

## Demographic analysis of ten women's leagues (2017-2022)










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### 1. Introduction





















The June 2022 Monthly Report of the CIES Football Observatory analyses the squad make up of ten of the main women's leagues worldwide from the aspects of players' age, playing time of expatriate footballers and origins represented among the latter. The study covers the six-year period from 2017 to 2022.

The sample is composed of players fielded or present at least once on the bench over the season. For the current season, the values refer to the situation as on the 1st of June. The NWSL Challenge Cup in the United States was also considered. For 2022, the sample studied includes a total of 119 clubs and 3,067 footballers.

Figure 1: study sample (2017-2022)

Average per season		Teams	Players
	A-League Women (AUS)	9.2	192.8
	Women's Super League (ENG)	11.0	270.2
	Primera División Femenina (ESP)	16.4	450.4
	Division 1 féminine (FRA)	11.7	300.3
	Frauen Bundesliga (GER)	12.0	311.8
	Serie A Women (ITA)	12.0	326.7
	Eredivisie Women (NED)	8.5	216.5
	Toppserien (NOR)	11.0	267.0
	Damallsvenskan (SWE)	12.3	296.2
	NWSL and NWSL Challenge Cup (USA)	9.8	258.3

Total number of different players (2017-2022)

	A-League Women (AUS)	495	
	Women's Super League (ENG)	679	
	Primera División Femenina (ESP)	1'003	
	Division 1 féminine (FRA)	829	
	Frauen Bundesliga (GER)	756	
	Serie A Women (ITA)	959	
	Eredivisie Women (NED)	539	
	Toppserien (NOR)	676	
	Damallsvenskan (SWE)	815	
	NWSL and NWSL Challenge Cup (USA)	601	

## 2. Age evolution

After four consecutive years of growth, the players' average age on the pitch (calculated on the 1st January of each year) did not increase during last year. Since 2017, however, an increase was recorded in eight of the ten leagues studied, with a notable rise in the English Women's Super League (+2.3 years of age). By championship, in 2022, the values vary between 22.1 years of age in the very young Dutch Eredivisie and 27.1 in the more mature NWSL in the United States.

Figure 2: average age on the pitch (2017-2022)

Season 2016/17 or 2017	24.3
Season 2017/18 or 2018	24.6
Season 2018/19 or 2019	24.8
Season 2019/20 or 2020	24.9
Season 2020/21 or 2021	25.3
Season 2021/22 or 2022	25.2

Figure 3: evolution in the average age on the pitch, per league (2017-2022)

	Women's Super League (ENG)	+2.30
	NWSL and NWSL Challenge Cup (USA)	+1.48
	Division 1 féminine (FRA)	+1.24
	Serie A Women (ITA)	+1.21
	Primera División Femenina (ESP)	+1.02
	Damallsvenskan (SWE)	+0.54
	Eredivisie Women (NED)	+0.03
	A-League Women (AUS)	+0.02
	Frauen Bundesliga (GER)	-0.66
	Toppserien (NOR)	-0.68

Figure 4: average age on the pitch, per league (2022)

	Eredivisie Women (NED)	22.1
	Toppserien (NOR)	22.7
	A-League Women (AUS)	24.0
	Frauen Bundesliga (GER)	24.4
	Damallsvenskan (SWE)	25.3
	Division 1 féminine (FRA)	25.4
	Primera División Femenina (ESP)	26.0
	Serie A Women (ITA)	26.0
	Women's Super League (ENG)	26.7
	NWSL and NWSL Challenge Cup (USA)	27.1

During the current or last completed season, NJ/NY Gotham FC fielded the oldest line-ups with an all-time record for leagues surveyed of 30.3 years of age. This is about 1.5 years more than for the second most experienced team: Tottenham Hotspur WFC. As for last season, VV Alkmaar fielded the youngest line-ups among teams surveyed (19.7 years of age), ahead of two other Dutch teams: SC Heerenveen and PEC Zwolle.

Figure 5: oldest line-ups, by club (2022)
















1		NJ/NY Gotham FC (USA)	30.3	<div style="width: 100%;"></div>
2		Tottenham Hotspur (ENG)	28.7	<div style="width: 100%;"></div>
3		Vittsjö GIK (SWE)	28.5	<div style="width: 100%;"></div>
4		Orlando Pride (USA)	28.2	<div style="width: 100%;"></div>
5		AC Milan (ITA)	28.1	<div style="width: 100%;"></div>
6		UD Granadilla Tenerife (ESP)	27.7	<div style="width: 100%;"></div>
7		Houston Dash (USA)	27.6	<div style="width: 100%;"></div>
.		FC Rosengård (SWE)	27.6	<div style="width: 100%;"></div>
9		ACF Fiorentina (ITA)	27.5	<div style="width: 100%;"></div>
.		Angel City FC (USA)	27.5	<div style="width: 100%;"></div>
.		West Ham United (ENG)	27.5	<div style="width: 100%;"></div>
.		North Carolina Courage (USA)	27.5	<div style="width: 100%;"></div>
13		Kansas City Current (USA)	27.3	<div style="width: 100%;"></div>
.		Juventus FC (ITA)	27.3	<div style="width: 100%;"></div>
15		Chelsea FC Women (ENG)	27.2	<div style="width: 100%;"></div>

Figure 6: youngest line-ups, by club (2022)

1		VV Alkmaar (NED)	19.7	<div style="width: 100%;"></div>
2		SC Heerenveen (NED)	20.2	<div style="width: 100%;"></div>
3		PEC Zwolle (NED)	20.3	<div style="width: 100%;"></div>
4		Avaldsnes IL (NOR)	21.0	<div style="width: 100%;"></div>
5		Lyn Fotball (NOR)	21.2	<div style="width: 100%;"></div>
6		Wellington Phoenix FC (AUS)	21.3	<div style="width: 100%;"></div>
.		SBV Excelsior (NED)	21.3	<div style="width: 100%;"></div>
8		Arna-Bjørnar Fotball (NOR)	21.6	<div style="width: 100%;"></div>
9		Røa IL (NOR)	21.8	<div style="width: 100%;"></div>
10		SGS Essen (GER)	22.0	<div style="width: 100%;"></div>
11		FC Carl Zeiss Jena (GER)	22.2	<div style="width: 100%;"></div>
.		Sydney FC (AUS)	22.2	<div style="width: 100%;"></div>
.		ADO Den Haag (NED)	22.2	<div style="width: 100%;"></div>
.		Feyenoord Rotterdam (NED)	22.2	<div style="width: 100%;"></div>
15		Rosenborg BK (NOR)	22.8	<div style="width: 100%;"></div>

### 3. Evolution of expatriates

Since 2017, the development of women's club football has gone hand in hand with an increase in the international mobility of players. The percentage of minutes played by expatriate footballers, those who grew up in a different association from that of their employer club, went up from 21.6% in 2017 to 30.9% in June 2022. However, as for age, the rising trend reversed during last year.

The player labour market internationalisation process observed during the six-year-period studied was particularly marked in the Italian Serie A (+36.6% of minutes by expatriate footballers) and the English Women's Super League (+19.6%). By league, in 2022, the level of expatriates ranges from just 5.4% in the Dutch Eredivisie Women to 47.7% in the Swedish Damallsvenskan.

Figure 7: % of minutes by expatriates (2017-2022)

Season 2016/17 or 2017	21.6%
Season 2017/18 or 2018	24.0%
Season 2018/19 or 2019	25.6%
Season 2019/20 or 2020	30.8%
Season 2020/21 or 2021	32.1%
Season 2021/22 or 2022	30.9%

Figure 8: evolution in % of minutes by expatriates, per league (2017-2022)

	Serie A Women (ITA)	+36.6
	Women's Super League (ENG)	+19.6
	Division 1 féminine (FRA)	+16.9
	Damallsvenskan (SWE)	+14.8
	Primera División Femenina (ESP)	+14.6
	Eredivisie Women (NED)	-0.3
	Frauen Bundesliga (GER)	-2.1
	Toppserien (NOR)	-4.4
	NWSL and NWSL Challenge Cup (USA)	-7.5
	A-League Women (AUS)	-13.5

Figure 9: % of minutes by expatriates, per league (2022)

	Damallsvenskan (SWE)	47.7%
	Women's Super League (ENG)	47.0%
	Serie A Women (ITA)	42.0%
	Division 1 féminine (FRA)	33.3%
	Primera División Femenina (ESP)	31.8%
	Frauen Bundesliga (GER)	30.9%
	NWSL and NWSL Challenge Cup (USA)	20.7%
	Toppserien (NOR)	17.8%
	A-League Women (AUS)	15.7%
	Eredivisie Women (NED)	5.4%

Many of the most competitive teams are made up of a majority of players who have grown up in foreign associations. Twenty of the 119 clubs analysed fielded expatriate footballers for a majority of domestic league minutes, with a record figure of 75.2% for the Swedish side IFK Kalmar. Champions League winners Olympique Lyonnais are just below the 50% threshold (47.1%), while the percentage for 2022 finalists FC Barcelona is much lower (25.1%).

The United States stand out as the main exporting country in women's football. With 82 footballers abroad, US citizens outrank the Swedes (46 expatriates) and the Canadians (42). Players from the United States are present in all the leagues studied, with a maximum of 22 representatives in the Swedish Damallsvenskan. In total, 73 associations had at least one expatriate in one of the ten championships analysed.

Figure 10: % of minutes by expatriates, per club (2022)

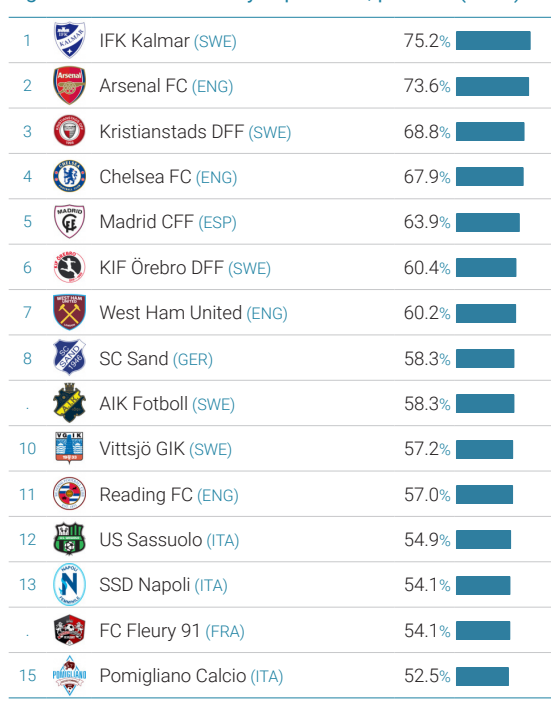
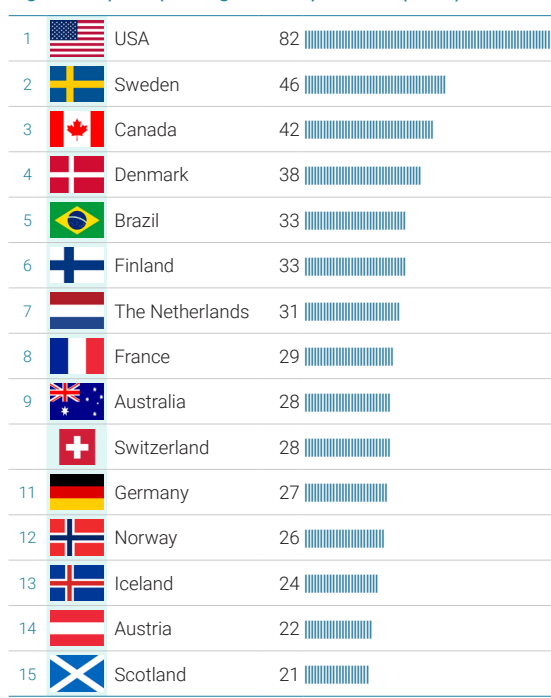


Figure 11: principal origins of expatriates (2022)



## 4. Conclusion

After the strong increases in players' age and expatriate presence recorded between 2017 and 2021, during the last year, the most competitive women's leagues worldwide underwent no major changes at the level of squad composition. The average age of line-ups fielded has remained stable, though the percentage of minutes played by expatriates has fallen slightly.

After having developed strongly, thanks notably to new resources invested by professional clubs traditionally more oriented to men's football, women's club football has entered into a period of consolidation. We have observed the emergence of a transnational market where each league, and teams within the latter, play complementary roles according to their economic and sporting potentials.

With the support of national associations, this new phase should go hand in hand with a general reinforcement of training programmes. Already well underway, this process will allow the level of competition to further improve both for clubs and national teams, thus promoting a lasting sporting and economic growth of women's football.