

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 | | players | UEFA | | 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 |

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).

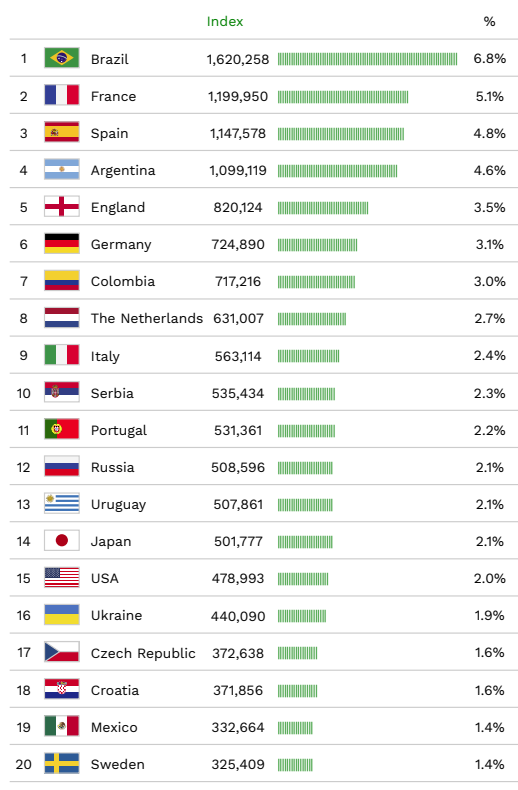


3. Qualitative contribution

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).