

Annex F - Stadia and non-player operating costs

State of the Game

In this annex, we consider stadium ownership structures, the role of stadia as financial assets, variations in the incentives to invest in infrastructure and non-player operating costs across the pyramid.

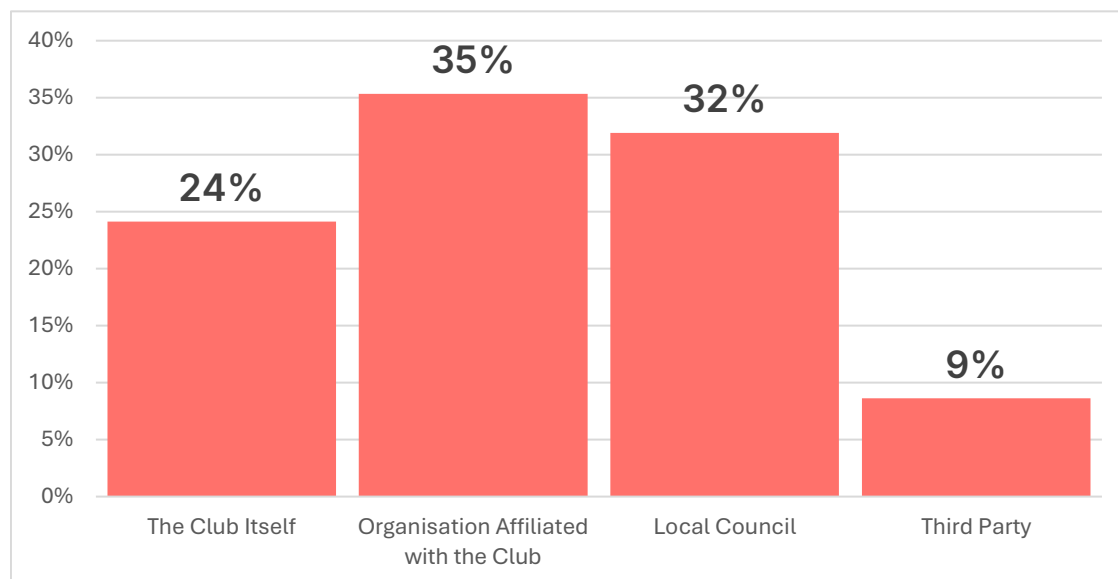
Stadium ownership

Stadium ownership arrangements vary across the football pyramid. Some clubs own the freehold of their stadium, while others occupy their stadium under a lease or licence granted by the freeholder, which may be a business within the club's wider corporate structure, a local council or an unrelated party.

Chart F.1 shows the ownership arrangements for Premier League, EFL and National League stadia.¹ 59% of stadia are owned by the club or an entity affiliated with the club. This category is predominantly made up of club holding companies but also includes club owners and Supporters' Trusts. The remaining 41% of club stadia are owned either by the local council or a third party.

There is a range of stadium ownership arrangements across the football pyramid.

Chart F.1: Ownership of Premier League, EFL and National League club stadia, by entity, 2024/25



Source: IFR analysis of PL, EFL and NL RFI data.

Note: The 'organisation affiliated with the club' category includes club holding companies, club owners and Supporters' Trusts.

¹ IFR analysis based on data received from the Premier League, EFL and National League in response to IFR requests for information.

Further down the pyramid, local council ownership becomes more common. However, ownership by organisations affiliated with the club remains the most common arrangement in both League One and League Two.

Not owning its stadium does not necessarily create a financial soundness risk for a club. However, it can affect the club's balance sheet, complicate a sale and limit its ability to invest in infrastructure and increase matchday revenues, as explored in the next subsection.

For the 88 clubs that do not own their stadium, the average time remaining on their lease or licence is 71 years. This is skewed upwards by 18 agreements with 100 years or more remaining, including two with over 900 years remaining. Conversely, 21 clubs have 10 years or less remaining on their agreements, including five clubs with less than two years remaining. These clubs may be more exposed to the risk of not securing a renewed lease or licence to continue use of their stadium.

Stadia as a financial asset

Incentives to invest in stadia

As well as being key cultural assets, stadia are often among a club's most significant financial assets. Many clubs have invested in their stadia to increase capacity, host non-football events, improve hospitality facilities and enhance the matchday experience. These investments can increase revenue, but they also carry financial risk. There is no guarantee that additional capacity or facilities will generate the expected returns, particularly if on-pitch performance declines. Clubs may also face constraints relating to stadium ownership, surrounding land use and planning requirements.

Alongside stadia, clubs increasingly invest in and maintain training facilities. These facilities support player development, welfare and performance, contributing to sporting success and increasing opportunities to generate income through player trading. Training grounds can therefore have an indirect impact on clubs' ability to generate revenue.

Clubs at different levels of the pyramid face different incentives to invest in infrastructure. Clubs can potentially increase their matchday revenues by expanding their stadium. However, a club's incentive to invest in stadium infrastructure depends on whether the additional revenue it expects to earn per seat from the investment outweighs the cost per seat of the investment. The illustrative analysis in Chart F.2 shows how the rate of return on stadium investment (IRR) varies depending on expected revenue and cost per seat.² Premier League clubs can earn more revenue per seat per match than EFL clubs, which means the expected return on investment is higher. These varying incentives are reflected in the level of infrastructure investment by Premier League and EFL clubs, explored in the subsection below.

² Analysis by BCG on behalf of the IFR.

The illustrative analysis below shows that potential rate of return on a stadium investment ranges from -9% to 18%, depending on the cost of the investment and additional revenue generated over 20 years.

Chart F.2: Illustrative analysis of rates of return on stadium investment over 20 years

		Revenue per seat per match ²							
		EFL benchmarks ³				PL benchmarks			
		£5	£10	£15	£20	£30	£60	£90	£120
Infra. cost per seat ⁴	£2k	1%	4%	6%	8%	10%	14%	16%	18%
	£4k	-3%	1%	3%	4%	6%	10%	12%	14%
	£8k	-6%	-3%	-1%	1%	3%	6%	9%	10%
	£12k	-8%	-5%	-3%	-1%	1%	4%	6%	8%
	£16k	-9%	-6%	-4%	-3%	-1%	3%	5%	6%

Source: Analysis by BCG on behalf of the IFR based on data from Stadium DB and Transfermarkt.

Note: Internal Rate of Return (IRR) on an investment is defined as the annualised return generated by each additional seat. Weighted Average Cost of Capital (WACC) is defined as the return investors would require to fund the construction of the seat. In this analysis, the IRR would need to equal the WACC for the investment to break even. Where the IRR is greater than the WACC, the investment would make a positive return. Here the WACC is assumed to be 7-8%. The figures in the chart represent the difference between the IRR and the WACC.

1. Calculations assume an inflation rate of 2% per year.
2. Assuming a stadium capacity of 20,000, operational expenditure of 25% of matchday revenue and 25 games per season.
3. EFL revenue per seat benchmarks based on 5 EFL clubs.
4. Infrastructure cost per seat range is based on benchmarks from two Premier League club stadium developments.

Infrastructure investment

Between 2021/22 and 2024/25, at least nine Premier League clubs invested in their stadium or training ground, with one new stadium built, at least three stadium redevelopments and at least five training ground developments. As such, infrastructure investment totalled £2.2 billion over the

period, equivalent to an average of 6% of total cash outflows across the four seasons.³ This is likely driven by the fact that:

- Established Premier League clubs are more likely to have excess demand for tickets and have higher revenue per seat than clubs in other leagues. Therefore, these clubs have greater incentives to invest in stadium expansions to unlock greater matchday revenues.
- Premier League clubs typically earn greater revenues and operating profits, which can be used to fund infrastructure projects.
- Furthermore, where external funding is required, Premier League clubs typically find it easier to secure loans for infrastructure projects compared with smaller clubs. These are often secured against future revenue streams or the freehold of property they own.

EFL clubs invest significantly less in infrastructure in absolute terms. Between 2021/22 and 2024/25, EFL clubs reported £417 million of infrastructure investment, representing 4% of total cash outflows, one-fifth of the total amount reported by Premier League clubs.⁴ Of that £417 million, Championship clubs spent £258 million, League One clubs spent £143 million, and League Two clubs spent £16 million.⁵ In addition, at least three EFL clubs have announced plans for new stadia, with another announcing a stadium redevelopment and one planning to redevelop its training ground.⁶

EFL clubs tend to generate lower revenue per seat than Premier League clubs. They are also less likely to experience excess demand for tickets than Premier League clubs. In addition, many EFL club investors have stated that infrastructure spending is limited because their focus is on immediate sporting outcomes.⁷ Furthermore, club owners in League One and League Two have cited challenges in obtaining bank loans for large infrastructure projects due to persistent loss-making and revenues being exposed to relegation risk.⁸ These factors contribute to lower levels of infrastructure investment in the EFL in comparison with the Premier League.

³ Analysis by BCG on behalf of the IFR based on data received from the Premier League, EFL and National League in response to IFR requests for information.

⁴ Analysis by BCG on behalf of the IFR based on data received from the Premier League, EFL and National League in response to IFR requests for information.

⁵ Analysis by BCG on behalf of the IFR based on data received from the Premier League and EFL in response to IFR requests for information, Stadium DB and club websites.

⁶ Analysis by BCG on behalf of the IFR.

⁷ Analysis by BCG on behalf of the IFR based on data received from the Premier League, EFL and National League in response to IFR requests for information.

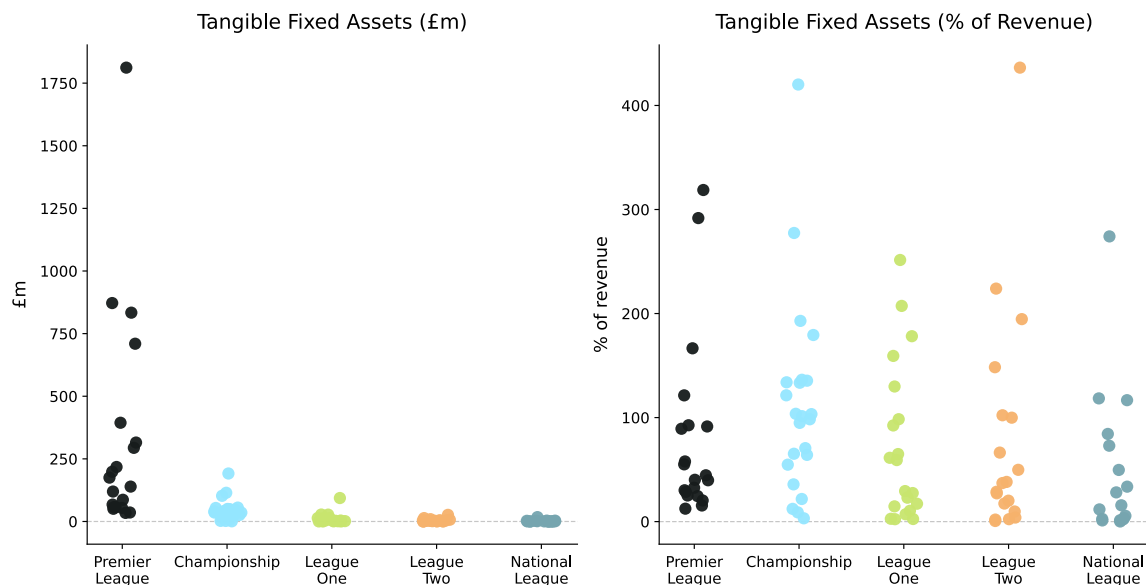
⁸ Analysis by BCG on behalf of the IFR based on data received from the Premier League, EFL and National League in response to IFR requests for information.

Value of infrastructure assets across the pyramid

Chart F.3 shows the book value of stadia and other infrastructure assets across divisions. The value of these assets is highest in the Premier League, particularly among clubs that have made significant investments in stadium infrastructure. Infrastructure assets account for a broadly similar proportion of revenue across divisions, highlighting their importance throughout the football pyramid. There is also significant variation in the value of tangible fixed assets within each division. This reflects differences in the scale and quality of infrastructure, as well as whether clubs own the stadia and training grounds they use.

Infrastructure assets account for a broadly similar share of revenue across divisions, despite large differences in absolute asset values.

Chart F.3: Tangible fixed assets by division, 2025/26



Source: IFR analysis based on data received from the Premier League, EFL and National League in response to IFR requests for information.

Note: The dot plots above display the book value of tangible fixed assets by division, where each dot represents a club during the 2025/26 season. Tangible fixed assets include the stadium and infrastructure owned by the club. The graph on the left shows the absolute values in £ million. The graph on the right shows the values as a percentage of revenue.

Non-player operating costs

Current non-player operating costs

Stadia and training facilities represent significant operating costs for clubs, alongside non-playing staff, including coaching, matchday and business operations staff, and utilities. Chart F.4 shows non-player operating costs across the leagues, both in absolute terms and as a proportion of revenue.

- In the Premier League, eight clubs have non-player operating costs of over £180 million each, reflecting the scale of their stadia and commercial operations.
- For the remaining Premier League clubs, non-player operating costs range from £40 million to £120 million each.⁹ Although these costs are high in absolute terms, they typically represent a lower proportion of revenue than further down the pyramid, ranging from 29% to 53% across all Premier League clubs.
- Across the rest of the pyramid, non-player operating costs range from £13 million to £72 million in the Championship, £6 million to £23 million in League One, £2 million to £9 million in League Two and £1 million to £7 million in the National League.¹⁰ These costs represent a much higher proportion of total revenue for Championship clubs (48% to 98%), League One clubs (43% to 235%), League Two clubs (54% to 117%) and National League clubs (43% to 158%).

Overall, 17 clubs across the EFL and National League incurred non-player operating costs in excess of total revenues. This suggests that their core operations would be loss-making even before player wage costs are considered.

These cost levels can create financial soundness risks for individual clubs in the Championship, League One, League Two and the National League. On average, for every £1 of revenue earned:

- a non-parachute Championship club spends £0.78 on non-player operating costs, ranging from £0.48 to £0.98.
- a League One club spends £1.00 while a League Two club spends £0.87, ranging from £0.43 to £2.35 across both leagues.
- A National League club spends £0.91, ranging from £0.43 to £1.58.

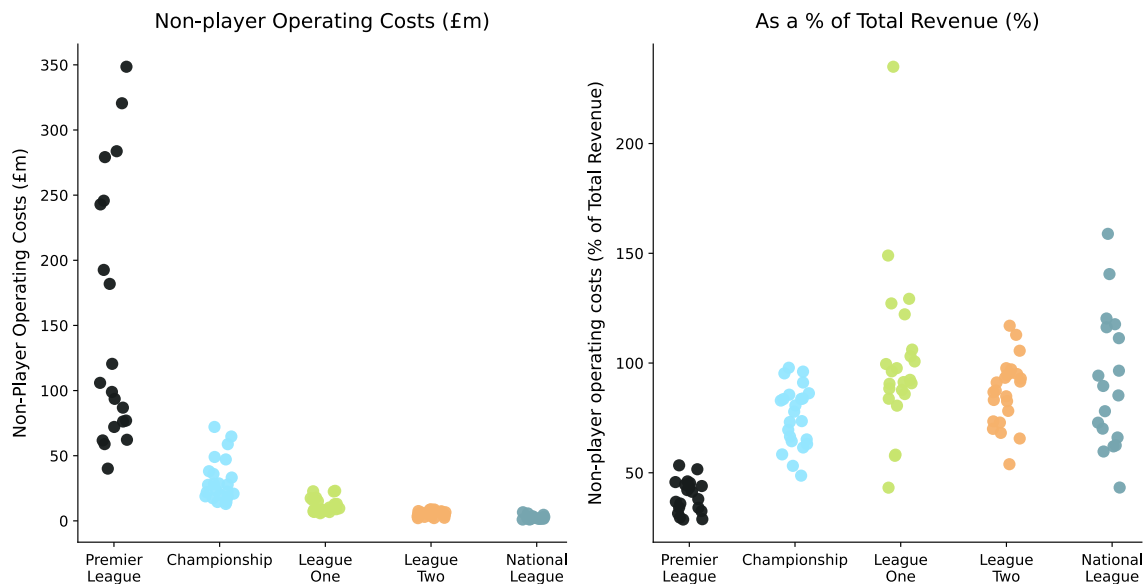
Many of these costs are relatively fixed, including staffing and utility costs, limiting clubs' ability to reduce expenditure quickly when revenues fall.

⁹ IFR analysis based on data received from the Premier League, EFL and National League in response to IFR requests for information.

¹⁰ IFR analysis based on data received from the Premier League, EFL and National League in response to IFR requests for information.

High non-player operating costs can create financial soundness risks for individual clubs in the EFL and the National League.

Chart F.4: Non-player operating costs by club, 2025/26



Source: IFR analysis based on data received from the Premier League, EFL and National League in response to IFR requests for information.

Note: The dot plots above display non-player operating costs by division, where each dot represents a club during the 2025/26 season. Non-player operating costs includes all operating costs outside of player wages. The graph on the right shows the values as a percentage of revenue.

Recent trends

Like other businesses, football clubs have been affected by recent changes in the labour market, taxation and wider cost pressures. These changes can affect club finances directly through higher costs and indirectly through their impact on demand and investment in the club.

- **Labour market:** Football clubs employ a large number of staff for day-to-day operations, as well as matchday staff such as stewards and hospitality staff. Recent increases in the National Minimum Wage and changes to National Insurance contributions have significantly increased clubs' non-player staff costs. During interviews conducted to understand investment in football, many club owners cited these changes as key contributors to rising non-player costs.¹¹

¹¹ Analysis by BCG on behalf of the IFR based on data received from the Premier League, EFL and National League in response to IFR requests for information.

- **Price inflation and cost-of-living:** Rising prices in recent years have had an impact on club costs and affected the ability of some fans to pay for tickets, TV and streaming subscriptions. The extent to which demand decreases following relegation varies between clubs and according to the socioeconomic profile of their fanbase. In particular, clubs in areas with lower income levels may find it more difficult to reflect increased costs in their pricing.
- **Energy costs:** Energy costs have increased significantly in recent years, reflecting wider geopolitical developments and disruption in energy markets. Given the energy required to operate and maintain stadia and training facilities, these increases have had a significant impact on clubs' operating costs. Investors also cited this as a contributing factor to rising non-player costs.¹²

Box F.1: Climate change and football

Climate-driven shocks have the potential to exacerbate increases in non-player operating costs that clubs are facing, and to reduce revenues. These may include:¹³

- weather-related disruption to revenue via match postponements or reduced attendances
- increased facility maintenance costs due to weather-related damage
- increased borrowing costs due to higher credit and insurance pricing for borrowers exposed to climate impacts or failing to adapt

Clubs can protect themselves from these shocks by investing in better drainage, advanced pitch technologies and insurance, but the ability of clubs to do this varies across the pyramid. This is demonstrated by the rate of weather-related postponements where, in the EFL, an average of 37 weather-related postponements occur per season. Meanwhile, the last weather-related postponement in the Premier League occurred in 2021.¹⁴

Assessing and mitigating climate risk has the potential to reduce the impact of climate-driven shocks. Some clubs are beginning to assess the risks posed to their revenue and costs by climate change. Arsenal, Chelsea, Liverpool, Manchester City, Tottenham Hotspur and The FA include climate risks in their financial reports as part of mandatory climate-related financial disclosures (CFDs).

This is clearly a global issue that requires concerted effort across governments, but football can play a part in reducing its emissions and using its position to encourage change.

These changes have meant that non-player operating costs have increased significantly in recent years. Chart F.5 shows that, between 2021/22 and 2025/26, non-player operating costs increased by:

- 68% in the Premier League

¹² Analysis by BCG on behalf of the IFR based on interviews with club owners and investors.

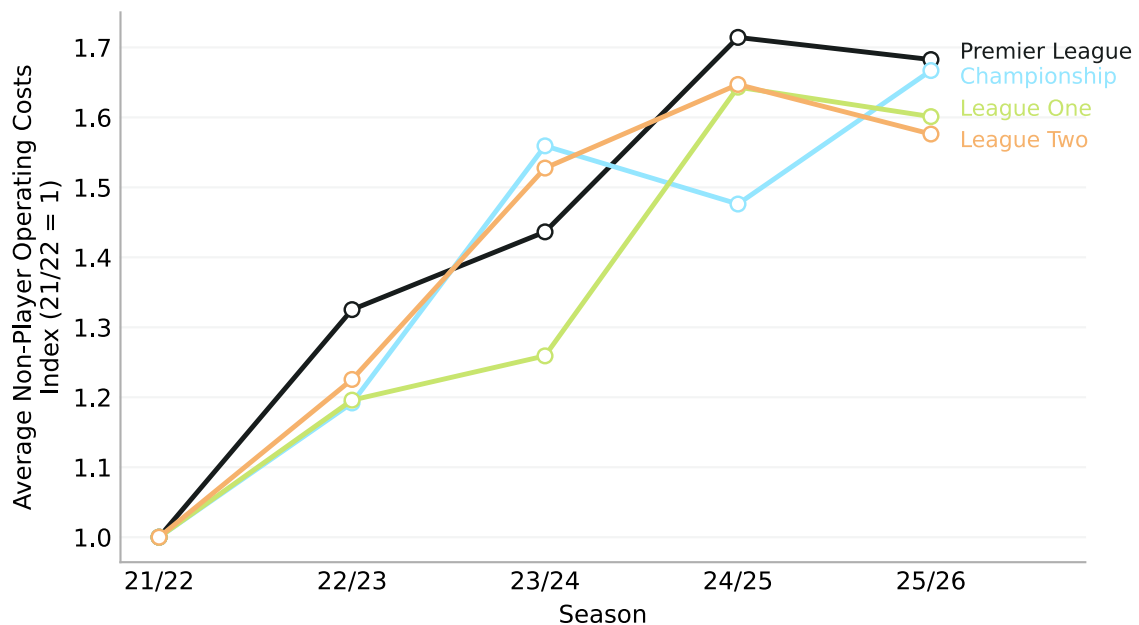
¹³ Evidence submitted to the IFR by Fran James at the Football and Climate Change Newsletter in response to the State of the Game Terms of Reference consultation.

¹⁴ EFL Executive Update, 2026.

- 67% in the Championship
- 60% in League One
- 58% in League Two

Average non-player operating costs have increased across all leagues since 2021/22.

Chart F.5: Indexed average non-player operating costs by division, 2021/22 to 2025/26



Source: IFR analysis based on data received from the Premier League, EFL and National League in response to IFR requests for information.

Note: Each line shows how the average non-player operating costs have evolved over time, indexed to the levels from the 2021/22 season.

Continued increases in these costs could create a systemic risk. Table F.1 illustrates the impact of hypothetical increases in non-player operating costs. The scenarios are intended to approximate the effect of potential macroeconomic shocks such as further increases in energy costs and demonstrate how such increases could affect club finances. We model increases of 10%, 20% and 30% in non-player operating costs. In each scenario, pre-tax losses increase. These growing losses would need to be covered in some way, potentially through additional owner funding, reduced on-pitch expenditure or downsizing off-pitch operations. The proportional impact is greatest for non-parachute Championship, League One, League Two and National League clubs, for which non-player operating costs account for a larger share of revenue than at Premier League and parachute clubs.

Table F.1: Impact on average losses before tax from changes to non-player operating costs

League/Category	Average Loss Before Tax in 2025/26 £m (% of revenue)	Additional Loss Before Tax £m (% of 2025/26 revenue)		
		After a 10% increase in non- player operating costs	After a 20% increase in non- player operating costs	After a 30% increase in non- player operating costs
PL – Big 6	62 (9%)	+29 (4%)	+57 (8%)	+86 (12%)
PL – Other	37 (16%)	+9.5 (4%)	+19 (8%)	+28 (12%)
CH – Parachute	31 (33%)	+6.1 (7%)	+12 (13%)	+18 (20%)
CH – Other	20 (64%)	+2.5 (8%)	+5.0 (16%)	+7.5 (23%)
L1	7.5 (67%)	+1.2 (10%)	+2.4 (20%)	+3.6 (30%)
L2	2.7 (43%)	+0.6 (9%)	+1.1 (17%)	+1.7 (26%)
NL	1.5 (57%)	+0.3 (9%)	+0.5 (18%)	+0.8 (27%)

Source: IFR analysis based on data received from the Premier League, EFL and National League in response to IFR requests for information.

Conclusion

Average non-player operating costs have increased substantially across all divisions, with these costs making up a higher proportion of club expenditure towards the bottom of the pyramid. In 2025/26, 17 clubs across the EFL and National League had non-player operating costs that exceeded their total revenues. These clubs would therefore have been loss-making before accounting for player costs.

- Between 2021/22 and 2025/26, average non-player operating costs have increased across the top four divisions:
 - Premier League: 68%
 - Championship: 67%
 - League One: 60%
 - League Two: 58%
- Investing in stadia and matchday infrastructure has enabled the largest clubs to materially increase matchday revenues. Premier League clubs can typically generate more revenue per seat per match than EFL and National League clubs because of higher ticket prices, excess demand and corporate hospitality. This increases the expected return on investment.
- Investment has been substantially higher in the Premier League: between 2021/22 and 2024/25, Premier League clubs invested £2.2 billion in infrastructure, compared with £417 million across EFL clubs.

- For many clubs, the stadium is a significant financial asset and an important part of their cultural heritage. However, ownership structures vary across the pyramid:
 - 59% are owned by the club or an affiliated entity
 - 41% are owned by local authorities or other third parties