

# 2023 | FIFA WOMEN'S WORLD CUP WORKLOAD JOURNEY REPORT





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# 01 WELCOME

Welcome to the 2022/23 FIFPRO PWM Annual Report, focusing on the workload of players in the build-up to the 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup (FWWC). In this report, we provide an overview of the "pathway to the Women's World Cup" through the lens of workload and playing opportunities for players at international and club level.

This report follows FIFPRO's 2022 UEFA Women's Euros Workload Journey Report, and the 2021 FIFPRO Player Workload Monitoring Annual Women's Report. A critical theme running throughout the reports and within the data is that a large degree of fragmentation exists across elite professional and international football. Many players are experiencing what we have termed "underload", where players are afforded a relatively low number of appearances each season. This is a view of the industry that is perhaps often overlooked and unseen: the fragmented spread of games from team to team and player to player challenges the potential "readiness" for players to perform on the world stage. It also highlights where important and meaningful reforms can be positively influential.

A World Cup provides the industry with an opportunity to pause and reflect. It is a milestone that briefly stops the sport at a time when focus - both on how far we have come, and where we still need to go - can be applied to critically analyse areas where improvements and innovations can be found.

For women's football to sustainably flourish in a way that protects and promotes the wellbeing of players, solutions are required to inform decision makers and support player performance and the development of the game worldwide.



David Aganzo,  
FIFPRO President



Jonas Baer-Hoffmann,  
FIFPRO General Secretary





# 02 ABOUT

## FIFPRO PLAYER IQ: WORKLOAD

### FIFPRO PLAYER IQ

This publication has been developed by FIFPRO Player IQ, a player-focused knowledge centre that aims to help shape decision-making in the football industry to protect and improve the careers and working lives of professional footballers.



For more, visit <https://fifpro.org/en/player-iq>

### FIFPRO PWM PLATFORM

The FIFPRO Player Workload Monitoring (PWM) platform is a digital tool tracking the workload of professional football players from around the world. The platform is an analytics tool that monitors player workload to provide data insights and enable informed decisions to be taken in relation to future competitive scheduling and sustainable competition structures by prioritising player health, performance, and career longevity.

The database behind the PWM platform is the source of the analysis presented within this workload report. The FIFPRO PWM platform has recently been updated and now features 1,800 professional footballers, with over 350,000 match appearances on record to illustrate their workload journeys since 2018.



The FIFPRO PWM platform, operated jointly by FIFPRO and Football Benchmark, is freely accessible at the [FIFPRO website](#) and at the [Football Benchmark website](#).

### FOOTBALL BENCHMARK

Football Benchmark is a digital data & analytics platform that includes financial and operational performance data from more than 250 European and South American professional football clubs and social media performance metrics of hundreds of football clubs and players. The business intelligence tool also provides market value estimates for 10,000+ players, covering the best leagues of the UEFA, CONMEBOL and AFC confederations.



## FOOTBALL BENCHMARK





# 03 KEY FINDINGS

01



## MATCH LOAD OF FWWC SQUADS IS VERY DIVERSE, WITH HIGHER MINUTES PLAYED BY EUROPEAN TEAMS

The match load varies significantly among FWWC squads, with European teams playing the most combined minutes. England leads in total minutes played, followed by Spain, Portugal, Germany, and the Netherlands. Most of these players play in top European leagues, benefiting from international club matches (UWCL) and, in some cases, multiple domestic cup competitions (England, Portugal, Netherlands), which further increases their playing time compared to others.

02



## LACK OF DATA AVAILABILITY EVEN ON BASIC INFORMATION SUCH AS MATCH DATES AND MINUTES PLAYED

Gathering complete and accurate data on basic information such as match dates and minutes played of all FWWC players is a significant challenge. Even today, it is impossible to easily access many top players' up-to-date match schedule and performance statistics. Tackling the lack of data availability is important for the continued growth of women's football.

03



## LARGE DISPARITY IN DOMESTIC CLUB FOOTBALL STRUCTURES

There is a significant variation in domestic club football structures, impacting players' competitive exposure and development. The number of participating clubs, as well as the overall number of games played are very important. Our research shows that some FWWC participant nations' first division leagues have as few as 12 rounds, while in others, a team can play up to 30 matches in a season.

04



## PROFESSIONALIZATION AND LEAGUE EXPANSION PACE IS NOT QUICK ENOUGH

The pace of professionalization and league expansion in professional women's club football varies across regions, with progress not always necessarily matching expectations. International club competitions could represent the highest quality level, but access to these types of tournaments is uneven across continents. Disparities persist between the UEFA Women's Champions League (UWCL) and similar tournaments in other confederations. For instance, in the group stages of continental club competitions, outside Europe the average number of teams is around 8.3, while the UWCL has 16. Controlled efforts should be made to accelerate the development of international club competitions and provide more sustainable opportunities for women's club football globally.

05



## UNEVEN AND FRAGMENTED QUALIFICATION PATHWAYS

The different qualification formats used by confederations for the FIFA Women's World Cup have had varying workload implications on teams and players. While UEFA's dedicated qualifying tournament promotes consistent and competitive playing opportunities, players from other confederations have to rely on continental championships that also act as FWWC qualification pathways. The fragmented qualification landscape should be addressed by creating a more balanced qualification system that supports the growth of women's football worldwide.





## 04

## THE PATH TO THE 2023 FIFA WOMEN'S WORLD CUP

The years leading up to the first 32-team FIFA Women's World Cup were eventful. While the qualification journeys of the participating nations were quite different, they all had to contend with the impacts of a global pandemic and its subsequent impact on the match calendar and competitions. Taking a look at the landscape of women's football in this chapter, we find that it is still somewhat fragmented and is characterized by vastly different playing opportunities, scheduling, and overall conditions by region. In addition, the strength and development level of domestic leagues across the 32 nations also paints a diverse picture, enhancing the uneven nature of World Cup preparation.





# 04 THE PATH TO THE 2023 FIFA WOMEN'S WORLD CUP

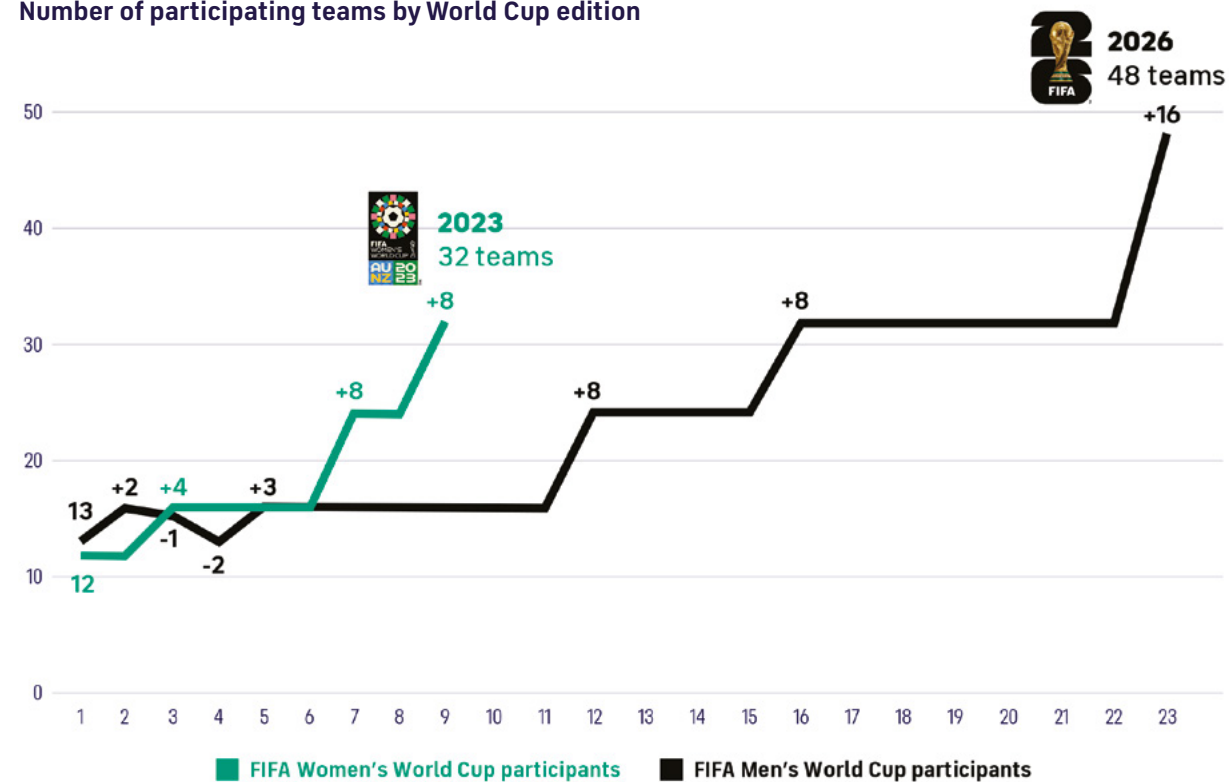
## TOURNAMENT EXPANSION: THE GROWTH OF THE FIFA WOMEN'S WORLD CUP

Hosted by Australia and New Zealand, the 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup (FWWC) is the ninth edition of the tournament. In many ways, it is a "World Cup of firsts": the event has never been co-hosted by two nations before or been held in the Southern hemisphere. This is also the first time that the overall prize money will be USD 110 million. . Although this is three times as much as the pot in 2019, it must also be mentioned that the prize money difference to the men's World Cup is still over USD 300 million. Significantly, the 'World Cup of firsts' will also contain per-player performance funding of a minimum of USD 30,000 per player and an equalization of conditions to the Men's World Cup 2022 in Qatar. These enhancements are the result of the largest piece of collective action undertaken by women's footballers worldwide, under the umbrella of FIFPRO and its Member Unions.

Also notable for this report, the most apparent competition format change compared to previous FWWCs is that this is **the first one with 32 participating nations**, indicating that there is continued growth of women's football around the world. While the historical context is admittedly different, it is worth mentioning that it took almost 70 years for the men's tournament to reach the same size. In the case of FWWC, the pace of the expansion was much quicker, growing from 13 teams in 1991 to 32 in just 32 years.

The next men's tournament will feature 48 nations in 2026, the largest-ever increase in the history of the two competitions. Similar expansion could be expected to follow in the women's tournament, the key question being when?

Number of participating teams by World Cup edition



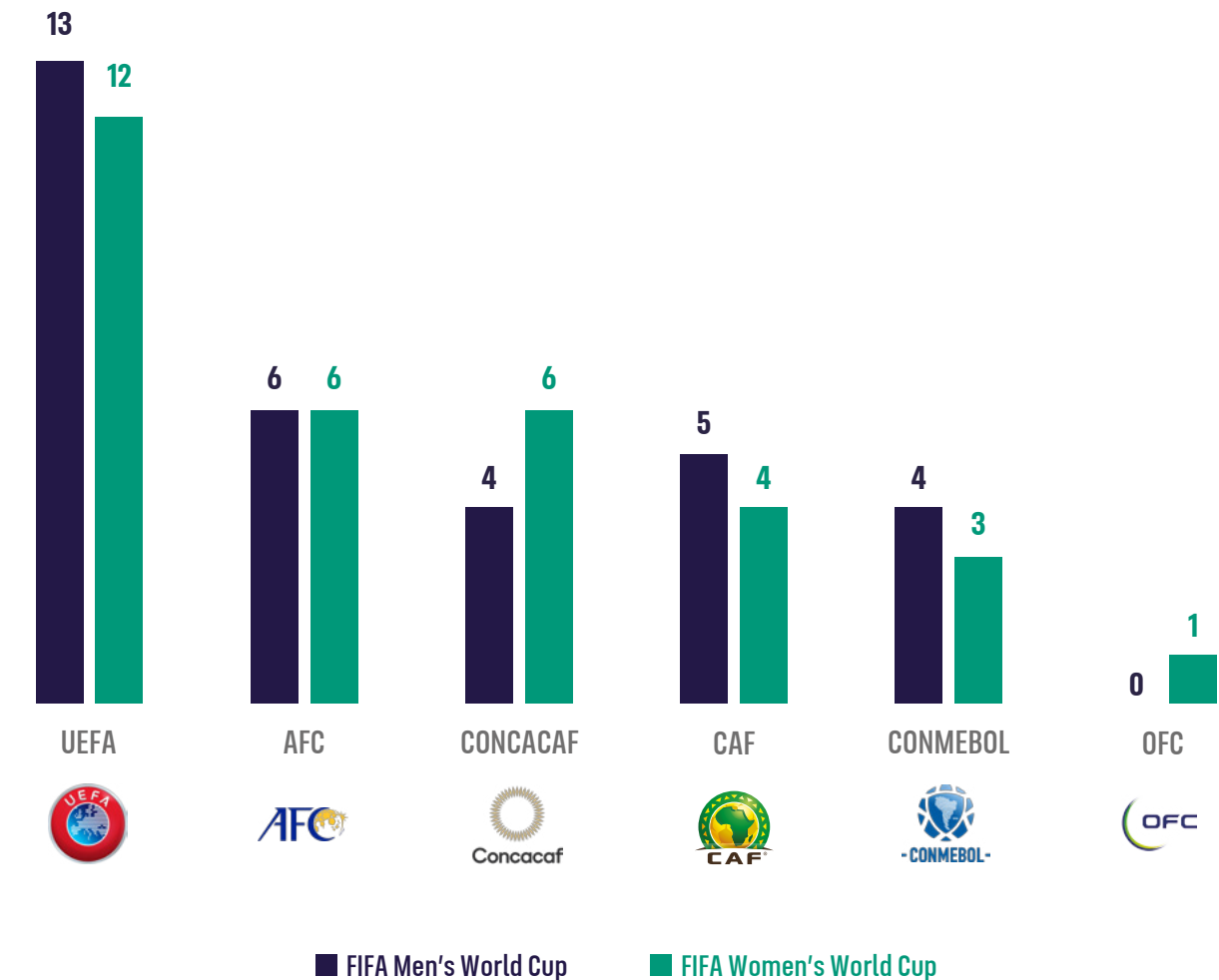
Source: Football Benchmark analysis

Note: Data labels indicate changes in the number of participating teams compared to the preceding edition.

Looking beyond the total number of teams, it is also interesting to compare their breakdown by confederation after the increase to 32 participants. The line-up of the last men's tournament (Qatar 2022) and the 2023 FWWC show strong similarities, but there are some key variations. In the latter there will be one fewer team from Europe (UEFA), but the biggest difference is related to the Concacaf region from which there are two more participants. Panama and Haiti both qualified via inter-continental playoffs, besting more favored opponents from South America.

Finally, it should be highlighted that the men's World Cup has not had a representative from OFC since New Zealand's 2010 participation, while the women's team of New Zealand makes an appearance at the FWWC for the fifth time in a row in 2023 (this time as co-hosts).

Number of participants by confederation (2022 FIFA World Cup vs 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup)



Source: Football Benchmark analysis



## REACHING THE TOURNAMENT: FRAGMENTED QUALIFICATION PATHWAYS

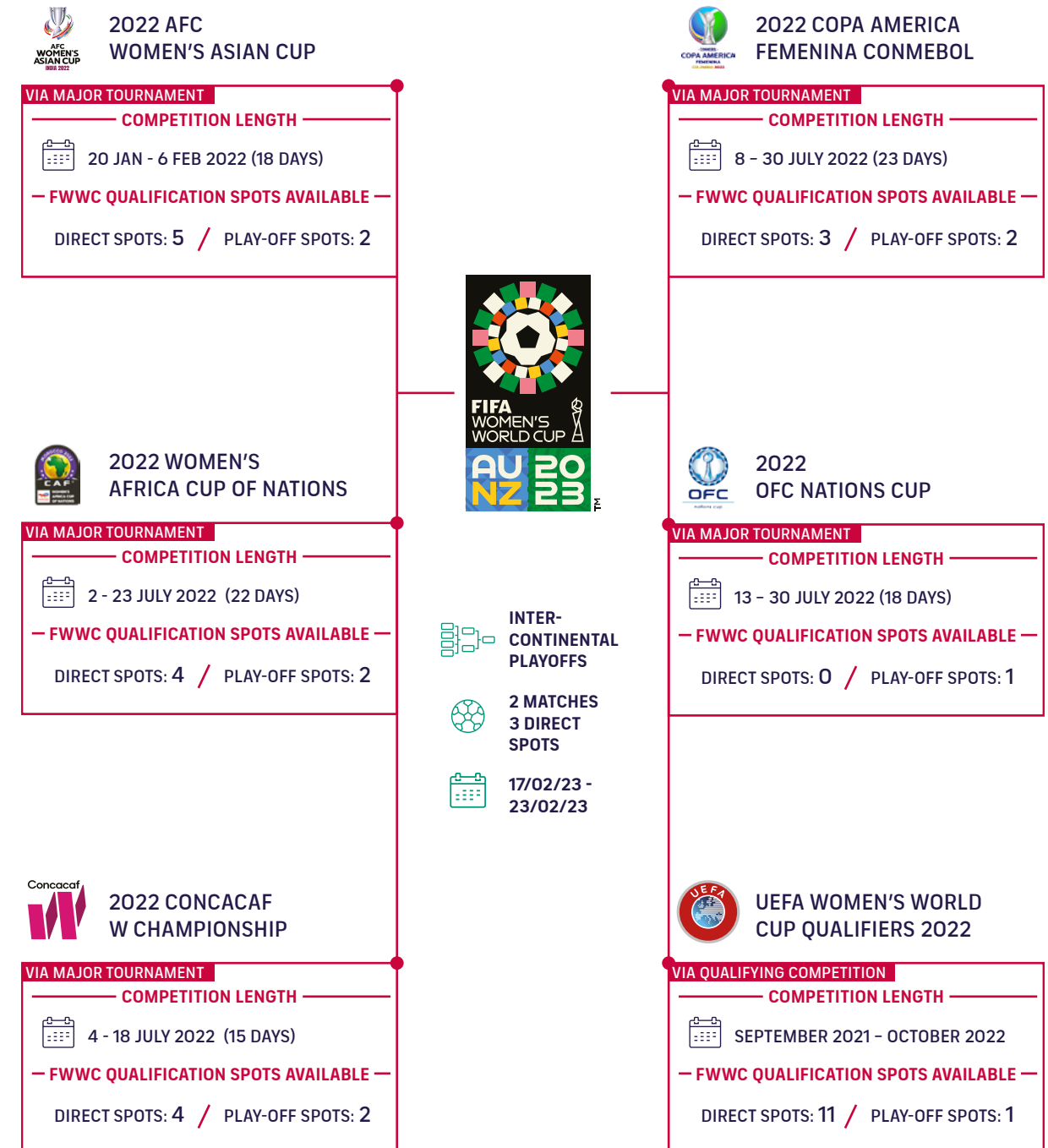
The 2023 FWWC will feature most of the best teams in the World (17 of the top 20 by the latest FIFA ranking have qualified), as well as many debutants as a result of the expansion. The tournament is a historic first for the Philippines, Vietnam, Morocco, Zambia, Haiti, Panama, Portugal, and the Republic of Ireland – a quarter of the participants overall.

The pathway to the FWWC was a complex and fragmented journey, with confederations adopting different approaches to the qualification process. In addition to the two host countries (Australia and New Zealand), there were 30 other slots to fill. 27 of these qualified directly through the confederations, while three places were won via inter-continental playoffs. It is important to underline that UEFA was the only one with a standalone, separate qualifying tournament; teams from the rest of the world could earn their place via continental championships: AFC Women's Asian Cup, CAF Women's Africa Cup of Nations, CONCACAF W Championship, CONMEBOL Copa America Femenina, and OFC Women's Nations Cup.

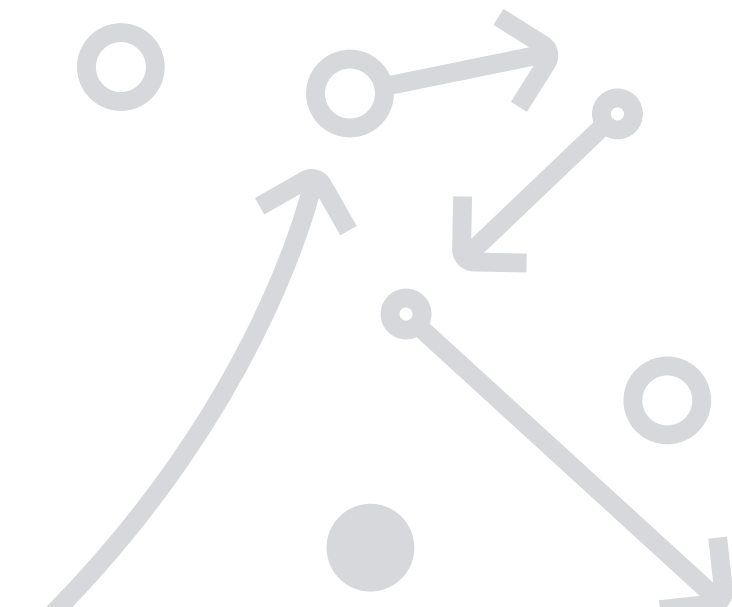
The qualification pathways are an important topic of debate as the introduction of qualifying tournaments in more confederations could increase the number of high-level, competitive matches that are available to teams from those regions. In addition, a qualifying phase could engage the teams over a longer period of time with competitively consequential games, adding

some stability and predictability to their schedules. As the analysis on the graphic highlights, outside of UEFA, qualification was determined in just a few weeks for most national teams via continental championships, whereas in Europe the process took more than a year and included at least 8-10 matchdays for everyone.

**In addition to uneven match opportunities, there have been significant disparities in other conditions during the qualification process, as well.** As highlighted in the [2023 FIFA Women's World Cup Qualifying Conditions Report](#) by FIFPRO, players mentioned several areas where attention and improvement could be found in those critically important tournaments. Medical examinations, training pitches, matchday stadiums, recovery and gym facilities all fell short of the professional standards and expectations according to the survey data. Additionally, around one third of players said that they were not paid for taking part in qualifying tournaments, with 66% having to take unpaid leave or vacation to participate. These inadequacies in providing necessary safeguards and elite standards highlight the pressing need for better support and equal treatment of women footballers. In order to be able to compete at the highest level the FWWC represents, competition organisers and governing bodies must provide conditions and competition environments that provide the players a platform that promotes and supports their wellbeing and performance.



Source: Football Benchmark analysis





## MATCH EXPERIENCE: GAMES PLAYED SINCE THE 2019 FWWC

The diverse qualification landscape of FWWC participant teams is an important factor that affects their workload, but it is not the only source of match opportunities for them. In this section the total number of games played by these 32 nations between the end of the 2019 FWWC (July 2019) and May 2023 is analysed to uncover disparities in their preparations for the tournament.

If a team does not have sufficient playing time together, it can seriously hinder their preparation, performance, cohesion and international match experience. If games are few and far between, it is difficult to provide

competitive opportunities to players, both to blood new talent and build squad experience. For many, national team football often represents the highest quality level and is the pinnacle of the game.

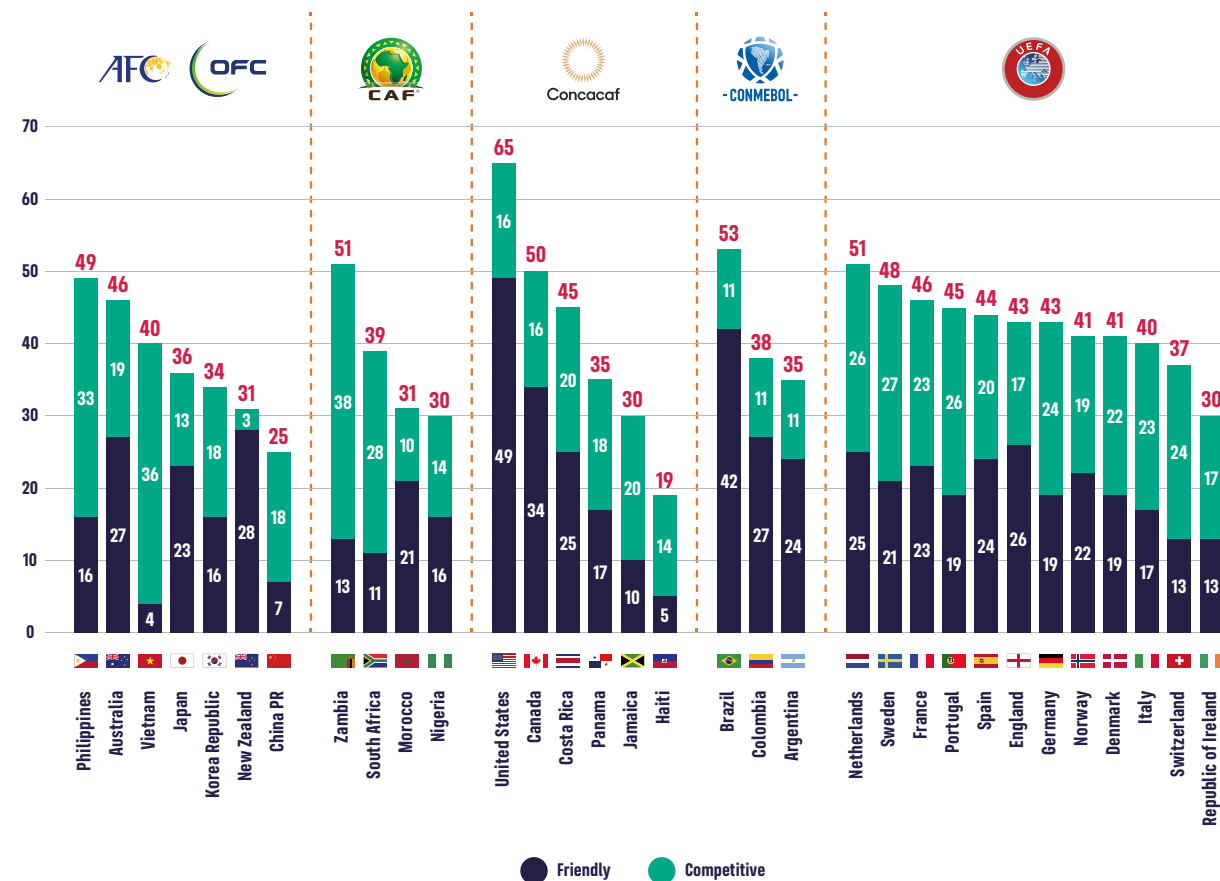
However, match-volume is not the sole “ingredient” of national team development; the type of matches played is equally important. This is why in the following analysis competitive and friendly (exhibition) matches are categorized separately. For example, continental championships and qualifiers for major events are all in the former category, but invitational tournaments (generally not hosted by confederations) are marked as friendlies in our analysis.

Looking at almost four full years of data, we found that there was indeed a wide disparity in match workload between the 32 FWWC teams. **The number of games played by teams was between 19 (Haiti) and 65 (USA)**, an almost three-and-a-half-fold difference. This is indicative of the current development levels of the 32 teams, their financial resources, as well as how they were affected by the COVID-enforced break. Other highlights from the data include:

- An average, 2023 FWWC national team played 40 matches since the last tournament, an average of just 10 games per year, which is less than what most men’s national teams’ calendar provides
- On average, around half of all national team matches were friendlies during the analysed period for these teams.
- For many, qualifying tournaments, and continental championships (with qualification also at stake) accounted for an important share of their competitive workload. In total, 40% of competitive matches were about FWWC qualification either directly or indirectly.
- The smallest intra-confederation variance in total matches was observed in UEFA. The Dutch national team had the highest workload due to their regular participation at major tournaments (49 matches, reaching the quarterfinals at last year’s Euros and at the Tokyo Olympics).
- Most matches played by Vietnam were competitive (Southeast Asian Games, AFF Championship, Asian Cup, and the qualifying tournament for the Olympics). They had the lowest share of friendlies among all teams (just two games in total).

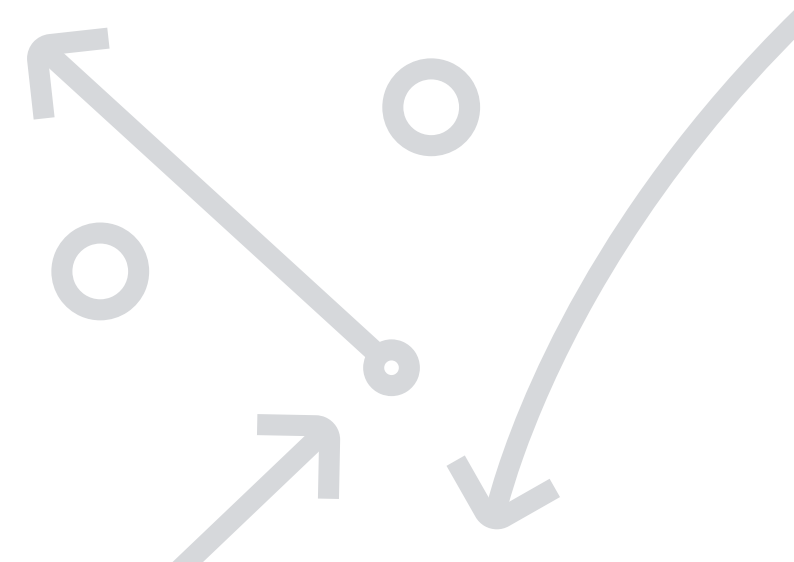
- Many teams played a high number of consecutive friendlies and thus did not face an opponent in a competitive match for a long period. Zambia had the longest such streak with 23 friendly games. It is noteworthy that all South American FWWC participants had long streaks of friendly games: Brazil (18), Colombia (16) and Argentina (16), again a consequence of the low number of confederation level competitions organised by CONMEBOL for women’s national teams (one in a four-year period).
- China PR and Haiti are the two teams with the lowest number of games during the analysed period. China took part in only a few friendlies with most of their games coming in different competitive tournaments (e.g., EAFF Football Championship, Asian Cup, the Olympic qualifying tournament, and the Olympic Games). Similarly, Haiti participated in the Olympic qualifying tournament, the World Cup qualifiers, and the intercontinental playoffs to clinch a spot at the 2023 FWWC. Quite problematically, there was a two-year period in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic during which Haiti did not play a single match (February 2020 – February 2022).
- The road to FWWC 2023 was far from being smooth due to the COVID-19 pandemic which impacted the calendar and deprived players of precious playing time. Many tournaments were postponed (e.g., Olympic Games, World Cup U20 and U17, and many continental tournaments). Several leagues were also impacted with forced breaks during the season. The domestic league in the Philippines has not resumed play since.

National team matches since FWWC 2019 (until May 2023)



Source: Football Benchmark analysis

Notes: The analyzed period includes matches played from 8 July 2019 to 3 June 2023.





## DOMESTIC FOUNDATIONS: STATE OF THE GAME IN FWWC PARTICIPANT COUNTRIES

Professional women's club football is growing rapidly, and the increasing visibility and popularity of the game is paving the way for greater opportunities and development for players worldwide. Current leagues are expanding, new leagues and clubs are being founded or gaining professional status. However, despite these positive signs, there are several regions where viable career paths, quality match opportunities and proper working conditions are lacking. As women's football continues to gain momentum, this section provides an overview of domestic football leagues in all 32 participating countries of the 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup.

As established earlier, experience within the national team setting is important, but players - usually - spend most of their time at their clubs. In an ideal scenario, proper playing time and growth opportunities found in domestic football competitions provide the foundation

for player progression. Even though in our globalized world the best players often sign for top teams concentrated in a few markets, the overall structure and relative strength of domestic leagues are still good indicators of the state of women's football in a particular country.

**The following analysis compares the number of clubs and matches played in first division leagues of the 32 participant countries of the 2023 FWWC.**

It must be mentioned that currently there is no national championship in Canada (it is expected to launch in 2025), while data about Haiti was unavailable at the time of our research. The remaining 30 competitions are quite diverse with half of them following a spring-autumn schedule (e.g., 2023 season) with the other half adhering to an autumn-spring calendar (e.g., 2022/23).

## NUMBER OF CLUBS BY LEAGUE

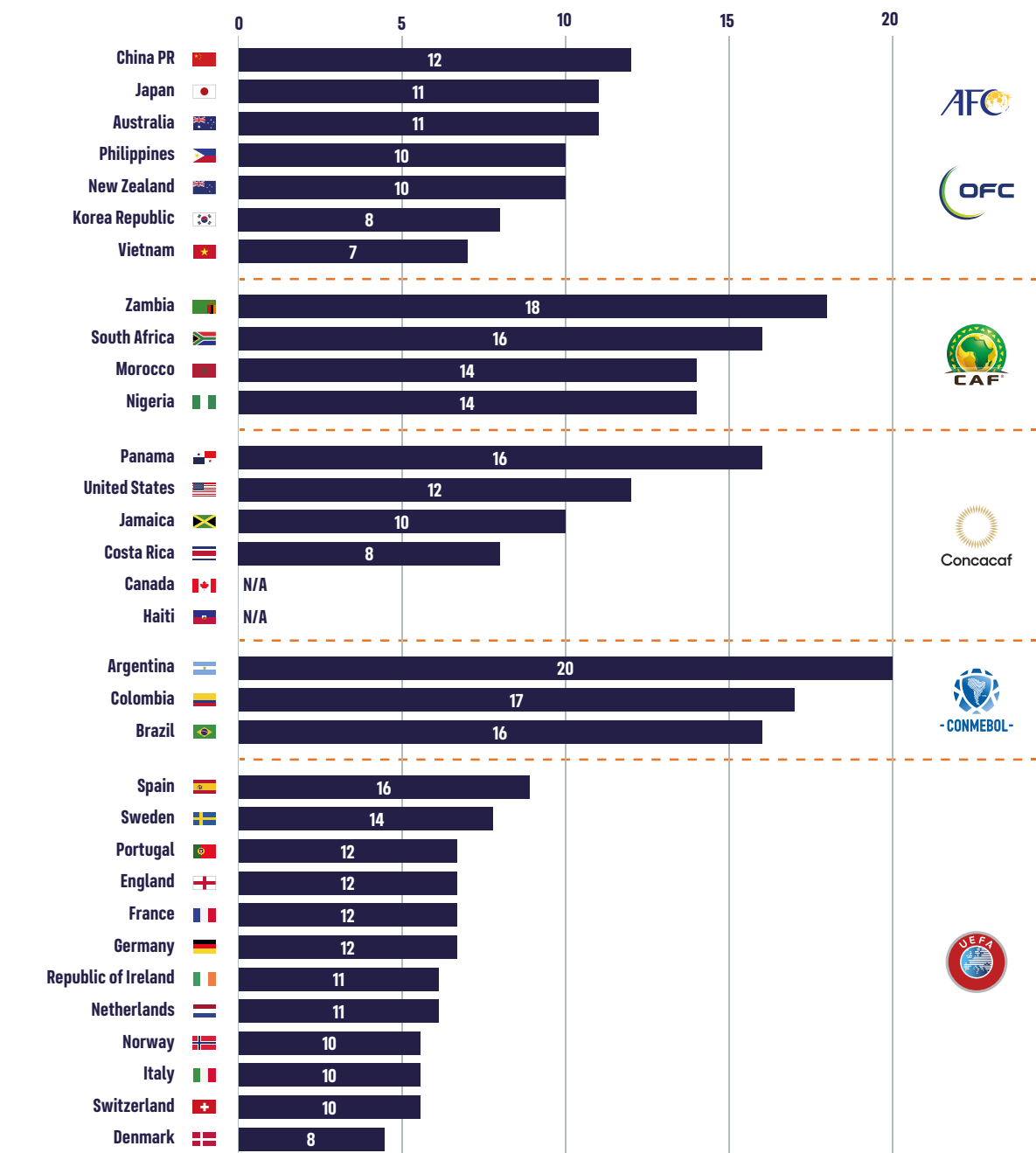
The size of a league purely in terms of the number of clubs can be considered an indicator of the sport's reach and its development state in a country. Our analysis found that there is a huge discrepancy between FWWC participant nations in this regard.

The average number of teams in these countries' women's top division leagues currently stands at

around 12. For context, the average of corresponding men's top tiers in the same countries is over 16, a considerable difference, indicating that there is still room for growth.

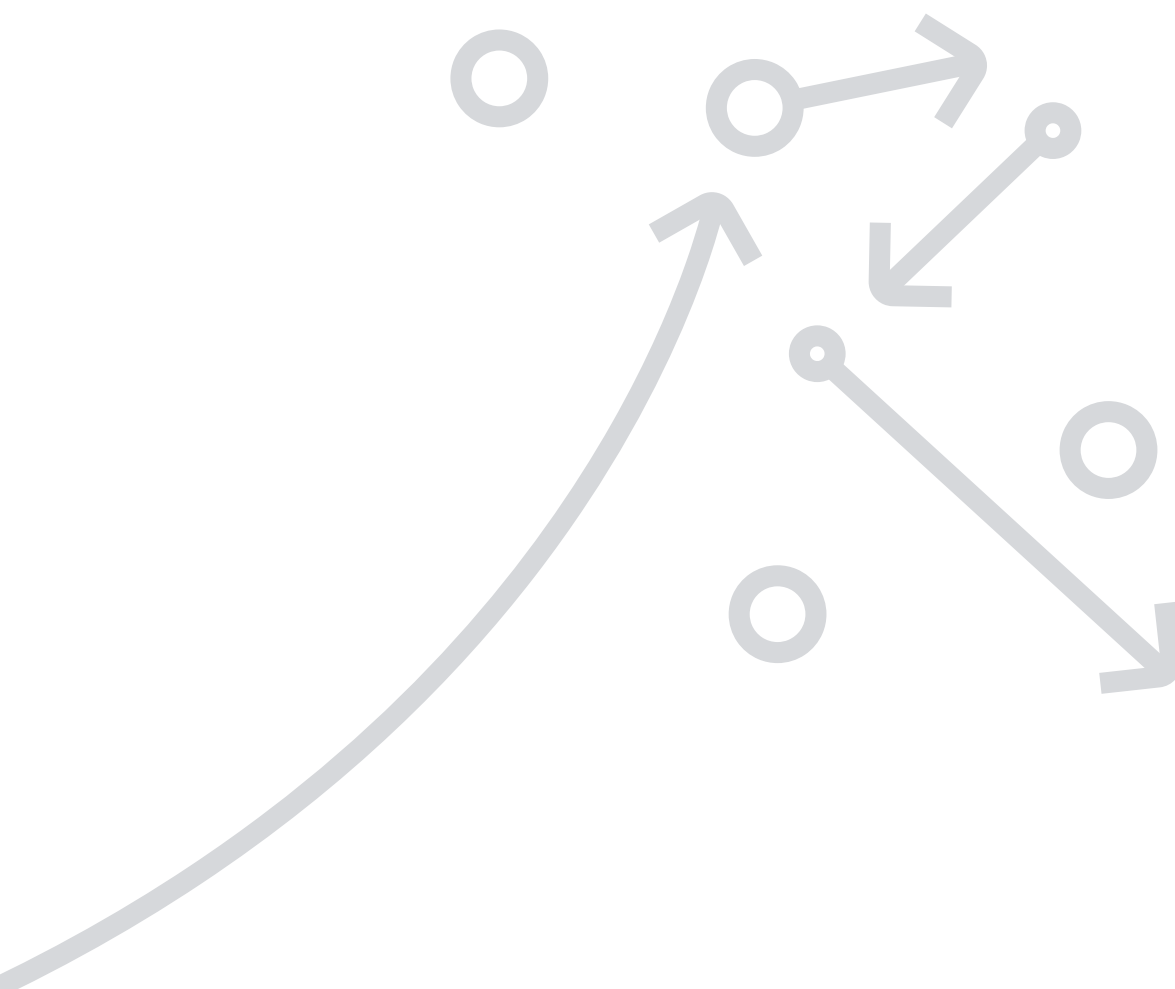
The three South American participants' leagues are the most "populous", while European leagues are perhaps the most consistent in their size.

Number of clubs in domestic first division leagues (2022/23 or 2023 season)



Source: Football Benchmark analysis

Notes: New Zealand (OFC confederation) is shown grouped together with Asian (AFC) nations.





## NUMBER OF MATCHES BY LEAGUE

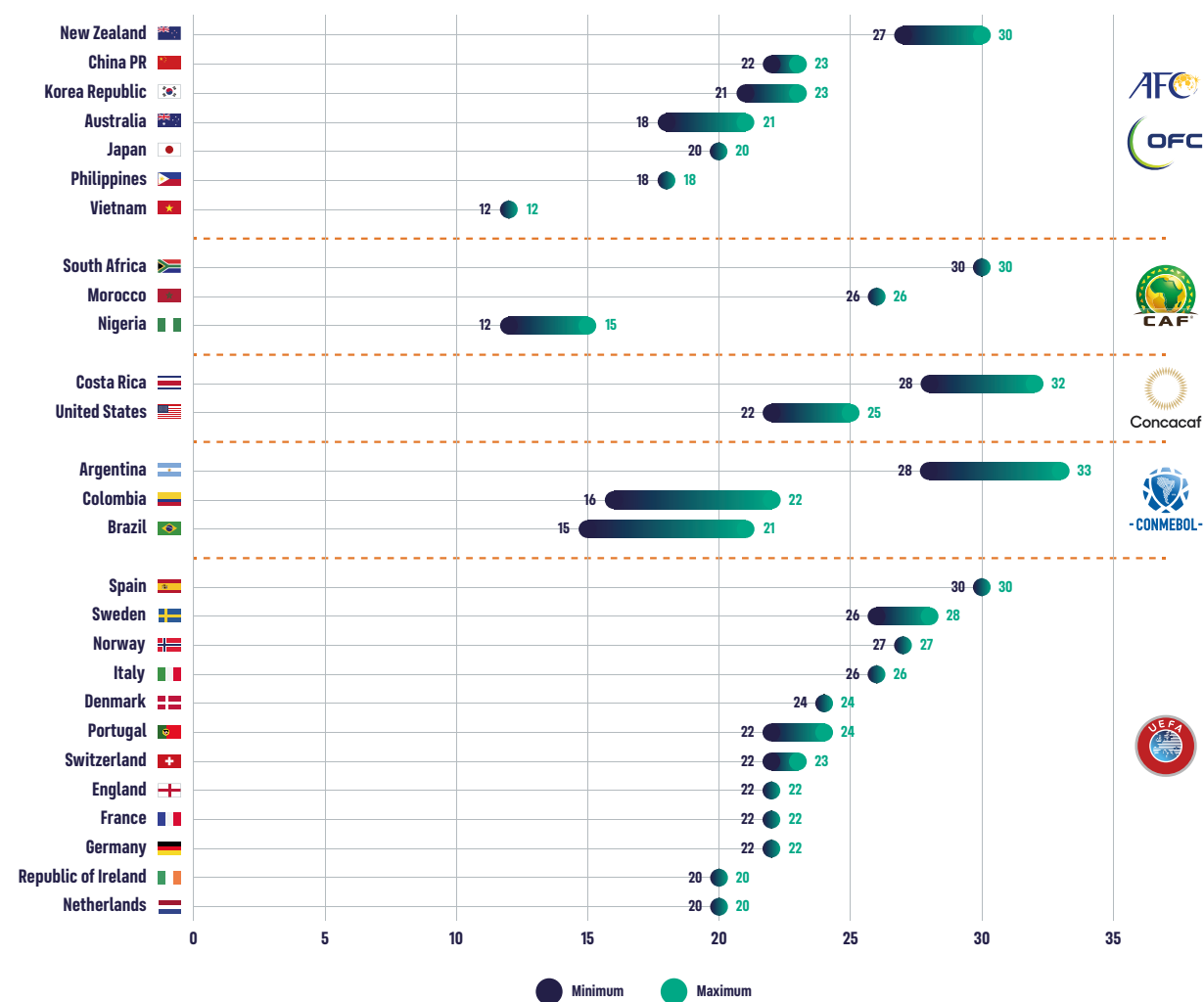
The size of a competition is an important factor, but it does not give us the full picture as actual matches played are perhaps even more important to determine the reach of the full domestic competition framework. This analysis shows the minimum and maximum games that a team can play in the analysed top divisions. The difference between the two figures (if any) is due to the varied nature of competition structures: some leagues incorporate a play-off phase for teams finishing near the top during the regular season, some organize grand finals, while others include relegation play-offs.

It would seem logical that the number of matches played in a single season by an average team correlates with the number of teams in a league, but it is not

always the case. For example, many in the 16-team Brazilian top tier only get 15 matches in a season, whereas all 12 teams of the Norwegian Toppserien play 27 rounds of matches, keeping the players "engaged" for longer and more often.

The average per club (considering only the minimums) is 22 matches across the analysed leagues. Most European leagues are in the middle of the pack in this regard (England, France and Germany are all with 22 matchdays).

Minimum and maximum number of matches played by first division teams (2022/23 or 2023 season)



Source: Football Benchmark analysis

Note: New Zealand (OFC confederation) is shown grouped together with Asian (AFC) nations.

## INTERNATIONAL CLUB FOOTBALL: RECENT CHANGES

In the final segment of this chapter, let's take a look at recent changes in the "third" arena of women's football: international club competitions. The developments generally point to continued expansion, but the pace of it is not uniform nor always satisfactory in every region. As the international club matches often represent the highest quality, it is crucial to increase access to these competitions for players everywhere in the world. Regrettably, the difference in the number of participants between the UEFA Women's Champions League (UWCL) and similar competitions of other federations is still huge. In the group stages of continental club competitions, outside Europe the average number of teams is around 8.3, while the UWCL has 16.

Competition	No of clubs (excluding qualifiers)	Recent developments
<b>FIFA</b> Global - FIFA Women's Club World Cup	-	FIFA announced the creation of the tournament in 2022, but it is not expected to launch until the summer of 2025.
 Europe - UEFA Women's Champions League	16	The longest-running and perhaps most advanced of all international club tournaments in women's football, the UWCL recently changed its format in 2021/22. The introduction of a group stage, followed by a knockout phase, aligned its structure to the men's competition format. A total of 72 clubs take part in the qualifying rounds.
 South America - Copa America Femenina	10	CONMEBOL announced that Copa America Femenina will be held every two years after the 2022 edition. In another major development, the confederation banned clubs from the men's Copa Libertadores if they do not operate a women's team.
 Africa - CAF Women's Champions League	8	The first women's international club tournament organized by CAF was approved in 2020 and it launched in 2021. A total of 30 teams take part in the qualifying phase, competing for one of the eight spots at the main tournament.
 Asia - AFC Women's Club Championship	7	The competition was launched in 2019, initially with the participation of only four clubs. The tournament was expanded to seven teams two years later, however, in the end only five took part as Orthodox FC withdrew, and Gokulam Kerala were disqualified.
 North and Central America - CONCACAF	-	The first continental club competition of the region is expected to start in 2024. It is set to be the sole qualification route for Concacaf clubs to the FIFA Women's Club World Cup.

Source: Football Benchmark analysis



## 05

## 2023 FWWC SQUAD WORKLOAD ANALYSIS

The Women's World Cup 2023 presents a valuable opportunity to assess the workload levels of players from various corners of the world and to showcase the different realities of the 32 participating squads. In this section, we delve into the workload comparison of the teams to see which ones have accumulated the most (and the least) minutes on the pitch over the past year in preparation for the tournament in Australia and New Zealand.







# 05 2023 FWWC SQUAD WORKLOAD ANALYSIS

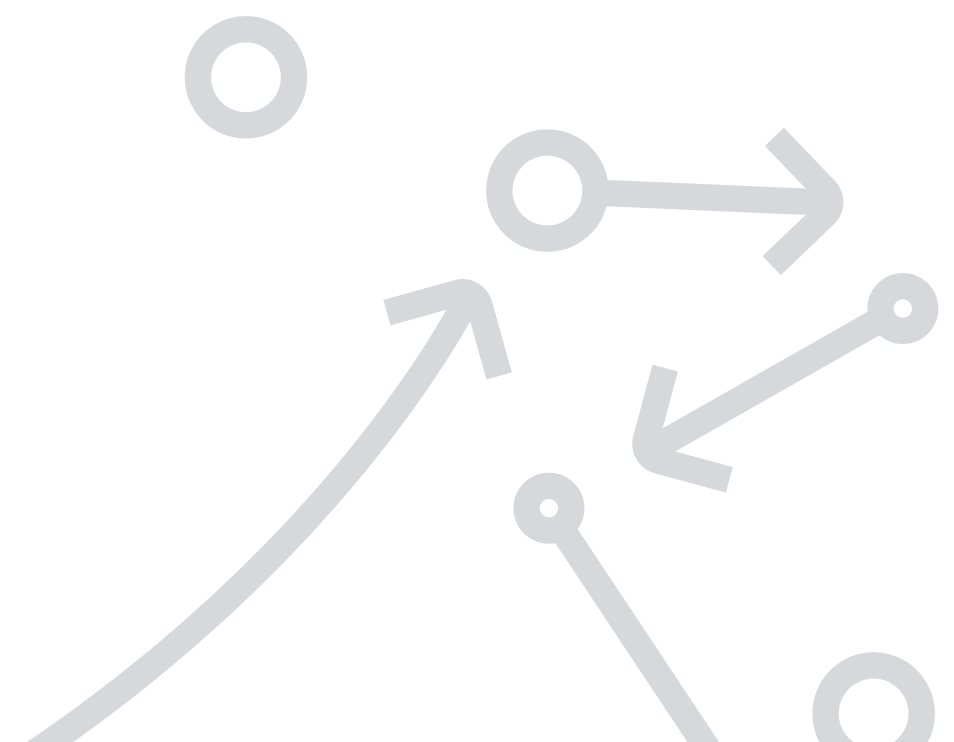
This chapter aims to analyse the match workload of the players called up to the final squads for the 2023 FWWC, between 1st August 2022 and 3rd June 2023, showcasing the differences that exist among and within the national teams.

It is important to highlight that, at the time of writing, not all FWWC squads had been finalized. Therefore, based on recent national team statistics, media reports and official preliminary squads, projected 23-player squads were selected for each national team by our panel, serving as the basis for our analysis. No changes were made to the selections after 22nd June 2023. Based on the tournament regulations, all projected squads include three goalkeepers.



## DATA (UN)AVAILABILITY IN WOMEN'S FOOTBALL

It is important to acknowledge the challenges regarding data collection. The lack of comprehensive and up-to-date information about certain competitions and players poses a significant hurdle to conducting statistical analyses in women's football. **Even at the highest level (such as the FIFA Women's World Cup), there is a substantial number of players about whom even basic information such as career path, match dates and minutes played is scarce or incomplete.** Consequently, eight national teams (Argentina, China, Costa Rica, Morocco, Panama, South Africa, Vietnam, and Zambia) are excluded from parts of the following analysis as too many players in their projected squads have an incomplete workload profile.





## SQUAD BREAKDOWN BY CLUB CONTEXT

Although professional women's club football has seen significant development in various countries over the years, access to adequate playing time still varies a lot from region to region. As highlighted in the previous chapter, the diverse range of league formats and sizes contribute to a discrepancy in club football playing opportunities. Consequently, players often seek a transfer to clubs that could provide them with more playing time and access to better quality competitions

When analysing the projected composition of national team squads, it is worth noting that none of them consists entirely of players competing in their respective home country's league. At the most extreme, teams such as Canada, Haiti, Jamaica, and Nigeria all rely entirely on players plying their trade abroad.

However, in Canada's case, it must be noted that the country does not currently have a women's top division league (it is expected to be launched in 2025 with a professional status).

Considering all squads, including the ones where the match workloads of some players were unavailable, there are more than 50 different leagues with at least one representative at the 2023 FWWC. The English FA WSL, the Spanish Liga F, and the NWSL of the United States collectively account for nearly 30% of players at the tournament. This highlights the significant presence and influence of these leagues in women's football on the global stage and the relative strength of their clubs compared to others.

### Breakdown of FWWC squads by players' clubs



Source: Football Benchmark analysis  
Note: percentage of players in a squad playing for a club in their home country or abroad in the projected squads as of early June 2023.

## SQUAD COMPARISON BY ON-PITCH MINUTES

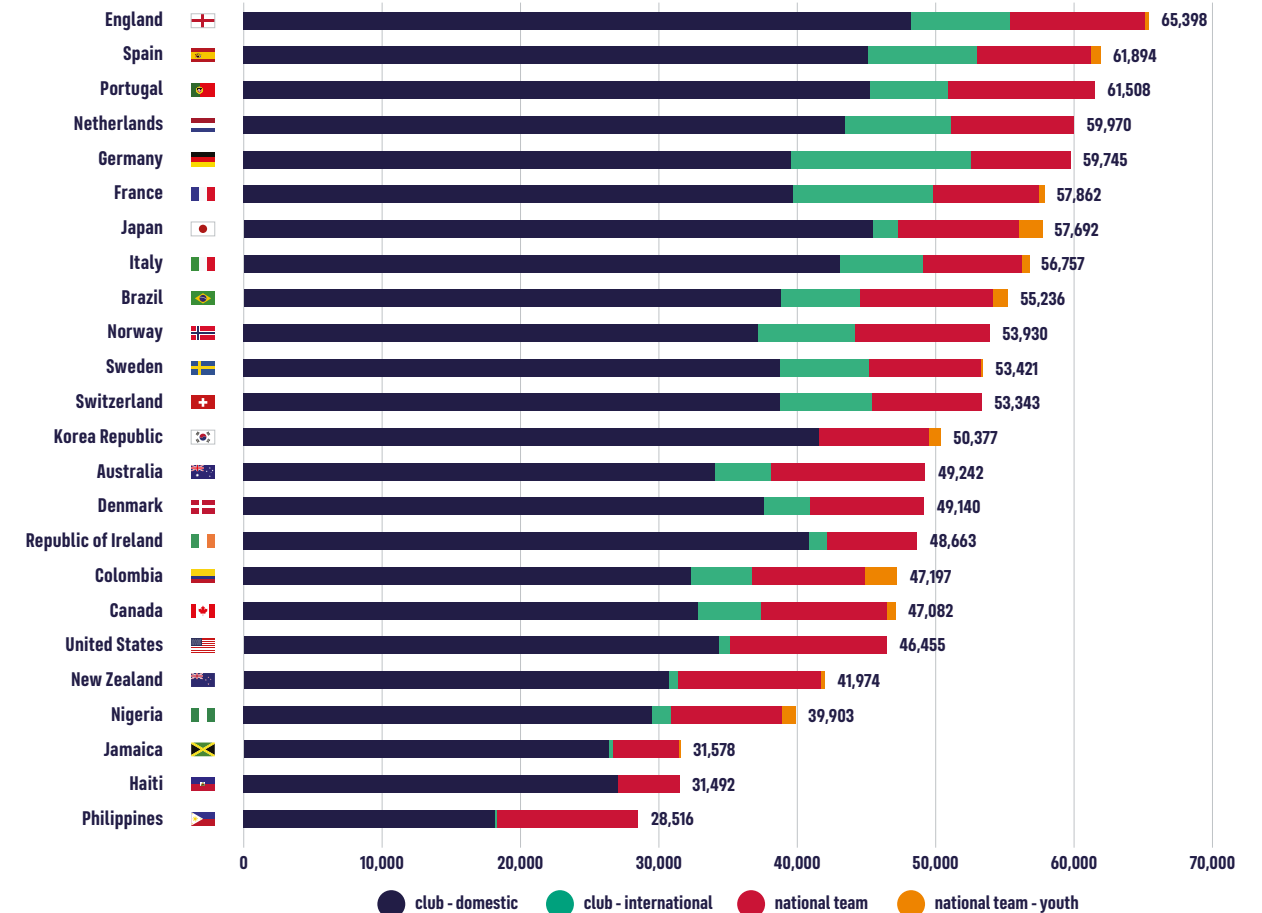
When considering the total minutes played during the analysed period, England emerges as the clear leader in the ranking, followed by Spain, Portugal, Germany, and the Netherlands. Taking into account the context of each country, it should be mentioned that three out of the top five countries' domestic football setup (England, Portugal, and the Netherlands) include a secondary cup competition for clubs, adding more playing time for many of their players.

In line with the findings of last year's report ([UEFA Women's EURO 2022 Workload Journey Report](#)) Germany demonstrates significantly greater experience in international club matches than other national teams at the 2023 FWWC. This is not surprising, given that two German clubs made it into the knock-out stages of the 2022/23 UEFA Women's Champions League, with VfL Wolfsburg advancing all the way to the final with many national team players in their line-up.

Meanwhile, Spain's high position in the ranking is partially explained by their relatively large domestic league and that the majority of their players are based at home. As shown in the previous chapter, Liga F is the league with the most teams among all European FWWC participants with 16.

Regarding national team minutes, players of the USWNT are near the top, just slightly behind the combined minutes of the England squad. However, this is not enough to make up for the relatively low club minutes figure of most US players who are based in the NWSL and play less than their Europe-based counterparts, as they do not have an international club competition or second cup competition. In terms of the total, combined minutes of the USWNT squad since last summer, they are in the bottom third among the analysed FWWC teams.

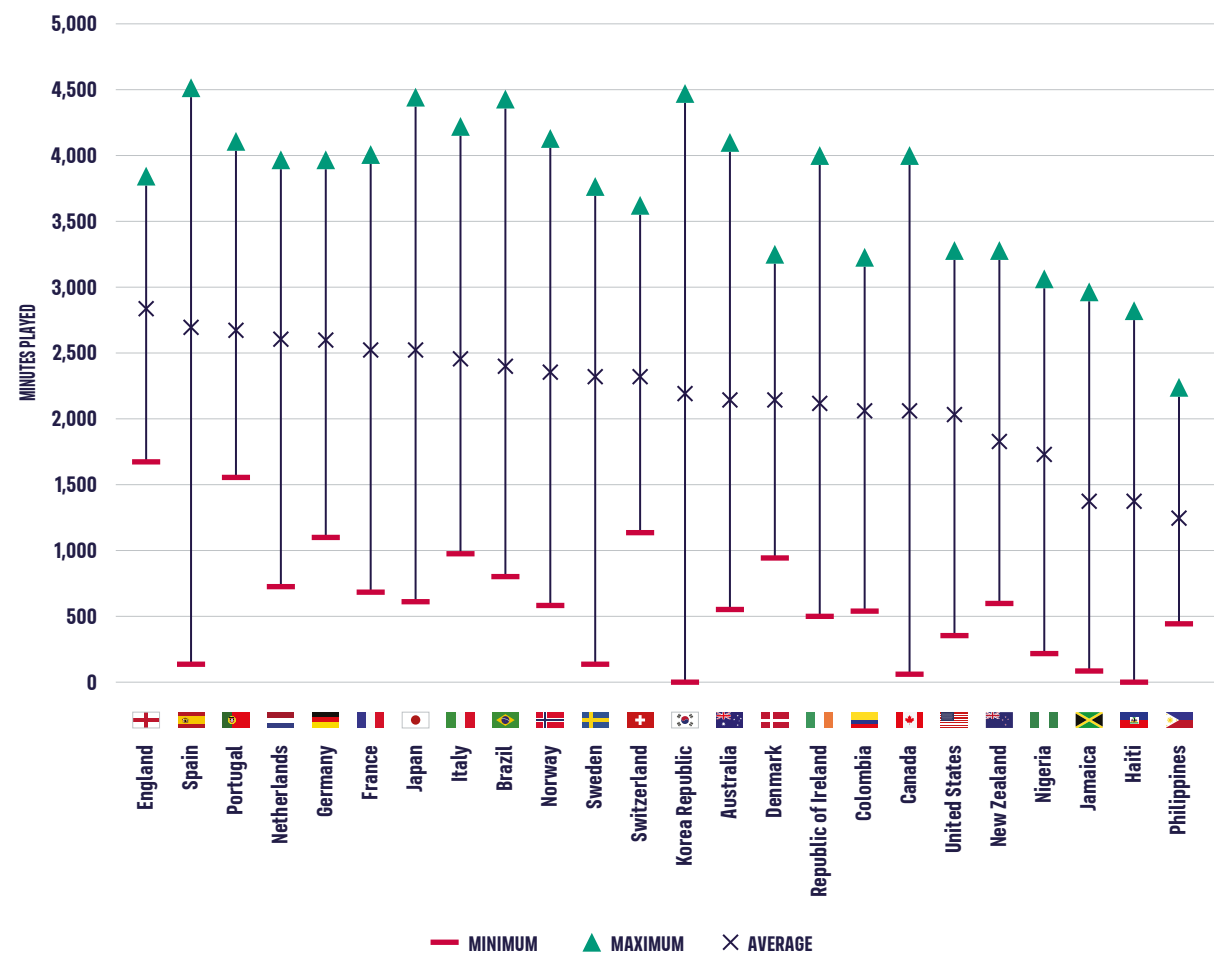
### Breakdown of minutes played by 2023 FWWC squads by competition type (Period covered: 1st August 2022 - 3rd June 2023)



Source: Football Benchmark analysis



**Comparison between lowest, highest, and average minutes played by a squad member**  
 (Period covered: 1st August 2022 – 3rd June 2023)



Source: Football Benchmark analysis  
 Note: Countries are ordered by the squad average of minutes played per player.

The projected squads comprise players who can be considered to be at different stages of their professional careers. Every player faces unique challenges when it comes to playing time: in addition to personal circumstances such as injuries, small league sizes can seriously limit the number of matches available to them. Among the analysed national teams, players of England, Denmark, Switzerland, and Portugal (in this particular order) had the most similar workload journeys leading up to the 2023 FWWC, meaning that the intra-squad variance was the lowest in their case.

A deep dive into the top 10 players by minutes played reveals an interesting pattern. In order to make it to the top 10, players had to accumulate more than 4,100 minutes. Unsurprisingly, the list is led by a goalkeeper,

Misa Rodríguez (Spain), who is the only player above 4,500 minutes. Among outfield players, Hye-ri Kim (South Korea) played the most in the analysed period during which she won the 2022 edition of the WK League with Incheon Hyundai Steel Red Angels WFC. South Korea is the only national team represented by multiple players in the top 10: there are three from the domestic WK League.

At the other end of the scale, there are a few players who make the FWWC squad with relatively low number of minutes over the past 10 months. In most cases this is due to a long-term injury. For example, two-time Ballon d'Or winner Alexia Putellas had just come back from an ACL injury but was still selected for the Spanish national team.





# NUMBER OF PLAYERS BY MATCH APPEARANCES MADE

(Period covered: 1st August 2022 – 3rd June 2023)

The growth and increased recognition of women's football in recent years have undoubtedly been positive developments for the sport. However, a significant disparity persists in terms of the availability of quality playing time for women's football players compared to their men's football counterparts. Underload is still a major problem for many.

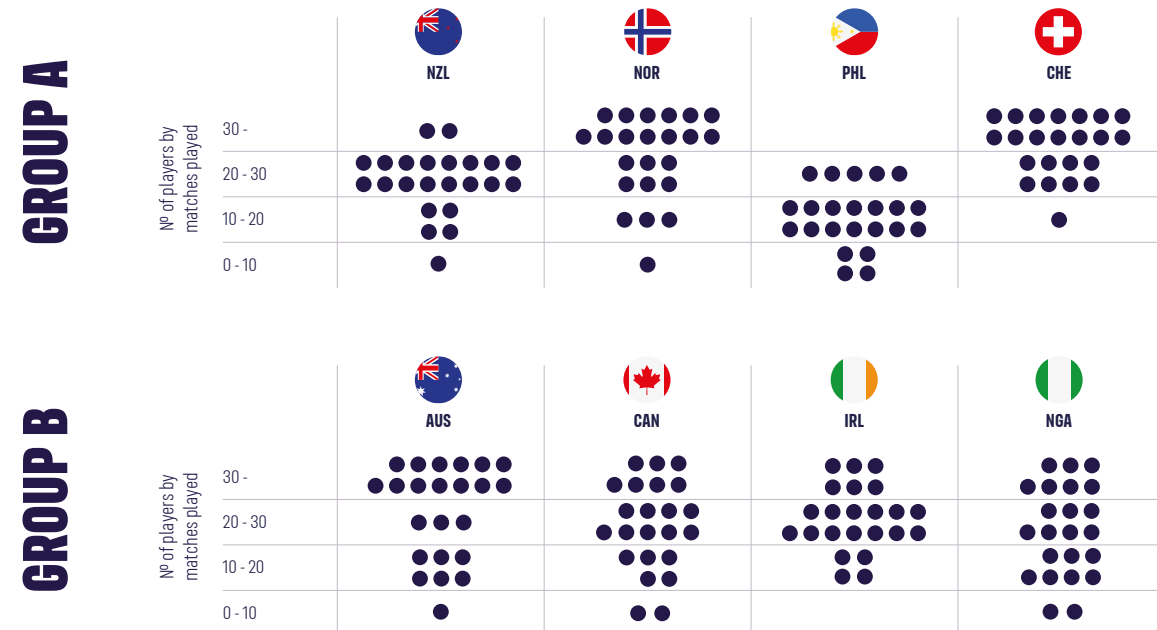
For a better understanding, we categorized all players within the FWWC squads into four groups based on the number of match appearances they made. Naturally, more players in a higher category implies that a squad accumulated more match minutes over the analysed period and is perhaps more "prepared" for the tournament.

In many national teams, most players arrive at the tournament in Australia and New Zealand with less than 30 domestic and international appearances in total. This is especially true for teams outside of UEFA as only Australia, South Korea, and Brazil have the at least half of their squad in the top category.

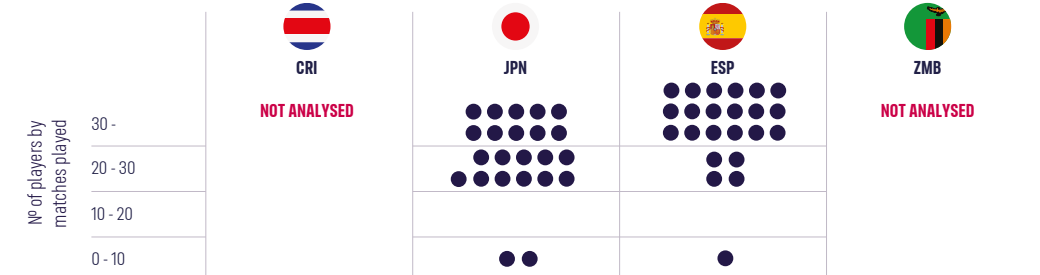
At the lower end we find the other co-host, New Zealand, alongside Haiti, Jamaica, and the Philippines. These teams have only a hand of players with 30 or more appearances since last August. The team that is the most "balanced" across the four categories is Nigeria; they have a similar number of squad members in all four.

Limited access to quality competitive playing opportunities can have a detrimental impact on the development and progress of women's football players, in some cases hindering their ability to reach their full performance potential. It also reinforces the need to address systemic issues and provide quality support, create more opportunities for (competitive) matches that could help to "bridge the gap" and ensure that women players receive the match opportunities they need to ensure they fulfil their potential. By doing so not only will the competitiveness of women's football increase, but also the overall quality will be enhanced.

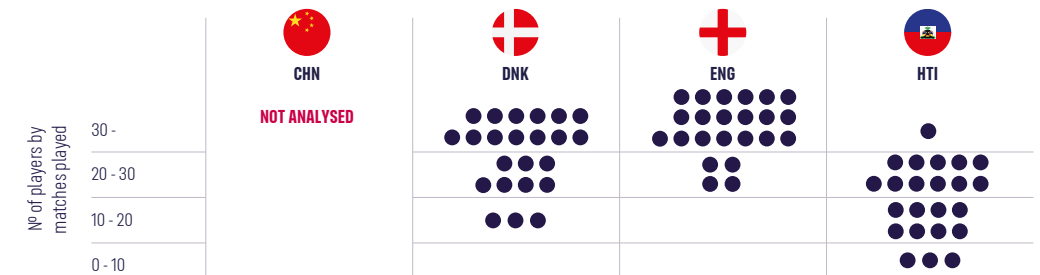
Number of players by matches played range



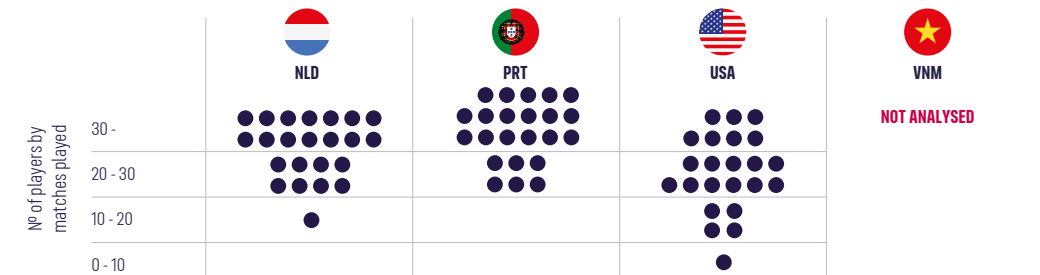
## GROUP C



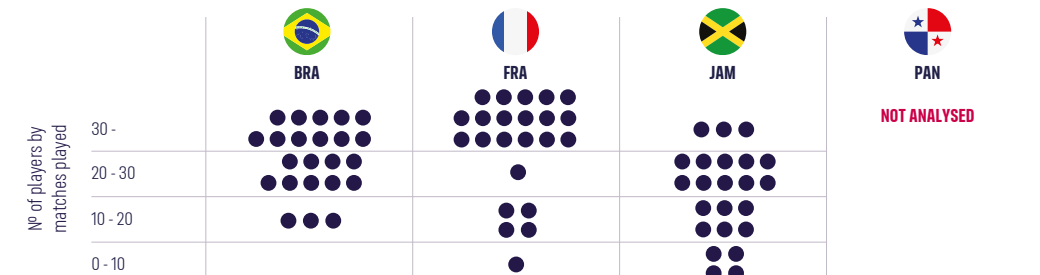
## GROUP D



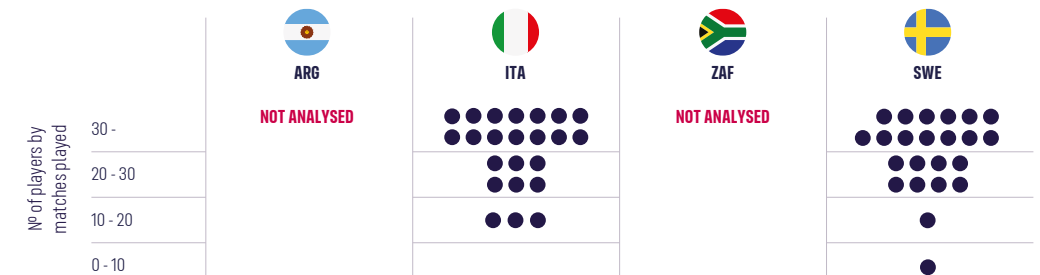
## GROUP E



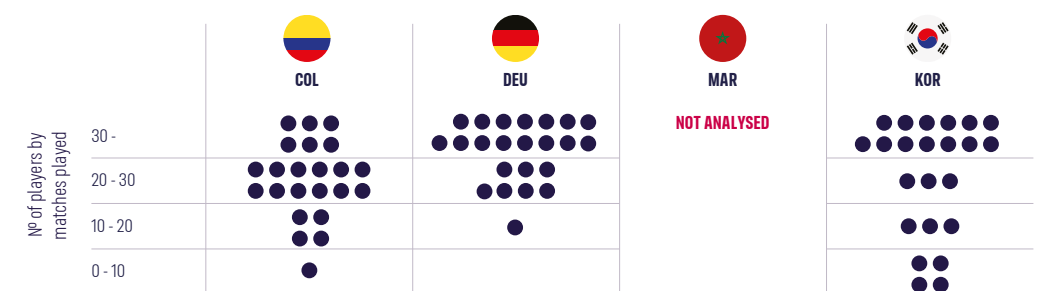
## GROUP F



## GROUP G



## GROUP H



Source: Football Benchmark analysis



# 06

## INDIVIDUAL WORKLOAD JOURNEYS

After the analysis of squad workload, the following chapter goes one step further, highlighting individual workload stories from various leagues and shedding light on diverse situations within the women's game. By utilizing the traditional workload metrics of the Player Workload Monitoring (PWM) platform, it becomes clear that even at the top of the game, players face different realities and their preparation for the FWWC has been uneven.





# 06 INDIVIDUAL WORKLOAD JOURNEYS

As established, the workload journeys, club, and national team environments of players can be very diverse in women's football. How does this look like through the lens of specific players? The purpose of this chapter is to showcase the recent experiences of four players from a workload perspective and illustrate their preparations for the 2023 FWWC.

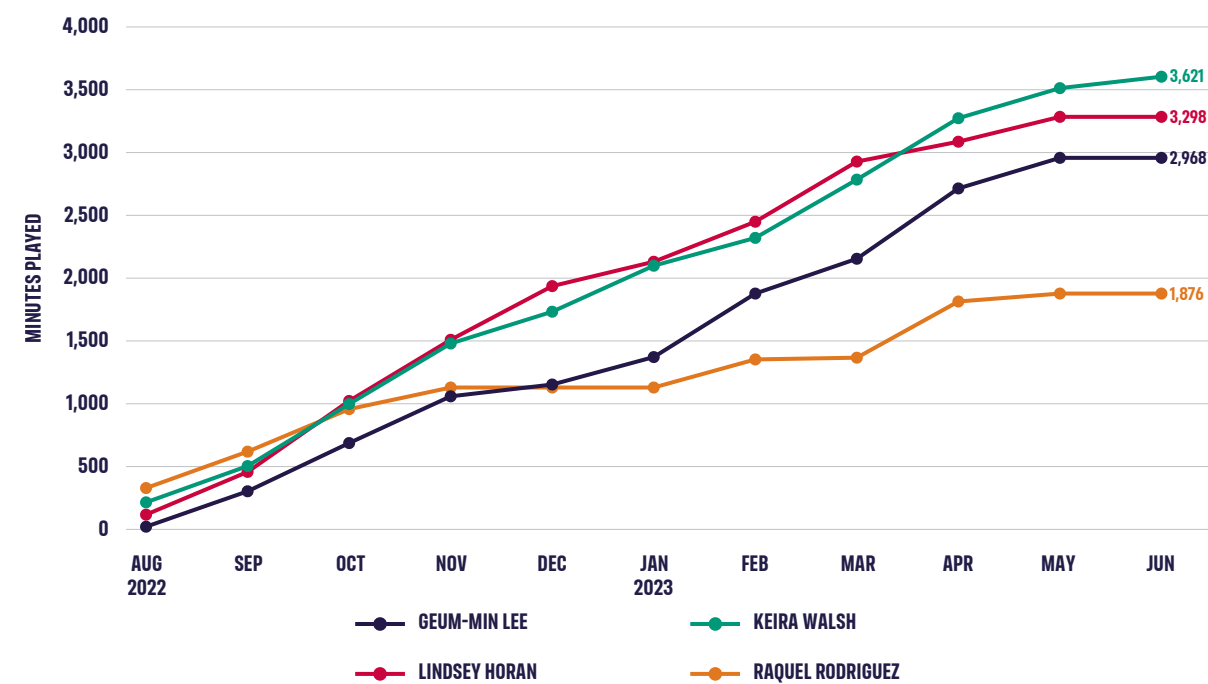
The timeframe of the analysis fits with the rest of the study, focusing on the period between 1st August 2022 (end of the 2022 European Championships) and 3rd June 2023 (the final of the 2022/23 UEFA Women's Champions League). In certain cases, past seasons are also analysed, in order to provide additional context for last year's workload.

When selecting the subjects for this chapter, it was important to identify players who have important roles

in both their clubs and national teams. Another crucial requirement was to select players that represent different leagues and nationalities to see how these factors can affect their overall workload.

In the end, the data showed that the four players (Raquel Rodríguez, Keira Walsh, Geum-min Lee, and Lindsey Horan) had different match workload experiences since last summer. Rodríguez, playing in the NWSL had the lowest cumulative minutes played (the analysed period includes a league break between October and March). Her overall playing time is around 60% of what Walsh and Horan recorded over the same timeframe. In addition to the different scheduling of the NWSL, one of the key drivers of the gap is the international club football minutes of the FC Barcelona and Olympique Lyon players.

Evolution of cumulative minutes played since August 2022



Note: Cumulative minutes at the end of the month. For June 2023, the end date is 3rd June.

In the remainder of the chapter the individual workload statistics of the four players are analysed in detail, describing their preparation for the tournament over the past 10 months.





# RAQUEL RODRÍGUEZ

Analysed period:  
1<sup>st</sup> August 2022 – 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2023



29 years old / Attacking Midfielder

Costa Rica's all-time leading scorer will play in her second FWWC in 2023. Rodríguez finished the end of the 2022 season on a high as she was crowned NWSL champion with Portland Thorns. She injured her MCL in May, but upon recovery she could be one of Costa Rica's difference makers at the tournament.



## Workload Highlights

**31%**

of matches in 2021 and 2022 were played for Costa Rica, a significant reliance on national team games

**0**

club international matches, as the continental club competition is still in planning phase in the CONCACAF

## Match workload

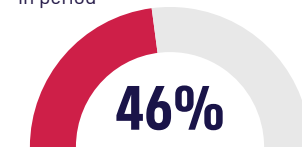
Total matches in period



Total minutes played in period

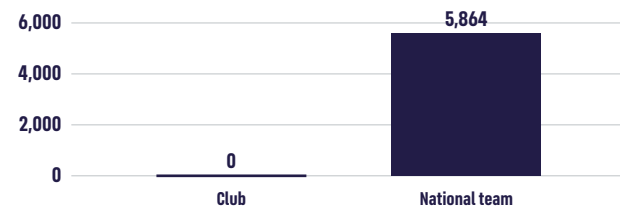


Percentage of back-to-back games in period

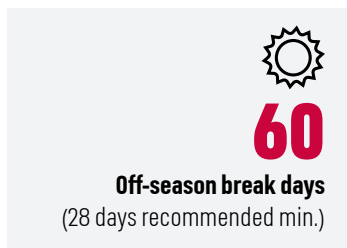


## Travel load

Due to the lack of international club competitions for her club, her national team involvement accounted for all the travel load

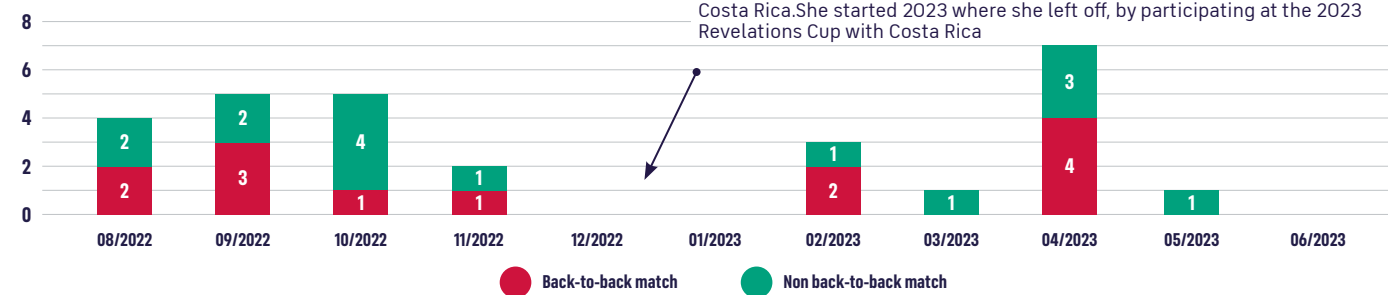


## Season breaks length (days)

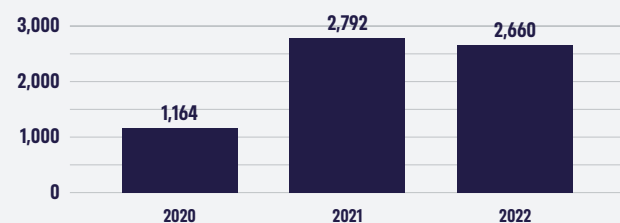


## Number of back-to-back appearances by month

Following the NSWL final she ended the 2022 season with two friendlies for Costa Rica. She started 2023 where she left off, by participating at the 2023 Revelations Cup with Costa Rica



## Overview of the last 3 full seasons (minutes)



Raquel Rodríguez has been a valuable member of the Portland Thorns for the past three seasons. The 2020 NWSL season was affected by the pandemic, leading to its cancellation and the introduction of the Challenge Cup and Fall series instead. As a result, her playing time in 2020 was limited. Despite an increase in her playing time since then, she still trails behind many top players in European clubs in terms of minutes played.

# KEIRA WALSH

Analysed period:  
1<sup>st</sup> August 2022 – 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2023



26 years old / Defensive Midfielder

Following her pivotal role in England's EURO 2022 victory, Keira Walsh made headlines as she was signed by FC Barcelona Femeni for a record-breaking fee at that time. Without delay, she swiftly established herself as a crucial member of the starting lineup at the Catalan club. The season proved to be highly successful for her, as she won the UEFA Women's Champions League, Supercopa Femenina, and the Spanish Liga F.



## Workload Highlights

**104 & 24**

104 club and 24 national team appearances over the last three seasons

In 2022/23 she experienced limited break days both for the off-season and in-season

## Match workload

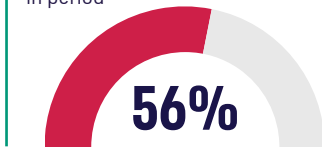
Total matches in period



Total minutes played in period

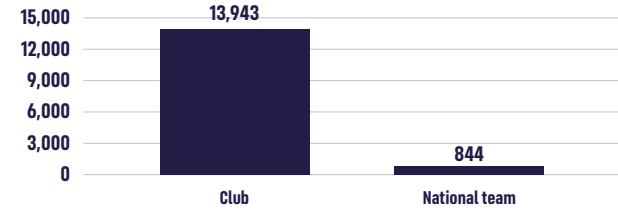


Percentage of back-to-back games in period



## Travel load

Due to the UWCL, her travel load mainly consisted of club travels, that accounted for almost 95% of the total travel distance



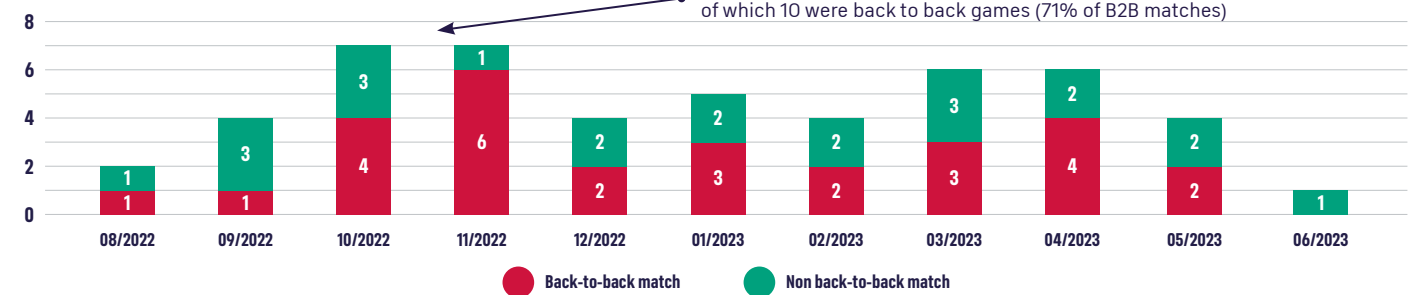
## Season breaks length (days)

Following the UEFA Women's EURO 2022 win, she only had 10 days before returning to training at her club for the new season

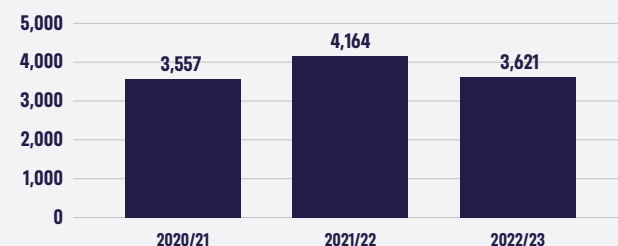


## Number of back-to-back appearances by month

Her busiest period was in October and November, when she played 14 games out of which 10 were back to back games (71% of B2B matches)



## Overview of the last 3 full seasons (minutes)



Keira Walsh had been an integral part of Manchester City for a significant period until September 2022 when she was transferred to FC Barcelona. Walsh has consistently high playing time, she stands as one of the top players in recent seasons. Over the past three seasons, she has made an impressive total of 104 club appearances and 24 appearances for the national team.



# GEUM-MIN LEE

Analysed period:  
1st August 2022 – 3rd June 2023

 /  / 29 years old / Centre Forward

Having initially struggled for game time in England with Manchester City, Geum-min Lee spent the 2020/21 season on loan at Brighton & Hove Albion, which contributed to a career resurgence as the Seagulls signed her on a permanent deal and since then she has seen her match workload gradually increased.

## Workload Highlights

**68 & 24**

68 club and 24 national team appearances over the last three seasons

**3,000**

Even without international club matches she accumulated almost 3,000 minutes in the period under review

## Match workload

Total matches in period

 **36**

Total minutes played in period

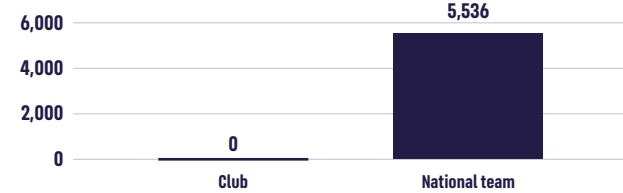
 **2,968**

Percentage of back-to-back games in period

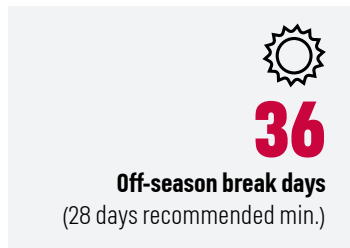


## Travel load

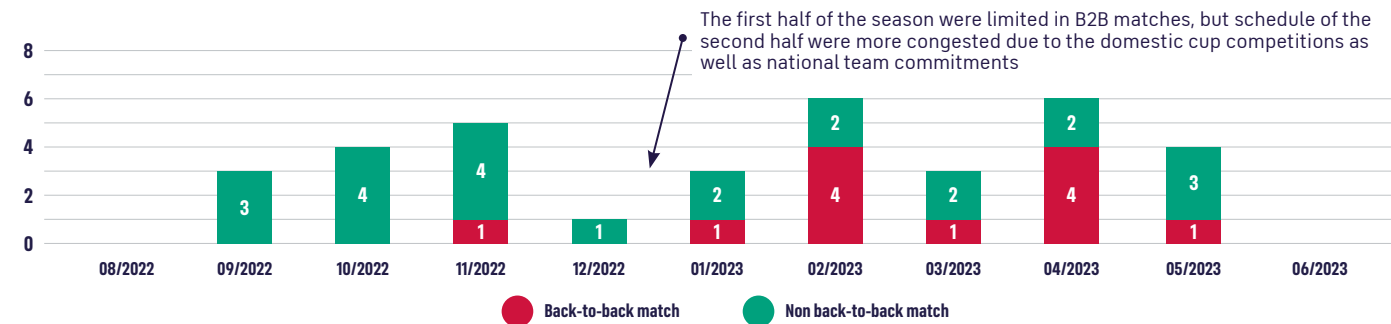
As she finished mid-table in the 2021/22 season with Brighton, her travel load was solely due to national team fixtures.



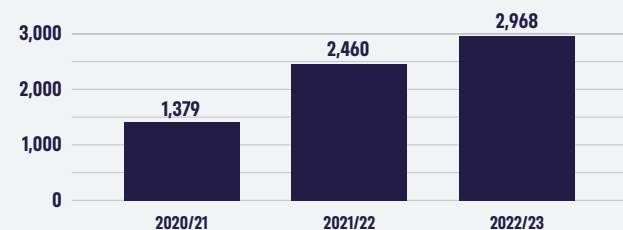
## Season breaks length (days)



## Number of back-to-back appearances by month



## Overview of the last 3 full seasons (minutes)



Geum-min Lee spent the last three seasons at Brighton & Hove Albion. Simultaneously, she has established herself as a key member of the South Korean national side, too. In total, she has accumulated 92 appearances, with 24 of them representing her national team. However, the absence of international club competitions has presented a challenge, making it difficult for her to accumulate 3,000 or more minutes in a single season.

# LINDSEY HORAN

Analysed period:  
1st August 2022 – 3rd June 2023

 /  / 29 years old / Central Midfielder

As the 2023 FWWC approaches, Lindsey Horan enters the tournament with a notable season behind her. She experienced a surge in playing time and achieved success by clinching both the league title and the Coupe De France with Olympique Lyon. However, her UEFA Women's Champions League campaign ended earlier than anticipated, with an exit in the quarterfinals.

## Workload Highlights

**3,000**

Accumulated more than 3,000 minutes in two of the last 3 seasons

By playing abroad and involved in continental club competition, she has travelled approximately 29,000 kms for both club and national team matches during the period under review

## Match workload

Total matches in period

 **39**

Total minutes played in period

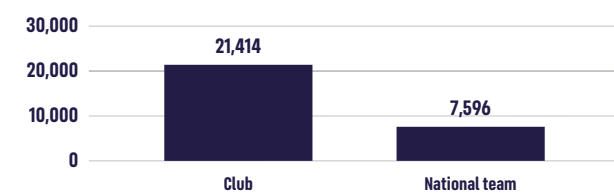
 **3,298**

Percentage of back-to-back games in period



## Travel load

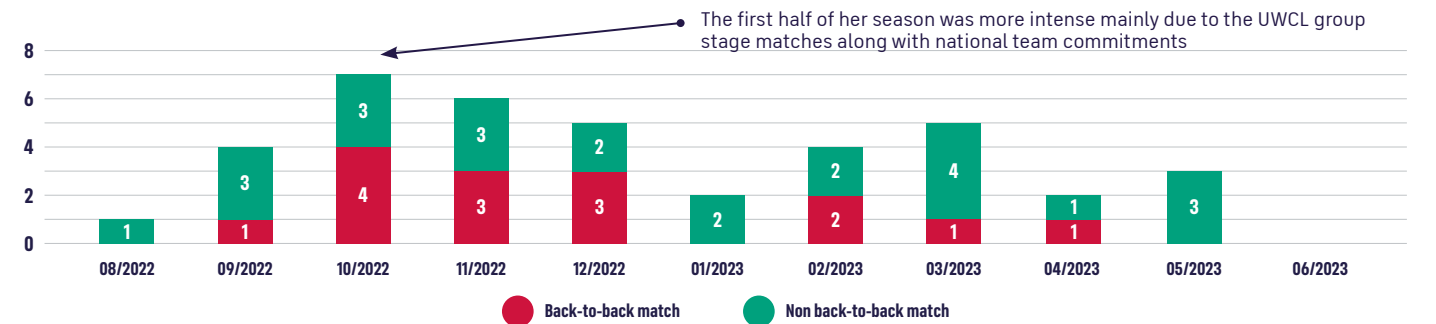
Her international travel burden was a result of her club's participation in the UWCL, although she also had to make several long-distance travels to play for her country



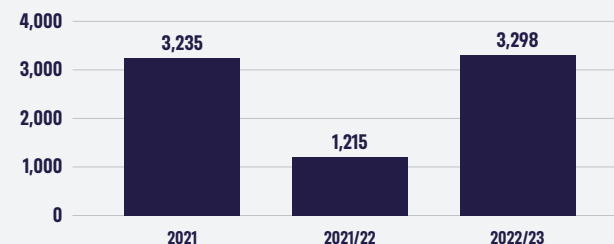
## Season breaks length (days)



## Number of back-to-back appearances by month



## Overview of the last 3 full seasons (minutes)



Lindsey Horan spent the 2021 season with the Portland Thorns, which turned out to be a long season with plenty of national team action including the postponed Tokyo Olympics. For the remainder of the 2021/22 season, she was transferred to Olympique Lyonnais, where she also spent the full 2022/23 season, with similar playing time as in the 2021 season. However, a significant distinction between the two seasons is that while more than half of her matches in 2021 were national team fixtures, in the 2022/23 season, they accounted for less than a third of her total games.

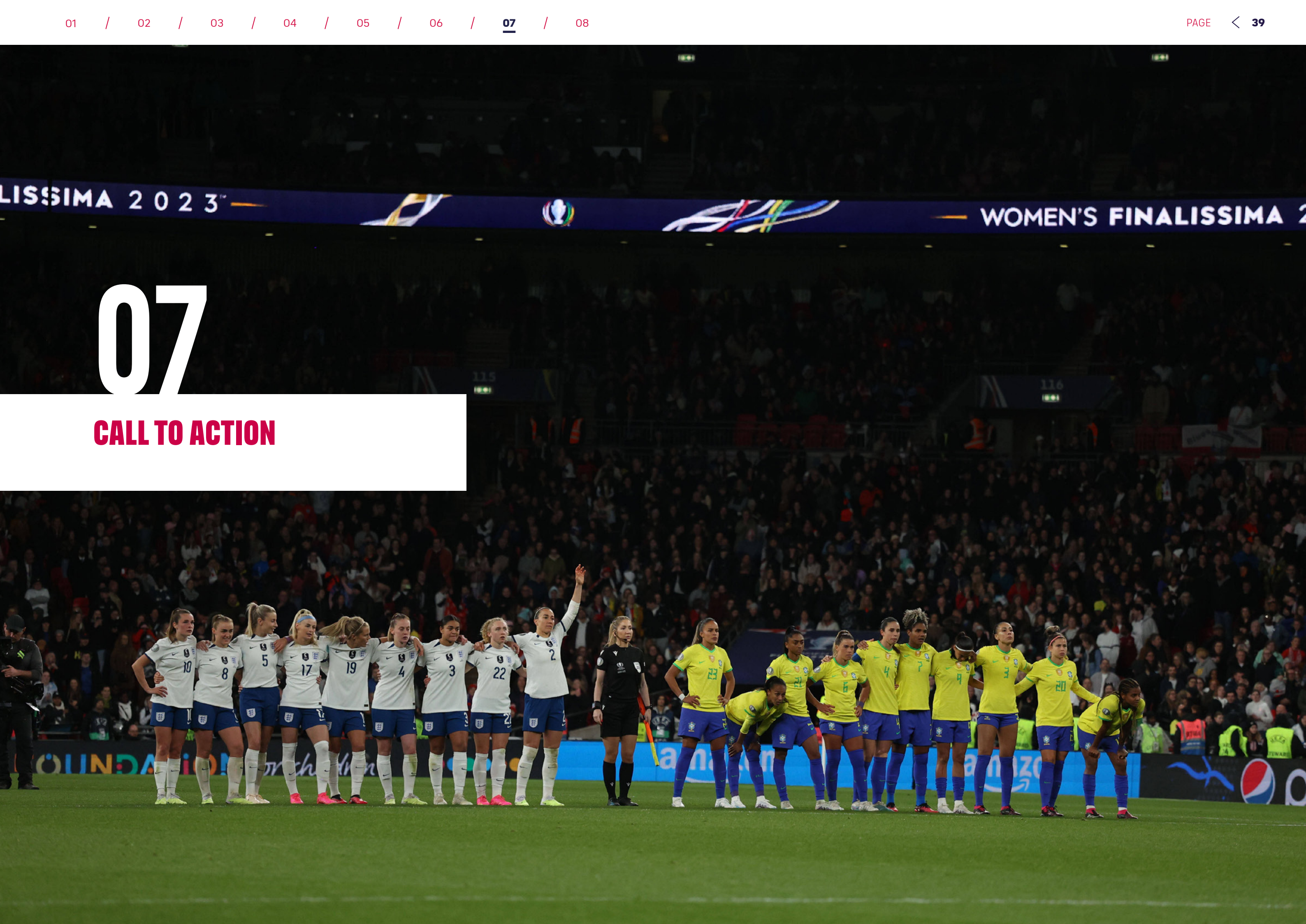




LISSIMA 2023™  WOMEN'S FINALISSIMA 2

# 07

## CALL TO ACTION





# 07 CALL TO ACTION

## 01

### MORE COMPETITIVE GAMES FOR PROFESSIONAL WOMEN PLAYERS VIA THE CONTINUED GROWTH OF PROFESSIONAL CLUB FOOTBALL

FIFPRO asserts that the continued growth and progress of professional club football is paramount to the overall sustainability and competitiveness of women's football. Access to regular competitive opportunities still varies from region to region. Women's professional football has a diverse range of league formats, a general lack of regular availability to international club competitions, and globally the international windows are not utilized regularly and effectively. Addressing these specific areas will reduce fragmentation in the competitive playing opportunities for more players worldwide, affording them access to development and performance.

## 02

### PRIORITISATION OF GENDER-SPECIFIC DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE SUSTAINABILITY OF THE INDUSTRY

FIFPRO asserts that a top down, collaborative approach to increasing the size, consistency and accuracy of data will contribute to a more sustainable industry. FIFPRO calls on governing bodies, including international, regional and domestic competition and tournament organizers, to work proactively alongside researchers and other such bodies to generate and analyse data that can contribute to decision making concerning the international match calendar, player health and safety, competition innovation and development, and the growth of the industry more broadly.

## 03

### STANDALONE QUALIFICATION PATHWAYS FOR THE FIFA WOMEN'S WORLD CUP

In total, 40% of competitive international matches were about FWWC qualification either directly or indirectly. FIFPRO asserts that qualification pathways to the FIFA Women's World Cup should be standalone processes, with a more complete regulatory framework. Confederation level tournaments should be maximized to provide meaningful, competitive processes that qualify teams for international tournaments.







# 08

## METHODOLOGY


The findings presented in this flash report are largely based on the methodology and metrics of the FIFPRO Player Workload Monitoring (PWM) platform covering the match, rest & recovery, travel, and other workload statistics of professional footballers from around the world.




# TERMS & DEFINITIONS

The following terms are used throughout the report to illustrate the workload situation of professional football players. The same principles are applied within the FIFPRO PWM platform.


## GLOBAL PLAYER AND COMPETITIONS


 **FIFPRO PWM SAMPLE** – this report covers match schedule and workload data of female football players that take part in the 2023 FWWC. All matches played between 1<sup>st</sup> August 2022 and 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2022 are included in the analysis to analyse their workload (where data was available). In certain cases, historical data of past seasons was also considered.


## PLAYER WORKLOAD

 **PLAYER WORKLOAD** – this term refers to all applicable workload indicators such as match workload, rest & recovery, and travel. The concepts of overload and underload relate to the imbalance between the load induced on players (match workload and travel log indicators) and their recovery (rest & recovery indicator). It is important to note that it is the cumulative exposure to overload or underload which really impacts on a player's health, performance, and career longevity.


## MATCH WORKLOAD


 **MINUTES PLAYED AND APPEARANCES** – the number of minutes spent on the pitch by a player during a match. Includes added time at the end of the first and second halves as well as any extra time required for competitions (where applicable). If a player played any length of time in a match, then it is accounted for as an appearance.


 **MATCH TYPE** – matches played by a player are divided into various categories: domestic league, domestic cup, international club competition, national team matches and friendlies.

 **BACK-TO-BACK MATCH** – an appearance is considered as a “back-to-back” appearance if the player did not have at least 5 days of rest and recovery time since their last appearance. It is important to note that it is the cumulative exposure to back-to-back matches, together with travel demands, and shortened off-season or in-season breaks, that constitutes a danger to player health, performance, and career longevity.

## REST & RECOVERY

 **REST TIME** – the period (in hours and days) between the end of a player's previous match and the start of their next match. This is generally the time allocated to rest & recovery and training. According to FIFPRO's 'At the Limit' study from 2019, players need at least 120 hours (5 days) between games to perform at their best and manage injury risk.

 **OFF-SEASON BREAK** – the period given to players between two seasons, without training or matches, to recover and regenerate. Off-season breaks are mandatory, should last at least 28 days (combination of physically inactive and active weeks) and must take place outside the club and national team environment.

 **IN-SEASON BREAK** – the rest period (in calendar days) that a player is permitted to take without matches or training, during a season. In-season breaks are mandatory and should last 14 days. However, they are not always fully respected, given the demanding requirements of the match calendar.







# FIFPRO

## FOOTBALL PLAYERS WORLDWIDE



fifpro.org



info@fifpro.org



+31 23 554 6970



Scorpius 161,  
2132 LR Hoofddorp  
Netherlands

*This report was realised in association  
with Football Benchmark*

*Photo cover by:  
Imago*

*Main photo sources:  
Imago*