

Football players' production index: measuring nations' contributions

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1. Introduction

The 55th Monthly Report of the CIES Football Observatory analyses the contribution of national associations worldwide from the point of view of the production of professional players. To do so, we have traced the association of origin of 55,865 footballers having played during the 2019 calendar year in 132 top or second division leagues from 93 countries covering all continents.

The sample taken into account includes all the principle leagues worldwide. The difficulty in accessing the information of line-ups fielded by teams explains the absence of most of the African sub-Saharan championships. The latter are thus largely under-represented. However, their level of professionalism remains limited.

The origin of players was defined as the association where they grew up and from where they have eventually departed due to recruitment carried out by a foreign club. For example, a player such as Riyad Mahrez, though an Algerian international, was considered as being French insofar as he grew up there before leaving for England following his recruitment by Leicester City.





























































AFC			UEFA		
		players			players
AUS	A-League	321	ALB	Superliga	338
CHN	CSL	464	ARM	Premier League	338
HKG	Premier League	272	AUT	Bundesliga	369
IDN	Liga 1	509		2. Liga	522
IND	Indian Super League	281	AZE	Premyer Liqa	245
IRN	Persian Gulf Pro League	504	BEL	First Division A	547
JPN	J1 League	499		First Division B	305
	J2 League	633	BIH	Premijer Liga	411
KOR	K League 1	379	BLR	1. Division	400
	K League 2	320	BLR	Premier League	426
KSA	Pro League	553	BUL	First League	482
LIB	Premier League	244	CRO	1. HNL	354
MAS	Super League	314		2. HNL	564
QAT	Stars League	351	CYP	1. Division	429
SIN	Premier League	230	CZE	Czech Liga	477
THA	Thai League 1	438		FNL	483
UAE	Arabian Gulf League	466	DEN	Superliga	423
UZB	Super League	360		1st Division	400
VIE	V.League 1	372	ENG	Premier League	600
ALG	Ligue 1	533		Championship	855
RSA	1st Division	648	ESP	La Liga	657
RSA	PSL	520		Segunda División	811
TUN	Ligue 1	494	EST	Meistriliiga	261
Total		9705	FIN	Veikkausliiga	306
			FIN	Ykkönen	255
			FRA	Ligue 1	655
				Ligue 2	720
			FRO	Meistaradeildin	257
			GEO	Erovnuli Liga	296
			GER	Bundesliga	560
			GER	2. Bundesliga	634
			GRE	Super League 1	517
			HUN	NB I	370
				NB II	660
			IRL	Premier Division	276
			ISL	Úrvalsdeild	275
			ISR	Ligat ha'Al	464
				Liga Leumit	572
			ITA	Serie A	656
				Serie B	716
			KAZ	Premier League	320
			LTU	A Lyga	216
			LUX	National Division	437
			LVA	Virsliga	273
			MDA	Divizia Națională	225
			MKD	First League	327
			MLT	Premier League	440
			MNE	First League	324
			NED	Eredivisie	602
				Eerste Divisie	723
			NIR	Premiership	399
			NOR	Eliteserien	402
				1. Division	386
			POL	Ekstraklasa	524
				I Liga	608
			POR	Primeira Liga	698
				Segunda Liga	696
			ROM	Liga I	522
				Liga II	754
			RUS	Premier League	473
				FNL	681
			SCO	Premiership	423
				Championship	321
			SMR	Campionato	436
			SRB	Super Liga	563
				Prva Liga	621
			SUI	Super League	348
				Challenge League	348
			SVK	Super Liga	400
				2. Liga	561
			SVN	1. SNL	341
				2. SNL	548
			SWE	Allsvenskan	414
				Superettan	387
			TUR	Süper Lig	591
				1. Lig	666
			UKR	Premier League	415
				Persha Liga	522
			WAL	Premier League	362
			Total		37183

Figure 1: sample of the study

2. Quantitative contribution

Brazil is the most represented country among the players from the 132 leagues studied. The 2,742 Brazilians from the sample played more than three million minutes in 2019 (1,204 per player on average). Only one other country had more than 2,000 footballers in the championships taken into account: Argentina. In the top ten places are a third South American country, Colombia (4th), six European nations, of which France is the best ranked (3rd), as well as Japan (9th).

Figure 2: most common origins within the leagues studied

		Players	Minutes
1	 Brazil	2,742 	3,301,237 
2	 Argentina	2,330 	2,554,790 
3	 France	1,740 	2,192,397 
4	 Colombia	1,536 	1,900,969 
5	 Spain	1,349 	1,834,247 
6	 Serbia	1,337 	1,692,027 
7	 England	1,228 	1,648,140 
8	 Germany	1,096 	1,314,350 
9	 Japan	1,047 	1,450,405 
10	 The Netherlands	1,039 	1,409,033 
11	 Russia	1,029 	1,247,571 
12	 Uruguay	1,014 	1,249,292 
13	 Croatia	993 	1,133,202 
14	 USA	972 	1,258,342 
15	 South Africa	949 	824,222 
16	 Ukraine	946 	1,015,683 
17	 Romania	926 	1,067,314 
18	 Italy	919 	1,055,286 
19	 Chile	885 	683,378 
20	 Portugal	824 	1,003,131 

If we limit the analysis to footballers playing outside of the countries where they grew up, Brazil retains its top place (1,535 expatriates). There are more French (948) abroad than Argentinians (913), but the latter have played a greater number of minutes. Numerous in other United Kingdom associations, the English are in fourth place. Four African countries are in the top 20 (Nigeria, Ghana, Senegal and the Ivory Coast).

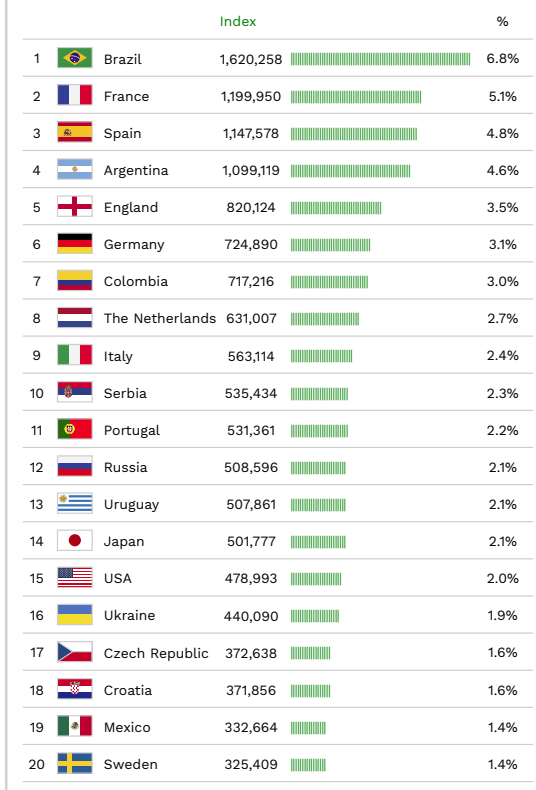


3. Qualitative contribution

To deepen our analysis, we have weighted the domestic league minutes played by each footballer according to the sporting level of the clubs of employment. For this purpose, we have developed a coefficient of sporting strength for teams worldwide. This coefficient was calculated by taking into consideration the division and results of teams at national level, as well as the results of the representatives of every association in international club competitions.

If we take into account the sporting level of teams where the footballers played, Brazil is still in first place with a football players' production index of 1.6 million (6.8% of the total). France (5.1%) and Spain (4.8%) complete the podium ahead of Argentina (4.6%) and two other European countries: England (3.5%) and Germany (3.1%).

Figure 4: football players' production index, by association



4. Conclusion

Independently of the modalities of calculation, Brazil emerges as the principle worldwide power regarding the production of professional footballers. Brazilians are numerous (2,742 in the 132 leagues studied, of which 1,535 are abroad), play a considerable number of minutes (1,204 domestic league minutes per year compared to a general average of 1,133 minutes) and play in high-level clubs (sporting coefficient of 0.49 compared to an average of 0.37).

The five European countries with the world's most competitive competitions – the big-5 – are all ranked in the top ten. The second biggest exporter, France, is second, just ahead of Spain. The French are more numerous than the Spanish in the leagues studied (1,740 as opposed to 1,349), but are less fielded (on average 1,260 minutes against 1,360 in 2019) and play in clubs with a lower level (sporting coefficient of 0.55 as opposed to 0.63).

Seven non-European countries are ranked in the top twenty places: four are part of the CONMEBOL (Brazil, Argentina, Colombia and Uruguay), two are from the CONCACAF (United States and Mexico) and one from the AFC (Japan). The absence of African countries is partially explained by the impossibility of accessing the information on line-ups fielded by teams in local leagues. However, if we limit the analysis to expatriate players, four African countries figure in the top twenty (Nigeria, Ghana, Senegal and the Ivory Coast).