FIFPRO

2026 FIFPRO GLOBAL EMPLOYMENT REPORT

WORKING CONDITIONS IN WOMEN'S FOOTBALL





Growing the game, protecting the players - Why women's football's economic boom needs institutional protection to match



FOREWORD

This is FIFPRO's second women's football Global Employment Report, and the industry looks remarkably different compared to when we published the first report in 2017. While there has been well recognised economic success, that growth and success has not been distributed across all markets and players evenly. And this unevenness is pervasive across the globe, with inconsistencies and precarity experienced by the majority of players.

In 2023, 150 players from participating nations signed a joint letter to FIFA calling for equal regulations, equal conditions, fairer prize money redistributions, and a credible pathway to equal prize money. The demands in the letter exposed the absence of standards that should underpin any global tournament. Through collective solidarity, players, unions and FIFPRO were able to achieve substantial progress in the journey toward true economic justice and equality - one that challenges longstanding inequities and redefines the value of women's football. The outcomes of the collective action were transformative for the recognised value of the players who competed in the 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup and the women's football ecosystem: increase in prize money to 110m USD (from 30m), equal conditions with the FIFA Men's World Cup and a minimum 30% guaranteed share of prize money directly to players. UEFA followed suit at Women's EURO 2025, mandating that 30–40% of a record €41 million pool go directly to players. Both are proof of what collective player power can achieve. But both are international tournament money, paid every two or four years to players already selected for their national team. This report is about the domestic club game most players spend their career in.

Behind every percentage here is a player describing, in her own words, what professionalisation has or has not meant for her. Together, the findings describe a two-tier game – a better-resourced top end of the scale and a much larger group for whom "professional" still means precarious. The themes contained within this report are organised around four key indicators of employment, performance and health that players say define genuine professionalisation: fair wages, full-time contracts, safe workplace conditions, and the structures that support a career. FIFA's 2021 maternity regulation shows what a genuine global floor can achieve; this report sets out what it would take to build the rest of the house on it.

Closing this gap is not one organisation's job – it depends on all stakeholders and those whose priority and responsibility it is to create a sustainable ecosystem FIFA, confederations, federations, leagues, clubs and investors treating player protection as the foundation the game's growth is built on, not a cost competing with it. FIFPRO's role is to keep players' own voice at the centre of that work. This report is part of it.

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01 INTRODUCTION

The growth of the professional women's football industry is accelerating across some parts of the world. Global revenue is on track to approximately double from around $581 million in 2024 to over $1 billion in 2027. Broadcast figures and attendances are breaking records, and player profiles are driving the commercial viability of the game. As a result, some clubs are generating revenues that are reflective of an industry that is growing exponentially.

Yet the well documented "growth" has not necessarily translated proportionally into security or adequate labour conditions for players at the same pace or across place. The professionalisation of women's football is well underway in some countries but occurs on uneven terrain. As the professionalisation of the women's game continues to grow in financial value and the numbers continue to rise—for the broadcast audiences, fans in stadiums and on social media—the implications of this growth for the players demand attention. The highlight reels of professional women's football must not overshadow the lived realties of the majority of its players. For a sustainable ecosystem to exist, growth must reach players at every level, and extend across players, leagues, clubs. The rights and protection of players and their workplace conditions must be protected with a floor and promoted as the game grows.

FIFPRO's 2026 Global Employment Report reveals how the growth of the women's game is bringing important positive developments that also present a very real risk to professional players, which requires pressing attention. The numbers must not be taken at face value. FIFPRO's 2026 deeper examination, sheds light on the ground; looking behind the numbers at the lived experiences of players.

According to FIFPRO's 2026 findings, professional players in many regions are still barely earning a minimum wage, or even falling below it, while others are receiving well above a very low floor. Neither end of the spectrum is evidence that pay has reached an adequate standard. The research also reveals that only two-thirds of professional players globally are paid for 12 months of the year, and average club contract length is still less than two years. The findings further show that almost half of players are not provided with a pension, contributing to financial insecurity in the wake of an already precarious and relatively short career. Moreover, psychological stress is now being reported by players as one of the main reasons for leaving the sport early, with players also citing a lack of mental health support. Simultaneously, the research reveals encouraging findings around maternity/parental support and the positive shift away from players' early exit; as well as agent representation.

However, these global figures mask one of the biggest findings of the 2026 research—that players' experiences of "professionalisation" vary enormously depending on where they ply their trade. Players in some regions report satisfaction well below adequate with their pay, working conditions and maternity provisions, while a minority enjoy far stronger protection.

All women's leagues cannot be expected to professionalise at the same pace around the world, indeed staggered growth is anticipated, but the transition to professionalism cannot be fragmented when it happens. Labour standards must be established and enforced within and across markets creating and maintaining a widespread floor that grows at an equal pace. **These standards are key to creating decent, safe and secure jobs. At the same time, minimum standards must not become ceilings inhibiting potential improvements in playing environments.**

> **This report organises its findings around the three key areas that players themselves say define genuine professionalisation[1]:**
>
> 1. Fair wage
> 2. Full-time contract
> 3. Workplace conditions that protect, respect and value players.

FIFPRO situates these three areas within the wider ecosystem, drawing attention to the critical backdrop of policies, regulations, and institutional interventions—or lack thereof—shaping players' workplace conditions and environments. Institutional protection – from FIFA, confederations (UEFA, CAF, AFC, CONMEBOL, CONCACAF), national associations, collective agreements/ bargaining and worker's protections under the International Labour Organisation (ILO) – is what turns each of these from an aspiration into an enforceable right. FIFPRO directs attention to FIFA's 2021 global maternity regulation as clear proof of what successful intervention looks like and makes a call to action for global football stakeholders, in order to ensure that industry growth is translating into improved labour conditions and spreading evenly across the bumpy terrain that is a player's career. **The conclusion is simple: the economic case for women's football is clear and evident. The institutional case now must catch up and extend its reach, evenly and swiftly.**

1 A professional player is one who has a written contract with a club and is paid more for their footballing activity than the expenses they incur from it

02 KEY FINDINGS

62% of the players consider themselves professional, yet 78% have a contract and 82% receive football income from club.

$2,601 is the global monthly average salary. Median (middle) monthly salary is $1,669. Global annual average salary is $30,527, median (middle) annual salary is $18,837.

1.6 years is the average club contract length.

66% of players globally paid for 12 months of the year.

24% of players globally have experienced late payments in the last 2 seasons.

42% of players globally are not provided with a pension.

41% of players globally have an agent representation.

Maternity/ Parental Support

A positive shift away from early exit.

Top reasons for players leaving the game early

1. Financial (59%)
2. Psychological stress (46%) (& players lack mental health support)
3. Better work-life balance (39%).

32% of players feel like they don't have enough days off throughout the season.

Document analysis

In order to understand the economic value and industry perspective an external analysis of the economy of women's professional football and an assessment of the structural environment of the industry was conducted. This included a systemic review of league models, popularity data, economic, financial and market information, and league wide collective agreements. Data were collected through document analysis across 30 countries in six geographical regions.[1]

Survey data

During the 2025/26 season 791 players from 40 countries completed a survey designed by Manchester Metropolitan University in collaboration with FIFPRO. The results are arranged by geographical regions.[2]

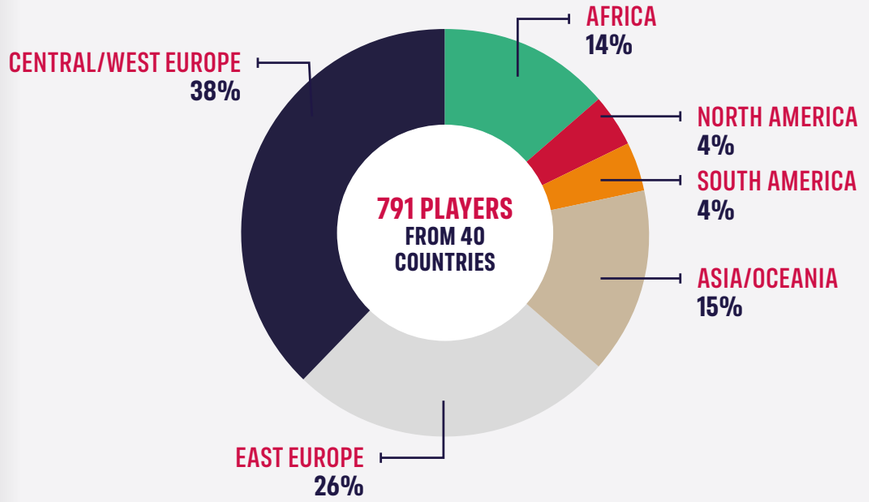
Interview data

During the 2025/26 season 34 players from the six geographical regions participated in a semi-structured interview designed by Manchester Metropolitan University in collaboration with FIFPRO. The players were playing in the following geographical regions: Central/West Europe(17), North America (7), Asia/Oceania (5), South America (3), Africa (1), and East Europe (1).

Limitation

Within both the survey and interviews there is an (over)representation of Central/ West Europe based respondents, while it is acknowledged that despite the team effort for better representativeness, the Americas are underrepresented in the survey data and Africa and East Europe are underrepresented in the interview data.

CONTINENTS' REPRESENTATION



1 3 in Africa: Egypt, Morocco and South Africa. 3 in North America: Canada, Mexico, and USA. 3 in South America: Argentina, Brazil, and Colombia. 6 in Asia/Oceania: Australia, China, Japan, New Zealand, Saudi Arabia, and South Korea. 5 in East Europe: Croatia, Cyprus, Greece, Lithuania, and Romania. 10 in Central/West Europe: Czechia, Denmark, England, France, Germany, Italy, Norway, Scotland, Spain, and Sweden.

2 Botswana, Egypt, Gabon and South Africa for Africa (4); Canada, Mexico and the United States of America for North America (3); Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Colombia for South America (4); Australia, Japan, New Zealand and Taiwan for Asia/Oceania (4); Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Greece, Hungary, Lithuania, Montenegro, Poland, Romania and Slovakia for East Europe (10); Austria, Czech Republic, Denmark, England, France, Germany, Iceland, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Scotland, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden for West Europe (15).

03 THE AVERAGE GLOBAL PLAYER



AVERAGE AGE

24.5 years is the average age of players

NATIONAL TEAM

42% of the players are playing in a national football team

EDUCATION LEVEL

90% of the players have finished school education

52% have a university degree

MONTHLY CLUB SALARY

$2,601 (€2237) is the average monthly club salary

MEDIAN MONTHLY WAGE

$1,669 (€1435) is the median monthly wage

PAID BY CLUB

82% of the players are paid by club

CLUB CONTRACT

78% of the players have a written club contract

84% have a copy of club contract

TYPE OF CONTRACT

12% have an amateur contract
56% have an employment contract
4% have a civil law/self employed contract
2% have a collective contract
26% don't know

EXPENSE COVERAGE

57% of the players are paid enough to cover their expenses

PAYMENT TIMELINE

76% of the players are always paid on time

CONTRACT DURATION

19 months is the average length of a player contract

AGENT

41% of the players are represented by an agent

DUAL CAREER

39% of the players combine their football career with study

31% combine their football career with another job

LEAVING THE GAME EARLY

49% of the players leave the game early

REASONS

59% leave for financial reasons
22% leave for health reasons
19% leave to start a family
22% leave to study
35% leave for other career opportunities
39% leave for a better work-life balance
21% leave for discrimination or poor treatment
46% leave for psychological stress
12% leave because they were not offered a contract
3% leave for other reasons

04 METHODOLOGY

Methods

01 **OUTCOME A**
Questionnaires and interviews with players

02 **OUTCOMES B & C**
Desktop research/document and data analysis

THREE OVERARCHING OUTCOMES

OUTCOME A
New and Updated Employment Data / Player Perspective

Based on FIFPRO's consideration that there is limited employment data on professional women's football and subsequent information on the labour experiences and reality for women's players, the focus of overarching outcome A is a research and situational analysis of players in the labour market.

OUTCOME B
Economic Value / Industry Perspective

The focus of desired overarching outcome B is an external analysis of the economy of women's professional football and an assessment of the structural environment of the industry, including a systemic review of league models, popularity data, economic, financial and market information, and collective bargaining agreements (CBAs).

OUTCOME C
Additional Supporting Items

Where relevant, FIFPRO also wanted the Report to identify best practice and case studies from other sports, or other labour union movements, that support the outcomes of the Report and add impact.

05 A BOOMING INDUSTRY

The numbers behind women's football's growth are striking. FIFPRO's research estimates that global revenue for the sport reached roughly $581 million in 2024[1], rising to around $678 million in 2025, excluding major tournaments – and to almost $919 million once the FIFA Women's World Cup and UEFA Women's European Championships are accounted for[2]. On current growth trends, with a 15.2% growth in 2026 as suggested by Deloitte, the estimated global revenue for women's football would reach $1bn allocated to 2026[3].



In line with a projection by Nielsen Sports and PepsiCo that the fanbase will rise from 500m in 2025 to over 800m in 2030[4] (9.9% annual growth), the estimated global revenue for women's football would be over $1bn ($1.15bn) allocated to 2027[5]. The estimated global revenue for women's football in (rather than allocated to) 2027 would be around $1.9bn without any allocation from the UEFA Euro (since it will not be played in 2027), but with the revenue targeted for the 2027 FIFA World Cup fully allocated in 2027 (since it will be played in 2027) instead of being allocated to different years[6]. This growth is not expected to plateau; the next four-year calendar period (2027-2031) could be the most profitable, with international tournaments in each year, except 2030[7]. FIFA Women's World Cup in Brazil in 2027, FIFA Women's Club World Cup (location tbc) and Olympics in Los Angeles in 2028, UEFA Women's European Championships in Germany, AFC Women's Asian Cup in Uzbekistan and CONCACAF Women's Gold Cup (location tbc) in 2029, and the expanded 48 team FIFA Women's World Cup in 2031, likely to be in the USA, Mexico, Costa Rica and Jamaica.

Domestic leagues are contributing considerably to this growth. The National Women's Soccer League (NWSL) in the United States generated $253 million in revenue in 2025, up 18% on the previous year, underpinned by a $240 million, four-year media rights deal – forty times larger than its previous contract[8]. England's Women's Super League (WSL) is projected to grow revenue from £87 million to £101 million over the same period. FIFPRO examined a sample of 37 clubs from eight countries (14 from USA, eight from England, eight from Japan, two from Germany, two from Spain, one from France, one from Italy, and one from Norway).

TABLE 1 / **REVENUE PER CLUB AND URBAN AREA POPULATION**

	REVENUE 2023-2024 (in $ million)[1]	REVENUE 2024-2025 (in $ million)[2]	URBAN AREA POPULATION 2023 (in million)
Angel City / USA	35.5	38.0	15.6
Kansas City Current / USA	36.4	38.0	1.8
Arsenal / England	19.4	28.9	10.8
Chelsea / England	14.5	28.7	10.8
FC Barcelona / Spain	19.4	24.9	5.3
Portland Thorns / USA	16.0	24.0	2.1
San Diego Wave / USA	24.0	24.0	3.0
Bay / USA	22.0	23.0	1.8
Seattle Reign / USA	10.1	18.0	4.0
Washington Spirit / USA	11.9	18.0	7.9
Manchester City / England	8.5	14.6	2.5
Manchester United / England	11.6	14.5	2.5
Real Madrid / Spain	11.4	13.9	6.8
North Carolina Courage / USA	9.1	12.0	0.2
Bayern Munich / Germany	3.9	8.2	2.1
Paris SG / France	5.0	5.2	11.1
Inter Milan / Italy		3.4	5.5
Sanfrecce Hiroshima Regina / Japan	2.1	3.4	1.1
Brann / Norway	2.3		0.3

Note: clubs ordered from the highest to the lowest revenue 2024-2025.
1 2024 for USA. Conversion rates = 0.9243 for $ to € and 0.0061 for JPY to €.
2 2025 for USA. Conversion rates = 0.8862 for $ to € and 0.0061 for JPY to €.

Sources: Forbes and Sportico (USA), Deloitte (Europe) and J.League (Japan) for revenue, Demographia for population over 500,000 inhabitants, City Population for population under 500,000 inhabitants as well as for Tokyo, merged with Yokohama by Demographia.

Revenue Sources

1 FIFA (2023). FIFA Women's World Cup 2023TM: Beyond greatnessTM. https://inside.fifa.com/tournament-organisation/fifa-womens-world-cup-2023-tournament-recap

2 To avoid peaks in years with major tournaments and help provide a more linear progression of the overall global revenue, the revenue generated by major tournaments is split into and allocated to four years instead of being solely allocated to the year of the competition.

3 The growth only applies to the amount excluding the FIFA World Cup and the UEFA Euro.

4 Nielsen (2025). Women's football set to enter global top 5 sports by 2030 with over 800M fans — Nielsen Sports and PepsiCo report reveals untapped opportunity for brands. https://www.nielsen.com/news-center/2025/womens-football-set-to-enter-global-top-5-sports-by-2030-with-over-800m-fans-nielsen-sports-and-pepsico-report-reveals-untapped-opportunity-for-brands/

5 This is based on the allocation of 12.5% of the revenue budgeted for the UEFA Euro 2025 and 2029 each; and the assumption that the revenue generated by the UEFA Euro 2029 will be €186m based on the application of a 9.9% annual growth in revenue compared to the UEFA Euro 2025.

6 In addition to the FIFA Women's World Cup and the UEFA Women's Euro, there are also other women's confederation tournaments, but data on these is not available and considered covered is the amount for women's football globally, Euro excluded.

7 ESPN (2025). FIFA targets $1bn revenue from 2027 Women's World Cup. https://www.espn.co.uk/football/story/_/id/45140049/women-world-cup-fifa-targets-1-billion-revenue-tournament

Table 1 presents the revenue generated by 14 clubs above $10m in 2024-2025 (2025 for USA) – all coming from three countries, that is, USA, England and Spain – and five clubs with the highest known revenue in the five other countries with at least one known revenue. Table 1 confirms the economic domination of the NWSL worldwide with seven of its clubs in the top ten. It is also consistent with the WSL being the 2nd ranked league in terms of revenue generated worldwide, with two clubs in the top ten (Arsenal and Chelsea) and Manchester City 11th and United 12th. The only club in the top ten which is neither US nor England based is FC Barcelona. Spain is also represented at the 13th rank with Real Madrid, the last but one club in the sample with a revenue above $10m, ahead of North Carolina Courage.

Audiences are increasing alongside revenue, live TV/digital/ streaming of the UEFA Women's Champions League has seen viewership climb by double digits year after year, with the most recent group stage recording a 135% jump in average live audiences[12]. Domestically, the 2025 NWSL final between Gotham FC and Washington Spirit averaged 1.2 million viewers, marking the league's most-watched match in history, with a peak at 1.55 million viewers[13]; total viewership across Nielsen-rated platforms in 2025 reached 20.2 million[4]. In the WSL's 2023-2024[14] and 2024-2025 seasons[15], marquee derbies drew peak TV audiences near a million viewers and BBC One viewership stayed largely stable, the plateau in traditional TV averages reflected a shift toward digital platforms—highlighted by the WSL's YouTube channel drawing 39.6 million views in its debut season to become the second-most-watched women's sports property worldwide—rather than any real decline in fan interest.

That interest is showing up in stadiums too as seen in Table 2 (next page). Across the 14 domestic leagues FIFPRO tracked over the past three seasons, the NWSL drew the highest average crowds – around 10,600 to 12,860 fans per game – with England's WSL second at roughly 6,600 to 7,400 both well clear of



every other league (Germany, Japan and France each averaged under 4,000). Arsenal posted the highest average club attendance of all, regularly filling large sections of the 60,704-seat Emirates Stadium; they averaged around 30,000 for three consecutive seasons (23/24, 24/25, 25/26), ahead of most NWSL sides, the highest average club attendance in the NWSL is Portland Thorns with just under 20,000 for the three consecutive seasons (23/24, 24/25, 25/26) studied.

The UEFA Women's Champions League final tournament drew a comparable 6,900 to 9,200 fans per game across its last three editions. Tellingly, as discussed above the NWSL and WSL are also the two highest-revenue leagues in the sport – underlining that strong attendance and strong finances are moving together, not by coincidence.

Fan interest is projected to continue to follow the same curve. Industry forecasts project that the global fanbase for women's football will grow from around 500 million people in 2025 to more than 800 million by 2030[4].

8 ESPN (2023). NWSL announces new 4-year rights deal with ESPN, CBS, Prime and Scripps. https://www.espn.co.uk/football/story/_/id/38857254/nwsl-inks-4-year-rights-deal-espn-cbs-prime-scripps

9 Sportico (2026). 2026 NWSL valuations ranking. https://www.sportico.com/feature/nwsl-soccer-team-value-ranking-1234740972

10 Knight, B. (2026). The NWSL's most valuable teams 2026. Forbes. https://www.forbes.com/sites/brettknight/2026/04/22/the-nwsls-most-valuable-teams-2026

11 Deloitte (2025b). Women's Super League clubs. https://www.deloitte.com/uk/en/services/consulting/research/annual-review-of-football-finance-womens-super-league.html

Audience Sources

12 Tomás, A. (2026). The Women's Champions League breaks viewership records, rising 164% with its new format. Mundo Deportivo. https://www.mundodeportivo.com/en/20260209/740047/the-women-s-champions-league-breaks-viewership-records-rising-164-with-its-new-format.html

13 NWSL (2025). Record-setting 1.184 million viewers tune into 2025 NWSL championship, presented by Google Pixel on CBS. https://www.nwslsoccer.com/news/2025-nwsl-championship-postseason-records

14 https://womensleagues.thefa.com/record-breaking-2023-24-barclays-wsl-season-concludes

15 WSL Analytics (2025). Eyes on the screen: WSL broadcast and streaming trends 2024-25. https://www.wslanalytics.com/p/wsl-broadcast-streaming-trends-2024-25

TABLE 2 / **AVERAGE STADIUM ATTENDANCE FOR CLUBS IN WOMEN'S DOMESTIC LEAGUES AND URBAN AREA POPULATION**

	ATTENDANCE 2023-2024	ATTENDANCE 2024-2025	ATTENDANCE 2025-2026	URBAN AREA POPULATION 2023 (in million)
Arsenal / England	30,017	28,808	33,808	10.8
Portland Thorns / USA	18,918	19,967	18,173	2.1
Angel City / USA	19,756	19,331	16,257	15.6
Washington Spirit / USA	10,886	13,864	15,259	7.9
Bay / USA	n/a	13,671	14,823	1.9
San Diego Wave / USA	20,718	20,069	13,427	3.1
Kansas City Current / USA	11,353	11,500	11,500	1.8
Gotham / USA	6,322	10,909	8,892	21.4
Utah Royals / USA	n/a	10,469	8,727	2.5
Chelsea / England	9,266	9,373	8,519	10.8
Union Berlin / Germany	n/a (3rd tier)	n/a (2nd tier)	8,208	4.4
Seattle Reign / USA	13,609	23,444	7,873	4.0
Hamburger / Germany	n/a (2nd tier)	n/a (2nd tier)	6,934	2.2
Bayern Munich / Germany	3,964	2,455	6,715	2.1
Manchester United / England	10,956	7,390	6,178	2.5
Monterrey / Mexico	5,227	7,555	6,055	4.7
Corinthians / Brazil			6,006	21.5
FC Barcelona / Spain	6,969	6,794	5,905	5.3
Manchester City / England	7,108	6,536	5,551	2.5
Liverpool / England	4,550	6,753	5,303	0.8
Sanfrecce Hiroshima Regina / Japan	2,907	5,482	5,290	1.1
Tigres UANL / Mexico	6,324	4,964	4,996	4.7
Nantes / France	n/a (2nd tier)	2,441	4,967	0.6
Marseille / France	n/a (2nd tier)	n/a (2nd tier)	4,806	1.4
Vancouver Rise FC / Canada	n/a	n/a	4,245	2.5
Deportivo Guadalajara / Mexico	6,957	3,346	4,084	4.4
Wolfsburg / Germany	5,691	4,846	4,082	0.1
Lyon / France	2,737	2,829	3,877	1.4
Eintracht Frankfurt / Germany	3,736	5,733	3,515	2.0
Brann / Norway	1,076	2,273	3,100	0.3
Adelaide United / Australia	1,724	2,731	3,024	1.3
Athletic Club / Spain	2,225	5,116	2,542	0.8
Hammarby / Sweden	4,043	2,366	2,264	2.2
Strasbourg / France	n/a (2nd tier)	2,848	2,129	0.5
Sydney FC / Australia	4,139	2,332	2,117	4.8
JEF United Chiba / Japan	871	3,623	1,148	1.0
Slavia Prague / Czechia	654	1,447	886	1.3

Note: clubs ordered from the best to the least performing as per attendance 2025-2026.
Sources: World Football for attendance, Demographia for population over 500,000 inhabitants, City Population for population under 500,000 inhabitants.

06 GROWTH WITHOUT A FLOOR

Whilst growth should be acknowledged and celebrated; the growth in professional women's football is uneven, fragmented, and occurring without a floor in place. When there is growth without a floor - such as guaranteed minimum conditions, collective agreements or basic safety nets, it carries problematic implications including the deepening of inequalities and worker exploitation.

FIFPRO's research looked at league structures in 30 countries and found that only eight of them have a collective agreement in place; 17 have none, and the data was not available in a further five. Whilst the term "semi-professional" does not exist within FIFA definitions, it is a categorisation that reflects the current state of some leagues across the globe and players who compete within those leagues, and accurately captures this fragmented terrain (i.e., some teams operate professionally, but not all, alternatively scattered professional contracts exist for some players but not standardised across the whole league). Semi-professional leagues – a third of those studied – have no collective agreements at all and are fertile ground for precarious working conditions and players easily falling through the cracks of protections. Even among fully professional leagues, having a collective agreement is far from guaranteed, but is a critical aspect to accelerate and indicate professionalisation.

The fragmented growth pattern shows up in players' own accounts of their working lives. Surveyed on a five-point scale, 791 elite women players report an average overall satisfaction of just 3.1 – **essentially neutral.** Satisfaction is highest in the Americas and Western Europe, but drops below neutral in Eastern Europe, Africa and Asia/Oceania. Pay satisfaction follows the same fault line: an average of 2.8 out of 5 overall, but as low as 2.2 in Africa.

WHY ARE COLLECTIVE AGREEMENTS SO IMPORTANT?

A collective agreement means any written agreement concluded between a players' union, on the one hand, and a league and/or football association, on the other, which regulates, establishes or otherwise addresses terms and conditions affecting players collectively.

Such agreements may cover, among other matters, employment conditions, minimum remuneration, working time and workload, health and safety, medical care and insurance, leave, travel and accommodation standards, player welfare, contractual protections, dispute resolution and other matters relating to the professional and employment conditions of players.

For the purposes of this definition, a collective agreement may take different forms and need not be formally designated as such. It may, for example, be concluded in the form of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), protocol, framework agreement or similar instrument, provided that it reflects an agreement between the relevant player representative body and the league and/or football association.



Revenue is just as fragmented. FIFPRO's club-level data shows eight North American and European clubs generating more than $20 million a year, while clubs in Italy, Japan and Norway in the same dataset report revenues under $5 million. The same sport, at the same moment in its growth story, is producing very different outcomes across the ecosystem, which ultimately influences the players access to resources throughout their careers.

> It's just really sad that we have to leave our country to play professional and have a good environment.
>
> PLAYER INTERVIEWEE



FIFPRO INDEX
PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS ON COLLECTIVE ORGANISING & REPRESENTATION

The right to collectively organise is the foundation on which to establish collective bargaining, and independent representation in the governance of the football industry. Collective bargaining at the national level is one of the most effective ways to protect and advance the rights of players and their conditions.

Every professional player has the right to organise and join a player union. Every professional player also has the right to collectively bargain. Many elite players, even if not recognised as professionals yet in the women's game, can also organise, join a player union and collectively bargain. However, gaining professional status is crucial for securing these rights. There must be collective agreements established between the players and their national league. The main objective being to reach a collective agreement under which the working conditions and terms of employment, as well as the regulation of the relations between employers and workers are defined. In some countries, the collective agreement will be with the Federation (FA), if it runs the domestic league; in other countries, it will be with an independent league. Contracts in the form of collective agreements are also important for national teams (between national team players and their Federation).

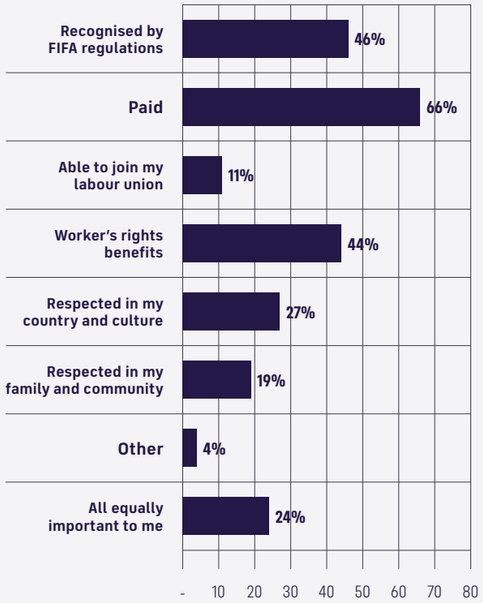
> Player interviewee
>
> I think we are definitely improving in women's football, but I am just scared that it's only improving at a high speed in some countries, and the same with the national team. I am scared that in time there will be like 2 or 3 countries where the domestic league is competitive and well-organized and plays well, and I am really scared that other countries will fall behind, also the national teams.



07 THIS IS WORK

2026 FINDINGS
Recognising the Professional Status of Players

FIGURE 1 / **WHY PROFESSIONAL STATUS IS IMPORTANT FOR PLAYERS**



> Player interviewee
>
> A professional player is someone who can live on their salary.

In FIFPRO's 2026 survey findings:



90% of the respondents globally consider that it is important for them as a player to have professional status. The percentages were high across all regions.

According to the respondents, the three main justifications for the importance of professional status are the following:

90% in order to be paid[1]

70% to be recognised by the FIFA regulations, e.g., the transfer system[1]

68% to get workers' rights benefits[1]

The data shows that players' priority is to be paid, with 90% stating the importance of having professional status is to be paid.

In addition, the majority of players understood the importance of being recognised by FIFA regulations, with 70% selecting this as one of their top three reasons for the importance of professional status. The final reason that made the top three was 'workers' rights benefits' with 68% selecting this as one of their top three reasons for the importance of professional status. Together, this suggested that there was a strong understanding among the players of the importance of professional status, firstly to be paid, but also to be protected within institutional regulations.

1 to account for the 24% that answered "all equally important to me", +24% has been added to each answer given.

What is a professional player and why is professional status important within the regulations?

FIFA's definition of professional football player according to the Regulations on the Status and Transfer of Players (RSTPs):

> A professional is a player who has a written contract with a club and is paid more for his [sic] footballing activity than the expenses he [sic] effectively incurs. All other players are considered to be amateurs.
>
> FIFA RSTP 2024



FIFA's Regulations on the Status and Transfer of Players recognise only two categories, amateur and professional, with "no other status" permitted. A professional player is simply one who has a written contract with a club and is paid more for their footballing activity than the expenses they incur from it – no minimum wage threshold, no minimum hours, no requirement to be full-time.

Professional women's players are workers who must be recognised as such and must be granted the rights to which they, like all workers, are entitled.

Ensuring that women's football players' labour and status as professionals is recognised remains the key starting point. Still one of the main issues hampering many women's players and inhibiting the professionalisation of the game is them being required to perform and compete under professional obligations without being granted professional status. Without professional status as workers, players can be denied their rights and protections and excluded from labour legislation, setting in a motion a vicious cycle:

When players do not have professional status and their access to labour rights is at risk, this undermines their ability to join a labour union and collectively bargain. As such, it becomes difficult to have a voice or any agency in improving their circumstances and conditions. To propel the virtuous cycle, players' work must count as labour, and this be reflected in their status.

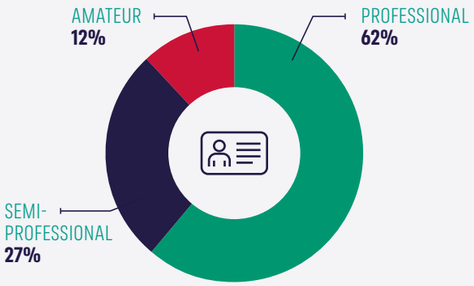
However, granting players professional status is not enough. The virtuous cycle cannot fuel itself. Although players may be entitled to labour rights, this does not guarantee that they can access or exercise these rights. Players may have greater agency in improving their conditions, but this does not ensure that the industry values their voice or vision in shaping the structures of the game. Active measures must be taken in tandem with granting players professional status on paper, to ensure the translation of status and rights in practice into the real lives of players.

These labour rights must also be comprehensive. International conventions (ILO) and national labour legislation standards must apply to the women's football sector, as to any other. Meeting collectively agreed upon labour standards and creating conditions of work that comply with national and international standards are essential for players in the women's football industry to be protected and able to focus on sporting performance.

2026 FINDINGS

Self-reported status of players

FIGURE 2 / **HOW PLAYERS CONSIDER THEMSELVES**



Player interviewees

Professional means like full-time and being fully supported by the club that you're playing for and the league you're playing in. I think it means security, and that the contracts that you get are there to look out for you and clearly state the things that you're entitled to. (P12)

I feel like what I'm being provided is like for a professional player, but I guess... when it's not spread across the league and not everyone gets that opportunity, it doesn't feel like it as much. (P23)

I would say we're professional in time, but not professional in pay. [...] So, the time is very much a full-time job and a full-time role, but not a full-time pay. I'm professional in what I'm required to do as an athlete, but not what they give me as a wage. (P5)

The players are aware of the importance of professional status but how do they consider themselves? Across the data sample there were 62% of the players who considered themselves professional, 27% semi-professional and 12% amateur.

78% have a written contract

82% of players report receiving payment from their club.

57% consider that payment to play for their club is sufficient to cover the expenses incurred by playing football.

As highlighted above, under FIFAs definition, a professional player is one who has a written contract and is paid more than the expenses they incur playing. The survey data lines up closely with this: 62% of the players consider themselves professional and 57% of them consider that payment to play for their club is sufficient to cover the expenses incurred by playing football - both percentages are fairly similar, which aligns with one half of FIFA's definition and 78% report having a written contract and thus meeting the other half of FIFAs definition.

A gap remains between the 82% who report receiving any payment from their club and the 57% who consider that payment sufficient to cover expenses — a difference of 25% that roughly matches the 27% who consider themselves "semi-professional." But since FIFA doesn't recognise a semi-professional category, some of this group may in fact meet the full professional definition (contract plus sufficient pay) without realising it — meaning they could already qualify for professional-level regulatory protections without being aware or able to exercise their rights.

However, for players the meaning of 'professional status' goes beyond the FIFA definition, as these players (P26, P12, P23 and P5) highlighted during the interviews. This is not just a qualitative impression, critically, the numbers support it. We looked at what predicts how satisfied players feel with their careers overall, taking pay, working conditions, job security and region all into account at the same time.

Even after accounting for those factors, players who saw themselves as "professional" (rather than semi-professional or amateur) reported meaningfully higher overall satisfaction — and this held true separately from, and in addition to, their satisfaction with pay, working conditions and development opportunities. In other words, how professional a player feels she is treated makes a real difference to her wellbeing, above and beyond what she's actually paid. That is why the gap between the legal definition of "professional" and how players see themselves is not just a technicality — it has a real, measurable effect on how players feel. This general satisfaction is related to performance; if a player feels secure in their career, that positively impacts performance and ultimately the commercial viability of the ecosystem overall. It is just smart business to provide players with environments and conditions that reflect their needs as high-performance athletes. With professional status as the starting point, professional environments, structures and workplace conditions must also be set in place around the players. These conditions and structures must be comprehensively implemented as basic standards across the game.

The data points to a consistent conclusion: a contract and a wage are the entry point to professional status, not the whole of it. 78% of players already have that entry point on paper,

Player interviewees

I think they would say we are professionals, but the income doesn't match that. The contract is professional, but it still doesn't match at all.

I am just hoping that one day women's professional football will be like any other ordinary work with the same rights and pay so it can be your full profession.

yet only 62% consider themselves professional — and satisfaction data shows self-perceived status carries its own weight on wellbeing, separate from pay and conditions. Players describing full-time hours without full-time pay, or professional treatment that is not consistent league-wide, show that a contract alone cannot manufacture professionalism. Leagues, clubs and competition organisers must guarantee wages and contracts, but the data makes clear that the work cannot stop there: professional structures and conditions must be built around the player and applied consistently as basic standards — until they are, players will keep doing professional work without feeling like professionals.



Key Factors for Professionalisation

In FIFPRO's 2026 research, players reported on several main areas when reflecting on what it means to be professional (status) and the criteria they view as essential for professional environments and conditions: Fair wage, full-time contracts, decent, safe and fair workplace environments and structures.

FIFPRO has grouped these findings into three key areas as the basis for elaborating on sustainable, professional, women's football:

AREA 01



FAIR WAGE

AREA 02



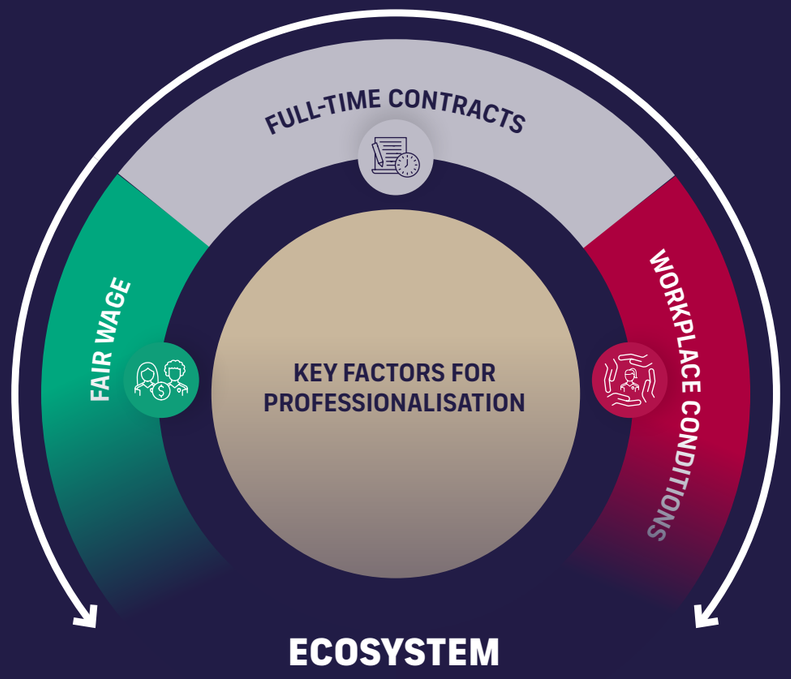
FULL-TIME CONTRACTS

AREA 03



WORKPLACE CONDITIONS THAT PROTECT, RESPECT AND VALUE PLAYERS

FIFPRO situates these three areas within the wider **'Ecosystem'**, drawing attention to the critical backdrop of policies, regulations, and institutional interventions—or lack thereof—shaping players' workplace conditions and environments.
In the sections that follow, FIFPRO shares the 2026 global findings for each of the three key areas, highlighting players' voices and discussing the implications for the profession. In the final chapter, FIFPRO addresses the ecosystem with regards to labour standards, club licensing and collective agreements —and calls to action for global football stakeholders, specifically FIFA, regional confederations, clubs and unions to work collaboratively together to address player precarity.



08 FAIR WAGE

Players' voice:

Players reported that being considered a professional player equates to being paid to play football at a wage that is enough to support their daily lives without having to get a second job (P27) and have recognised the growth that shows up in the data (P30).

2026 FINDINGS

Global monthly average salary

Player interviewees

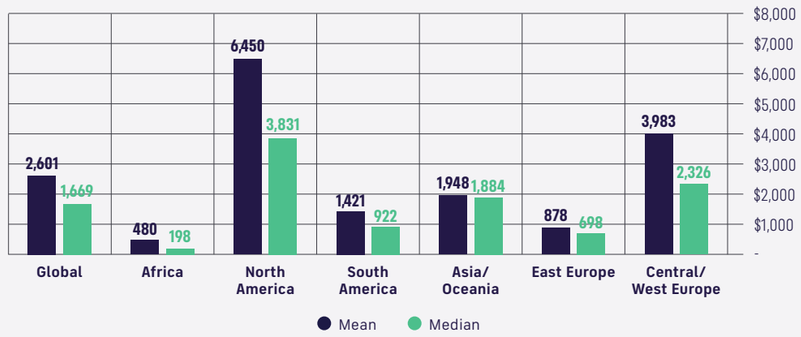
To me, professional football is usually when it is your profession, when you don't have to combine your job with another job to make enough money to cover your living expenses. Basically, when you give all your time into it and you get enough money, like your job, like a professional job. (P27)

The amount of money that we've been earning has increased over the years. (P30)

The 2026 survey data reveal that the average monthly earnings from the club for the months with payment is €2,237 ($2,601) worldwide. This figure represents an increase (300%) from the $600 average per month in FIFPRO's 2017 sample of players worldwide. This upward trend also builds on findings from FIFPRO's 2020 report that revealed a large increase in monthly club salary amongst **women's national team players** from 2016 to 2018 from €2,734 to €4,123 respectively.

The €2,237 ($2,601) global figure is an average (mean) – the total paid out divided by the number of players – and means can be pulled a long way by a small number of very high earners. A median is different: it is the midpoint value, the point at which half of all players earn more and half earn less. For a workforce as unevenly paid as professional women footballers, where a small top tier at clubs earns many multiples of everyone else, the median is a far more honest picture of what a typical player actually takes home – because it is not dragged upward by the handful of players earning the most.

FIGURE 3 / **AVERAGE (MEAN) AND MEDIAN MONTHLY EARNINGS (IN $) FROM THE CLUB FOR THE MONTHS WITH PAYMENT ACROSS REGIONS**



Seen this way, the global median of $1,669 a month sits well below the global mean of $2,601 – meaning the typical player earns noticeably less than the headline average implies, because that average is being lifted by a relatively small number of well-paid players, concentrated in the best-resourced leagues and clubs.

However, the global monthly average of €2,237 ($2,601) or median $1,669 masks very different situations across regions, with North America being €5,547 ($6,450) on average and Central/West Europe €3,425 ($3,982), while Asia/Oceania is €1,675 ($1,948), South America €1,222 ($1,421), East Europe €755 ($878) and Africa €413 ($480); medians follow the same pattern but lower throughout from Africa ($198) to North America ($3,831) see Figure 3. Moreover, these values are an average for the months with payment, but they do not consider how many months of the year the players are paid, see section below on contracts.

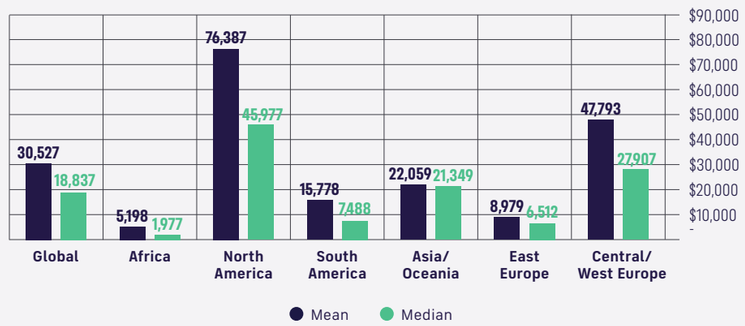
The size of this mean-median gap is itself revealing: a wide gap signals a small, well-paid elite pulling the average above what most players earn, while a narrow gap can mean pay is spread evenly – or just uniformly low. Africa's gap is widest (mean more than double the median); Central/West Europe, North America, South America and the global figure all show a sizeable 45–70% gap, pointing to the same better-resourced top tier found throughout this report. Asia/Oceania's mean and median are almost identical, suggesting flatter pay, while East Europe's narrow gap reflects uniformly low pay rather than equity.

2026 FINDINGS

Global monthly average salary

Monthly figures show what a player earns in a month they are paid – but as shown in the section below on contracts, only 66% of players are paid across all 12 months, so even multiplying by 12 can overstate real annual income. The annual figures below, drawn directly from what players report earning, show the fuller picture.

FIGURE 4 / **AVERAGE (MEAN) AND MEDIAN ANNUAL EARNINGS (IN $) FROM THE CLUB FOR THE MONTHS WITH PAYMENT ACROSS REGIONS**



Globally the two measures line up closely for the mean ($30,527 reported vs. an implied $30,840) but diverge more for the median ($18,837 reported vs. an implied $20,000) – the clearest sign of pay gaps during the year. That gap is sharpest in South America, Africa and East Europe, the regions with the weakest year-round pay coverage, and smallest in North America and Central/West Europe, where coverage is strongest.

FIFA's "Setting the Pace" benchmarking report cross-checks this picture from the club side, splitting pay by club tier (built from licensing status, World Cup representation and budget) rather than geographical region. It puts the global average annual salary at $10,900: $24,030 in Tier 1 (the best-resourced 41 clubs in 16 countries), $4,361 in Tier 2 and $2,805 in Tier 3.

The two sources differ because they measure different things: FIFPRO surveys players directly, capturing late or missing pay, while FIFA collects contracted pay from clubs and leagues, across the full universe of smaller clubs. Union representation is also concentrated in the Tier 1 leagues, so FIFPRO's respondents most likely correspond to that tier – which is why its implied annual average (~$30,527) sits above FIFA's $10,900 overall and closer to its upper tier of $24,030. Sliced by region or by tier, the structure is the same: a narrow, well-resourced top sitting well above a much larger base earning far less.

Putting the global pay rise into context

A 300% pay rise sounds substantial – but a number like that can be misleading if we don't ask what it would actually buy a player today. Prices have risen markedly over the same nine years: cumulative inflation since 2017 has been roughly 36% in the US and a similar order of magnitude across the Eurozone. That means the $600 a player earned in 2017 would need to be worth around $816 today just to buy the same amount it did then. Therefore, the average player pay of $2,601 in 2026 is approximately three times the inflation-adjusted baseline of $816 in 2017.

It is also worth asking what players in each region earn against a spread of that region's own national minimum wages, not just a single benchmark, since minimum wages themselves vary widely even within one region. In addition, tax varies in each country, for example if you play in a country with a flat tax rate vs a progressive tax rate, the take home net pay may differ. The table below sets FIFPRO's regional average football salaries against a small sample of national minimum wages before tax in each region.

TABLE 3 / **REGIONAL AVERAGE FOOTBALL SALARIES VS MINIMUM WAGE**

	Minimum wage examples		Regional football average	Football pay vs. minimum wage
Central/ West Europe	**France**	€1,867/month	€3,425 (≈$3,8993)/month	≈ 1.4–1.8x
	UK	≈€2,377/month (£12.71/hr, 40hr week)		
	Spain	Liga F CBA minimum €23,500/year (≈€1,958/ month) (2025/2026)		
East Europe	**Poland**	€1,118/month	€755 (≈$880)/month	≈ 0.7–0.8x (below minimum wage)
	Croatia	€1,050/month		
	Greece	€920/month		
Africa	**Botswana**	≈$150/month	≈€400 (≈$432)/month	≈ 1.4–2.9x
	Egypt	≈$150/month		
	South Africa	≈$320/month		
Asia/ Oceania	**Japan**	≈$1,290/month (national average)	<€1,750 (≈$1,890)/month	≈ 1.4-1.5x
	Australia	PFA CBA minimum A$26,000/year (≈A$2,167/month or ≈$1,397/month)		
North America	**US federal**	$1,160/month	€5,547 (≈$5,940)/month	≈ 1.4x (vs NWSL floor) to >11x (vs Mexico)
	Washington DC	$2,944/month		
	Mexico	≈$510/month		
	NWSL	CBA minimum ≈$4,208/month (2026)		
South America	**Colombia**	≈$400/month	<€1,250 (≈$1,350)/month	≈ 3–6x
	Brazil	≈$310/month		
	Argentina	≈$220/month (volatile currency)		

The most significant finding is in East Europe, where the region's average football salary sits below every one of its own national minimum wages – meaning the average professional woman footballer there earns less than she could on minimum-wage work in the same region.

North America shows the opposite end of the spectrum, but it comes with a caveat: the regional average is likely pulled upward by the NWSL specifically. The NWSL's collective bargaining agreement (CBA) includes a minimum salary – not a statutory minimum wage but a floor negotiated between the players' union (National Women's Soccer League Players Association) and the league – is a useful comparison point here: even that CBA-negotiated floor, at roughly $4,208 a month in 2026, is below the regional average, which is a demonstration of what collective bargaining can achieve, while also showing how much of the region's average sits well above what even a strong CBA currently guarantees.

A single global average of €2,237 ($2,601) therefore hides two very different problems at once: in some regions football pay is a modest premium on the local minimum wage, or even falls below it, while in others it is a transformative multiple of a very low floor. Neither end of the spectrum is evidence that pay has reached an adequate standard – it is a reminder that a single global average obscures exactly the kind of regional distortion this report finds throughout. A rising average income is genuine progress. It is not, on its own, evidence that pay has reached an adequate floor for every player earning it.

Where the fair wage still fails players

- Only 66% (2/3) of players are paid for 12 months out of the year.
- Late payment: 76% of the players receiving football income (from their club and/or other sources) have been paid fully and on time over the last two seasons.

Of the players who are paid by their club at all, only 66% are paid across all 12 months of the year, and a further 0.5% are paid over 14 months. However, averages hide the fault lines throughout this pillar.

Twelve-and-14-month contracts are more common in Central/West Europe (86%), and less common in Africa (24%), East Europe (28%) and South America (50%) – meaning the players already earning the least, are also the ones most likely to go unpaid for part of the year.

Being paid year-round is not a technicality – it is one of the clearest markers of whether a job functions as genuine full-time employment or a series of short engagements.

Twelve months of pay enables a player budget for rent, insurance and family costs without a seasonal gap in income, plan a life around her career rather than around when the paycheques stop, and avoid falling back on savings, another job, or nothing at all once the season ends.

FIGURE 5 / **HOW MANY MONTHS OF THE YEAR PLAYERS ARE PAID**

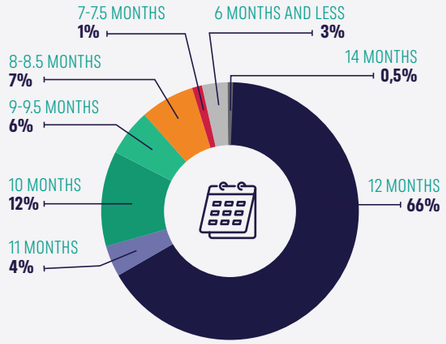
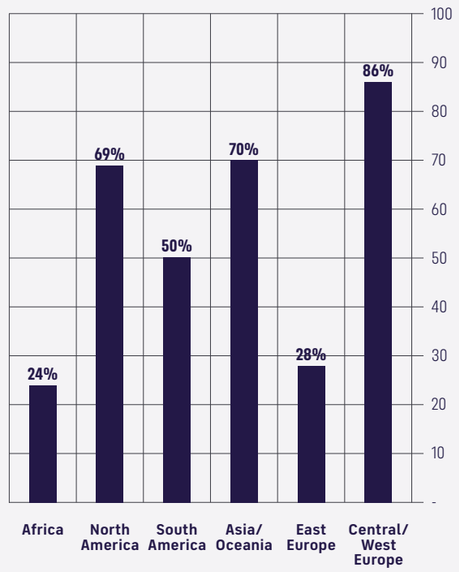


FIGURE 6 / **PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS PAID BY THEIR CLUB 12 OR 14 MONTHS ACROSS REGIONS**



Late payment

Globally, 76% of the players receiving football income (from their club and/or other sources) have been paid fully and on time over the last two seasons, see Figure 7. This has improved from the 63% observed in the 2017 report, however regional differences can be seen in Figure 8.

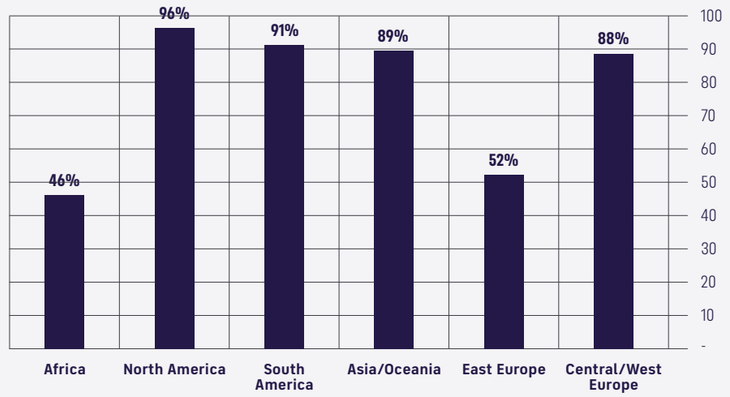
Late payment remains an issue globally. Of the players receiving football income, whether from their club or other sources, 76% say they have been paid fully and on time over the last two seasons – meaning close to a quarter (24%) have experienced a shortfall or a delay. Reliability follows a familiar regional pattern: on-time payment is more common in North America, South America, Asia/Oceania and Central/ West Europe, and less common in Africa and East Europe.

A delay is not simply an inconvenience: rent and bills do not wait for a club's cash flow to catch up, and a player without meaningful savings or a second income has little cushion to absorb the gap. Not knowing whether this month's pay will actually arrive on time is its own source of stress, separate from how much that pay is worth, or how many months of the year it is paid. It is clear that when a player operates in precarious conditions, this will ultimately impact overall performance and her contract stability in the long-term. It goes without saying that there is interconnectivity between the various forms of precarity experienced by professional women footballers and that this interconnected precarity is a factor of performance.

FIGURE 7 / **PAYMENT TIMING**



FIGURE 8 / **PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS BEING PAID FULLY AND ON TIME ACROSS REGIONS**



Pensions

Long-term financial security is a blind spot too in our understanding of the employment realities of professional women footballers, and it barely features in the industry's growth story at all. 42% of players are not provided with any player pension, and a further 38% do not even know whether they have one. Only 13% in this data set were provided with a pension by their club.

Therefore, the data reveals that roughly four in five of the players surveyed either have no retirement provision or cannot say if they do. The regional pattern is a familiar one: Central/West Europe fares best, yet the overall percentage is still incredibly low, with 31% of players receiving a club pension and 22% reporting none, while East Europe (65%) and South America (64%) have the highest rates of players with no pension at all. In Asia/Oceania, the dominant problem is not absence but invisibility – 65% of players simply do not know who, if anyone, is providing for their retirement. A rising monthly salary says nothing about what happens to a player once her relatively short playing career comes to an end.

Pensions are important because they provide a reliable, steady stream of income after one stops working, supporting people to maintain quality living standards and having more financial security in old age. However, there are nuances to this scenario for professional women's football players, particularly because of the sport's young retirement age and the low average wage. This is why tailor-made pensions specific to women's professional football are essential.

FIGURE 9 / **PLAYER PENSION PROVIDER**

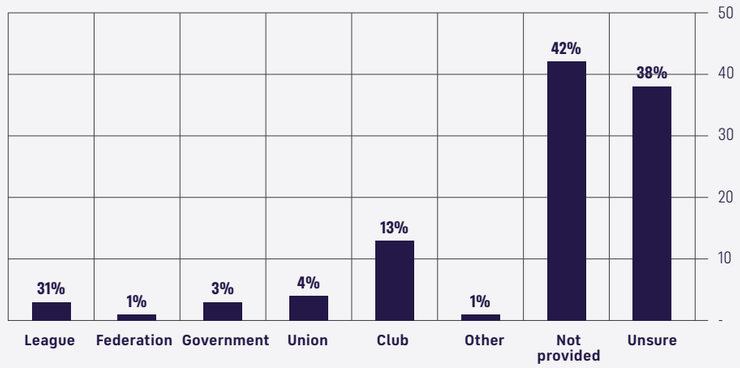
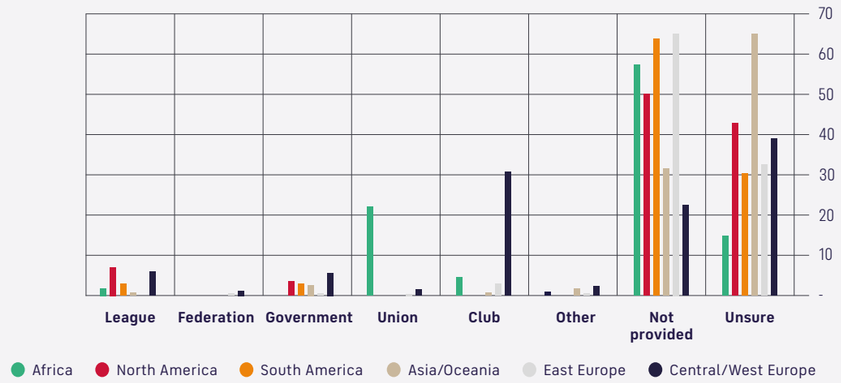


FIGURE 10 / **PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS WITH PLAYER PENSION/ BY WHOM, WITHOUT OR UNSURE ACROSS REGIONS**



SNAPSHOT OF BEST PRACTICE EXAMPLES

A few examples from elsewhere in women's sport show what a pension built specifically for the women's game can look like, rather than an afterthought bolted onto men's provisions.

01 **The NWSL has no defined-benefit pension of the kind the NFL, NBA or MLB provide their players** – but since its first CBA in 2022, every club has been required to contribute to a 401(k)-retirement account for each player, fully vested from day one, with the contribution level expanded again in the 2024 agreement. It is worth being precise about what that means in practice: a 401(k) is not paid out when a player retires from football. It is a standard US tax-advantaged account, and while the money is hers immediately and travels with her if she leaves the league, she generally cannot draw on it without penalty until age 59.5, regardless of when her playing career ends.

02 **The Women's Tennis Associations (WTA's) Pension Plan works differently:** a player who qualifies as a Full Member and accrues five years of vesting service becomes entitled to the funds in her pension account from age 50 specifically, funded through the tour itself rather than any individual tournament or employer – closer to a sport-specific retirement benefit, even if it still leaves a long gap between a typical playing career ending and the pension becoming accessible. In 2019, the WTA also created a Legacy Fund, contributing $1.25 million over five years to provide one-off payments to more than 240 pioneering players who retired before 1991 and received no pension at all.

03 **Professional Footballers Australia has taken a third approach again:** focusing on education with financial literacy workshops, one-on-one advice and help for members to navigate Australia's existing compulsory superannuation system.

04 **In Asia/Oceania, Professional Footballers Australia has taken a third approach again:** rather than negotiating a football-specific fund, the union has run a partnership with LUCRF Super, an Australian industry superannuation fund, since 2009, explicitly covering every part of its membership – Socceroos, Matilda's, A-League, and the A-League Women (formerly the W-League) – with financial literacy workshops, one-on-one advice and help tracking club super payments to make sure they are actually paid. It is a genuinely women's-game-inclusive example, not a men's-only benefit dressed up as universal, and a reminder that a union can build meaningful retirement support by brokering access to an existing national system, by negotiating a new one.

05 **Finally, an example from rugby has attempted to bridge the gap** between retirement (often in 30's) and pension access, which is often around 20-30 years after official retirement from the sport. The New Zealand Rugby Players association has created a retirement investment scheme which players can access early for three reasons: hardship, first home purchase and fertility.

Together, these examples show that a pension for a women's sport does not have to wait for a men's league to build one first – but all four remain narrower than the retirement security enjoyed in more established men's leagues, and none has yet been matched in women's football.

FIFPRO INDEX
PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS ON SOCIAL PROTECTION

Professional football players must be guaranteed minimum standards of protection — just like workers in other professions — through benefit schemes in case of sickness, unemployment, old age, employment injury, and maternity and parental responsibility. It is also important that players are provided with education on these issues and the resources available to them, especially for foreign players. More broadly, access to an adequate level of social protection is recognised by International Labour Standards and the United Nations as a basic right of all individuals. Social security is a human right which responds to the universal need for protection against certain life risks and social needs. Effective social security systems guarantee income security and health protection.



Agents

Agent representation is an area where the last decade has clearly moved forward on paper. The share of women's players with an agent has almost tripled since FIFPRO's 2017s report findings, from 14% to 41% globally.

NOTABLE DIFFERENCES ACROSS REGIONS

FIGURE 11 / **WHO PAYS YOUR AGENT?**

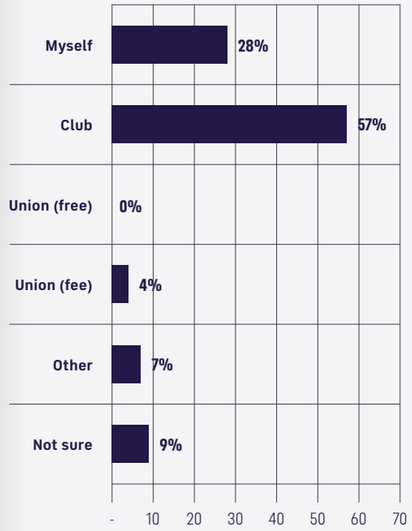


FIGURE 12 / **ESTIMATED AVERAGE PERCENTAGE OF THE PLAYER'S SALARY RECEIVED BY AGENT ACROSS REGIONS**

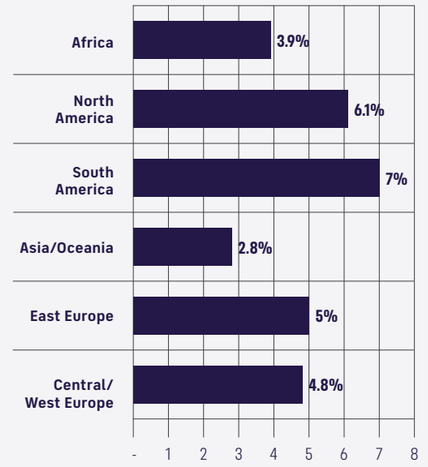
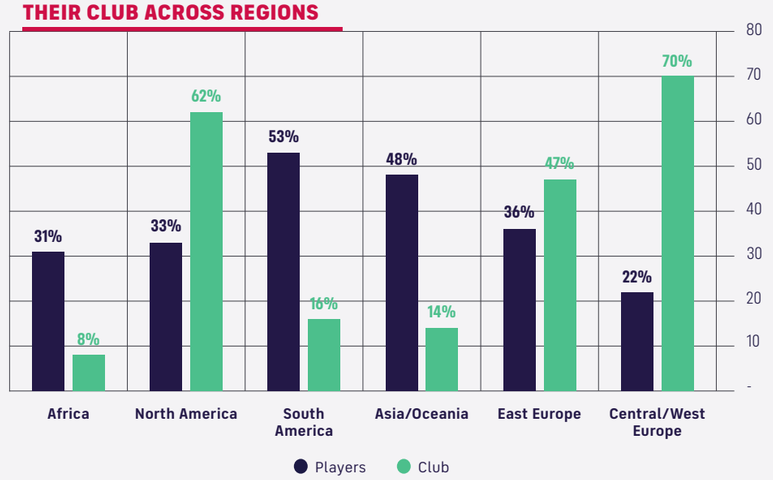


FIGURE 13 / **PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS WITH AGENT PAID BY THEMSELVES OR THEIR CLUB ACROSS REGIONS**



In October 2023 FIFA introduced binding, Football Agent Regulations. The regulations require every agent to pass a FIFA exam and hold a licence, to publicly disclose the fees they are paid, and – crucially – Article 15 caps what an agent can charge, on a sliding scale tied to the player's own annual pay. For an individual earning $200,000 or less a year, an agent representing only the player or only the club is entitled to a maximum of 5% of that remuneration; above $200,000, the cap drops to 3%. Where an agent represents both the player and the club at once (permitted dual representation), the caps roughly double, to 10% below the $200,000 threshold and 6% above it.



However, the FIFA Football Agent Regulations have been partially suspended, due to national injunctions granted. The provisions subject to the Injunction, and therefore suspended, are the following: the service fee cap (art. 15 pars 1-4); the rules concerning service fee payments (art. 14 pars 6, 8 and 11); the client pays rule (art. 14 pars 2 and 10); the rules regarding the timing of service fee payments (art. 14 pars 7 and 12); the prohibition of double representation (art. 12 pars 8-10); the reporting obligations (art. 16 par. 2 h), j), k) and 4); the rules regarding disclosure and publication (art. 19); the submission rule (art. 4 par. 2; art. 16 par. 2 b); art. 3 pars 2 c) and d); art. 20; and art. 21); the rule that service fee payments must be made via the FIFA Clearing House (art. 14 par. 13).

That $200,000 threshold matters enormously for this report because it is the tier in which the large majority of women's players actually sit. At an average annual salary, according to this report, of roughly $31,000, most professional women footballers earn nowhere near the mark where the cap tightens to 3%. For them, the applicable ceiling under Article 15 is 5%, not 3% – and FIFPRO's survey data shows agents currently take an estimated average of 5% of a player's salary, which is not comfortably inside the cap so much as sitting right at the maximum FIFA allows for players in this income bracket.

That average also sits on top of two more troubling patterns. Only 41% of players have an agent at all, and that share drops furthest in precisely the regions – Africa, Asia/Oceania and Eastern Europe – that this report has already shown have the lowest pay satisfaction and the least pension provision. A fee cap offers little protection to a player who cannot find representation in the first place. And of the players who do have an agent, at least 57% have their fee paid by the club, but at least 28% pay for their own agent out of their own pocket – a heavier burden in South America and Asia/Oceania than in Central/West Europe – meaning a 5% fee is quietly eating into the pay of the players who can least afford it.

Further, the players highlighted in the interviews that education in this space is vital. Having agent representation is only good if the agent is responsible and prepared. And it does not substitute the role of the union and the lawyer, in the revision of the contracts.

Player interviewees

Finding agents and managers ... more of the girls need [one] but it's a really hard thing to find and hard to know who to ask and get any contacts. (P10)

Awareness of agents, just like knowing who's a good agent and who's not ... you get the odd issue with some players, and I'm like, are you signed in? I don't know how you get out of that. (P11)

FAKE AGENTS: FIFPRO AFRICA'S CAMPAIGN WITH THE ILO

In July 2023, FIFPRO Africa launched a campaign with the ILO, the Didier Drogba Foundation, the International Organization for Migration and the Confédération Africaine de Football to warn players about fake agents, with Drogba as ambassador. It was built on a FIFPRO survey of 263 men's and women's professional players in seven countries (Botswana, Cameroon, DR Congo, Ghana, Kenya, Zambia and Zimbabwe): more than 70% had been approached by alleged agents, 56% of those promised a trial and 44% of those promised a contract never received one, and around 70% had received no education on agents.

The campaign's response is education – an animated video and guidance pamphlet urging players never to pay an agent before a contract, to check an agent's FIFA licence, and to contact their union first.

In June 2026, the FIFA Council Bureau approved a new FIFA RSTP – the "Transfer System 2027" – due to take effect on 1 January 2027. Its new Article 21bis gives players earning under €150,000 a year in their previous contract a direct, mandatory right to 5% of the fixed fee[1] on any permanent international transfer, paid straight to the player by the releasing club – separate from, and in addition to, the existing solidarity mechanism that only ever paid training clubs. As mentioned above, given this report's own data puts the average professional woman footballer's annual salary at around $31,000, the majority of women's players would fall inside that threshold, making Article 21bis, in principle, a rule built for the women's game as much as the men's. Its real impact will still depend on how developed the transfer market itself becomes: the right only pays out when an international move actually involves a fixed fee, and fee-based transfers remain far less common in women's football than free transfers and loans. But as a matter of design, this is exactly the kind of global-floor intervention this report has argued for throughout – and one FIFPRO hopes will translate into a real, felt benefit for women players once it takes effect.

FIFPRO INDEX
PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS ON WAGES & COMPENSATION

Players must receive fair and regular wages in exchange for the highly valuable work they do and the value they generate for their employers through that work. Fair wages refer to compensation that is reasonable and just. It allows workers to meet their basic needs and meets or exceeds minimum wage standards, promoting equitable labour practices and compliance with labour laws. They should have the guarantee of a minimum wage, which should meet the expenses they incur playing football. Players must also be able to collectively negotiate equitable and stable remuneration for their work. The continuation of the professionalisation of women's football and the development of domestic football markets require the establishment of a liveable wage to allow players to focus on their sporting performance as their job.

1 fee partially waivable.

09 FULL-TIME CONTRACTS

Players' voice:

Players talked about the importance of having a full-time schedule and contract in place as part of being a professional football player.

2026 FINDINGS

Average Club Contract Length 1.6 Years

These findings represent a welcome development and mark an increase from the 2017 data, where the average length of contract globally was 12 months. Short-term contracts are commonplace in professional football, creating significant stress for players, compounding the precarious nature of professional football as an occupation and undermining team stability, performance and overall career longevity.

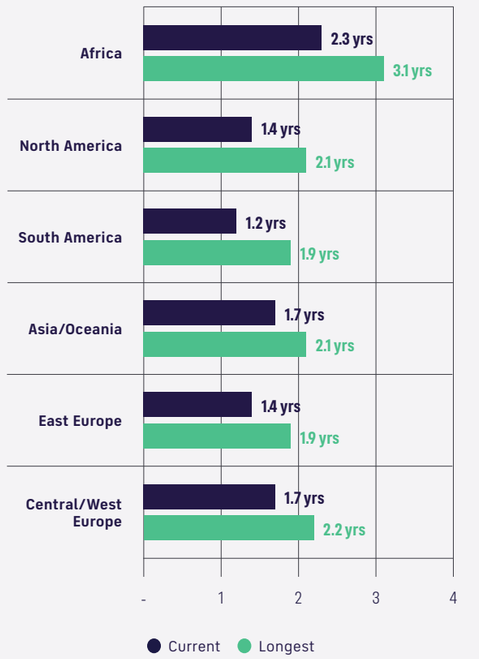
Contract findings

- 78% of the respondents currently have a written contract with their club (and 83% of the respondents have ever had a contract). This represents an increase from the 2017 dataset where only 53% of respondents reported having a written contract.
- In the 2026 dataset, at least 56% of the respondents have an individual employment contract, while 26% do not know about their kind of contract. In the 2017 dataset, 47% of all respondents with a written contract had an employment contract.

The average length of the current contract is 1.6 years. It is higher in Africa and lower in South America, see Figure 14. The longest contract players have had is 2.2 years on average. Again, it is higher in Africa and lower in South America, also lower in East Europe, see Figure 14.

Regional data shows just how irregular written contracts are in practice. Written contracts are most common in North America, Asia/Oceania and Central/West Europe, and least common in Africa and East Europe. East Europe combines the lowest rate of standard individual employment contracts of any region (28%, against a global average of 56%) with the highest rate of informal "amateur" contracts (29%) and the highest share of players who simply don't know what kind of contract they have – 36%, more than a third of the region. South America sits at the other end on contract type, with the highest rate of individual employment contracts (89%), yet it has among the shortest average contract lengths of any region. Africa, by contrast, has the longest average contracts of any region.

FIGURE 14 /
AVERAGE LENGTH OF THE CURRENT AND LONGEST CONTRACT ACROSS REGIONS



A collective agreement means any written agreement concluded between a players' union, on the one hand, and a league and/or football association, on the other, which regulates, establishes or otherwise addresses terms and conditions affecting players collectively. This is where full-time, professional status is least secure, with only 2% of the 2026 player survey reporting a collectively agreed contract. Further, only eight of the 30 women's football leagues studied for this report currently have a Collective Agreement; 17 have none, and data is not available for a further five. Extending that number – with player unions at the table – is one of the most direct ways to improve employment conditions.

> Player interviewee
>
> This new league I'm in now, there's obviously a standard contract. It would be interesting to know how that standard contract came about because no one has been involved in the collective bargaining agreement. (P9)

Holding a written contract does not mean understanding it. Globally, 26% of the players do not know what type of contract they have signed.

Players in the interviews highlighted the need for further education on contracts (P10, P13 and P24):

> Player interviewees
>
> Around the contract. There are some things in the contract that I think people should know about... what's expected in a contract? (P10)
>
> Contract and financial literacy could be something that everyone would benefit from or like the club helping with work opportunities. (P13)
>
> We don't have a lot of education on contracts and stuff and how transferring works. (P24)

Taken together, these findings show that formal progress on contracts is real — more players have one, and for longer, than in 2017 — but that progress is still outpaced by gaps in awareness, collective agreement coverage and regional consistency that leave many players without a genuine understanding of, or say in, the terms that govern their careers.

FIFPRO INDEX
PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS ON CONTRACTS

Having a written contract is a critical basic element of a labour relationship. A contract is key to ensuring the obligations between the player and the club and helps to guarantee playing and working conditions for players, as well as to create a level playing field for the football industry. A player's fundamental rights at work should be outlined in a Standard Player Contract—the right to decent, safe and healthy working conditions and environment. In many countries, a (standard) contract is also a prerequisite to access health care and/or social protection and to join a labour union.

A single contract creates not only a benefit to players but guarantees a level-playing field amongst clubs and sporting competitions. The standardisation of player contracts across territories and jurisdictions is a key factor in mainstreaming the employment status and conditions of players in the football industry. Standard Player Contracts are a fundamental prerequisite to sustainable professionalisation and stable football markets.

Where wage and contract meet: financial security

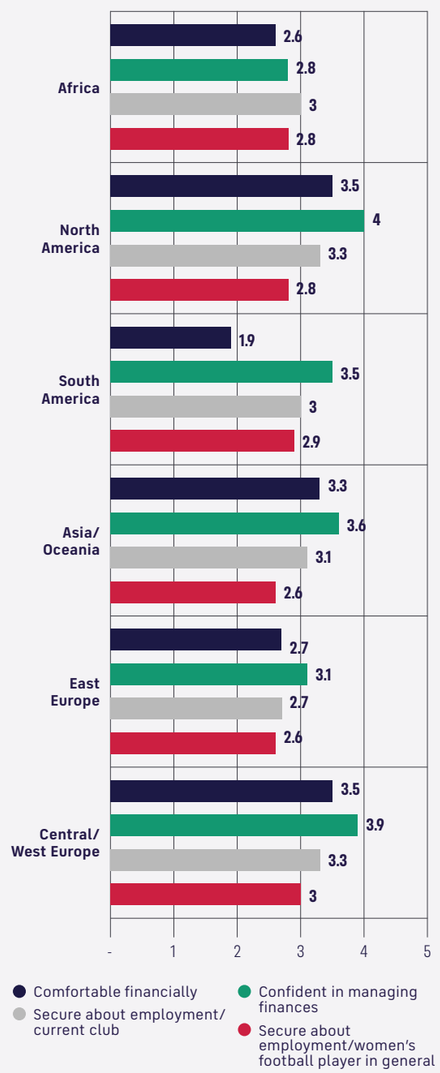
Wages and contracts do not sit in isolation – together, they determine how secure a player actually feels, both financially and in her career. FIFPRO's survey asked players to rate their financial wellbeing and employment security on a 1–5 scale, from disagree to agree. The results are displayed in Figure 15.

The results land almost exactly where the pay and contract findings above would predict: an average of 3.1 (neutral) for financial comfort – the ability to pay bills, avoid payment problems and absorb a setback like a temporary loss of income; 3.5 for confidence in managing finances over the next 12 months; 3.1 for employment security at a player's current club; and just 2.8, below neutral, for employment security as a women's football player in general. Overall, financial wellbeing and management across the sport sits at neutral – not a crisis, but not the settled foundation a genuinely secure profession should offer either.

Regionally, financial comfort is lowest by some distance in South America (1.9, closer to somewhat disagree than neutral), followed by Africa (2.6) and East Europe (2.7), while North America and Central/West Europe are the only regions to average as close to somewhat agree as to neutral (3.5 each). Confidence in managing finances over the next year follows the same order, from North America's 4.0 down to Africa's 2.8. Employment security at a player's current club is weakest in East Europe (2.7), with every other region landing between 3.0 and 3.3 – close, but still short of somewhat agree. And employment security as a women's football player more broadly scores the lowest figure of all: every region scores below neutral except Central/West Europe (3.0), with Asia/Oceania and East Europe lowest at 2.6. Put simply, wherever pay is smallest and contracts are shortest or least understood – South America, Africa and East Europe throughout this pillar and the last – players also feel least secure, both in their bank accounts and in their careers. Financial security is not a separate problem from fair wages and full-time contracts; it is what fair wages and full-time contracts are ultimately for, and by that measure, the labour market is not yet delivering on this for players. The reinforcing cycle of insecurity experienced by players within their short careers limits their ability to perform in their job, which eventually impacts the prosperity of the market overall.

Combined, the results from the fair wages and contracts pillars highlight genuine progress since 2017 but also highlight regional gaps. Despite rising global average pay and contract length, financial reasons remain by far the top cause cited for considering leaving the game early (59%, up from 47% in 2017), with work-life balance the third reason (39%, up from 29%). Low pay, short contracts, unpaid months and late payments do not sit as isolated statistics – they add up to exactly the kind of insecurity that pushes a player to walk away from a career she might otherwise have stayed in – underlining just how much rests on the next pillar: workplace conditions and environments that protect, respect and value players.

FIGURE 15 / **FINANCIAL/EMPLOYMENT SECURITY ON A 1-5 SCALE ACROSS REGIONS**

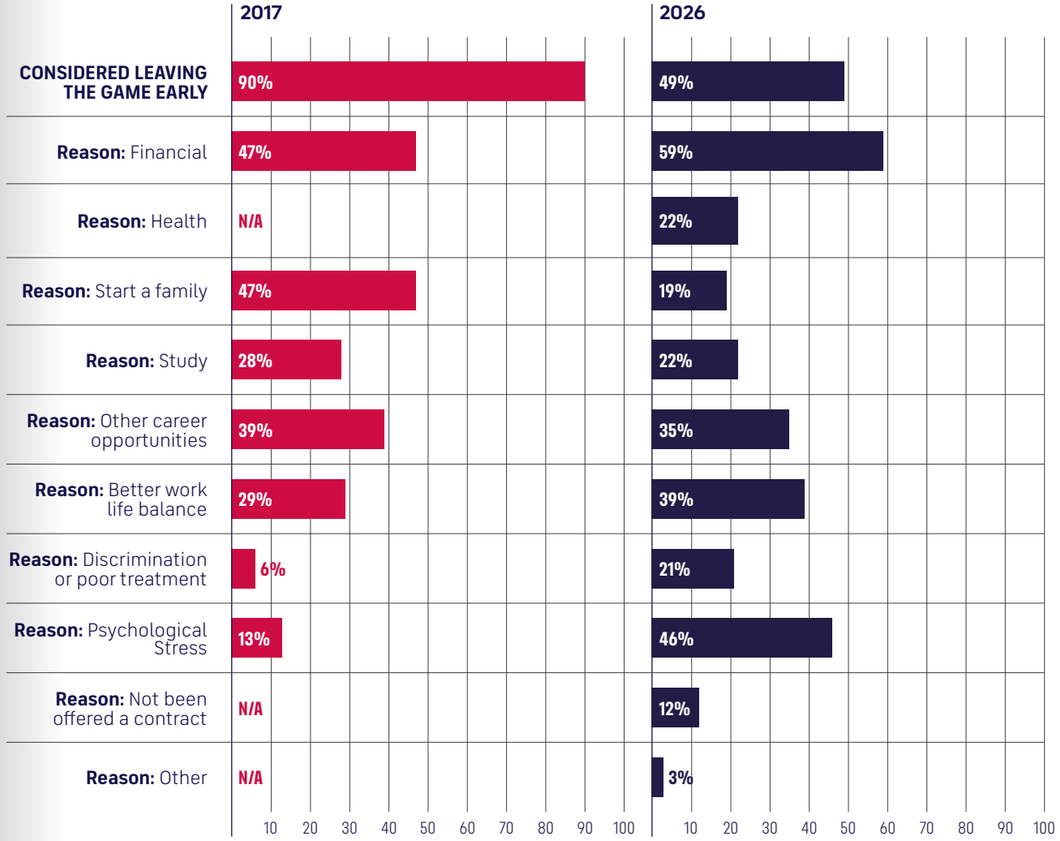


10 WORKPLACE CONDITIONS THAT PROTECT, RESPECT & VALUE PLAYERS

Players' voice:

Players have highlighted the importance of having workplace environments and structures that support and promote players' wellbeing and development, and conditions that value, respect, and protect players.

Less players are reportedly considering leaving the game early (49% in 2026; 90% in 2017), but that still leaves close to half of all players surveyed considering an early exit. Amongst those who consider leaving, their reasons reveal concerning findings. Financial reasons are still the main driver behind players considering leaving the game early (up to 59%, from 47%). As mentioned above, poor work-life balance is close behind (39%, from 29%), and discrimination or poor treatment is now cited by 21% of players, up from just 6%. The one clearly positive shift is that leaving to start a family is no longer in the top four reasons for leaving (19%, from 47%), positively suggesting that parental, childcare and maternity protections and support for players have improved. But the overall pattern is unmistakable: financial reasons for leaving remain at the forefront as discussed above, but workplace conditions – mental health, work-life balance, and how players are treated – are creeping up as reasons to leave the game early. This chapter explores these findings in depth.



2026 FINDINGS

Maternity/Parental Support - A positive shift away from early exit

In 2021, upon FIFPRO's request, FIFA introduced maternity regulations into the FIFA Regulations Status and Transfer of Players (RSTP), mandatory at national level. As the peak fertility years for women overlap with the peak performance years for players, these protections intervened in the previously existing "choice" between parenthood and a career as a professional footballer. These regulations include minimum of 14 weeks paid maternity leave. Maternity leave pays at least 2/3 of the players salary and the right to receive full payment during pregnancy and until the start of the maternity leave.

The regulations were tested almost immediately. A landmark case brought by Iceland international Sara Björk Gunnarsdóttir against Olympique Lyonnais, decided by FIFA's Dispute Resolution Chamber, confirmed that clubs could be held to account for failing to pay players the minimum stated in the RSTP maternity protections, including full payment during pregnancy – immediately putting the protection into practice.

These protections were updated in 2024 and include: adoption and family leave, express prohibition on pregnancy test requirement and clarity on wage payment during pregnancy and before the start of the leave.

The regulation matters because of what the data shows happened next. Nationally, players now see a realistic path back to professional football after having a child, and starting a family has dropped out of the top reasons players give for considering early retirement – a genuine behavioural shift, not just a paper right. Yet satisfaction with maternity provisions still varies sharply by region – high in the Americas and Africa, below neutral in Eastern Europe and Asia/Oceania – and players overall remain unsure whether the right is even written into their contract. Satisfaction with maternity provisions is also one of the strongest statistically significant predictors of a player's overall career satisfaction, alongside pay and job security. The reduction in the number of players considering leaving the game early due to starting a family is a proof of concept that intentional, targeted intervention is effective and provides security for players in an otherwise relatively precarious career. However, it takes strong domestic institutions to fully deliver on it, and that delivery is still incomplete.

Maternity: what needs to happen next

The 2021 rules and 2024 update are a floor, not a finished system.

THREE GAPS REMAIN

01

EXTEND CONTRACTS THAT EXPIRE DURING PREGNANCY OR MATERNITY LEAVE

Today, if a contract ends while a player is pregnant or on leave, her maternity rights lapse and no further payment is due. With contracts as short as they are in women's football (1.6 years on average), that makes the protection one that exists on paper only. Contracts should be extended by one season, and at minimum until the next registration period. Spain's Liga F CBA already gives a player who becomes pregnant in her final contract year the right to renew for a further season, and AC Milan guarantees automatic renewal. Argentina's 2019 agreement between the AFA and the players' union, reopens the transfer window for 20 working days once a player is cleared to return.

02

ADD PROTECTIONS FOR ASSISTED REPRODUCTION

Fertility treatment, including IVF, involves appointments and recovery time that existing maternity provisions do not cover. Players need protected time off, protection from termination or non-selection, and confidentiality.

03

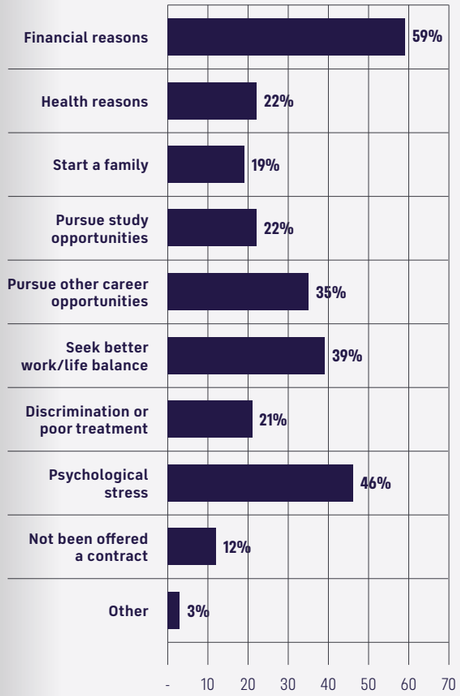
IMPLEMENT THE RULES NATIONALLY

The RSTP sets the global floor, but real protection depends on how it combines with national law. Federations and leagues should align statutory maternity rights, RSTP minimums and any CBA, applying whichever is most favourable to the player, and tell players clearly what they are entitled to.

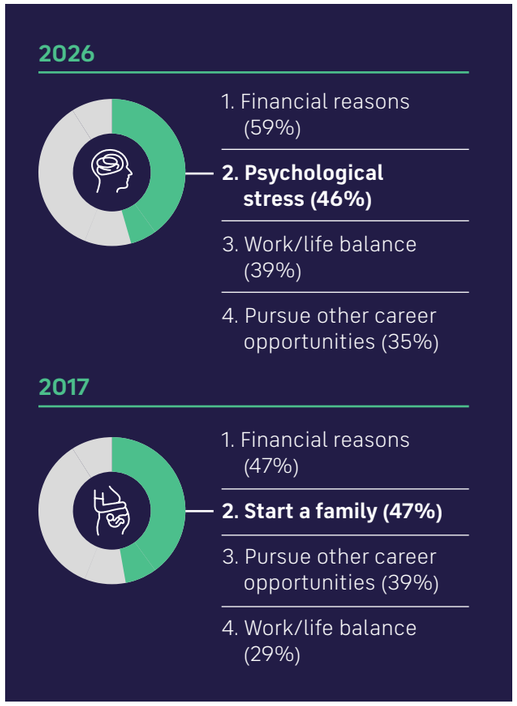
2026 FINDINGS

Psychological stress has players leaving the game early

FIGURE 16 / **WHY HAVE YOU CONSIDERED LEAVING YOUR FOOTBALL CAREER EARLY?**



It is of great concern that psychological stress has become the second main driver behind players considering leaving the game early at 46% of respondents. In FIFPRO's 2017 Global Employment Report, leaving due to psychological stress was at 13%.



As women's football professionalises and enters the global industry, the players can be increasingly subject to intense psychological pressures. High-stakes competition with immense pressure to win, public scrutiny and precarious career stability can easily translate into potential stressors and impact a players' overall mental health. It is also critical to look at how new psychological stressors may be emerging for professional women's footballers. In the current modern digital context, with the rise of social media and technological developments, new dynamics are shaping the conditions and risks to players. Both women's and men's professional players are now easily accessible via social media with the opinions of fans and the public. This also has the potential to turn into online harassment and abuse (see section below), which are now of serious and growing concern for professional players. The risks and mental health challenges for players associated with online abuse can have a direct effect on their overall well-being but are often underestimated.

However, two important caveats must be included when discussing social media and its potential impact on professional women's footballers. Firstly, unlike their male counterparts, professional women footballers rely heavily on social media to subsidise their incomes. This means that while abuse may be present, women players are forced to be visible on social media to ensure that their incomes are feasible to live on. Second, while male players are also exposed to online abuse, quite often their social media handles are managed through their agency; a privilege most women's footballers do not have. Meaning that if abused online, this abuse goes directly to players fingertips as they are incredibly accessible.

Players must have access to adequate mental health resources and psychological support to meet their needs and at a pace that matches the professionalisation of the game and keeps up with these digital realities.

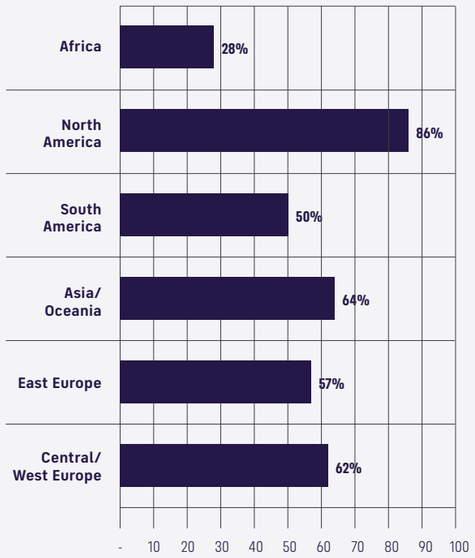
2026 FINDINGS

Mental Health

> Player interviewee
>
> I think if I said [to the coaching staff] that my sleep was poor or I wasn't feeling well then they would ask me about it; but if I put a low score for my mental well-being they would not ask anything about it.

In the 2026 data, on average globally **57% of respondents have ever struggled with their mental health.** The percentages are higher in North America, Asia/Oceania and Central/West Europe, and lower in Africa and South America, see Figure 17.

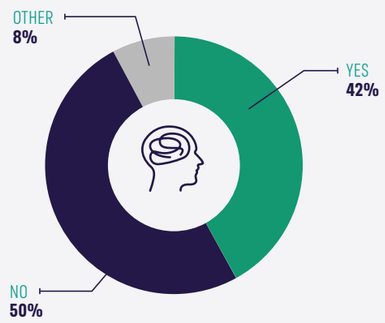
FIGURE 17 / **PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS WHO HAVE EVER STRUGGLED WITH THEIR MENTAL HEALTH ACROSS REGIONS**



Lack of mental health support

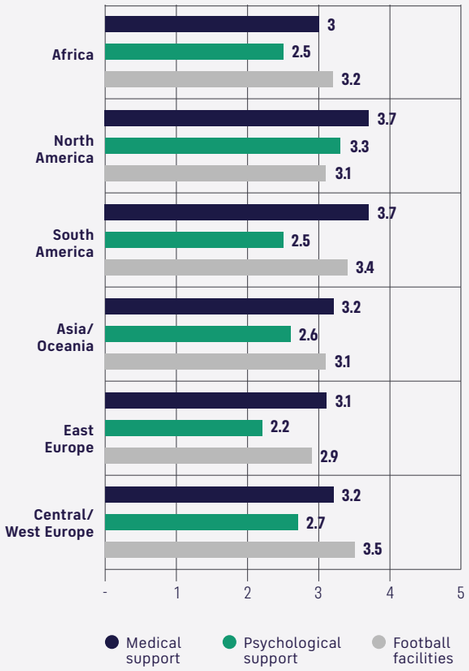
Among the respondents who have struggled with their mental health, notably, **50% have not been provided with supportive resources by their club.**

FIGURE 18 / **HAS YOUR CLUB PROVIDED SUPPORTIVE RESOURCES WHEN YOU HAVE STRUGGLED WITH MENTAL HEALTH?**



The findings on 'Support and Facilities at the Club Level' also reveal player satisfaction with psychological support as the lowest on average, falling below medical support and football facilities in all regions except North America, see Figure 19.

FIGURE 19 / **SATISFACTION WITH SUPPORT AND FACILITIES AT CLUB LEVEL ON 1-5 SCALE ACROSS REGIONS**



Many of the players interviewed expressed concerns about the pressure on players and the lack of mental health care (P20, 21). Concern was expressed for the younger players coming up in the game (P21).

> Player interviewees
>
> I think we must catch up because it's going very fast with the salaries and the girls coming up. I think it's important for young players to have someone that's taking care of them mentally as well.... so we don't get lost in that little bit of salary that comes fast. I think the care on a personal level is important in this fast journey. (P21)
>
> My dream through the players' union is that in the future as a club you must have someone you can talk to, it doesn't have to be one employed person, but contacts through the club so you can talk to someone. (P21)
>
> We have good medical resources today for physical health, but not for mental health, we don't have any mental health resources at our club. So, players have to look for it outside the club, outside of football. (P20)

DRAKE FOOTBALL STUDY

Coordinated by FIFPRO, the Drake Football Study, which launched in 2019 is a 10-year project tracking the physical and mental health of around 170 men's and women's footballers – beginning during their playing careers and transitioning through to retirement. It is the most comprehensive study to-date to monitor the long-term health of professional football players.

Mental health findings from the Drake Football Study published in 2024, revealed one in five women's footballers experienced disordered eating over a 12-month period. Of the 74 women's players surveyed for the sub-study, 55 percent reported sport-psychological distress during the 12-month period (consistent with athletes across elite sports), while three percent reported substance misuse. To learn more about the Drake Football Study: drakefootballstudy.org

A CBA CASE STUDY
THE NWSL AND MENTAL HEALTH

The NWSL is the clearest example of what a CBA can do specifically for mental health. Its 2022 agreement was the first in women's football to require every club to employ a licensed mental health provider alongside its medical staff, plus up to six months of dedicated mental health leave. That provision was not symbolic: forward Imani Dorsey became the first player to take mental health leave in 2023, stepping away from the game to address burnout before returning to play with the Utah Royals. The league's 2024 CBA then expanded both mental health leave and services further – a direct, practical answer to the gap this report identifies, and exactly the outcome a mandatory, resourced provision is designed to prevent.

Online abuse as aggravated risk

Social media abuse is a direct and documented contributor to psychological stress and mental health challenges for players. The effects on players exposed to sustained online abuse include anxiety, depression, sleep disturbance, social withdrawal and, in extreme cases, suicide. As such, hatred, harassment and discrimination encountered online carries real consequences for players and constitute occupational health risks that should not be underestimated.

A cross-sport study by FIFPRO, the NBPA and the WNBPA in 2022 shows that the pattern of online abuse targeting athletes was already a growing trend across sport, and not a football-specific issue. The report found that four in five instances of abuse directed at women's basketball players involved sexually explicit or harassing content, highlighting athletes' similar risk profiles. A year later, a report by FIFPRO and FIFA on the 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup that monitored the social media accounts of 697 players during the tournament found that one in five players was targeted with discriminatory, abusive or threatening content. Sexist, sexual and homophobic slurs accounted for almost half of all verified abuse.

The evidence base linking online abuse to player mental health has existed for several years with growing efforts to develop online protections and raise awareness on mental health consequences for players. However, the results show that mental health support and protections remain vastly insufficient.

Addressing this requires action on two fronts: protecting players from online abuse, and treating its mental health consequences with the same rigor as any other occupational health risk.

This requires an industry-wide effort to make online protections a permanent feature at club and international level. It also requires prioritizing mental health awareness, education and support within the professional football context, with interdisciplinary medical and psychological support established as a minimum standard of care.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SUPPORTING PLAYER MENTAL HEALTH

It is critical that more efforts and resources are put into raising awareness and prioritizing mental health overall within the women's professional football context by:

(i) Supporting research and improving staff mental health literacy/skills;

(ii) Incorporating the use of interdisciplinary medical and psychological support as minimum standard of care;

(iii) Facilitating early identification of mental health symptoms and disorders in professional women's football via systematic screening so that appropriate management can be initiated.

FIFPRO INDEX
PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS ON PLAYER HEALTH

Mental health is an important part of the medical care necessary for players. Psychological support for players must be approached not only from a performance perspective, but also to consider how stress, anxiety, depression and other mental health struggles may be affecting players' overall wellbeing. The appropriate attention from medical staff and external resources must be offered to players in this area.

Clubs should have mental health professionals on staff working within their medical teams and the possibility for dedicated mental-health leave should be available to all players should the need arise.

The introduction of Minimum Medical Standards should include the mandatory employment of adequately educated medical staff, basic education of coaches/trainers/managers about health and safety issues, appropriate pre- and during competition medical assessment, secured medical records, the right of a player to a second opinion and the right of a player to choose a doctor.

FIFPRO INDEX
PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS ON SAFE WORKPLACES

Players must be ensured a healthy and safe workplace, which includes both the physical infrastructure and environment and the cultural climate. Every player is entitled to equality of opportunity and to be free from precarious conditions; free from discrimination, abuse, harassment and violence—which can come from any stakeholder (e.g. fans, coaches, staff, teammates).

FIFPRO advocates for safe workplaces that protect players against any violation or threat to their safety both in their playing and working environment. Freedom from discrimination is a fundamental human right and one of the core international labour standards.

Players need access to be anonymised, secure and external (i.e., independent from the FA/league) mechanisms to be able to report issues and the football industry must establish standards, regulations and implementation mechanisms in line with human rights measures to ensure safe workplaces for women's players.

Workload and scheduling

Players' voice:

Several players described workload decisions made with little regard for their health or their lives outside football:

Player interviewees

I don't feel like our workload is balanced at all ... we're the only team where we get one day off every three weeks ... there was one week where we had four games in 10 days ... I think they're not managing the load at all. (P31)

We have been training non-stop since last Monday, until tomorrow which is 13 days in a row; then I have one day off then we have 7 days again, and then I go straight into National Team with 2 games in 10 days, then I have one day off and I go straight into play with my club on the weekend again...Not only mentally but also physically, it's not good for our bodies. When you pass 30 years old, you really know your body and what you need, it's all about standing up for yourself and talking with the staff and hoping that they understand, but it's not easy. (P33)

Another player described a season with no off-season break at all because of calendar congestion around international windows (P32), and a mother described how unpredictable scheduling made it hard to arrange both university and childcare around training (P5).

Player interviewees

Especially this year with the schedule, there is a mid-season break because it's a long season from April to November, the finals and there's maybe like an 8-day break during an international break. So, everyone else is going to be getting a break and I'm not going to be getting a break. So, I think that's something that's kind of a little bit challenging for me, no breaks all the way through. [...] So, there's no summer break that's outside of international window, not this year. .....but that's something that seems like it might definitely put a strain on my body to not have a break. (P32)

Our scheduling needs to be better so that we can earn outside of our training, and a lot of us still do university, and when people don't know when they're training or what the schedule is, it's very difficult to plan. And for me personally as a mum, if I don't know things well in advance, it's difficult to find people to help me look after my daughter. (P5)



2026 FINDINGS

Workload

FIFPRO's 2026 survey data back up these individual accounts. Overall, 60% of players think their match load is about right, and that share is highest in Europe (61–63%). Where match load is a problem, the nature of the problem varies sharply by region: 36% of players in North America think their match load is too high, against just 5% in Africa, while the opposite complaint – too few matches – is more common in Africa (21%) and Europe (16%) than across the Americas (4–6%).

FIGURE 20 / **MATCH OVERLOAD AND UNDERLOAD IS A PROBLEM FOR SOME PLAYERS - WHAT IS THE SITUATION FOR YOU?**

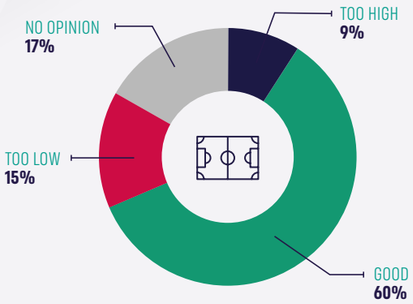
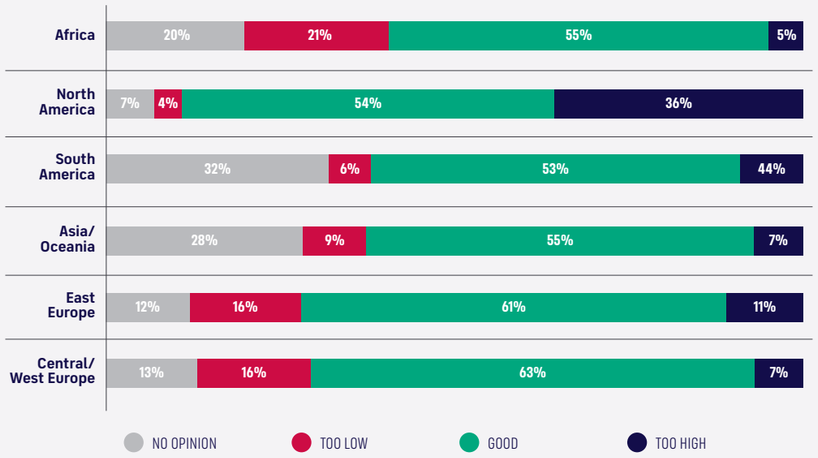


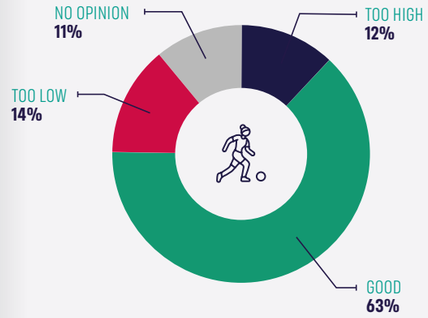
FIGURE 21 / **PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS WHO THINK THEIR MATCH LOAD IS TOO HIGH, GOOD, TOO LOW OR WITHOUT OPINION ACROSS REGIONS**



Training load follows a related but not identical pattern. Overall, 63% of players rate their training load as good, ranging from 82% in South America and 71% in North America down to just 51% in Asia/Oceania.

Too much training is the more common complaint in Asia/Oceania (23%) and North America (21%); too little is more often the complaint in East Europe (21%) and Africa (17%).

FIGURE 22 / **TRAINING OVERLOAD AND UNDERLOAD IS A PROBLEM FOR SOME PLAYERS - WHAT IS THE SITUATION FOR YOU?**



Several players questioned not just how much they train, but what training is designed around (P4):

> Player interviewee
>
> I think we should have more studies on training loads because we train like men, but we are not men. So, more studies on women. (P4)

FIGURE 24 / **DO YOU FEEL LIKE YOU HAVE ENOUGH DAYS OFF THROUGHOUT THE SEASON?**

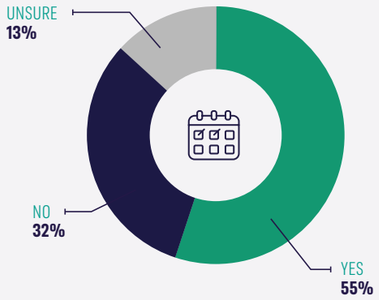


FIGURE 23 / **PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS WHO THINK THEIR TRAINING LOAD IS TOO HIGH, GOOD, TOO LOW OR WITHOUT OPINION ACROSS REGIONS**

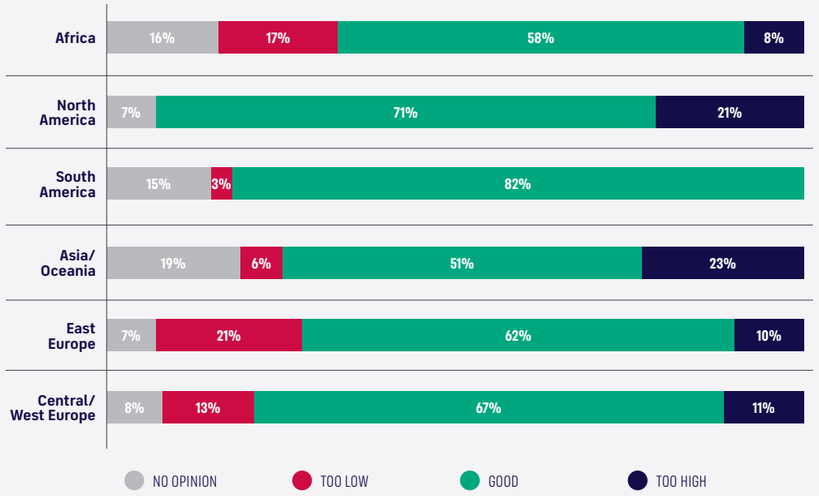
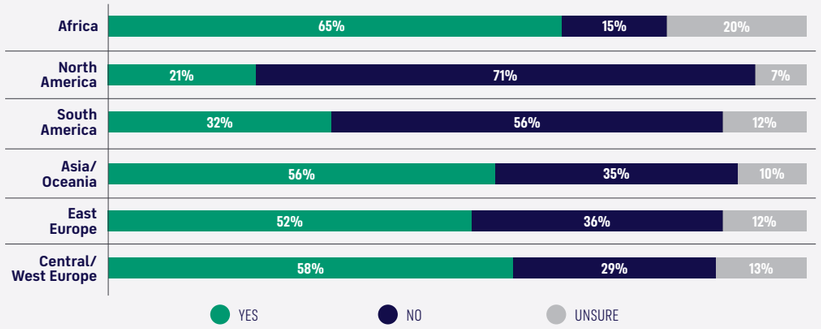


FIGURE 25 / **PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS FEELING LIKE THEY HAVE ENOUGH DAYS OFF THROUGHOUT THE SEASON, NOT ENOUGH DAYS OFF OR UNSURE ACROSS REGIONS**



Recovery time tells a similar story from a different angle. Just over half of the players (55%) surveyed feel like they get enough days off throughout the season, 32% of players feel they do not get enough days off throughout the season, with 13% unsure – only a modest majority rather than a comfortable one – and the regional picture inverts the pattern this report finds almost everywhere else. Africa records the highest share of players who feel they get enough rest (65%) and the lowest share who do not (15%). North America, one of the strongest regions on pay and contracts throughout this report, records the opposite: just 21% feel they get enough days off, and 71% – more than two in three players – say they do not. South America sits closer to North America than to Africa, with only 32% feeling they get enough rest and 56% saying they do not. Africa's figure needs a caveat, though: this is the same region that recorded the highest share of players saying their match load is too low (21%) and the lowest share saying it is too high (5%), so "enough days off" there may reflect a genuine lack of playing opportunities as much as it reflects good rest management – underload wearing the appearance of recovery.

Both high usage and underload carry real risk: cumulatively, too many matches, training sessions or seasons without adequate rest increases injury risk and acts as a performance inhibitor. At the same time, not enough competitive match opportunities links to de-loading periods within the season, limits a player's competitive development and earning potential. More high-quality, robust research specific to professional women players is required, as the players' comments on the previous page make clear (P4). Match load, training load and days off all point to the same underlying gap: scheduling is being set without systematic input from the players.

FIFPRO INDEX
PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS ON PLAYER HEALTH (WORKLOAD)

Exposure to High Workload

Players must benefit from obligatory rest and recovery periods. Within the club environment, players must have a mid-season break and an off-season break. This is about ensuring high performance while safeguarding players' physical and mental health. FIFPRO maintains that players must be given at least 72 hours recovery time between matches, and extra recovery time after international flights across time zones. Within the club environment, players must have a mid-season break of at least 10 days and an off-season break of at least four weeks.

An unbalanced and overloaded calendar puts the health and wellbeing of players at risk as well as their career prospects. It also threatens to diminish peak sporting performance and as a result, the quality of the competitions. There is a need for integrated and balanced competition calendars to protect the performance and health of players.

Training and match Environment

Players' voice:

Having the structures and environment which allow players to train and develop in their best form as an athlete (P18, P26).

Player interviewees

I think having facilities that enable you to get better and improve yourself, so the club providing good food, a good gym, good fields to play on, uniforms, and also getting professionals to work with you that are capable of making you better and helping you improve. (P18)

Though I am a professional player, the way the club or league operates isn't really that close to being professional. For example, the conditions of our playing fields, or some of our training situations, are relatively... well, there's no way around it. It's not as professional as you might expect. (P26)

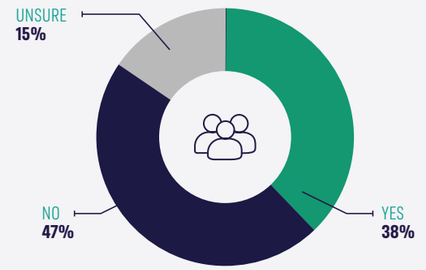


2026 FINDINGS

Not Enough Staff to Fulfil Players Needs

Almost half of respondents (47%) think there are currently not enough staff employed at their club to fulfil their needs as a player (see Figure 26). These findings are similar to those from the FIFPRO 2020 report where 40% of players reported not having enough staff employed at their club to fulfil their needs as a player. The difference being that domestic players are now feeling the same burden as international players (as 2020 focused on international players).

FIGURE 26 / **ENOUGH STAFF EMPLOYED AT YOUR CLUB TO FULFIL YOUR NEEDS AS A PLAYER?**



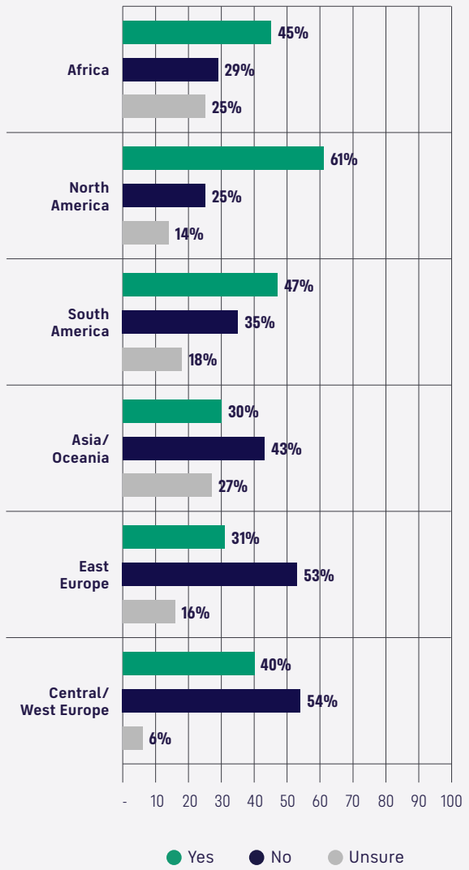
Interviewed players connected that shortfall directly to injuries and safety (P3), not just convenience:

> Player interviewee

We did not have an S&C [strength and conditioning coach] that was qualified ... we had three stress fractures which are completely related to load ... I think we were a bit more vulnerable on the injury side of things with not having the adequate staff in place. (P3)

NOTABLE DIFFERENCES ACROSS REGIONS

FIGURE 27 / **PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS WHO THINK THERE IS ENOUGH STAFF EMPLOYED AT THEIR CLUB TO FULFIL THEIR NEEDS, NOT ENOUGH STAFF OR ARE UNSURE ACROSS REGIONS**



Others described the staff on low wages and perhaps lacking experience (P22):

> Player interviewee

A lot of our staff are also probably on minimum wage, so a lot of them are newly graduated, or very early career, and that has led to issues. (P22)

While others pointed to a generational and knowledge gap rather than a numbers one (P33):

> Player interviewee

While the coaches are well-intentioned, they are very 'old school' and lack understanding of women's specific needs. (P33)

Staffing breaks the pattern this report has found almost everywhere else. On pay, contracts and pensions, Central/West Europe and North America consistently score above Africa and East Europe. Staffing flips that: North America (61%), South America (47%) and Africa (45%) are the region's most likely to say they have enough staff, while Europe has the highest share saying they do not (53–54%) – higher than Africa (29%) or North America (25%). Uncertainty is highest in Asia/ Oceania (27%) and Africa (25%), and lowest in Central/West Europe (6%). There is no single explanation for why the usual regional pattern does not hold here, but the reversal itself is telling: professionalisation does not raise every measure of player support at the same time, or in the same order, in every region.

This is also an area where institutional protection is visibly uneven. The NWSL's CBA does not leave staffing to a club's discretion: it mandates that the head coach has a pro-licence, requires every club to employ at least two licensed medical doctors with at least 3 years of post-fellowship clinical experience and a sports medicine qualification. At least two certified athletic trainers and at least one physical therapist – new staff coming into these positions are also required to have three years of prior experience in football. At least two massage therapists, at least one applied sports scientist and at least one team clinician specifically to provide mental health service to the players. This turns adequate staffing into an enforceable, collectively bargained right.

European club licensing has not yet gone that far. UEFA's Women's Club Licensing Regulations cover personnel and administrative criteria, but access to a qualified medical and mental health team currently sits as an area the framework could be extended to cover as a mandatory Grade A condition, not one it already requires. Australia shows a third version of this gap: a written equity commitment that has not yet been fully delivered. The PFA's 2021–2026 CBA with the Australian Professional Leagues was the first to set common high performance and medical standards across both the A-League Men and A-League Women, explicitly embedding "high-performance staffing" equity between the two competitions rather than leaving the women's side to a lower bar. But the PFA's own later research shows that commitment outpacing practice: most A-League Women clubs were found not to be honouring the same agreement's two-month advance training-schedule notice requirement, and the 2026 Ready for Takeoff report concluded that reaching full professionalism would still require roughly AUD 1 million in further investment per club, including more high-performance staff on longer contracts. A strong clause in a CBA is a real achievement, but this report's findings throughout show that writing equity into an agreement and delivering it in every dressing room are two different steps, and the gap between them can persist even where the union itself negotiated the clause.



Taken together, the staffing findings are a reminder that professionalisation is not a single track: a region or a league can lead on pay while lagging on staffing, or the reverse, and closing one gap does not automatically close the others.

INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS WHAT THE ILO REQUIRES

FIFA's own rules are not the only international standards that apply here. As workers, players are also covered in principle by the general labour standards set by the International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations agency responsible for labour rights worldwide. The Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981 (No. 155), and its 2022 Promotional Framework (No. 187), require employers to organise work so that it does not put a worker's health at risk, including through adequate supervision and sufficient trained personnel – precisely the risks the staffing and workload findings above describe. The Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190), and its Recommendation (No. 206) – the first international treaty of its kind – require employers to prevent and address violence and harassment, including gender-based harassment, in the workplace. In 2024, the ILO went further and published dedicated Guidelines applying these same fundamental principles and rights specifically to professional athletes.

The institutional response so far has come more from football's own governance than from ILO enforcement, but it has deliberately borrowed the ILO's authority. FIFPRO signed a Global Labour Agreement with the World Leagues Forum at the ILO's Geneva headquarters in September 2022, explicitly bringing collectively agreed workload and welfare standards into the same international framework as Conventions 155 and 190.

FIFPRO INDEX PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS ON TRAINING & MATCH ENVIRONMENTS

Players must be given the adequate infrastructure, facilities, material conditions and human resources to perform their job at their peak. These are the grounds on which players prepare and perform. The quality and standard of material resources and human resources, which include employed staff, must reflect that.

11 ECOSYSTEM: A CALL TO ACTION

Women's football is growing rapidly. But growth alone is not progress. As the game becomes more professional, more commercial and more global, the rights, health and working conditions of the players who create that value must keep pace. More competitions, bigger audiences and greater revenues can create opportunity, but without the right safeguards they can also mean heavier workloads, inadequate recovery, insecure employment and widening inequalities between players, clubs and regions.



The choice is not between commercial growth and player protection. **The two must advance together.** The long-term value of women's football depends on creating an environment in which players can perform, develop and build sustainable careers.

That responsibility cannot sit with one organisation. Collectively, every stakeholder in the ecosystem has a role to play.

- **Leagues and clubs** should involve players, through their unions, in decisions on scheduling, workloads and the impact of commercial growth on health, safety and wellbeing. These decisions should be made with players, not about them. Standardising resource allocation should be paramount; recognising the link between high-performance, fit-for-purpose conditions and performance and health.
- **FIFA, confederations, federations, leagues, club owners and sponsors** should treat investment in player welfare as an investment in the long-term value and sustainability of the game, rather than as a short-term cost. Evidence of improved player wellbeing should be recognised as part of the performance, commercial, policy and business case for investment.
- Through their union representation the **industry as a whole** should incorporate player voice with a real genuine voice at the table. Regular, independent research and player surveys should become standard practice, helping to identify and close gaps in areas such as contracts, maternity rights, mental health, social protection and access to remedy.

There is no single model that will fit every league, competition or stage of development. But there is one principle that must apply everywhere: **dignified conditions and fair treatment must be the baseline from which the professional game continues to grow.** The evidence gathered for this report points to four areas that must move forward together.

FIFPRO INDEX OF PLAYER CONDITIONS



1. FIFA
Set the global floor

FIFA has a unique responsibility to establish and continually strengthen global minimum standards that protect players wherever they play.

The progress made on maternity rights in 2021 and 2024, agent fees in 2023 and, most recently, the Transfer System 2027 reforms approved in June 2026 demonstrates what global regulation can achieve. The next step is to extend that approach to the areas where significant gaps remain: calendar, scheduling, contracts, mental health provision, social protection (pensions) and access to remedy.

The FIFPRO x FIFA Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) established in June 2026 creates **a new mechanism for players to participate in global football governance,** including a Global Social Dialogue Platform, representation in FIFA bodies, cooperation on player welfare and workload, and development of global minimum standards for women's national teams.

A global floor only works if players can rely on it in practice. Rights must therefore be enforceable, and dispute-resolution mechanisms must be accessible to every player, not only those competing in the most established or well-resourced leagues. Likewise, new rights must translate into real opportunities and outcomes for players if they are to have meaning.

Preventing a Ceiling

Minimum standards must create a **floor, not a ceiling.**

A baseline designed as a safety net can become a maximum target if compliance is reduced to simply passing a test or ticking a box, that risks limiting ambition and discouraging further investment in better working conditions. Reaching the minimum must therefore be treated as the beginning, not the end. Stakeholders should continue incentivising and investing in innovation, higher standards and better player support as the game develops.

2. CONFEDERATIONS
Close the regional gaps

Regional confederations have a critical role between global regulation and domestic football. Several are already developing frameworks for the professionalisation of women's football, but progress remains uneven. UEFA has established independent club licensing regulations for its women's competitions and engages in social dialogue with FIFPRO around minimum requirements for standard player contracts. AFC and CAF have also introduced women's club licensing frameworks, while CONCACAF launched its first Women's Club Licensing Regulations in 2026. CONMEBOL has taken a different approach, using participation in its men's Copa Libertadores to drive investment in women's football by requiring participating clubs to field a women's team.

These initiatives demonstrate that the tools for raising standards already exist. But they must reach further. The regions in which players report the weakest pay and pension provision are often those in which regulatory frameworks are newest, weakest or absent altogether. Confederations should establish clear standards for player employment and welfare, support their member associations in implementing them and monitor their application over time.

The next step is to make minimum standards a genuinely regional commitment — not a privilege of the most developed competitions.

3. CLUB LICENSING

Make player protection a condition of competing

Club licensing is one of the most powerful tools available to football governing bodies and competition organisers. Licensing already determines whether clubs meet requirements relating to finance, infrastructure, administration and sporting operations. The same principle should apply to the conditions in which players work.

Women's football licensing systems demonstrate that this can be done. UEFA's tiered model, for example, distinguishes between mandatory criteria that can determine eligibility and criteria that trigger corrective action or sanctions. Domestic systems can go further, with some national federations applying licensing requirements across entire domestic leagues rather than only to clubs qualifying for continental competitions. This distinction matters. A competition-specific licence cannot protect players who never reach that competition.

Where domestic licensing exists, player protection should be embedded directly into the conditions of participation. Written contracts, minimum remuneration, on time payments, adequate medical provision, mental health support, safe workplaces and sufficient qualified staff should become measurable licensing requirements rather than aspirations. Licensing should also be backed by meaningful monitoring and consequences. A standard that exists only on paper does not protect a player.

If a club is not meeting basic standards for the people who make its football possible, it should not simply be business as usual.

4. COLLECTIVE AGREEMENTS

Turn the floor into a lived reality

Global standards and licensing systems establish the minimum. Collective bargaining turns those minimums into working conditions that reflect the value players create. Collective agreements can address multiple dimensions of a player's career at once — from pay and employment security to maternity rights, mental health, education, retirement and protection from harassment and discrimination. There are already powerful examples. Spain's Liga F collective agreement provides protections including maternity provisions, mental health support, study grants and enhanced employment rights. France established its own landmark collective agreement for women's professional football in 2026. Players in Romania and Czechia have gained mandatory standard contracts through the European social dialogue process. In the NWSL, collective bargaining has delivered retirement provisions, mental health support and significantly stronger minimum salaries, while Australia's A-League Women has its own PFA-negotiated agreement.

Yet collective bargaining remains the exception rather than the norm. Collective agreements protect both the employer and the employee. Yet only eight of the 30 women's football leagues examined in this report currently have a collective agreement.

Closing that gap should be a priority.

FIFPRO and its member unions should be at the table wherever meaningful decisions are being made that effect the careers and livelihoods of professional players. Players must have a meaningful collective voice in determining the conditions under which they work.

12 CONCLUSION: BUILD THE GAME ON AND WITH ITS PLAYERS



Women's football does not have a growth problem.

It has a distribution problem.

The value generated by the game is not yet consistently reflected in fair wages, secure contracts, safe workplaces, sustainable schedules, social protection or the structures that allow players to build long careers. And these gaps are not distributed evenly: they vary significantly between leagues, countries and regions.

The industry should not have to choose between growth and protection. **Growth and protection are the same project.**

Every stakeholder has a responsibility: FIFA and the confederations to establish and strengthen standards; domestic federations and leagues to enforce them; clubs to provide safe and dignified workplaces; funders and sponsors to invest in sustainable growth; and players' unions to ensure players have a collective voice in shaping their game. The evidence is overwhelmingly clear: a player who is paid fairly, securely contracted, safely supported and given the platform to perform, will perform. That performance contributes to the commercial viability of the industry and the overall sustainability of the ecosystem as whole.

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14 APPENDIX

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Dr Qi Peng is a Senior Lecturer in Sport Management and Policy in the Business and Law Faculty at Manchester Metropolitan University and a member of the Faculty's Sport Policy Unit and University's Institute of Sport. Qi has extensive experience in qualitative research including conducting interviews and focus groups with various stakeholders. One of her research projects includes the development of women's football in China. It examines the experiences of female footballers as they are integrated into men's clubs and the impact of such integration policy on female players' career development. Qi's current research project is funded by the British Academy which investigates the barriers to the low physical activity level of pregnant women in both China and the United Kingdom. Qi has expertise in sport policy and management and has published in leading academic journals such as European Sport Management Quarterly and Sport Management Review.



DR SWARALI PATIL
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Dr Swarali Patil is a Senior Lecturer in Sport Management and Policy in the Business and Law Faculty at Manchester Metropolitan University and a member of the Faculty's Sport Policy Unit and University's Institute of Sport. Swarali completed her doctoral studies at Western University in Canada. Her research interests are in advancing opportunities for women's engagement in sport. She has led projects related to elite women athletes and their financial well-being, women's experiences in sport leadership, and women's experiences in sport media. She is currently working on a project that explores women's experiences in esports leadership. Her research has been supported by grants from E-Alliance, the gender+ equity hub for sport in Canada and Canadian Women & Sport, a national advocacy group for women in sport. Swarali is a proficient researcher in qualitative and quantitative methods and has published her work in leading sport management journals. She is an Indian citizen and has lived in six countries including the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom.



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Dr Marianna Pavan is a Lecturer in Sport Management and Policy in the Business and Law Faculty at Manchester Metropolitan University and a member of the Faculty's Sport Policy Unit and University's Institute of Sport. Her research sits at the intersection of human rights in and through sport, sport for development and peace, and disability, with a particular focus on inclusion. Through participatory methods, she works alongside participants to ensure their voices and perspectives shape both the research process and its outcomes. Her recent work includes research on the consumer experiences of disabled football fans, which reflects her broader commitment to inclusive and socially impactful sport research. Marianna has presented her research across academic, policy and practitioner fora, and has received funding from FIFA, UEFA, Erasmus+ Sport, and the ESRC. Prior to joining MMU, she also worked with national and international organisations and sport governing bodies in consultancy and advisory capacities. She holds a PhD from the University of Edinburgh and an MSc in Human Rights from the London School of Economics and Political Science.



DR RYUTA YODA
Lecturer

Dr Ryuta Yoda is a Lecturer in Sport Management and Policy in the Business and Law Faculty at Manchester Metropolitan University and a member of the Faculty's Sport Policy Unit and University's Institute of Sport. Ryuta completed his PhD at Coventry University, where he researched the impact of hosting international sport events on sport participation in Japan. He conducted over 100 interviews in Japanese and translated the findings. Prior to his PhD studies, he was involved in various sport-related organisations in Japan, the United States, Bhutan, and the United Kingdom.



DR ALESSIO NORRITO
Senior Lecturer

Dr Alessio Norrito was a Senior Lecturer in Sport Sociology and Management in the Business and Law Faculty at Manchester Metropolitan University and a member of the Faculty's Sport Policy Unit and University's Institute of Sport before moving to the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign in the United States in January 2026. Alessio is an expert in the field of sport for development and peace and migration. His particular interests lie on cross-cultural interactions, social ecology, and new materialisms. He holds a PhD from Loughborough University, and his doctoral thesis has looked at how football helps refugees positively resettle in Europe. Since then he has worked on different funded projects, such as researching retention in sport for marginalized communities in the United Kingdom, looking at how sport may help reduce crime in Nottinghamshire, and how footballers with a forced migration navigate their careers in Germany and Italy. While doing his PhD, he has served as the managing editor for the Journal of Sport for Development, and as a Co-Lead for the Loughborough UNESCO Student Network. He has successfully worked on and completed two funded research projects, one funded by the International Olympic Committee (led by Julie Stirrup) and one funded by the UEFA Academy (led by Enrico Michelini). He has won the Young Researcher Award 2024 from the European Association for the Sociology of Sport.

Methodology

Table 1 provides an overview of the methods used and how they relate to the four overarching outcomes. These methods are developed in more depth below for each outcome.

METHODS	OVERARCHING OUTCOMES ADDRESSED
Questionnaires and interviews with players	A
Desktop research/document and data analysis	B & C

A. New and Updated Employment Data / Player Perspective

Based on FIFPRO's consideration that there is limited employment data on professional women's football and subsequent information on the labour experiences and reality for women's players, the focus of overarching outcome A is a research and situational analysis of players in the labour market. The expected specific outcomes are a) the creation of an updated evidence base about global employment in professional women's football and b) a better understanding of what it means to be employed as a player in women's football. Data was collected through questionnaires and interviews with women's players.

A.1. Questionnaires

A.1.1. Process

The process for the questionnaires with players followed four steps: preparation, translation, online publication, and contacting/sharing.

The preparation of the questionnaires aimed to design the questions to be asked to players. A mix of closed (yes/no and 1-5 Likert scale, that is, level of agreement from 1 for disagree to 5 for agree) and open questions is used. An initial draft of the questionnaire was shared by the research team with FIFPRO for feedback and further refinement before an agreement was reached on the final draft. Overall, following initial demographical questions (e.g., nationality, age, league), 12 areas are covered:

1. Status (professional/semi-professional/amateur) and contract (e.g., written contract or not, copy or not, length);
2. Wages and compensation (e.g., sources of football income, non-financial benefits, earnings);
3. Financial/employment security (e.g., level of financial comfort, confidence in ability to manage finances);
4. Agent (e.g., players having an agent representing them or not, payment);
5. Training and match environment (e.g., enough staff to fulfil needs, satisfaction with medical and psychological support and football facilities, willingness to discuss issues with coaching staff and club management or not);
6. Player health, safety and wellbeing (e.g., match load, training load, enough days off or not);
7. Player education and development (e.g., highest level of education or training, commitments on the top of football player or not, satisfaction with football/work/study/life balance);
8. Social security protection (e.g., provider for health insurance, benefit schemes in case of sickness or injury);
9. Professional status and career (e.g., importance of professional status, reasons, barriers);
10. Player data protection and image rights (e.g., education about image rights, data rights and performance data protection, control of performance data usage);
11. Collective organising, representation and voice (e.g., perceived solidarity amongst player and teammates to take collective action, member of Players Union or not; organisations and/or mediums used to make voice heard);
12. Satisfaction (e.g., working conditions, protections, pay, opportunity to develop, maternity/parental provisions, overall).

The content of the questionnaires initially written in English was translated into other languages spoken in the countries analysed. As mentioned in the 'Evidence of Expertise and Experience' section above, the research team represents five nationalities (Chinese, French, Indian, Italian, and Japanese) and was able to additionally deal not only with English but also other languages (e.g., Amharic, German, Korean, and Spanish) relevant to the project. The questionnaires were then published online through Qualtrics before being shared with national unions and players by FIFPRO.

A.1.2. Data Analysis

The data analysis for the questionnaires shared with players followed three steps: translation, cleaning, and analysis.

All the responses were extracted in an Excel sheet and carefully translated in English for open responses to ensure consistency and comparability across languages. The responses were then checked for potential issues (such as respondents having made limited progress to the survey and/or answered to limited items), and cleaned if necessary (e.g., removing respondents having not made sufficient progress and/or responded to enough items, or duplicate responses) to ensure that the data analysed were reliable. Any monetary information not provided in euros was converted in euros to allow more meaningful integration and comparison. A limitation is that amounts were not recalculated based on purchasing power parity which would have catered for different costs of life worldwide, that is, €1,000 in one country may not allow the same level of expenditure than €1,000 in another country. However, it was considered that such recalculation would overcomplicate the data analysis.

The responses from players were then analysed through descriptive statistics (percentages or average scores) and, when at least three responses to a question were suggested, figures displaying the percentage of respondents for each response. Figures correspond either to pie charts if the sum of responses is 100% (only one response possible for each respondent) or bar charts if the sum of responses is more than 100% (more than one response possible for each respondent). Bar charts were also used for regional comparison based on the distinction between 6 geographical regions, namely, Africa, North America, South America, Asia/Oceania, East Europe, and Central/West Europe. Open responses were scrutinised to highlight key aspects raised by players. Additionally, regression analyses were undertaken to explain the determinants of overall satisfaction as professional football player, that is, whether the employment items assessed have a significant impact on overall satisfaction as professional football player. Significant means that there is high confidence in the fact that an item impacts overall satisfaction, with the impact being either positive or negative.

A.2. Interviews

It was anticipated that areas such as contract types, working conditions and protections, players voice on conditions, experiences, and development, and other relevant employment information including multiple jobholding and dual careers were not going to be fully represented by statistical data. For instance, based on research in China[1], contract types for women's footballers are not a clear-cut between individual and collective, there can be cases where players rely on a government 'bianzhi'[2] and at the same time, an individual contract within a professional club. As such, the research team anticipated that contract types in different countries can have multiple meanings and be in various forms, and qualitative method of interviews would be necessary and important to offer insights into these areas in addition to quantitative data. Members of the FIFPRO and Manchester Metropolitan University research teams also asked players about their experiences and/or perceptions of the integration of women's teams by men's clubs, a growing phenomenon internationally they have worked and are still working on[3], while also covering independent women's clubs. Areas for improvements and information sought by players were also discussed.

A.2.2. Data Analysis

Once data collection was completed, transcribed and translated, the research team undertook a five-step reflexive thematic analysis guided by the data[4]. The analysis led to the generation of a collective Excel file with emergent codes/themes and associated quotes. For each interview, two researchers were assigned to conduct the first three steps of the thematic analysis – dataset familiarisation, data coding, and initial theme generation. The two researchers subsequently met to discuss, clarify, and negotiate emergent themes from the data. This process of collective analysis represents the fourth and fifth steps of reflexive thematic analysis, namely theme development and review, and theme refining, defining and naming.

A.3. Summary on New and Updated Employment Data / Player Perspective and Link to Expected Specific Outcomes

Through questionnaires and interviews with players, the FIFPRO and Manchester Metropolitan University research teams collected new and updated employment data. This contributed to the creation of an updated evidence base about global employment in professional women's football, hence responding to the expected specific outcome a. In addition, the use of mixed methods and their application to all 6 geographical regions across the world used in the player perspective analysis (i.e., Africa, North America, South America, Asia/Oceania, East Europe, and Central/West Europe) helped gather a range and depth of insights about how women's football players assign or make meaning of employment in football, with its associated pros and cons. This provides a better understanding of what it means to be employed as a player in women's football, hence responding to the expected specific outcome b.

B. Economic Value / Industry Perspective

The focus of desired overarching outcome B is an external analysis of the economy of women's professional football and an assessment of the structural environment of the industry, including a systemic review of league models, popularity data, economic, financial and market information, and collective bargaining agreements (CBAs). The expected specific outcomes are a) to estimate the economic value of women's national team football and elite tier professional league competitions; and b) to cover the determinants of the economic value of women's elite tier professional league competitions. Data were collected through document analysis across 30 countries in 6 geographical regions:

- 3 in Africa: Egypt, Morocco and South Africa.
- 3 in North America: Canada, Mexico, and USA.
- 3 in South America: Argentina, Brazil, and Colombia.

- 6 in Asia/Oceania: Australia, China, Japan, New Zealand, Saudi Arabia, and South Korea.
- 5 in East Europe: Croatia, Cyprus, Greece, Lithuania, and Romania;
- 10 in Central/West Europe: Czechia, Denmark, England, France, Germany, Italy, Norway, Scotland, Spain, and Sweden.

B.1. Document and Data Analysis

The document and data analysis focused on four types of documents and data: economic information, such as known revenue from major international tournaments, and domestic revenue information for key professional leagues; league models in terms of governance, CBA, structure and competition models; public interest/ popularity data, such as stadium attendance, TV/ digital/ streaming audience, and social media metrics for domestic league games; and additional finance and market statistics, such as transfer fees and transfer market analysis, and club/player valuations.

B.1.1. Process

The process for the document and data analysis followed the principles of reviews the research team conducted in the past[5], including on women's football[6]. These principles include problem identification (already provided by FIFPRO and reminded above, see the focus of desired outcome B in the previous page); document and data search; data evaluation; data analysis (see below); and presentation of results (see 'Findings' section).

Regarding document and data search, it was key to identify which data the research team was looking for. Given the overarching objective to estimate and explain the economic value of women's football, this was informed by the literature on the determinants of the economic and financial value of football, including the research team's previous publications on the topic[7]. An initial discussion with FIFPRO then helped establish which relevant information they could provide the research team with. Other documents and data were found on national association, domestic league and club websites and social media platforms, as well as other relevant internet sources such as Deloitte (more details in the findings section where relevant). In addition, relevant academic literature was reviewed, based on a snowballing approach starting with documents already identified by the research team[8]. Moreover, government/policy documents were also consulted, as domestic and continental laws and policies towards gender equality/equity in sport and more broadly in society can have an impact on the development of women's football and the situations encountered by female players[9].

In terms of data evaluation, the key question was: do the data in the documents identified help solve the problem? If not, the documents were excluded from the analysis.

B.1.2. Data Analysis

The data analysis was organised around the four types of documents and data mentioned above leading to the following four categories: economic value; league models (including governance, CBA, structure and competition models); public interest/popularity; finance/player market data. For each category, relevant data were extracted from the documents and sources analysed and translated in English if needed. These data were made consistent across leagues and international competitions to favour comparisons.

B.2. Summary on Economic and Financial Value / Industry Perspective and Link to Expected Specific Outcomes

Through document and data analysis, we collected data about the economy and structural environment of professional women's football. This contributed a) to estimate the economic value of women's national team football and elite tier professional league competitions; and b) to cover the determinants of the economic value of women's elite tier professional league competitions, consistent with the expected specific outcomes.

C. Additional Supporting Items

Where relevant, FIFPRO also wanted the Report to identify best practice and case studies from other sports, or other labour union movements, that support the outcomes of the Report and add impact. In this respect, we identified best practice and case studies alongside the earlier data collection process, made separate portfolio reports on other practices and analysed factors leading to their success. In addition, we used desktop research method to collect further information about these successful cases to make the portfolio more informative and more organised to be shared.

Initially, we thought potential successful practices could be identified from tennis and Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA), among others. In tennis, there is a long history of battle for gender equality that includes fighting for equal pay/prize money, in particular under the leadership of Billie Jean King[10]. While there is a general consensus in the literature that women's competitions are less balanced than their men's counterparts[11], the WNBA has been identified as an exception[12]. It was therefore identified as potentially acting as an example of best practice in terms of generating high competitive balance leading to an uncertainty of outcome attracting fans and revenues that eventually feed into better employment conditions for female players. These two cases (tennis and WNBA) were eventually included, together with the Professional Women's Hockey League (PWHL) recently launched in 2023 in North America, as it was also identified as an example of good practice potentially inspiring for the development of professional women's football.[13]

1 Peng, Q., Scelles, N., Chen, Z., Ai, K., & Wang, P. (2026). 'We exist because of them': Understanding the integration mechanisms and process of men's and women's football in China. Sport Management Review, 29(1), 133-158.

2 Bianzhi in China refers to the authorized number of personnel (the number of established posts) in a Party or government administrative organ (jiguan), a service organization (shiye danwei) or a working unit (qiye).

3 François, A., Scelles, N., & Valenti, M. (2022). Gender inequality in European football: Evidence from competitive balance and competitive intensity in the UEFA men's and women's Champions League. Economies, 10(12), 315.

Peng et al. (2026), cited in footnote 1.

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5 Scelles, N. (2020). Dynamics of publication in international scientific reviews in sport management: Towards an Agenda 21. Management & Organisations du Sport, 1, 1-71.

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Teixeira da Silva, J.A., Nazarovets, S., Carboch, J., Deutscher, C., Almeida, C.H., Webb, T., & Scelles, N. (2024). The video assistant referee in football. Sports Engineering, 27(1), 14.

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Viollet, B., Scelles, N., & Peng, Q. (2023). From sport policy to national federation sport policy: An integrative literature review and conceptualisation attempt. Sustainability, 15(4), 2949.

6 Scelles, N., & Andreff, W. (in press). Économie du football féminin : Un aperçu des recherches récentes [Economics of women's football: A glimpse of recent research]. In M. Desbordes & Y. Imine (Eds.), Le football féminin, état des lieux et enjeux scientifiques [Women's football, state of play and scientific stakes]. Paris: INSEP Éditions.

Valenti, M., Scelles, N., & Morrow, S. (2018). Women's football studies: An integrative review. Sport, Business and Management: An International Journal, 8(5), 511-528.

7 Scelles, N. (2024). Le fair-play financier de l'UEFA est-il « juste » ? Le cas du Real Madrid [Is UEFA Financial Fair Play 'fair'? The case of Real Madrid]. Revue d'Économie Financière, 154, 129-140.

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Scelles, N., Helleu, B., Durand, C., & Bonnal, L. (2016). Professional sports firm values: Bringing new determinants to the foreground? A study of European soccer, 2005-2013. Journal of Sports Economics, 17(7), 688-715.

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8 This includes Scelles and Andreff (in press) mentioned in footnote 6 but also Andreff (2023, in press) for France, Clarkson et al. (2022, 2023) for England, as well as Arrondel and Duhautois (2023) internationally, among others:

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Andreff, W. (in press). The French top-tier women's football championship: A preliminary economic analysis. In P. Rodriguez, M. Taks & R. Koning (Eds.), Essays on sports economics. Oviedo, Spain: Ediciones de la Universidad de Oviedo.

Arrondel, L., & Duhautois, R. (2023). L'argent du football : Vol. 3 – Le foot féminin [The money of football: Vol. 3 – Women's foot]. Paris: Rued'Ulm, CEPREMAP.

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9 François, A., & Scelles, N. (2023, 23 August). La Coupe du Monde féminine a-t-elle respecté l'adage de la glorieuse incertitude du sport ? [Did the women's World Cup respect the adage of the glorious uncertainty of sport?]. The Conversation. https://theconversation.com/la-coupe-du-monde-feminine-a-t-elle-respecte-ladage-de-la-glorieuse-incertitude-du-sport-211967

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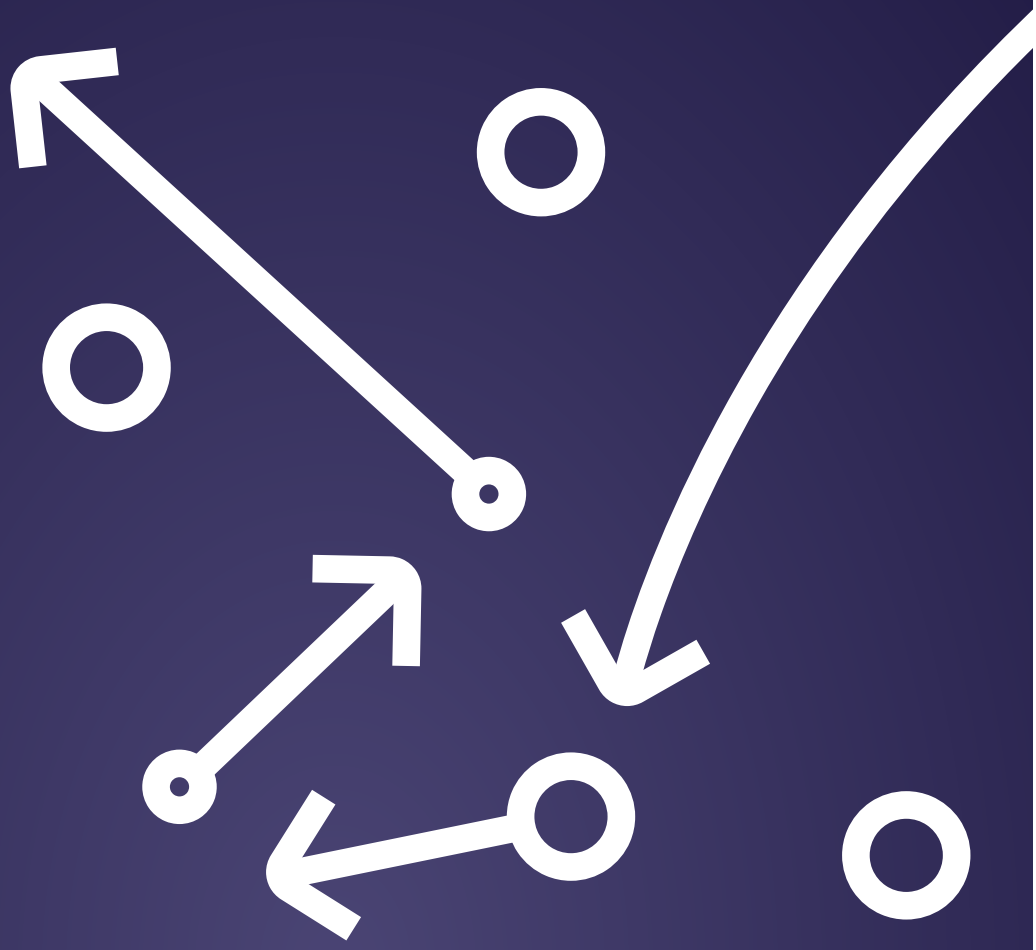
10 According to Blanchflower and Bryson (2020), job satisfaction is one of the measures of wellbeing and the most used in the literature of the impact of unions, however there are also other measures of wellbeing which help capture broader wellbeing/satisfaction (rather than just job satisfaction which is not sufficient in our case since some players are amateur without contract or have another job than playing football, etc.); Blanchflower, D.G., & Bryson, A. (2020). Now unions increase job satisfaction and well-being. NBER Working Paper Series, Working Paper 27720. https://www.nber.org/system/files/working_papers/w27720/w27720.pdf

11 Ware, S. (2011). Game, set, match: Billie Jean King and the revolution in women's sports. Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press.

12 Scelles et al. (2024), cited in footnote 10.

13 Kringstad, M. (2021). Comparing competitive balance between genders in team sports. European Sport Management Quarterly, 21(5), 764-781.

14 Patel, J. (2026) The future is female: How the PWHL was built in six months. Nova Sports Law. https://www.novasportslaw.com/post/the-future-is-female-how-the-pwhl-was-built-in-six-months & Bryson, A. (2020). Now unions increase job satisfaction and well-being. NBER Working Paper Series, Working Paper 27720. https://www.nber.org/system/files/working_papers/w27720/w27720.pdf



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