country

(N) did not play in qualifiers

History of the FIFA World Cup Preliminary Competition (by year)

Recap FIFA World Cup™ 1938 World Cup Preliminary Competition

YEAR	TEAM ENTRIES	DID NOT PLAY	QUALIFIED*	TEAMS PLAYED°	MATCHES	GOALS	Ø
1938	37	14	2	21	22	96	4.36

*Qualified ex officio: defending champions Italy and hosts France

°13 teams qualifying by preliminary competition

Background FIFA World Cup™ 1938 World Cup Preliminary Competition

With all the pioneering work that had been done for the FIFA World Cup by Jules Rimet, Henri Delauney, and Robert Guérin, it was no great surprise that the 1938 venue chosen was France, which - the same as 60 years later - did the event proud with new or at least modernised stadiums. The number of teams entering the competition was only slightly greater than the total four years earlier, easily understandable in view of the threatening political situation.

For the first time the title holders and the host country were given automatic qualification and escaped the preliminary round. But the teams that made it to France did not include all the world's best. Among the noticeable absentees were Argentina, winners of the Copa America 1937 and one of the strongest teams at that time. They were unhappy about having been passed over for hosting the competition and in addition were having differences of opinion with the Brazilian association CBF, against whose team they would have had to play in the qualifying round.

The draw was made by the grandson of the French President of FIFA, Jules Rimet, in Paris, with Sweden receiving a bye and Germany (who had co-opted several of the Austrian stars), France, Italy, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Cuba, and the sole South American representatives, Brazil, being seeded.

Following a play-off match against Latvia, Austria had officially qualified for the final round but because of the Anschluss in April 1938 did not feel that they could attend. Their place was offered to England, who in the so-called "Battle of Highbury" in 1934, had defeated reigning world champions Italy. But England did not accept FIFA's offer and it would not be until 1950 in Brazil that they would make their first appearance.

Facts & Figures FIFA World Cup™ 1938 World Cup Preliminary Competition

Despite the letter that FIFA received in 1938 claiming that Austria "no longer existed", several of the annexed state's stars took the field for Germany. Their best player, Matthias Sindelar, had been invited to join but had refused. Some time later it was announced that he had committed suicide.

France's national team, bolstered by the raised standard of championship football played at that time due to an influx of foreign stars, had a clean 10-game run under their belt going into the FIFA World Cup.

Confidence was high in France, stadiums were refurbished, and two new stadiums were built in Bordeaux and Marseille. A glimmer of light despite the dark clouds looming on the horizon.

History of the FIFA World Cup Preliminary Competition (by year)

Entries FIFA World Cup™ 1938 World Cup Preliminary Competition

- **Europe 24+2** : Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Irish Free State, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Yugoslavia + Egypt, Palestine (British mandate)
 - *Withdrawal*: Egypt
 - *Qualified without playing*: Romania
 - *Entry not accepted*: Spain
- **South America 2** : Argentina, Brazil
 - *Withdrawal*: Argentina
 - *Qualified without playing*: Brazil
- **North and Central America 5+2** : Costa Rica, Cuba, El Salvador, Mexico, USA + Colombia, Dutch Guyana.
 - *Withdrawal*: Colombia, Costa Rica, Dutch Guyana, El Salvador, Mexico, USA
 - *Qualified without playing*: Cuba
- **Asia 2** : Dutch East Indies, Japan
 - *Withdrawal*: Japan
 - *Qualified without playing*: Dutch East Indies

No. of teams participating for the first time in the Preliminary Competition: 3

Finland, Latvia, Norway

Remarks:

- Spain's entry was not accepted due to the political circumstances which made it unlikely that they would be able to play all their matches.
- Austria had disappeared as a political entity after qualifying and its place in the finals was offered to England, who had again disdained entering; but the English once more rejected the invitation.
- The Dutch East Indies (today's Indonesia, which has been independent since 1945) were the only Asian representative after Japan - locked in war with China - had pulled out. FIFA pitted the Dutch East Indies against the USA in a pre-finals play-off but this time the Americans, victorious against Mexico under similar circumstances in 1934, declined. Thus, the Dutch East Indies qualified without playing a single qualifying game.
- The Irish Free State has been called Éire (Ireland Republic) since 29.12.1937.
- The modern Palestine, an Arab state, has no connection with the Jewish delegation from Palestine (at the time a British mandate).
- The representatives from Asia (Dutch East Indies), South America (Brazil), and North and Central America (Cuba), all qualified without playing in the qualifying matches due to the withdrawal of other group participants.
- Similarly, Romania went through as winners of the Group 4 pool without contesting any matches as opponents Egypt withdrew.
- Czechoslovakia split up into the Czech Republic and Slovakia in 1993. After the split, the politically separated countries still fielded a joint team, the RCS (Representation of Czechs and Slovaks), for the 1994 remaining qualifying matches. First entered separately as Czech Republic and Slovakia in 1998.
- Dutch Guyana has been called Suriname since 1975.

History of the FIFA World Cup Preliminary Competition (by year)

Finalists FIFA World Cup™ 1938: 15

Belgium	Brazil (N)	CUBA (N)	Czechoslovakia
<i>DUTCH EAST INDIES (N)</i>	France (H)	Germany	Hungary
Italy (C)	Netherlands	<i>NORWAY</i>	<i>POLAND</i>
Romania (N)	Sweden	Switzerland	

Legend

NEWCOMERS TO FINALS in upper case italics

(N) did not play in qualifiers

(C) Defending champions, qualified automatically

(H) Host country, qualified automatically

History of the FIFA World Cup Preliminary Competition (by year)

Recap FIFA World Cup™ 1950 World Cup Preliminary Competition

YEAR	TEAM ENTRIES	DID NOT PLAY	QUALIFIED*	TEAMS PLAYED ^o	MATCHES	GOALS	Ø
1950	34	13	2	19	26	121	4.65

*Qualified ex officio: defending champions Italy and hosts Brazil
^o14 teams qualifying by preliminary competition

Background FIFA World Cup™ 1950 World Cup Preliminary Competition

After the turbulent events of the Second World War and the difficult years for international sport that followed, football managed to get back on its feet fairly quickly. As early as 1946 a FIFA Congress was held in Luxembourg, one of the items on the agenda being to select the host country for the 1950 World Cup.

Brazil were assigned the task of organising the 1950 competition for the World Cup trophy, now to be called the Jules Rimet Cup in honour of the long-serving French President of FIFA. South America as a whole had not been greatly affected by the Second World War and in fact, from a football point of view, had experienced a boom. Argentina especially had been the team of the 40s, winning the Copa America four times. But their decline had already begun with their stars moving to Colombia and Mexico in search of greater rewards, and their association were again denied the World Cup as it went this time to their great rivals Brazil.

The Brazilian Association had begun campaigning back in 1947 against the knock-out format and so two years later a preliminary round began, from which more and more associations withdrew yet again - including Argentina. For political reasons the East European countries did not even enter, which deprived the competition right away of some of the potentially strongest teams, - Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, Hungary. Title-holder Italy however did enter, despite the air disaster of Superga in 1949 in which the entire AC Turin team were killed, a number of whom were national team players. Understandably, the weakened Italian national team travelled to Brazil by ship.

Facts & Figures FIFA World Cup™ 1950 World Cup Preliminary Competition

Yugoslavia and France met each other in a breathtaking play-off, matching each other inch for inch until Yugoslav Cajkovski fired home his team's decisive goal in 114'. France were out, but were invited to join later following Turkey and Scotland's decision to withdraw. Initially accepting, France reversed their decision a month later claiming that travel distances between venues were too long.

Controversy surrounded Carl Erik Palmer's second goal in Sweden's 3-1 triumph over Ireland Republic. Hearing a whistle, the Irish defenders halted their pursuit of the 19-year old Swede, who scored anyway. He was right to play beyond the whistle, which had, it emerged, emanated from the crowd. The goal stood, Palmer completed his hat trick and Sweden were through to their third FIFA World Cup final competition.

Scotland qualified, but had previously decided they would only participate if they came top of their group. England's 1-0 victory over their northern neighbours led Scotland to withdraw their entry for the FIFA World Cup.

History of the FIFA World Cup Preliminary Competition (by year)

Entries FIFA World Cup™ 1950 World Cup Preliminary Competition

- **Europe and Near East 17+2** Austria, Belgium, England, Finland, France, Ireland Republic, Italy, Luxembourg, Northern Ireland, Portugal, Scotland, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Wales, Yugoslavia + Israel, Syria.
- *Withdrawals:* Austria and Belgium

- **South America 8** Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay
- *Withdrawals:* Argentina, Ecuador and Peru
- *Qualified without playing:* Bolivia, Chile, Paraguay, Uruguay

- **North and Central America 3** Cuba, Mexico, USA

- **Asia 4** Burma, India, Indonesia, Philippines
- *Withdrawals:* All four teams

No. of teams participating for the first time in the Preliminary Competition: 7

England, Israel, Northern Ireland, Scotland, Syria, Turkey, Wales

Remarks:

- Turkey had already entered 1934, but withdrawn again without playing a match. This time they withdrew after qualifying.
- Scotland, too, qualified but withdrew as they failed to top their group, losing the decisive match 0-1 to England.
- France and Portugal were invited to take the place of Scotland and Turkey but both declined.
- Ireland Republic had already played in the 1934/38 qualifiers, then still under the name "Irish Free State".
- Syria withdrew after playing one match.
- The first Jewish national team, and as such the forerunner of Israel was the delegation from Palestine (at the time a British mandate) which had played the qualifiers of 1934/38.
- Indonesia, Burma (later known as Myanmar) and Philippines all withdrew, allowing India through to the finals where they were drawn to meet Italy, Sweden and Paraguay. But following a FIFA ruling against barefoot players they withdrew.
- Argentina, Ecuador and Peru withdrew without playing a match.
- Bolivia, Chile, Paraguay, and Uruguay reached the FIFA World Cup final competition without having to play the qualifiers. They did play two matches but these were not classified as official World Cup qualifiers.

Finalists FIFA World Cup™ 1950: 13

Bolivia (N)	Brazil (H)	Chile (N)	<i>ENGLAND</i>
Italy (C)	Mexico	Paraguay (N)	Spain
Sweden	Switzerland	Uruguay (N)	United States
Yugoslavia			

Legend

NEWCOMERS TO FINALS in upper case italics

(N) did not play in qualifiers

(C) Defending champions, qualified automatically

(H) Host country, qualified automatically

History of the FIFA World Cup Preliminary Competition (by year)

Recap FIFA World Cup™ 1954 World Cup Preliminary Competition

YEAR	TEAM ENTRIES	DID NOT PLAY	QUALIFIED*	TEAMS PLAYED°	MATCHES	GOALS	Ø
1954	45	10	2	33	57	208	3.65

*Qualified ex officio: defending champions Uruguay and hosts Switzerland
°14 teams qualifying by preliminary competition

Background FIFA World Cup™ 1954 World Cup Preliminary Competition

For the qualifying round of the fifth FIFA World Cup, which had been assigned to Switzerland back in 1946, 45 national associations entered teams, of whom ten eventually did not play. Of the Eastern European countries, the Soviet Union again did not participate, this time for a sporting reason, namely their disappointing showing at the Olympic Football tournament in 1952. Egypt, the only applicant from Africa, had to face Italy directly for their place, a task that proved well beyond them.

Once again the British contingent of four teams were all there, with places in the World Cup for the top two. Again England finished ahead of Scotland, but this time the Scots did not turn down the opportunity. Hungary did not have to play their qualifying games, since Poland withdrew, but they had shown their strength emphatically, defeating England twice within six months, 6-3 at Wembley and then topping that with 7-1 in Budapest. Definitely the team of the moment.

Back in the FIFA family, both Germany FR and Japan took part in the preliminary round. The Germans' successful route saw them eliminate Norway and also the Saar Territory, for a short period an independent state. Japan played against Korea Republic, which was in the throes of civil war, and were eliminated. For the first time there was a preliminary round in South America too, even though Argentina yet again declined to participate. Brazil were clear winners and accompanied the automatically-qualified reigning World Cup champions Uruguay on the latter's first trip to Europe.

Facts & Figures FIFA World Cup™ 1954 World Cup Preliminary Competition

A fated draw: on 17 March 1954, unseeded Turkey played seeded Spain in Rome to decide which team would go through. With one win apiece up until then, this was the conclusive match. A draw at full-time was resolved by a 14-year-old Roman boy called Luigi Franco Gemma. Luigi, his eyes blindfolded, drew Turkey from the lots, creating the first sensation of the tournament as Spain went out...

In the 57 preliminary matches there were 208 goals, bringing the average below four for the first time (surprising in view of the fact that the final round this time would see the most prolific scoring of all World Cups. France's tally of 20 goals in four matches and Austria's 9-1 win over Portugal were the highlights in this respect.)

Incredibly, thanks to some very fortuitous circumstances for the Seleçao, Brazil were not obliged to earn their World Cup slot through the qualifiers until 1954!

History of the FIFA World Cup Preliminary Competition (by year)

Entries FIFA World Cup™ 1954 World Cup Preliminary Competition

- **Europe and Near East 27+2** : Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, England, Finland, France, Germany FR, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland Republic, Italy, Luxembourg, Northern Ireland, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Saar, Scotland, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Wales, Yugoslavia + Egypt, Israel
 - *Withdrawal*: Poland
 - *Entry not accepted*: Iceland
 - *Qualified without playing*: Hungary
- **South America 6** : Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay
 - *Withdrawals*: Peru
 - *Entry not accepted*: Bolivia
- **North and Central America 5** : Costa Rica, Cuba, Haiti, Mexico, USA
 - *Entries not accepted*: Costa Rica, Cuba
- **Asia 5** : Chinese Taipei, India, Japan, Korea Republic, Vietnam
 - *Withdrawals*: Chinese Taipei
 - *Entries not accepted*: Vietnam, India

No. of teams participating for the first time in the Preliminary Competition: 6

Brazil, Chile, Japan, Paraguay, Saar, Korea Republic

Remarks:

- Brazil, Chile and Paraguay had attended the World Cup in 1930, when there were no qualifying games, and qualified by default (opponents withdrew) for the other World Cups: Brazil in 1934/38, Chile and Paraguay in 1950 when Brazil qualified as hosts.
- Japan had already entered 1938, but pulled out without playing a match.
- The Saar territory had been separated from Germany following World War II but rejoined it soon afterwards.
- Israel was re-located from Asia's group to Group 10 in Europe.
- Hot favourites Hungary reached the FIFA World Cup final competition (and indeed the 1954 Final itself) without having to play the qualifiers.
- Czechoslovakia split up into the Czech Republic and Slovakia in 1993. After the split, the politically separated countries still fielded a joint team, the RCS (Representation of Czechs and Slovaks), for the 1994 remaining qualifying matches. First entered separately as Czech Republic and Slovakia in 1998.

Finalists FIFA World Cup™ 1954: 16

Austria	Belgium	Brazil	Czechoslovakia
England	France	Germany FR	Hungary (N)
Italy	<i>KOREA REPUBLIC</i>	Mexico	<i>SCOTLAND</i>
Switzerland (H)	<i>TURKEY</i>	Uruguay (C)	<i>Yugoslavia</i>

Legend

NEWCOMERS TO FINALS in upper case italics

(N) did not play in qualifiers

(C) Defending champions, qualified automatically

(H) Host country, qualified automatically

History of the FIFA World Cup Preliminary Competition (by year)

Recap FIFA World Cup™ 1958 World Cup Preliminary Competition

YEAR	TEAM ENTRIES	DID NOT PLAY	QUALIFIED*	TEAMS PLAYED°	MATCHES	GOALS	Ø
1958	55	7	2	46	89	341	3.83

*Qualified ex officio: defending champions Germany FR and hosts Sweden

°14 teams qualifying by preliminary competition

Background FIFA World Cup™ 1958 World Cup Preliminary Competition

Although the number of member countries of FIFA had only increased slightly since the last World Cup, the number of entries for 1958 passed the 50 mark for the first time. The Soviet Union were there this time, encouraged by their win at the Olympic Football Tournament in Melbourne 1956, but drawn in a group with Poland and Finland they were forced to go to a deciding game against Poland, which they won 2-0 in front of a record 100,000 crowd in the Central Stadium in Leipzig. The events in Hungary in 1956 had led to an exodus of most of the great players of the first half of the decade, and only Hidegkuti and Bozsik remained. Yet the re-built team did qualify; despite losing in Norway they twice beat Bulgaria, the other team in the group.

For the first (and so far only) time, all four British team qualified for the final round. The major surprise here was provided by Northern Ireland who eliminated Italy thanks to a 2-1 win in the last group game in Belfast. The Welsh were able to take advantage of an unusual situation in the Africa/Asia zone, where a flood of withdrawals would have led to Israel qualifying without having played a single match. This prompted FIFA to rule that qualification without playing was not allowed, and so Israel were ordered to play against one of the teams finishing second in the other groups. The luck of the draw favoured Wales, who defeated Israel 2-0 twice early in 1958.

Continental champions Argentina at last contested the qualifying round but - as was later also the case in Sweden - they had to manage without the young stars of their 1957 Copa America team, Humberto Maschio, Angelillo and Omar Sivori, who had joined Italian clubs and were not released for the national team. But they qualified, along with Brazil and, rather surprisingly Paraguay, who over-ran Uruguay 5-0 in their home game. As in 1954, Mexico dominated the North and Central America zone and won their tickets to Sweden without dropping a point.

Facts & Figures FIFA World Cup™ 1958 World Cup Preliminary Competition

This series of qualifiers witnessed the "Battle of Belfast". Tension had been building in the press between northern Ireland and Italy and when the referee was held up in fog at London, both sides agreed that the match should go ahead, but be contested as a friendly, much to the chagrin of the Irish crowd. A rough match ensued during which the crowd invaded the pitch, attacking the Italians. Swift thinking by Northern Ireland captain Danny Blanchflower saved the situation from developing into a catastrophe when he ordered his players to escort their Italian counterparts from the field.

Several strong teams failed to reach the final competition: Spain, Italy and Uruguay lost their chance to win the 1958 title. Hungary qualified but were severely disabled in the aftermath of the October 1956 uprising.

History of the FIFA World Cup Preliminary Competition (by year)

Entries FIFA World Cup™ 1958 World Cup Preliminary Competition

- **Europe 29** Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, England, Finland, France, German DR, Germany FR, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland Republic, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Northern Ireland, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Scotland, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Soviet Union, Wales, Yugoslavia
- **South America 9** Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, Venezuela
- *Withdrawal:* Venezuela
- **North and Central America 6** Canada, Curaçao, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Mexico, USA
- **Asia/Africa 10+1** China PR, Chinese Taipei, Cyprus, Egypt, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Korea Republic, Sudan, Syria, Turkey + Israel
- *Withdrawals:* Chinese Taipei, Cyprus, Egypt and Turkey
- *Entries not accepted:* Ethiopia, Korea Rep.

No. of Teams participating for the first time in the Preliminary Competition: 17

Argentina, Bolivia, Canada, China PR, Costa Rica, Curaçao, Cyprus, Denmark, German DR, Germany FR, Guatemala, Iceland, Indonesia, Peru, Soviet Union, Sudan, Uruguay

Remarks:

- Israel's opponents had withdrawn in succession: first Turkey, then Indonesia, and finally Sudan. Since every country, except the hosts and the holders, had played at least two matches, FIFA decided that Israel would have to meet one of the runners-up which was to be determined by the lot. Wales won the draw after Belgium declined. It was the first (and so far the only) time that a country played at a World Cup final round after having been eliminated in the regular qualifiers.
- Argentina, Bolivia, Peru and Uruguay had attended the World Cup in 1930, when there was no preliminary competition. Bolivia, Peru and Uruguay had qualified for 1950 by default (opponents withdrew), and Uruguay as holders for 1954. Argentina had qualified by default for 1934, and withdrawn from 1938/50 without playing a match.
- Colombia and Costa Rica had entered the 1938 qualifiers, but withdrawn again without playing a match. Costa Rica had also entered 1954, but the entry was not accepted by FIFA.
- Indonesia had played at the World Cup in 1938 (qualified by default), then still under the name Dutch East Indies, and withdrawn from 1950 without playing a match.
- Iceland had already entered 1954 but the entry was not accepted by FIFA.
- Following World War II, Germany had been divided into the German Democratic Republic (GDR or East Germany) and the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG or West Germany).
- Curaçao is now referred to as Netherlands Antilles.
- Czechoslovakia split up into the Czech Republic and Slovakia in 1993. After the split, the politically separated countries still fielded a joint team, the RCS (Representation of Czechs and Slovaks), for the 1994 remaining qualifying matches. First entered separately as Czech Republic and Slovakia in 1998.
- Yugoslavia became Serbia and Montenegro in February 2003, and in 2006 the two became independent from each other and are now 2 separate member associations.

History of the FIFA World Cup Preliminary Competition (by year)

Finalists FIFA World Cup™ 1958: 16

Argentina	Austria	Brazil	Czechoslovakia
England	France	Germany FR (C)	Hungary
Mexico	<i>NORTHERN IRELAND</i>	Paraguay	Scotland
Sweden (H)	<i>SOVIET UNION</i>	<i>WALES</i>	Yugoslavia

Legend

NEWCOMERS TO FINALS in upper case italics

(C) Defending champions, qualified automatically

(H) Host country, qualified automatically

History of the FIFA World Cup Preliminary Competition (by year)

Recap FIFA World Cup™ 1962 World Cup Preliminary Competition

YEAR	TEAM ENTRIES	DID NOT PLAY	QUALIFIED*	TEAMS PLAYED°	MATCHES	GOALS	Ø
1962	56	5	2	49	92	325	3.53

*Qualified ex officio: defending champions Brazil and hosts Chile
°14 teams qualifying by preliminary competition

Background FIFA World Cup™ 1962 World Cup Preliminary Competition

Following two World Cups held in Europe, the principle was established for 1962 that the competition would alternate from now on between Europe and America. This remained the pattern until 1996 when the World Cup for 2002 was assigned to two Asian countries. For 1962 the number of entries was only just above the level of the last competition and, still, fewer than 100 matches were needed in the qualifying round to see which 14 teams would get through.

The two automatic qualifiers this time were both South American, holders Brazil and hosts Chile. Also from South America were Argentina, Uruguay and Colombia, who had defeated Ecuador, Bolivia and Peru respectively, over two games.

From Europe this time there would only be one British representative - England. Scotland had come close, but had lost a play-off against Czechoslovakia in Brussels. Last time's runners-up Sweden suffered the same fate in a close battle with Switzerland. Of the other big names, Soviet Union, Germany FR, Italy (strengthened with several exiled players from Argentina and Altafini from Brazil) had little trouble getting through. On the negative side there was France, winners of bronze medals in Sweden in 1958. They did not manage to overcome Bulgaria in the group games - injuries to Kopa, Fontaine and Plantoni weakening the team - and had to play a decider against the same opponent in Milan. A French own goal settled the outcome in favour of Bulgaria, who would also prove a stumbling block for the French 32 years later in the qualifiers for the FIFA World Cup USA 1994.

Of the African and Asian entries no team managed to qualify. The best teams from their preliminary round, Morocco and Korea Republic, were beaten in play-off matches by Spain and Yugoslavia. From CONCACAF, the Mexican team was again the one to qualify, despite losing their opening match against Costa Rica.

Facts & Figures FIFA World Cup™ 1962 World Cup Preliminary Competition

FIFA decided that goal average would count, a first-ever, designed to dispense with the need for tiring play-offs. As a result, a more defensive tone underpinned these games.

Sudan and Egypt tried to rearrange their qualifying games to avoid the monsoon season. FIFA did not permit this, however, and both teams withdrew.

Costa Rica's 1-0 qualifying victory over Honduras was hosted by Guatemala who withdrew after playing three games. The host's ballboys were certainly enthusiastic, throwing replacement balls onto the pitch whenever the ball left the field of play... at one stage there were three balls on the pitch simultaneously!

Luxembourg's 4-2 win over Portugal destroyed the Iberian's World Cup aspirations for 1962. They would come back for the next edition though, with 19-year-old newcomer Eusebio set to become Portugal's new firework.

History of the FIFA World Cup Preliminary Competition (by year)

Entries FIFA World Cup™ 1962 World Cup Preliminary Competition

- **Europe 27+3** Belgium, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, England, Finland, France, German DR, Germany FR, Greece, Hungary, Ireland Republic, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Northern Ireland, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Scotland, Soviet Union, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Wales, Yugoslavia + Cyprus, Ethiopia, Israel
- *Withdrawal:* Romania
- **South America 9** Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay
- **CONCACAF 8** Canada, Costa Rica, Dutch Guyana, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Netherlands Antilles, USA
- *Withdrawal:* Canada
- **Africa 6** Ghana, Morocco, Nigeria, Sudan, UAR, Tunisia
- *Withdrawal:* Sudan and UAR
- **Asia 3** Indonesia, Japan, Korea Republic
- *Withdrawal:* Indonesia

No. of Teams participating for the first time in the Preliminary Competition: 8

Dutch Guyana, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Ghana, Honduras, Morocco, Nigeria, Tunisia

Remarks:

- Ecuador had withdrawn from 1950 without playing a match.
- Ethiopia already entered 1958 but the entry was not accepted by FIFA.
- The Netherlands Antilles already played in the 1958 qualifiers, then still under the name Curaçao.
- Dutch Guyana has been called Suriname since 1975.
- In 1960, the Football Federations of Egypt and Syria had formed a joint association. Egypt entered the 1960 and 1964 Olympic Football Tournaments (as well as the 1962 and 1966 World Cup preliminary competitions) under the name of UAR (United Arab Republic).
- Czechoslovakia split up into the Czech Republic and Slovakia in 1993. After the split, the politically separated countries still fielded a joint team, the RCS (Representation of Czechs and Slovaks), for the 1994 remaining qualifying matches. First entered separately as Czech Republic and Slovakia in 1998.
- Guatemala withdrew after playing two games due to an internal dispute within the federation.
- Yugoslavia became Serbia and Montenegro in February 2003, and in 2006 the two became independent from each other and are now two separate member associations.

Finalists FIFA World Cup™ 1962: 16

Argentina	Brazil (C)	<i>BULGARIA</i>	Chile (H)
<i>COLOMBIA</i>	Czechoslovakia	England	Germany FR
Hungary	Italy	Mexico	Soviet Union
Spain	Switzerland	Uruguay	Yugoslavia

Legend

NEWCOMERS TO FINALS in upper case italics

(C) Defending champions, qualified automatically

(H) Host country, qualified automatically

History of the FIFA World Cup Preliminary Competition (by year)

Recap FIFA World Cup™ 1966 World Cup Preliminary Competition

YEAR	TEAM ENTRIES	DID NOT PLAY	QUALIFIED*	TEAMS PLAYED°	MATCHES	GOALS	Ø
1966	74	21	2	51	127	393	3.09

*Qualified ex officio: defending champions Brazil and hosts England
°14 teams qualifying by preliminary competition

Background FIFA World Cup™ 1966 World Cup Preliminary Competition

The course of world history (following the pattern of ever more de-colonialisation) was echoed clearly in the increasing number of entries for the World Cup in England, which passed the seventy mark for the first time. The number of recently independent states was the major factor behind this enlargement, which ended disappointingly from a sporting point of view. The fact that only one place was available for two entire continents led to a mass withdrawal. At the end only one applicant was left, but what a surprise they provided!

Little or nothing was known about the Korea DPR team. Three dozen players had apparently been assembled in 1962 in order to build up a strong national team in a systematic manner. They played a number of friendly matches, but little was heard about them in the West. Yet wins by 6-1 and 3-1 over Australia in the play-off matches gave a hint of how the North Koreans would perform in England.

In Europe there were a few upsets in the qualifiers; two semi-finalists from 1962 were eliminated, Czechoslovakia (Portugal won that group) and Yugoslavia (France). With a rejuvenated team, Hungary had little difficulty in overcoming the German DR and Austria. England were automatically qualified as hosts - and, as in 1962, they were the only representative from the United Kingdom.

From South America came the three most fancied teams, Argentina, Colombia and Chile, along with Brazil, of course, who were coming to defend their title. Once again Mexico were the CONCACAF representatives, sailing through their qualifying matches undefeated and bringing their long-serving goalkeeper Antonio Carbajal to his fifth World Cup.

Facts & Figures FIFA World Cup™ 1966 World Cup Preliminary Competition

Seldom failing in confidence, England had a strong sense of self-belief going into these qualifiers. With their new team manager, Alf "the General" Ramsey, England began preparations for the tournament they were to host and eventually win. Ramsey's claim that "we will win the 1966 World Cup" was a prophecy that the English team were only too happy to fulfil.

Innovations in the run-up to the 1966 World Cup included the introduction of doping controls, and a prohibition on the naturalisation of players, two issues that had had negative repercussions during the last tournament.

Several smaller nations withdrew, but the bigger nations were still very much in the game: Spain's national squad was given a boost by a rejuvenated Real Madrid, and the Germans reaped the rewards of the new Bundesliga national league, as well as the introduction of full-time professional football.

History of the FIFA World Cup Preliminary Competition (by year)

Entries FIFA World Cup™ 1966 World Cup Preliminary Competition

- **Europe 31+2** Albania, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, England, Finland, France, German DR, Germany FR, Greece, Hungary, Ireland Republic, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Northern Ireland, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Scotland, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Soviet Union, Wales, Yugoslavia + Israel, Syria
- *Withdrawal:* Syria

- **South America 10** Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, Venezuela

- **CONCACAF 10** Costa Rica, Cuba, Dutch Guyana, Guatemala, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Netherlands Antilles, Trinidad and Tobago, USA
- *Entry not accepted:* Guatemala

- **Africa/Asia/Oceania 21** Algeria, Australia, Cameroon, French Congo, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea, Korea DPR, Korea Republic, Liberia, Libya, Mali, Morocco, Nigeria, Philippines, Senegal, South Africa, Sudan, Tunisia, UAR
- *Withdrawal:* Algeria, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea, Liberia, Libya, Mali, Morocco, Nigeria, Senegal, Korea Republic, Sudan, Tunisia and UAR
- *Entries not accepted:* French Congo and the Philippines
- *Not admitted:* South Africa.

No. of Teams participating for the first time in the Preliminary Competition: 6

Albania, Australia, Jamaica, Korea DPR, Trinidad and Tobago, Venezuela

Remarks:

- South Africa was banned for violating the anti-discrimination charter. The ban remained in effect until 1992 when the newly-formed South Africa Football Association was finally accepted by FIFA. With Korea Republic also withdrawing, only two teams were left in the entire zone: Australia and Korea DPR.
- Venezuela had already entered 1958, but withdrawn again without playing a match.
- In 1960, the Football Federations of Egypt and Syria had formed a joint association. Egypt entered the 1960 and 1964 Olympic Football Tournaments (as well as the 1962 and 1966 World Cup preliminary competitions) under the name of UAR (United Arab Republic)
- Dutch Guyana has been called Suriname since 1975.
- French Congo was later referred to as Congo.
- Czechoslovakia split up into the Czech Republic and Slovakia in 1993. After the split, the politically separated countries still fielded a joint team, the RCS (Representation of Czechs and Slovaks), for the 1994 remaining qualifying matches. First entered separately as Czech Republic and Slovakia in 1998.
- Yugoslavia became Serbia and Montenegro in February 2003, and in 2006 the two became independent from each other and are now 2 separate member associations.

Finalists FIFA World Cup™ 1966: 16

Argentina	Brazil (C)	Bulgaria	Chile
England (H)	France	Germany FR	Hungary
Italy	<i>KOREA DPR</i>	Mexico	<i>PORTUGAL</i>
Soviet Union	Spain	Switzerland	Uruguay

Legend

NEWCOMERS TO FINALS in upper case italics

(C) Defending champions, qualified automatically

(H) Host country, qualified automatically

History of the FIFA World Cup Preliminary Competition (by year)

Recap FIFA World Cup™ 1970 World Cup Preliminary Competition

YEAR	TEAM ENTRIES	DID NOT PLAY	QUALIFIED*	TEAMS PLAYED°	MATCHES	GOALS	Ø
1970	75	5	2	68	172	542	3.15

*Qualified ex officio: defending champions England and hosts Mexico

°14 teams qualifying by preliminary competition

Background FIFA World Cup™ 1970 World Cup Preliminary Competition

Even though the number of entries showed no increase over 1966, the number of teams actually rose by one third! The qualifying matches for the 1970 competition encompassed the whole world for the first time, with a total of 170 matches being played involving 168 teams in every continent.

No fewer than half of the quarter-finalists from 1966 fell by the wayside in this hotly contested elimination round: Portugal found themselves in a group that would be won by Romania, along with the surprising Greek team and Switzerland, who finished last. Hungary, winners of the Olympic title in Mexico in 1968, had to go to a play-off against Czechoslovakia in Marseilles, which they lost by the wide margin of 4-1 - the first time that they had failed to reach the World Cup finals since 1950. While Korea DPR were disqualified for their refusal to play against Israel, Argentina were also eliminated, by Peru. Brazil and Uruguay made up the South American contingent.

A sad note was written into the history of the World Cup, when Honduras and El Salvador, between whom relationships had been hostile for several months, found themselves opposed to each other in a play-off match which ended in a bloody three day battle. After this regrettable incident it was El Salvador who qualified - they had played a total of ten matches.

In Africa the format started to change in the direction of its present form: knock-out matches at the start and then group games in the decisive stage. Morocco were the first African team to qualify for the World Cup finals by means of an internal African elimination round. Egypt qualified in 1934 after playing against the team representing Palestine (at the time a British mandate - Hitachduth Eretz Yisraelit Lakadur Regel).

Facts & Figures FIFA World Cup™ 1970 World Cup Preliminary Competition

Event though the number of entries showed no increase over 1966, the number of teams actually playing rose by 33 (51 for 1966, 68 four years later).

No artificial turf in those days: in Scotland's 5-0 away victory over Cyprus, the Scots played in training shoes, so hard was the surface. A downpour in the second half turned the tough, gravelly pitch into something akin to concrete. McKinnon and Stein were both replaced before full time.

Many teams were making excellent progress, notably Brazil and Peru. Brazil's start of the season coach, a complex and unconventional character called Joao Saldana, was to be replaced before the Finals by milder-mannered Zagalo. Saldana had made various claims, such as refutedly stating (with one eye on the European friendlies and qualifiers) that if the Europeans wanted a fight, he would train his men in martial arts (of which he was an expert). Saldana's undoing came when he threatened to drop Pelé.

History of the FIFA World Cup Preliminary Competition (by year)

Entries FIFA World Cup™ 1970 World Cup Preliminary Competition

- **Europe 31** Albania, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, England, Finland, France, German DR, Germany FR, Greece, Hungary, Ireland Republic, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Northern Ireland, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Scotland, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Soviet Union, Wales, Yugoslavia

- *Entry not accepted:* Albania

- **South America 10** Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, Venezuela

- **CONCACAF 14** Bermuda, Canada, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dutch Guyana, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Netherlands Antilles, Trinidad and Tobago, USA

- *Entry not accepted:* Cuba

- **Africa 13** Algeria, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea, Libya, Morocco, Nigeria, Senegal, Sudan, Tunisia, Zaire, Zambia

- Entries not accepted: Guinea and Zaire

- **Asia/Oceania 5+2** Australia, Japan, Korea DPR, Korea Republic, New Zealand + Israel, Rhodesia

- *Disqualified:* Korea DPR

No. of Teams participating for the first time in the Preliminary Competition: 8

Algeria, Bermuda, Cameroon, El Salvador, Libya, New Zealand, Rhodesia, Zambia

Remarks:

- Israel had been with Europe, but due to political issues it was becoming more difficult to place them adequately in the qualifying rounds. Thus, they were grouped with Asia/Oceania, where Korea DPR refused to meet them, even though this meant automatic disqualification. Meanwhile, Australia - who had beaten Korea Republic and Japan - had to play Rhodesia (today Zimbabwe) next. Rhodesia's entry had been accepted, but their government was not recognised, which meant that other teams could not go there, nor could other countries receive theirs. In the end, Australia met Rhodesia on neutral ground: in Mozambique. After two draws and one play-off they eliminated Rhodesia, then were beaten by Israel, who had only played New Zealand so far.
- Cameroon and Libya had already entered for 1966 but withdrawn again without playing a match. El Salvador had done so for 1938.
- Dutch Guyana has been called Suriname since 1975.
- Czechoslovakia split up into the Czech Republic and Slovakia in 1993. After the split, the politically separated countries still fielded a joint team, the RCS (Representation of Czechs and Slovaks), for the 1994 remaining qualifying matches. First entered separately as Czech Republic and Slovakia in 1998.
- Yugoslavia became Serbia and Montenegro in February 2003, and in 2006 the two became independent from each other and are now 2 separate member associations.

Finalists FIFA World Cup™ 1970: 16

Belgium	Brazil	Bulgaria	Czechoslovakia
<i>EL SALVADOR</i>	England (C)	Germany FR	Italy
<i>ISRAEL</i>	Mexico (H)	<i>MOROCCO</i>	Peru
Romania	Sweden	Soviet Union	Uruguay

Legend

NEWCOMERS TO FINALS in upper case italics

(C) Defending champions, qualified automatically

(H) Host country, qualified automatically

History of the FIFA World Cup Preliminary Competition (by year)

Recap FIFA World Cup™ 1974 World Cup Preliminary Competition

YEAR	TEAM ENTRIES	DID NOT PLAY	QUALIFIED*	TEAMS PLAYED°	MATCHES	GOALS	Ø
1974	99	7	2	90	226	620	2.74

*Qualified ex officio: defending champions Brazil and hosts Germany FR

°14 teams qualifying by preliminary competition

Background FIFA World Cup™ 1974 World Cup Preliminary Competition

The impressive statistics for the 1974 World Cup preliminary round showed 99 entries and over 200 qualifying matches for the first time, in the course of which a number of big name European teams were knocked out. The decline of Hungary continued, this time in a group which included Austria, Malta and Sweden. The Scandinavians were the team to come through after a hard-fought play-off against Austria in Gelsenkirchen.

England faced Poland in their final match at Wembley, and a draw for the visitors was enough for them to earn qualification into the final round. The performance of Poland's goalkeeper Jan Tomaszewski has entered football's book of legends. After a draw in their first play-off match against Chile, the Soviet Union refused to travel to the Chilean capital for the return fixture for political reasons, and so, in accordance with the regulations, Chile were awarded victory. The most closely-contested groups were those involving Belgium and their neighbours and great rivals the Netherlands, plus the one with Spain and Yugoslavia. Both pairs of team ended up equal on points so play-off matches were required, with Netherlands and Yugoslavia winning through.

In addition to Chile and defending champions Brazil, the representatives from South America were Argentina and double World Champions Uruguay, who edged out Colombia on goal difference. In the North and Central America zone, a sensation occurred: playing at home in Port-au-Prince, Haiti took full advantage of the moment and of Mexico's weakness, the usual CONCACAF winners having played five matches against Trinidad and Tobago, of which they lost one 4-0 and drew two others. A 1-0 win in the final match against the host country, who until that moment had not dropped a point, was of no avail. In Africa, Zaire came through a marathon of nearly fifty matches and qualified as the first sub-Saharan team for the World Cup final round. There was also a premiere in the Asia/Oceania zone. Australia played two matches against both Iran and Korea Republic, coming out on top and earning Oceania its first-ever appearance in the World Cup.

Facts & Figures FIFA World Cup™ 1974 World Cup Preliminary Competition

Bulgaria, Cyprus, Portugal and Northern Ireland made up group six. Quite who would qualify was far from certain at the outset. What was certain, was that two of the four, Portugal and N. Ireland, boasted two of last century's most prized players, Eusebio and George Best. As fate would have it, the two only ever met in one friendly, never in the qualifiers. Best returned after 10 months away from football to play a qualifier against Portugal on 14 Nov 1973, at which point Eusebio was forced to bow out through injury.

World Champions eight years previously, England failed to qualify for the 1974 tournament. Their downfall came when they underestimated the Poles at home. Faced with a home crowd of 105,000 in Katowice, they eventually conceded a 2-0 defeat, and their pole position in group five, to Poland.

For the first time in the history of the FIFA World Cup preliminary competition the average number of goals dropped below three.

History of the FIFA World Cup Preliminary Competition (by year)

Entries FIFA World Cup™ 1974 World Cup Preliminary Competition

- **Europe 33** Albania, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, England, Finland, France, German DR, Germany FR, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland Republic, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Northern Ireland, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Scotland, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Soviet Union, Wales, Yugoslavia

- **South America 10** Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, Venezuela
- *Withdrawal:* Venezuela

- **CONCACAF 14** Antigua, Canada, Costa Rica, Dutch Guyana, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Netherlands Antilles, Puerto Rico, Trinidad and Tobago, USA
- *Withdrawal:* Jamaica

- **Asia/Oceania 17 + 1** Australia, Ceylon, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Japan, Korea DPR (late entry), Korea Republic, Kuwait, Malaysia, New Zealand, Philippines, Vietnam, Syria, Thailand + Israel
- *Withdrawal:* Ceylon, India, Philippines

- **Africa 24** Algeria, Cameroon, Congo, Cote d'Ivoire, Dahomey, Egypt, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Lesotho, Madagascar, Mauritius, Morocco, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Tanzania, Togo, Tunisia, Zaire, Zambia
- *Withdrawals:* Gabon, Madagascar

No. of Teams participating for the first time in the Preliminary Competition: 23

Antigua, Ceylon, Congo, Cote d'Ivoire, Dahomey, Guinea, Hong Kong, Iran, Iraq, Kenya, Kuwait, Lesotho, Malaysia, Malta, Mauritius, Puerto Rico, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Vietnam, Tanzania, Thailand, Togo, Zaire

Remarks:

- The Soviet Union was disqualified for refusing to play the return leg of the play-off against Chile for political reasons.
- India withdrew in March of 1973 and the Philippines in April of 1973. Korea DPR was admitted in place of India in March of 1973, almost two years after the official closing date for application.
- Guinea and Senegal had already entered 1966 but withdrawn again without playing a match. Congo had entered 1966, then still as the French Congo, but the entry was not accepted by FIFA. Nor were entries by Guinea and Zaire for 1970.
- Dahomey is now called Benin.
- Ceylon is now called Sri Lanka. Zaire changed its name to Democratic Republic of Congo (Congo DR) in 1997. Dutch Guyana has been called Suriname since 1975.
- Nigeria dropped out of the competition when the association was dissolved after losing in the third round against Ghana.
- Czechoslovakia split up into the Czech Republic and Slovakia in 1993. After the split, the politically separated countries still fielded a joint team, the RCS (Representation of Czechs and Slovaks), for the 1994 remaining qualifying matches. First entered separately as Czech Republic and Slovakia in 1998.
- Yugoslavia became Serbia and Montenegro in February 2003, and in 2006 the two became independent from each other and are now 2 separate member associations.

Finalists FIFA World Cup™ 1974: 16

Argentina	<i>AUSTRALIA</i>	Brazil (C)	Bulgaria
Chile	<i>GERMAN DR</i>	Germany FR (H)	<i>HAITI</i>
Italy	Netherlands	Poland	Scotland
Sweden	Uruguay	Yugoslavia	<i>ZAIRE</i>

Legend

NEWCOMERS TO FINALS in upper case italics

(C) Defending champions, qualified automatically

(H) Host country, qualified automatically

History of the FIFA World Cup Preliminary Competition (by year)

Recap FIFA World Cup™ 1978 World Cup Preliminary Competition

YEAR	TEAM ENTRIES	DID NOT PLAY	QUALIFIED*	TEAMS PLAYED°	MATCHES	GOALS	Ø
1978	107	10	2	95	252	723	2.87

*Qualified ex officio: defending champions Germany FR and hosts Argentina

°14 teams qualifying by preliminary competition

Background FIFA World Cup™ 1978 World Cup Preliminary Competition

For the first time the number of entries passed the one-hundred mark (even if the actual total fell back to two figures after various withdrawals). Among the most prominent teams not to survive the qualifiers were Uruguay, who were eliminated in the South American preliminaries.

Brazil and Peru were the other two South American teams in addition to the hosts, Argentina; Bolivia went into an inter-continental play-off against a strong Hungarian side and lost both matches. The Hungarians had left the Soviet Union behind them in their group, and Czechoslovakia also failed to make it. England lost only once in their six matches, against Italy in Rome, but the Italians went through thanks to a better goal difference.

Mexico, as usual, had a long road to the final round. In the preliminary group they ended level on points without the USA and Canada, also only managing to qualify thanks to goal difference; at home they had won all five of their matches and scored 20 goals in the process.

After almost 50 games in the Africa zone and a 4-1 win over Egypt, Tunisia earned their tickets to Argentina. They were probably the most fortunate of all, having overcome their very first opponent, Morocco, on penalties (4-2) after two drawn matches.

In the Asia/Oceania zone Iran set the tone this time; they won convincingly four times in the first phase, earned six wins in the final elimination round, plus two draws against Korea Republic, and were never in danger of being overtaken.

Facts & Figures FIFA World Cup™ 1978 World Cup Preliminary Competition

The qualifying tournament was kicked off in the National Stadium in Freetown, Sierra Leone, on 30 October 1975 when the hosts beat Niger 5-1.

Probably the most difficult qualifying tournament in the history of the FIFA World Cup - effectively 95 countries were competing for 14 slots. 1982 would see a welcome expansion to the number of participants, from 16 to 24.

On 9 January 1977, Tunisia played host to Morocco and won on penalties after extra time. Referee Walter Hungerbühler from Switzerland set a precedent by ordering the first World Cup preliminary penalty shoot-out.

History of the FIFA World Cup Preliminary Competition (by year)

Entries FIFA World Cup™ 1978 World Cup Preliminary Competition

- **Europe 32** Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, England, Finland, France, German DR, Germany FR, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland Republic, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Northern Ireland, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Scotland, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Soviet Union, Wales, Yugoslavia
- **South America 10** Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, Venezuela
- **CONCACAF 17** Barbados, Canada, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Netherlands Antilles, Panama, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, USA
- *Withdrawal:* Honduras
- **Asia/Oceania 21 + 1** Australia, Bahrain, Chinese Taipei, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Japan, Korea DPR, Korea Republic, Kuwait, Malaysia, New Zealand, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, South Vietnam, Sri Lanka, Syria, Thailand, United Arab Emirates + Israel
- *Withdrawals:* Iraq, Korea DPR, Sri Lanka and United Arab Emirates
- *Annexed:* South Vietnam
- **Africa 26** Algeria, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Congo, Cote d'Ivoire, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Libya, Malawi, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Tanzania, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, Upper Volta, Zaire, Zambia
- *Withdrawals:* Central African Republic, Sudan, Tanzania, Zaire

No. of Teams participating for the first time in the Preliminary Competition: 15

Bahrain, Barbados, Dominican Republic, Guyana, Malawi, Mauritania, Niger, Panama, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Suriname, Chinese Taipei, Uganda, Upper Volta

Remarks:

- Yugoslavia became Serbia and Montenegro in February 2003, and in 2006 the two became independent from each other and are now 2 separate member associations.
- Zaire withdrew from the second round, to which they had qualified after the Central African Republic (their opponent in the first round) withdrew.
- Syria withdrew after playing four matches, stating that their student-based team's college commitments prevented them from entering a credible team.
- Sri Lanka withdrew in 1977 when its government refused permission to pay the entry fee to the qualifying games.
- Vietnam's entry was not accepted in 1954. South Vietnam was re-annexed by the North on 30.4.1975. South Vietnam entered 1974 and 1978 independently.
- Chinese Taipei had already entered the 1954/58 qualifiers but withdrawn again without playing a match.
- Upper Volta is now called Burkina Faso.
- Suriname entered in 1938, 1962-1974 under the former name of Dutch Guyana.

Finalists FIFA World Cup™ 1978: 16

Argentina (H)	Austria	Brazil	France
Germany FR (C)	Hungary	<i>IRAN</i>	Italy
Mexico	Netherlands	Peru	Poland
Scotland	Spain	Sweden	<i>TUNISIA</i>

Legend

NEWCOMERS TO FINALS in upper case italics

(C) Defending champions, qualified automatically

(H) Host country, qualified automatically

History of the FIFA World Cup Preliminary Competition (by year)

Recap FIFA World Cup™ 1982 World Cup Preliminary Competition

YEAR	TEAM ENTRIES	DID NOT PLAY	QUALIFIED*	TEAMS PLAYED°	MATCHES	GOALS	Ø
1982	109	4	2	103	306	797	2.60

*Qualified ex officio: defending champions Argentina and hosts Spain
°22 teams qualifying by preliminary competition

Background FIFA World Cup™ 1982 World Cup Preliminary Competition

The format was simpler in Europe this time; there were six groups of five from which the top two teams qualified, and one group of three with only the winner (Poland) going further. In a very balanced group England lost their away matches in Romania, Norway, and Switzerland but qualified anyway, one point behind Hungary. In fact, qualification for all four British teams for the first time since 1958 looked a strong possibility. Wales just missed out in their group with Czechoslovakia taking second place from them on goal difference, behind the dominant Soviet Union. Scotland and Northern Ireland left Sweden and Portugal in their wake. Yugoslavia and Italy did not have much trouble, but things were closer for France, who ended up behind Belgium and just ahead of Ireland Republic on goal difference. Germany FR's record was impeccable - eight wins and a goal line of 33:3 putting them five points clear of Austria.

Of all the teams that had ever won the World Cup, the only one missing this time was Uruguay. Peru came through, and together with the undefeated Brazil and Chile completed the South American line-up.

The African qualifications saw Cameroon and Algeria come out on top, with Cameroon securing their place with a 2-1 home win over Morocco in Yaounde, in front of well over 100,000 jubilant fans. They had already won the away leg of the fixture. Algeria followed the same route, inflicting two defeats on Nigeria. Both of these teams were destined to hit the headlines during the final round in Spain.

In the final round in the CONCACAF zone in Honduras, the host team secured first place and denied favourites Mexico their place in the final round with a goalless draw in the final match. El Salvador won one more game and one more point than Mexico and earned the second set of tickets to Spain.

China PR had never come so close to qualifying for a World Cup, as on 10 January 1982. But they were thwarted at the last minute: New Zealand won the play-off between the two teams who were level on points and accompanied Kuwait, the group winners, to Spain.

Facts & Figures FIFA World Cup™ 1982 World Cup Preliminary Competition

A game of three halves! Wales vs Iceland (2-2) went to a 43 minute break when the floodlights at the Vetch Field Stadium in Swansea went down on 14 October 1981.

Canada, although untried on the international stage from 1977 to 1979, won through to come top of the CONCACAF Northern Zone Group in 1980 with three draws and a win. Unfortunately they lost out to the Central and South American sides (Honduras, El Salvador and Mexico) in the final group.

After a record-breaking 15 matches and 1,350 minutes of football, New Zealand were the last country to qualify for their inaugural FIFA World Cup final competition, beating China PR to get there. Along the way, they also broke a number of records to claim the top scorer title with 44 goals, the best defence (9 matches without concession), and took the highest-margin win (13-0 over Fiji on 16 August 1981).

History of the FIFA World Cup Preliminary Competition (by year)

Entries FIFA World Cup™ 1982 World Cup Preliminary Competition

- **Europe 33 + 1** Albania, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, German DR, Germany FR, England, Finland, France, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland Republic, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Northern Ireland, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Scotland, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Soviet Union, Wales, Yugoslavia + Israel

- **South America 10** Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, Venezuela

- **CONCACAF 15** Canada, Costa Rica, Cuba, El Salvador, Grenada, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Netherlands Antilles, Panama, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, USA

- **Africa 29** Algeria, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Egypt, Ethiopia, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Madagascar, Malawi, Morocco, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan, Tanzania, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, Zaire, Zambia, Zimbabwe

- *Withdrawals:* Ghana and Uganda

- *Exclusion:* Central African Republic

- **Asia/Oceania 21** Australia, Bahrain, China PR, Chinese Taipei, Fiji, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Japan, Korea DPR, Korea Republic, Kuwait, Macao, Malaysia, New Zealand, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Syria, Thailand

- *Withdrawal:* Iran

No. of Teams participating for the first time in the Preliminary Competition: 8

Fiji, Gambia, Grenada, Liberia, Macao, Madagascar, Mozambique, Somalia

Remarks:

- Liberia and Madagascar had entered previous qualifiers, but withdrawn without playing a match: Liberia for 1966, Madagascar for 1974.
- The Central African Republic was excluded for not paying the entry fee.
- Czechoslovakia split up into the Czech Republic and Slovakia in 1993. After the split, the politically separated countries still fielded a joint team, the RCS (Representation of Czechs and Slovaks), for the 1994 remaining qualifying matches. First entered separately as Czech Republic and Slovakia in 1998.
- Libya qualified for the second round and then withdrew. Egypt and Libya were in dispute when Libya withdrew after refusing to play a rearranged second round tie against Egypt in Italy.
- Yugoslavia became Serbia and Montenegro in February 2003, and in 2006 the two became independent from each other and are now 2 separate member associations.
- Suriname entered in 1938, 1962-1974 under the former name of Dutch Guyana.

Finalists FIFA World Cup™ 1982: 24

<i>ALGERIA</i>	Argentina (C)	Austria	Belgium
Brazil	<i>CAMEROON</i>	Chile	Czechoslovakia
El Salvador	England	France	Germany FR
<i>HONDURAS</i>	Hungary	Italy	<i>KUWAIT</i>
<i>NEW ZEALAND</i>	Northern Ireland	Peru	Poland
Scotland	Soviet Union	Spain (H)	Yugoslavia

Legend

NEWCOMERS TO FINALS in upper case italics

(C) *Defending champions, qualified automatically*

(H) *Host country, qualified automatically*

History of the FIFA World Cup Preliminary Competition (by year)

Recap FIFA World Cup™ 1986 World Cup Preliminary Competition

YEAR	TEAM ENTRIES	DID NOT PLAY	QUALIFIED*	TEAMS PLAYED°	MATCHES	GOALS	Ø
1986	121	9	2	110	308	801	2.60

*Qualified ex officio: defending champions Italy and hosts Mexico

°22 teams qualifying by preliminary competition

Background FIFA World Cup™ 1986 World Cup Preliminary Competition

Once again there was a new record number of entries, and fewer than ten withdrawals this time. From the four groups of five in Europe, the two top teams per group would qualify and among the prominent teams eliminated were Sweden, Czechoslovakia and Romania. From the remaining three groups of four, only the top team would qualify directly. Scotland were one of the runners-up in these groups and had to play off against the Oceania champions, Australia. A 2-0 win at Hampden Park and a no-score draw down under saw the Scots through. A further place in the final would go to the winner of the play-off between the other two runners-up in the groups of four. Once again this brought together Belgium and Holland, and in a great play-off battle it was the outstanding Belgian team of the 80s with Gerets, Scifo, Ceulemans and Vandenberg that won through thanks to the away goals rule. Nine months later they would again impress in Mexico. England were the only team in the European zone to come through undefeated and their most noticeable triumph was an 8-0 win over Turkey in Istanbul.

The qualifying teams from South America included three previous World Cup winners: Uruguay, Brazil and Argentina. They all won their groups and qualified directly. Paraguay earned their place thanks to a clear home win over Chile in a play-off, their first success since 1958. The one open CONCACAF place (in addition to hosts Mexico) went deservedly to Canada, who were undefeated in all their eight matches.

In the Africa zone the format this time was a knock-out competition, with home and away matches. Morocco and Algeria won all their home matches and qualified, already having considerable World Cup experience behind them (as several other highly respected footballing countries would testify).

In Asia the qualifying teams for the semi-finals of their zone competition, in addition to Japan and Korea Republic, were, rather surprisingly, Iraq and Syria. Japan lost both matches against their neighbours, while Iraq earned a draw in Damascus and defeated the Syrians at home, securing their country a place in the World Cup final round for the first time. China's exit was almost tragic; despite four wins in six matches and a goal-line of 23-2 they suffered a totally unexpected home defeat against Hong Kong and lost the chance of playing Japan in the second round.

Facts & Figures FIFA World Cup™ 1986 World Cup Preliminary Competition

110 teams, 308 matches, 801 goals: the basic numbers were almost the same as four years before. Only in 1990 would the goal average be lower than in 1982 and 1986.

In true sporting spirit, Tunisia magnanimously agreed to reschedule their match against Benin for 13 November 1984, when the game had been due to be contested two days earlier. Benin's flights had been delayed and Tunisia empathetically renounced their right to claim a 2-0 win by forfeit, choosing to play their African neighbours as planned. An inspired decision: Tunisia won 4-0.

History of the FIFA World Cup Preliminary Competition (by year)

Entries FIFA World Cup™ 1986 World Cup Preliminary Competition

- **Europe 33** Albania, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, German DR, Germany FR, England, Finland, France, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland Republic, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Northern Ireland, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Scotland, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Soviet Union, Turkey, Wales, Yugoslavia
- **South America 10** Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, Venezuela
- **CONCACAF 18** Antigua, Barbados, Canada, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Grenada, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Netherlands Antilles, Panama, Puerto Rico, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, USA
 - *Withdrawals:* Barbados and Grenada
 - *Expulsion:* Jamaica
- **Africa 29** Algeria, Angola, Benin, Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, Egypt, Ethiopia, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Morocco, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Tanzania, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe
 - *Withdrawals:* Lesotho, Niger and Togo
- **Asia 27** Bahrain, Bangladesh, Brunei, China PR, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Japan, Jordan, Korea DPR, Korea Republic, Kuwait, Lebanon (late entry), Macao, Malaysia, Nepal, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Yemen (North), Yemen PDR (South), Syria, Thailand, United Arab Emirates
 - *Withdrawals:* Lebanon and Oman
 - *Exclusion:* Iran
- **Oceania 2+2** Australia, New Zealand + Israel (late entry), Chinese Taipei

No. of Teams participating for the first time in the Preliminary Competition: 11

Angola, Bangladesh, Brunei, Jordan, Liberia, Nepal, Puerto Rico, Yemen, Yemen PDR, Uganda, United Arab Emirates

Remarks:

- Benin and Zimbabwe had both entered previous preliminary competitions under a different name: Benin (1974) as Dahomey, Zimbabwe (1970) as Rhodesia.
- India had already entered 1950, 1954 and 1974, but never played a match. They qualified for the World Cup in 1950 by default (opponents withdrew), but declined to attend. The entry for 1954 was not accepted by FIFA, and India withdrew from the 1974 qualifiers without playing a match.
- The United Arab Emirates had entered the 1978 qualifiers, but withdrawn without playing a match.
- Lesotho refused to play Madagascar (1st round).
- For the first time a country (Lebanon) entered late and then withdrew.
- Czechoslovakia split up into the Czech Republic and Slovakia in 1993. After the split, the politically separated countries still fielded a joint team, the RCS (Representation of Czechs and Slovaks), for the 1994 remaining qualifying matches. First entered separately as Czech Republic and Slovakia in 1998.
- Yugoslavia became Serbia and Montenegro in February 2003, and in 2006 the two became independent from each other and are now 2 separate member associations.
- Suriname entered in 1938, 1962-1974 under the former name of Dutch Guyana.

History of the FIFA World Cup Preliminary Competition (by year)

Finalists FIFA World Cup™ 1986: 24

Algeria	Argentina	Belgium	Brazil
Bulgaria	<i>CANADA</i>	<i>DENMARK</i>	England
France	Germany FR	Hungary	<i>IRAQ</i>
Italy (C)	Korea Republic	Mexico (H)	Morocco
Northern Ireland	Paraguay	Poland	Portugal
Scotland	Spain	Soviet Union	Uruguay

Legend

NEWCOMERS TO FINALS in upper case italics

(C) Defending champions, qualified automatically

(H) Host country, qualified automatically

History of the FIFA World Cup Preliminary Competition (by year)

Recap FIFA World Cup™ 1990 World Cup Preliminary Competition

YEAR	TEAM ENTRIES	DID NOT PLAY	QUALIFIED*	TEAMS PLAYED°	MATCHES	GOALS	Ø
1990	116	11	2	103	314	735	2.34

*Qualified ex officio: defending champions Argentina and hosts Germany FR
°22 teams qualifying by preliminary competition

Background FIFA World Cup™ 1990 World Cup Preliminary Competition

ITALIA 90 also attracted well over a hundred entries for the preliminary round, although the total was slightly down on last time. The first qualifying match was in the Caribbean as usual, where Trinidad and Tobago defeated Guyana 4-0 on 17 April 1988. By an odd coincidence it would also be Trinidad and Tobago who would play the last game in the preliminary round twenty months later. With a World Cup place within their reach, the island team lost against the USA in Port of Spain. The only goal of the match was scored by Paul Caligiuri and it earned the USA their first World Cup appearance for 40 years. Costa Rica (under coach Bora Milutinovic) won the other CONCACAF place (with Mexico being banned from taking part).

An unpleasant episode marred the South American preliminaries; during the match between Brazil and Chile a firework landed close to the Chilean goalkeeper Rojas who then feigned injury. His team refused to continue the match - they were a goal down at the time. But the scheme was quickly seen through, and the result was a long suspension for those involved and a ban for Chile from the World Cup 1994. In addition to Brazil, Uruguay and Colombia (for the first time since 1962) completed the South American contingent. Colombia had won through via a play-off against Israel, which produced just one goal in the two matches, Israel having come out on top in a group with the Oceania representatives Australia and New Zealand.

Europe's breakdown this time was into four groups with five teams and three groups with four; basically the top two teams in each group would qualify, with the exception of the poorest second team from the groups of four. A defeat in their last match against Romania put Denmark in this unfortunate position, and so the tournament was deprived of one of the most attractive sides of the 1986 competition. England and Germany FR both ended up second in their groups and that was enough. There were few other surprises, except for the case of France, for whom a 1-1 against Cyprus in Nicosia on 22 October 1988 came back to haunt them and saw Scotland a point ahead in the final ranking.

The usual long, drawn-out African qualifiers saw Egypt qualify for the first time since 1934, as well as Cameroon (who had been undefeated in 1982 in Spain). In an evenly matched battle between six teams in the final round in Asia Korea Republic and UAE both emerged undefeated, with the Arabs' record of one win and four draws being enough to get them through.

Facts & Figures FIFA World Cup™ 1990 World Cup Preliminary Competition

The United Arab Emirates secured their berth in the final competition with four draws, one win and only four goals (two of them in their 2-1 win over China PR) in five matches in the Asian Final round.

Unfortunately, the enduring image of several qualifiers in the late 80s marred the image of football, distorting what the game is really about. After the Netherlands vs Germany FR match, just 11 short days after the tragedy in Hillsborough, Dutch riot police had to intervene in the streets of Rotterdam; similar scenes ensued when Chile met Brazil in Santiago in August of that year.

History of the FIFA World Cup Preliminary Competition (by year)

Entries FIFA World Cup™ 1990 World Cup Preliminary Competition

- **Europe 33** Albania, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, German DR, Germany FR, England, Finland, France, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland Republic, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Northern Ireland, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Scotland, Soviet Union, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Wales, Yugoslavia
- **South America 10** Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, Venezuela
- **CONCACAF 16** Antigua, Belize, Canada, Costa Rica, Cuba, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Netherlands Antilles, Panama, Puerto Rico, Trinidad and Tobago, USA
 - *Suspension:* Mexico
 - *Entry not accepted:* Belize
- **Africa 26** Algeria, Angola, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, Egypt, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Malawi, Morocco, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sudan, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, Zaire, Zambia, Zimbabwe
 - *Withdrawals:* Lesotho, Rwanda and Togo
 - *Entry not accepted:* Mauritius and Mozambique
- **Asia 26** Bahrain, Bangladesh, China PR, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Japan, Jordan, Korea DPR, Korea Republic, Kuwait, Malaysia, Maldives Republic, Nepal, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Yemen (North), Yemen DPR (South), Syria, Thailand, United Arab Emirates
 - *Withdrawals:* Bahrain, India, Maldives Rep. and Yemen PDR
- **Oceania 3 +2** Australia, Fiji, New Zealand + Israel, Chinese Taipei

No. of Teams participating for the first time in the Preliminary Competition: 3

Gabon, Oman, Pakistan.

Remarks:

- Gabon and Oman had entered previous qualifiers, but withdrawn again without playing a match: Gabon 1966 and 1974, Oman 1986. Burkina Faso had already played in the 1978 qualifiers, then still under the name Upper Volta.
- As a result of a two-year FIFA ban imposed for falsifying age at a youth championship, Mexico was also suspended from the 1990 World Cup preliminary competition.
- Libya qualified for the second round and then withdrew.
- India had already entered 1950, 1954 and 1974, but never played a match. They qualified for the World Cup in 1950 by default (opponents withdrew), but declined to attend. The entry for 1954 was not accepted by FIFA, and India withdrew from the 1974 and 1990 qualifiers without playing a match.
- Yugoslavia became Serbia and Montenegro in February 2003, and in 2006 the two became independent from each other and are now 2 separate member associations.

History of the FIFA World Cup Preliminary Competition (by year)

Finalists FIFA World Cup™ 1990: 24

Austria	Argentina (C)	Belgium	Brazil
Cameroon	Colombia	<i>COSTA RICA</i>	Czechoslovakia
Egypt	England	Germany FR	<i>IRELAND REPUBLIC</i>
Italy (H)	Korea Republic	Netherlands	Romania
Scotland	Soviet Union	Spain	Sweden
<i>UNITED ARAB EMIRATES</i>	Uruguay	United States	Yugoslavia

Legend

NEWCOMERS TO FINALS in upper case italics

(C) Defending champions, qualified automatically

(H) Host country, qualified automatically

History of the FIFA World Cup Preliminary Competition (by year)

Recap FIFA World Cup™ 1994 World Cup Preliminary Competition

YEAR	TEAM ENTRIES	DID NOT PLAY	QUALIFIED*	TEAMS PLAYED°	MATCHES	GOALS	Ø
1994	147	15	2	130	497	1446	2.91

*Qualified ex officio: defending champions Germany FR and hosts USA

°22 teams qualifying by preliminary competition

Background FIFA World Cup™ 1994 World Cup Preliminary Competition

An entry of close to 150 countries, nearly 500 matches and once again more goals than in the past twenty years - these were the figures of the biggest World Cup preliminary in 60 years.

Two of Europe's big names failed to make the finals: England conceded an embarrassing goal after a few seconds in their final match in San Marino and although they won 7-1 in the end they were unable to overtake the Netherlands in the group, who qualified along with group winners Norway. In Group 6, France looked to be heading comfortably for the top spot two matches before the end, but lost surprisingly at home to Israel and then were beaten away by Bulgaria, thanks to a Kostadinov counter-strike in the dying seconds. It was thus Bulgaria who squeezed into second place and accompanied Sweden to the USA. Helped by good results against group winners Italy, Switzerland also qualified for the first time in nearly thirty years.

In South America the only team to come through convincingly were Colombia, undefeated in their group and ahead of Argentina. In the other group Brazil and Bolivia only managed to secure definite qualification in their very last matches. Argentina had to go into a play-off against Oceania winners Australia and were on a knife's edge until a narrow 1-0 home win got them through.

In Africa it was Nigeria (first time for them), Morocco, and Cameroon who qualified, but it was a close battle for all three against the second team in their groups. In a dramatic final in Qatar, Japan let a safe-looking qualification slip away from them at the last minute. After a 2-2 draw against Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Korea Republic (only on goal difference) finally edged out Japan. After slipping up in Costa Rica and El Salvador, Mexico earned their passage in the direct encounter with their closest rivals Canada.

Facts & Figures FIFA World Cup™ 1994 World Cup Preliminary Competition

San Marino's Davide Gualtieri shot to fame in November 1993 when he scored the opener against England after just nine seconds, the fastest goal ever in a World Cup qualifier. England went on to win the game 7-1 but their dismal attempt to qualify for the 1994 World Cup caused this radio commentary: "Welcome to Bologna on Capital Gold for England versus San Marino with Tennent's Pilsner, brewed with Czechoslovakian yeast for that extra Pilsner taste and England are one down."

Bulgarian Emil Kostadinov shocked a whole nation when he scored the winner against France in the dying seconds of their last World Cup qualifier in November 1993 at Parc des Princes. Bulgaria got the points and the ticket to the USA, which the French had virtually had in their pockets.

History of the FIFA World Cup Preliminary Competition (by year)

Entries FIFA World Cup™ 1994 World Cup Preliminary Competition

- **Europe 38 +1** Albania, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, England, Estonia, Faroe Islands, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland Republic, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Northern Ireland, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, San Marino, Scotland, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Wales, Yugoslavia + Israel

- *Withdrawal:* Liechtenstein

- *Suspension:* Yugoslavia

- **South America 9** Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, Venezuela

- *Suspension:* Chile

- **CONCACAF 23** Antigua, Barbados, Bermuda, Canada, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Netherlands Antilles, Nicaragua, Panama, Puerto Rico, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, USA

- *Suspension:* Yugoslavia

- **Africa 40** Algeria, Angola, Benin (late entry), Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Cote d'Ivoire, Kenya, Liberia, Libya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia (late entry), Niger, Nigeria, Saõ Tomé e Príncipe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa (late entry), Sudan, Swaziland, Tanzania, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, Zaire, Zambia, Zimbabwe

- *Withdrawals:* Burkina Faso, Gambia, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, São Tomé e Príncipe, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Uganda

- *Exclusion:* Libya

- **Asia 29** Bahrain, Bangladesh, China PR, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Japan, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Macao, Malaysia, Myanmar, Korea DPR, Korea Republic, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Syria, Chinese Taipei, Thailand, United Arab Emirates, Vietnam, Yemen

- *Withdrawal:* Myanmar

- **Oceania 7** Australia, Fiji, New Zealand, Solomon Islands, Tahiti, Vanuatu, Western Samoa

- *Withdrawal:* Western Samoa

No. of Teams participating for the first time in the Preliminary Competition: 16

Botswana, Burundi, Faroe Islands, Lebanon, Namibia, Nicaragua, San Marino, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Sri Lanka, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Swaziland, Tahiti, Vanuatu, Vietnam

Remarks:

- Czechoslovakia had begun playing in the preliminary competition as one country. After the division on 1.1.1993, the politically separated countries still continued with a unified team, the RCS (Representation of Czechs and Slovaks).
- Myanmar had already entered 1950 under the name of Burma.
- Liberia (1 match) and Tanzania (4) withdrew from the competition after having played.
- Yugoslavia was excluded due to UN sanctions in connection with the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Yugoslavia became Serbia and Montenegro in February 2003, and in 2006 the two became independent from each other and are now 2 separate member associations.
- Libya was excluded following UN sanctions in connection with the alleged involvement in terrorist attacks
- Russia (taking the place of the former USSR which had disintegrated over 1990 and 1991) played their first World Cup competition as an independent country.
- Sri Lanka and Lebanon had entered previous preliminary competitions but withdrawn again without playing a match: Sri Lanka 1974 and 1978 (1974 still under the name Ceylon), Lebanon 1986.

History of the FIFA World Cup Preliminary Competition (by year)

- South Africa had entered 1966 but was subsequently banned (anti-discrimination charter) without having played a match. The ban remained in effect until 1992 when South Africa was re-admitted.
- Vietnam's entry was not accepted in 1954. South Vietnam was re-annexed by the North on 30.4.1975. South Vietnam entered 1974 and 1978 independently.
- Yemen played for the first time as a united country: Yemen (North) and Yemen PDR (South) had enrolled independently for 1986 and 1990.
- Chile was suspended from the 1994 FIFA World Cup following goalkeeper Rojas' feigning an injury in their away game against Brazil in the previous preliminary competition.
- Federal Republic of Germany (FRG or West Germany) continued the record of the pre-war Germany with the German Democratic Republic (GDR or East Germany) entering independently from 1958-1990. The reunified Germany continues the record of Federal Republic of Germany while that of the German Democratic Republic closed in late 1990.
- Western Samoa is now referred to as Samoa.
- Suriname entered in 1938, 1962-1974 under the former name of Dutch Guyana.

Finalists FIFA World Cup™ 1994: 24

Argentina	Belgium	Bolivia	Brazil
Bulgaria	Cameroon	Colombia	Germany (C)
<i>GREECE</i>	Ireland Republic	Italy	Korea Republic
Mexico	Morocco	Netherlands	<i>NIGERIA</i>
Norway	Romania	Russia	<i>SAUDI ARABIA</i>
Spain	Sweden	Switzerland	United States (H)

Legend

NEWCOMERS TO FINALS in upper case italics

(C) Defending champions, qualified automatically

(H) Host country, qualified automatically

History of the FIFA World Cup Preliminary Competition (by year)

Recap FIFA World Cup™ 1998 World Cup Preliminary Competition

YEAR	TEAM ENTRIES	DID NOT PLAY	QUALIFIED*	TEAMS PLAYED°	MATCHES	GOALS	Ø
1998	174	4	2	168	643	1922	2.99

*Qualified ex officio: defending champions Brazil and hosts France
°30 teams qualifying by preliminary competition

Background FIFA World Cup™ 1998 World Cup Preliminary Competition

This time round all previous records were shattered: 174 entries (with 168 actually playing), 643 matches and over 15 million spectators. There were some individual records too: Iran beat the Maldives by the widest margin in World Cup history, the score being 17-0. Karim Bagheri scored seven of the total, also a new best. Iran continued to capture the headlines as the surprise team: in an AFC/OFC play-off in Australia they were trailing 0-2 but Iran pulled level, to the consternation of 85,000 spectators in the Melbourne Cricket Ground. Already qualified were Korea Republic, now becoming regulars, and Saudi Arabia for the second time in a row.

In Europe, fixed play-offs were arranged between the group second teams for the first time. Norway, Italy, Spain, Germany and Romania came through undefeated, but even five wins and three draws was not enough to take Italy to the top of their group, which was won by England. A goal from Tony Cascarino for Ireland Rep. in the last match against Romania earned his team a 1-1 draw and ruined Romania's 100% record. In the play-offs, Yugoslavia rattled up an aggregate score of 12-1 against the poor Hungarians. Not unexpectedly, Croatia eliminated Ukraine and so one of Europe's new countries would be making a first appearance.

No fewer than 72 matches were played in South America, where the eliminations were held for the first time in a single group. The teams coming out on top were Argentina, Colombia (for the third time in succession), Bolivia (for the first time since 1950) and Paraguay.

The longest qualifying round was, as usual, in the CONCACAF zone, where favourites Mexico and the USA were successful, encountering few problems along the way. Third place went to newcomers Jamaica, the "Reggae Boys" thus confirming the progress they had made over the last few years. Rather curiously, Mexico, who had been undefeated in the qualifiers and were sure of a place in France, released their coach Bora Milutinovic from his contract after a run of disappointing results.

In Africa it was the established teams that made the running; Nigeria, Cameroon, Tunisia and Morocco had all qualified on previous occasions. The only new name was South Africa, but their success was hardly a surprise, in view of the potential of their players and their victory in the African Nations' Cup in 1996. But Congo nearly caused a sensation on 16 August 1997 in Johannesburg, when a single goal decided that South Africa would get the final place, not Congo.

Facts & Figures FIFA World Cup™ 1998 World Cup Preliminary Competition

So near and yet so far: Australia's dreams of qualifying for the World Cup were shattered in the very last game at the Melbourne Cricket Ground packed with 85,000 spectators who saw the Socceroos go 2-0 up against Iran only to concede the equaliser late in the second half - and lose the set of tickets to France.

Japan's Kazu Miura added another 11 goals to the 10 he had scored in the previous Preliminary Competition. His record total of 21 was equalled four years later by Iranian striker Ali Daei.

History of the FIFA World Cup Preliminary Competition (by year)

Entries FIFA World Cup™ 1998 World Cup Preliminary Competition

- **Europe 49 +1** Albania, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, England, Estonia, Faroe Islands, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland Republic, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Macedonia FYR, Malta, Moldavia, Netherlands, Northern Ireland, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, San Marino, Scotland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine, Wales, Yugoslavia + Israel

- **South America 10** Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, Venezuela

- **CONCACAF 30** Antigua, Aruba, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Bermuda (late entry), Canada, Cayman Islands, Costa Rica, Cuba (late entry), Dominica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Grenada, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Netherlands Antilles, Nicaragua, Panama, Puerto Rico, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, USA

- *Withdrawals:* Bahamas and Bermuda

- **Africa 38** Algeria, Angola, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Congo, Cote d'Ivoire, Egypt, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau (late entry), Kenya, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Sudan, Swaziland, Tanzania, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda (late entry), Zaire, Zambia, Zimbabwe

- *Withdrawals:* Mali and Niger

- **Asia 36** Bahrain, Bangladesh, Cambodia, China PR, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Macao, Malaysia, Maldives Republic, Nepal, Oman, Pakistan, Philippines, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Korea Republic, Sri Lanka, Syria, Taiwan, Thailand, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan, Vietnam, Yemen

- **Oceania 10** Australia, Cook Islands, Fiji, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Tahiti, Tonga, Vanuatu, Western Samoa

No. of teams participating for the first time in the preliminary competition: 31

Armenia, Aruba, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belize, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Cambodia, Cayman Islands, Cook Islands, Croatia, Czech Republic, Dominica, Georgia, Guinea-Bissau, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Liechtenstein, Macedonia FYR, Maldives Rep., Moldavia, Papua New Guinea, Rwanda, Slovakia, Slovenia, St. Kitts and Nevis, Tajikistan, Tonga, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Western Samoa

- **Remarks:**

- Mali and Niger withdrew before the groups were drawn up. Burundi withdrew due to civil war and was replaced by Sierra Leone, who had been eliminated by Burundi in the first round. Sierra Leone thus became the first team to be eliminated twice from the same qualifying series.
- Zaire changed their name to Democratic Republic of Congo (Congo DR) in 1997.
- Maldives Rep., Rwanda, Liechtenstein and Western Samoa (since 1997 referred to as Samoa) had entered previous qualifiers but withdrawn without playing a match: the Maldives and Rwanda 1990, Liechtenstein and Western Samoa 1994. Belize had already entered 1990 but the entry had not accepted by FIFA.
- The Czech Republic and Slovakia are the two successors of Czechoslovakia.
- Yugoslavia became Serbia and Montenegro in February 2003, and in 2006 the two became independent from each other and are now 2 separate member associations.
- Suriname entered in 1938, 1962-1974 under the former name of Dutch Guyana.

History of the FIFA World Cup Preliminary Competition (by year)

Finalists FIFA World Cup™ 1998: 32

Argentina	Austria	Belgium	Brazil (C)
Bulgaria	Cameroon	Chile	Colombia
<i>CROATIA</i>	Denmark	England	France (H)
Germany	Iran	Italy	<i>JAMAICA</i>
<i>JAPAN</i>	Korea Republic	Mexico	Morocco
Netherlands	Nigeria	Norway	Paraguay
Romania	Saudi Arabia	Scotland	<i>SOUTH AFRICA</i>
Spain	Tunisia	United States	Yugoslavia

Legend

NEWCOMERS TO FINALS in upper case italics

(C) Defending champions, qualified automatically

(H) Host country, qualified automatically

History of the FIFA World Cup Preliminary Competition (by year)

Recap FIFA World Cup™ 2002 World Cup Preliminary Competition

YEAR	TEAM ENTRIES	DROP-OUTS	QUALIFIED*	TEAMS PLAYED°	MATCHES	GOALS	Ø
2002	199	3	3	193	777	2452	3.16

*Qualified ex officio: defending champions France and hosts Korea Rep. and Japan
°29 teams qualifying by preliminary competition

Background FIFA World Cup™ 2002 World Cup Preliminary Competition

199 teams registered to take part in the 2002 FIFA World Cup preliminary competition, although only 193 of them actually played in the 777 games contested. The history books now contain some new records too, such as a new goalscoring record both for teams and the fastest-ever hat-trick in an "A". More than 17 million spectators filled the stadia for the games - a new record in itself. Some of the big guns also found the going tough in the early rounds.

In the CONCACAF zone, outsiders Costa Rica stunned everybody by dominating the competition from start to finish. The USA qualified with matches in hand, but needed favourable results from other teams to do so. Pre-tournament favourites Mexico even went into the last match unsure of their destiny, but eventually made it safely over the finishing line. But the Confederation champions, Canada, did not even make it as far as the decisive final round. In South America, Argentina were the top dogs, and left their opponents trailing in their wake. Second place went to Paraguay, just ahead of Ecuador. Brazil, on the other hand, struggled like never before, and eventually qualified with a little help from rivals Uruguay, who slipped up against a surprisingly strong Venezuela, who finished in a commendable position themselves, consigning Peru and Chile to the lower reaches of the table.

Asia was home to a keenly-fought battle for the two automatic places, which were finally secured by China PR and Saudi Arabia, the latter living up to their billing as group favourites. In China, scenes of unbridled joy greeted the news that the national team had qualified for the first time ever. Iran could not repeat their success of 1997, and finally bowed out against Ireland Rep. in the playoff round.

In Africa, it was a case of "how you were", with four of the qualifiers from 1998 (Cameroon, Tunisia, South Africa and Nigeria) coming through once again with flying colours. The final African qualifier stunned the world with their showing in the qualification rounds. Senegal outshone seasoned campaigners such as Egypt and Morocco on their way to the greatest triumph in the nation's footballing history.

In Europe, the major surprise was sprung by the Netherlands. The Dutch team was full of international stars, but they only finished in third place in their group, missing out altogether. Poland, a force in world football in the early Seventies, and a constant presence at the FIFA World Cup™ between 1974 and 1986, announced their return with a glut of goals from a nationalised Nigerian, Emmanuel Olisadebe. Germany, previously untouchable in qualifying rounds, were stunned by arch-rivals England, with Sven-Göran Eriksson's men triumphant in Munich in a 5-1 victory. In the end, Germany came through the play-off round against Ukraine unscathed. EURO 2000 outsiders Slovenia qualified for their second high-profile tournament in succession, while Belgium qualified for the sixth consecutive time, and Turkey succeeded for the first time in 48 years.

Australia's successful year was not crowned in the play-off game against Uruguay, who finished fifth in the South American group. The "Celeste" team from Uruguay finally returned to the world stage after 12 long years in the World Cup wilderness

History of the FIFA World Cup Preliminary Competition (by year)

Facts & Figures FIFA World Cup™ 2002 World Cup Preliminary Competition

Togolese Souleymane Mamam became the youngest player ever to take to a World Cup preliminary game field at the tender age of 13 years and 310 days in Lomé in May 2001.

Another all-time superlative which takes some beating: Australia netted 31 goals against newcomers American Samoa - the highest-scoring match and biggest margin victory ever. Also, Archie Thompson's 13 goals surpassed the previous record (7) by far.

The fastest-ever hat-trick in an "A" international: Abdel Hamid of Egypt needed only 177 seconds to bag his three goals in a game against Namibia.

Entries FIFA World Cup™ 2002 World Cup Preliminary Competition

- **Europe 51+1 (France as defending champions):** Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, England, Estonia, Faroe Islands, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland Republic, Israel, Italy, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Macedonia FYR, Malta, Moldova, Netherlands, Northern Ireland, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, San Marino, Scotland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine, Wales, Yugoslavia

- **South America 10:** Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, Venezuela

- **CONCACAF 35:** Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Aruba, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Bermuda, British Virgin Islands, Canada, Cayman Islands, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Grenada, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Montserrat, Netherlands Antilles, Nicaragua, Panama, Puerto Rico, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent/ Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, Turks and Caicos Islands, USA, US Virgin Islands

-*Suspended:* Guyana

- **Africa 51:** Algeria, Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Cape Verde Islands, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Congo DR, Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, São Tomé e Príncipe, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, Sudan, Swaziland, Tanzania, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe

-*Withdrawal:* Burundi

- **Asia 40+2 (Korea Rep./Japan as hosts):** Bahrain, Bangladesh, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, China PR, Chinese Taipei, Guam, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Japan, Jordan, Korea Republic, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, Lebanon, Macao, Malaysia, Maldives Republic, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Oman, Pakistan, Palestine, Philippines, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Syria, Tajikistan, Thailand, Turkmenistan, United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan, Vietnam, Yemen

-*Withdrawal:* Myanmar

- **Oceania 10:** American Samoa, Australia, Cook Islands, Fiji, New Zealand, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tahiti, Tonga, Vanuatu

No. of teams participating for the first time in the preliminary competition: 25

American Samoa, Andorra, Anguilla, Bahamas, British Virgin Islands, Cape Verde Islands, Central African Republic, Chad, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Guam, Laos, Mali, Mongolia, Montserrat, Moldova, Palestine, Samoa, Sao Tome e Príncipe, Seychelles, Turks and Caicos Islands, US Virgin Islands

History of the FIFA World Cup Preliminary Competition (by year)

Remarks:

- Burundi withdrew before the groups were drawn up.
- Myanmar (entered 1950 under the name of Burma) withdrew before playing their first match. Guinea was excluded after playing five matches in the 1st and 2nd round in the African preliminary competition.
- Guyana were suspended from any international activities.
- Palestine entered the qualifying competition for the first time in the run-up to the 2002 FIFA World Cup Korea/Japan™. The "Palestine" that had participated in previous competitions in the 1930s was actually the forerunner of today's Isreal team, and as such bears no relation to the national team of modern Palestine.
- Yugoslavia became Serbia and Montenegro in February 2003, and in 2006 the two became independent from each other and are now 2 separate member associations.
- Suriname entered in 1938, 1962-1974 under the former name of Dutch Guyana.

Finalists FIFA World Cup™ 2002: 32

Argentina	Belgium	Brazil	Cameroon
<i>CHINA PR</i>	Costa Rica	Croatia	Denmark
<i>ECUADOR</i>	England	France (C)	Germany
Ireland Republic	Italy	Japan (H)	Korea Republic (H)
Mexico	Nigeria	Paraguay	Poland
Portugal	Russia	Saudi Arabia	<i>SENEGAL</i>
<i>SLOVENIA</i>	South Africa	Spain	Sweden
Tunisia	Turkey	Uruguay	United States

Legend

NEWCOMERS TO FINALS in upper case italics

(C) Defending champions

(H) Host country

History of the FIFA World Cup Preliminary Competition (by year)

Recap FIFA World Cup™ 2006 World Cup Preliminary Competition

YEAR	TEAM ENTRIES	DROP-OUTS	QUALIFIED*	TEAMS PLAYED°	MATCHES	GOALS	Ø
2006	198	3	1	194	847	2,464	2.91

Background FIFA World Cup™ 2006 World Cup Preliminary Competition

A total of 198 teams registered for the preliminary competition, but after three withdrawals, that number was reduced to 194 for the kick-off. Those 194 teams set a new record, as did the number of matches (847) and the total number of spectators (18.6 million). Ten teams remained unbeaten for the duration of the preliminary competition, but only seven of them actually booked a ticket to Germany – Cuba, Israel and Morocco bowed out without losing a single match.

All previous world champions had qualified for the 2002 World Cup, and it was nearly a case of history repeating itself with only Uruguay falling at the final hurdle after losing to an Australian team that exacted revenge for their play-off defeat in 2002 and qualified for the FIFA World Cup™ for the first time in 32 years. The preliminary competition for the 2006 FIFA World Cup™ also proved to be Australia's last as a member of the OFC. In the end, they saw off the challenge of the surprise packages, the Solomon Islands, without too many problems.

The preliminary competition in Asia threw up few surprises, with Korea Republic qualifying for the sixth consecutive time. Saudi Arabia, meanwhile, reached their fourth successive World Cup and Japan their third. Nine goals from veteran striker Ali Daei, meanwhile, ensured that Iran made a return to the World Cup stage after an absence of eight years.

In the CONCACAF zone, Costa Rica firmly established themselves as the third major power in the region behind Mexico and the USA, with Paulo Wanchope's goals firing them to their second successive World Cup. The 14 goals scored by Mexico's Jared Borgetti were not bettered anywhere in the world. To make it to Germany, Trinidad and Tobago played a total of 20 matches, the most of any team in the entire preliminary competition. Their path to Germany concluded with a play-off victory over Bahrain away from home.

Familiar faces also qualified from South America. Brazil (thanks to ten goals from Ronaldo) and Argentina (with seven goals from Crespo) shared the honours at the top of the table, even though the Seleçao drew seven matches and the Argentinians could even afford to lose four games. Further down the pecking order, Paraguay made it to their third successive World Cup after finishing level on points with another qualifier, Ecuador, who boasted an unbeaten home record and victories over both Brazil and Argentina.

There were surprises, however, in Africa. Of the quartet of teams that qualified for the 1998 and 2002 World Cups, it was, somewhat surprisingly, only Tunisia who managed to complete their hat trick. Cameroon and Nigeria were narrowly pipped at the post by Côte d'Ivoire and Angola respectively, but South Africa stood little chance in a group dominated by Ghana. Meanwhile Senegal, the surprise package at the 2002 World Cup, failed to overcome Togo, not least due to a draw at home, and so it was the Togolese and their impressive 11-goal striker Emmanuel Adebayor who were left to celebrate their first ever qualification.

In Europe, the Netherlands emerged from a very strong group along with the Czech Republic, the latter requiring a play-off against Norway before sealing their first ever qualification as an independent nation, Czechoslovakia having played in Italia '90. Of the other traditional European powerhouses, only Russia and Belgium failed to reach the finals. Spain struggled for long periods and needed a play-off victory over Slovakia to seal their passage to Germany. Turkey, semi-finalists in 2002, gave way to the Ukraine, another country who made their World Cup debut in Germany. The Turks, however, held off the challenge of Greece and Denmark to reach the play-offs, where they ultimately lost to Switzerland, who qualified for the World Cup after a lengthy absence of 12 years. France qualified at the top of an extremely close group in which the top four teams all had more draws than victories under their belts. England saw off a determined Poland, although the latter – together with Sweden (in Croatia's group) – did qualify for Germany 2006 as two best group runners-up. Eventual world champions Italy had few problems in reaching the finals.

History of the FIFA World Cup Preliminary Competition (by year)

Entries FIFA World Cup™ 2006 World Cup Preliminary Competition

Facts & Figures FIFA World Cup™ 2006 World Cup Preliminary Competition

With 9 goals scored in the 2006 World Cup qualifiers, Iran's Ali Daei became the all-time top scorer of FIFA World Cup preliminaries with a total of 30 goals (7 in 1994, 4 in 1998 and 10 in 2002). The previous top scorer was Japan's Kazu Miura with 21 goals.

Ecuador's Ivan Hurtado tops the all-time ranking in the number of World Cup qualifiers played, playing a total of 56 matches, with 17 in the 2006 preliminaries.

Zambia's Kalusha Bwalya, at the age of 41, scored the decisive goal (1-0) in the match against Liberia on 4 September 2004. Bwalya came into play in the second half and scored his 50th goal in 100 matches with his national team in the dying minutes. Bwalya also played and scored on his first World Cup qualifier in 1984 just before the whistle, in their 3-0 win against Uganda.

- **Europe 51+1* (Germany as Host):** Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, England, Estonia, Faroe Islands, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland Republic, Israel, Italy, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Macedonia FYR, Malta, Moldova, Netherlands, Northern Ireland, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, San Marino, Scotland, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine, Wales.

- **South America 10:** Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, Venezuela.

- **CONCACAF 34:** Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Aruba, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Bermuda, British Virgin Islands, Canada, Cayman Islands, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Grenada, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Montserrat, Netherlands Antilles, Nicaragua, Panama, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent / Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, Turks and Caicos Islands, US Virgin Islands, USA.

- **Africa 50:** Algeria, Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Cape Verde Islands, Chad, Congo, Congo DR, Cote d'Ivoire, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sao Tome e Principe, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, Sudan, Swaziland, Tanzania, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

- **Asia 37:** Afghanistan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, China PR, Chinese Taipei, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Japan, Jordan, Korea DPR, Korea Republic, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, Lebanon, Macao, Malaysia, Maldives, Mongolia, Oman, Pakistan, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Syria, Tajikistan, Thailand, Turkmenistan, United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan, Vietnam, Yemen.

- **Oceania 12:** American Samoa, Australia, Cook Islands, Fiji, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tahiti, Tonga, Vanuatu.

No. of teams participating for the first time in the preliminary competition: 2

Afghanistan, New Caledonia.

Remarks: Bhutan, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Philippines, Myanmar, Puerto Rico, Djibouti (all did not enter), Central African Rep, Guam and Nepal (all withdrew), Serbia and Montenegro was called Yugoslavia before February 2003. As to the new regulations the defending Champion is no longer automatically qualified.

History of the FIFA World Cup Preliminary Competition (by year)

Finalists FIFA World Cup™ 2006: 32

<i>ANGOLA</i>	Argentina	Australia	Brazil
Costa Rica	<i>CÔTE D'IVOIRE</i>	Croatia	Czech Republic
Ecuador	England	France	Germany (H)
<i>GHANA</i>	Iran	Italy	Japan
Korea Republic	Mexico	Netherlands	Paraguay
Poland	Portugal	Saudi Arabia	Serbia & Montenegro
Spain	Sweden	Switzerland	<i>TOGO</i>
<i>TRINIDAD & TOBAGO</i>	Tunisia	<i>UKRAINE</i>	USA

Legend

NEWCOMERS TO FINALS in upper case italics

(H) Host country

History of the FIFA World Cup Preliminary Competition (by year)

Recap FIFA World Cup™ 2010 World Cup Preliminary Competition

YEAR	TEAM ENTRIES	DROP-OUTS	QUALIFIED*	TEAMS PLAYED°	MATCHES	GOALS	Ø
2010	205	5	1				

Entries FIFA World Cup™ 2010 World Cup Preliminary Competition

- **Europe 53:** Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, England, Estonia, Faroe Islands, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland Republic, Israel, Italy, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Macedonia FYR, Malta, Moldova, Montenegro, Netherlands, Northern Ireland, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, San Marino, Scotland, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine, Wales
- **South America 10:** Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, Venezuela.
- **CONCACAF 35:** Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Aruba, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Bermuda, British Virgin Islands, Canada, Cayman Islands, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Grenada, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Montserrat, Netherlands Antilles, Nicaragua, Panama, Puerto Rico, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent / Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, Turks and Caicos Islands, US Virgin Islands, USA.
- **Africa 52 (+1):** Algeria, Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Cape Verde Islands, Central african Republic, Chad, Comoros, Congo, Congo DR, Cote d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sao Tome e Principe, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, Sudan, Swaziland, Tanzania, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe.
- **Asia 43:** Afghanistan, Australia, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China PR, Chinese Taipei, Guam, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Japan, Jordan, Korea DPR, Korea Republic, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Macau, Malaysia, Maldives, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Oman, Pakistan, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Syria, Tajikistan, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Turkmenistan, United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan, Vietnam, Yemen.
- **Oceania 11:** American Samoa, Cook Islands, Fiji, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tahiti, Tonga, Vanuatu.

No. of teams participating for the first time in the preliminary competition: 4

Bhutan, Comoros, Montenegro, Timor-Leste.

Remarks: Only the football associations of the Philippines, Brunei Darussalam and Laos did not register. Central African Republic, Sao Tome e Principe, Papua New Guinea, Guam and Bhutan all withdrew without playing a single game.