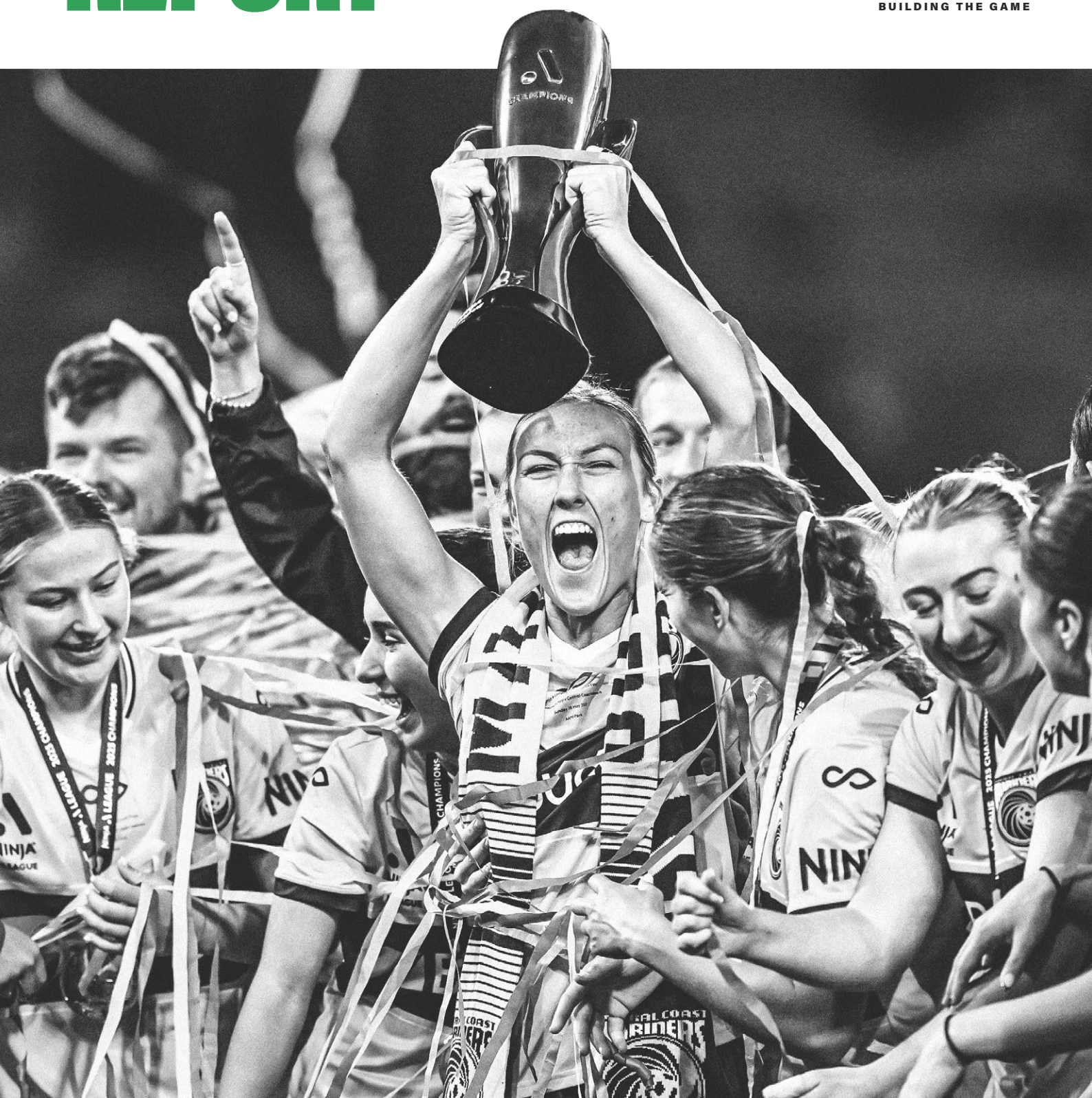


2024-25



A-LEAGUE WOMEN REPORT

SUPPORTING THE PLAYERS
BUILDING THE GAME



SUPPORTING THE PLAYERS BUILDING THE GAME



Professional Footballers Australia

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In the spirit of reconciliation, Professional Footballers Australia acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia.

We also acknowledge and pay our respects to the Traditional Owners and Elders past, present, and emerging throughout Australia, and recognise their continuing connection to land, waters, laws, and culture. They hold the memories, traditions, cultures, and hopes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of Australia.

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FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Foreword by Beau Busch



In the early 1990s, as the players sought to establish the PFA, they recognised that a precondition to the wellbeing of the players was the wellbeing of the game.

This realisation shaped the PFA's mission of supporting the players and building the game. Our mission remains the same today.

The 2024-25 PFA A-League Women Report lays bare the shortcomings of the industry, the unsustainable impact they are having on the players and how they are restraining our collective ambition of progress.

It is true that there has been much progress since the A-League Women (ALW) players unionised in 2015. However, this Report challenges the prevailing question as to whether the league is growing fast enough. Instead, we are confronted with the question of whether it is growing at all.

The Report highlights declining crowds and workplace experiences of players, a rapidly accelerating talent-drain, and safety concerns.

Equally, it illustrates an alternative path for the ALW, and provides the evidence for the sporting and financial opportunity available.

We cannot stay where we are and hope that natural forces deliver a thriving ALW.

What is required now is the courage to act to transform the competition.

The 2025-26 season marks the final season under the current Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA). The negotiation of a new agreement provides the league, clubs and players with a generational opportunity.

Occurring against a backdrop of what will be a highly successful AFC Women's Asian Cup, and surging growth of women's football globally, the players are determined to seize this moment and secure the future of the professional game. A future where the game's and the players' interests are progressed and safeguarded to deliver an industry that fans, clubs, and players can be proud of.

Thank you for taking the time to read this Report.

Collectively, we can deliver a better future.

A stylized green ink signature of Beau Busch.

Beau Busch
PFA Chief Executive

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2024-25 PFA A-League Women Report illustrates a burning platform for change. The league is falling behind women's football leagues abroad and other women's competitions in Australia, leading to an alarming talent drain. Results from the PFA's end of season survey show that the ALW has become the least preferred league globally among our own players. Our minimum salary has gone from one of the highest among Australian women's leagues pre-COVID to by far the lowest.

It has become more difficult to retain our best players and also to replenish the stocks from overseas; as predicted in last year's ALW report, our traditional pipeline of talent from the US has been cut off by the expanding professional footprint there. Our clubs are now recruiting from and seeing players poached by European second, third, fourth, and fifth divisions.

As a result of all this, the ALW's existing skew towards younger players became even more extreme in 2024-25, with the share of match minutes being played by players aged 21 and under rising to 32% from 28% the previous season.

Despite total player payments reaching a record high of \$8.7m, the players' self-reported financial health continued to decline. The share of players who said their financial situations were either 'not at all' or only 'slightly' secure grew to 76%, up from 66% two years ago. The share of ALW players who worked outside football during 2024-25 was 62%.

On the flip side, the Report highlights industry trends that demonstrate an enormous opportunity for the ALW. Leading investors abroad see where the industry is going and stake a claim for that future women's football economy, driving up the value of players and clubs in the process. As a result, revenue streams such as women's transfer fees and club prize money are

growing exponentially. If the ALW invested in full-time professionalism, our clubs could seize a greater share of this larger pie.

For example, the global women's transfer market is projected to exceed \$200m by 2027, and by increasing the league's share of that pot to 5% through improved talent retention and multi-year contracts, ALW clubs would receive more than \$10m that year and more thereafter.

The part-time nature of the league inhibits the players' ability to engage with fans online and in person, which focus group participants identified as a key reason they began following the Matildas. In exclusive market research commissioned by the PFA, fans chose "creating access to players" as the most important factor to drive increased support for the ALW, but in 2024-25, only 38% of ALW players made at least three commercial appearances, compared to 57% of A-League Men (ALM) players.

Average crowds fell by 26% in 2024-25 as the Women's World Cup buzz wore off. The market research confirmed the step up to full-time professionalism would be a driver in growing support, as has been the case in leading women's leagues abroad. The survey found 62% of Australian football fans agreed that ALW players "should be full-time professional athletes", with only 8% disagreeing. Fan focus groups conducted by the PFA found that the elite standards and platform afforded to the Matildas has been a key factor in the booming support for that team. By contrast, the ALW signals to potential fans that women are seen as an "afterthought".

The combined potential for increased sporting and traditional revenues at a relatively modest cost make a strong business case to propel the league into a fully professional future, but decision-makers at the league and clubs do not appear to be focused on the opportunity.

Two in five players are dissatisfied with the performance of the APL and the players overwhelmingly support the idea of an independent commission overseeing the league (61%) as opposed the current board of mostly club owners (2%).

The current dynamic has led to concerning trends in some club environments. One in six ALW players felt that their club environment posed some kind of safety risk during the 2024-25 season, with the majority of these concentrated in four clubs. Other than Wellington Phoenix, which performed very well across all categories of the PFA's Club Benchmarking program, every other club's Integration Index score was either static or declined.

A mental health audit conducted in conjunction with FIFPRO found that 67% of ALW players experienced sport-related psychological distress in 2024-25, up from 63% in 2020. The prevalence of global (general) psychological distress, anxiety, and depression in the league had also increased.

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METHODOLOGY

PFA end of season survey

The 2024-25 end of season survey of ALW players received a record response of 251 players, with at least 16 players from each club participating. The ALM version also received a record response in 2024-25. The survey asks players about their lives, their careers, their club, the league, and the PFA. The online ALW survey collected responses between the 7th of April and 19th of May, 2025. Participation is encouraged but optional.

PFA post-match surveys

The PFA attempts to survey at least one away team player after every match, via an online survey. The survey asks players about the pitch, the officiating, the facilities, the atmosphere, their club's travel logistics, and any extreme weather. In 2024-25, surveys were completed for 68% of ALW matches.



Where you see this symbol, the data is from the PFA's program of surveys.

Gemba market research

In mid-2024, the PFA commissioned leading sports intelligence agency Gemba to conduct market research into the A-Leagues. This included a survey of 500 football fans in Australia. Where a fan rates their interest in a property (such as the ALW) as a 4 or 5 on a scale of 1-5, Gemba categorises them as a 'fanatic'. Those who rate their interest as a 3 are considered casual fans.



Where you see this symbol, the data is from Gemba's fan survey.

PFA fan focus groups

In June 2024, the PFA conducted a series of focus groups with Australian football fans, to gain a deeper understanding of what was required for the A-Leagues to attract greater support. On the women's side, the 12 participants were mostly newly converted Matildas fans who were at least partially interested in the ALW. On the men's side, the seven participants were mostly 'lapsed' ALM fans.



Where you see this icon, the quote is from a PFA focus group participant.



LEAGUE ASSESSMENT

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ATTENDANCES

Attendances fell 26% as the 2023 Women’s World Cup buzz wore off

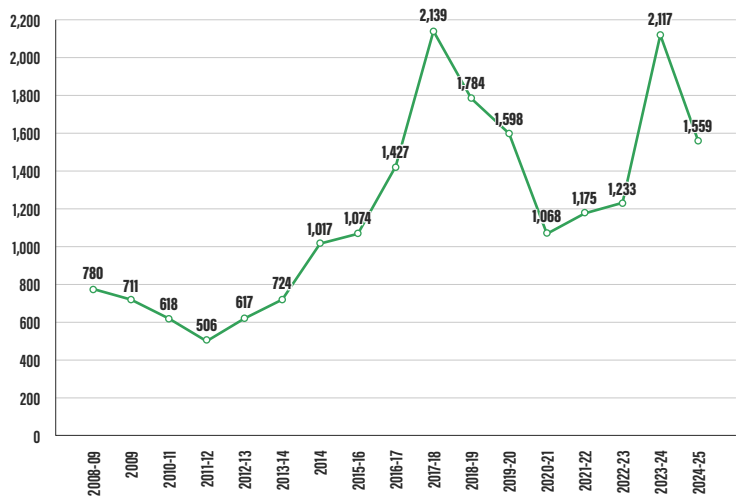
The average ALW attendance in 2024-25 was 1,559, down 26% from the 2023-24 season. All but two clubs – Adelaide (+58%) and Brisbane (+1%) – saw their crowds fall season-on-season. This ended a sequence of growing average attendances since the COVID-impacted 2020-21 season.

The biggest factor in the downturn is likely that the Women’s World Cup-driven boost to 2023-24 crowds has not been sustained. The main evidence for this assumption is that the decline occurred across the board, and therefore not due to local factors.

If we make comparisons to earlier periods, it is important to recognise that the numbers of rounds and clubs have increased since the pandemic. If we screen out the home games of Central Coast, Wellington, and Western United, the average attendance in 2024-25 was 1,731, which is similar to the average generated by the same other nine clubs in 2018-19. But those clubs are sustaining those averages across a season nearly twice as long, creating a much higher aggregate attendance.

These findings change the narrative around the league’s trajectory. Instead of asking whether the league is growing fast enough, the question now is whether the league is in fact growing.

ALW average attendances by season (excluding finals)



Change in average attendance, by club

Club	Average attendance, 2024-25	Change from 2023-24
	2,731	58%
	2,344	1%
	1,228	-2%
	1,476	-8%
	1,744	-28%
	1,147	-29%
	1,421	-35%
	1,750	-39%
	2,445	-41%
	1,100	-47%
	676	-49%
	739	-61%

Professionalisation is urgently required to seize 2026 Women's Asian Cup second chance

In 2024, the PFA conducted market research in the form of fan focus groups led by the PFA and a mass fan survey undertaken by Gemba on our behalf (see details in Methodology).

Focus group fans revealed that the appeal of the Matildas is grounded in what the team represents for women's progress: equal pay, elite conditions, and mainstream coverage.



"The rise of the Tillies is on the back of a larger cultural movement in women's equality. We're seeing that in multiple different sectors: employment, women's rights, focus on safety and women in relationships and so forth. The Tillies are like the poster girls of that. They're there to show young women you can achieve amazing things in your life. And I think that's where it really hits me hard is that amazing things are possible for you as a young woman."

– ALW focus group participant

A key reason why some fans who had become Matildas diehards were yet to fully embrace ALW was that the league did not reflect that same progress.



"Whether it be by the club or by (the) league, it just feels like the women's supporter experience is really quite second rate. I've had a great time, but I do feel like the women's league is a real afterthought."

– ALW focus group participant

In the Employment Framework section of this Report, we compare the minimum salary of the ALW against other Australian women's leagues over time. In the years between 2017 and the pandemic, the ALW's minimum compared favourably to those of most other sports. Looking at the previous average attendances trend, there is evidence that those improved conditions correlated with improved support.

Looking ahead, the corollary is that further growth in attendances is not guaranteed in the absence of improved standards. The Gemba survey of Australian football fans found that 62% agreed that ALW players "should be full-time professional athletes", and only 8% disagreed.

When asked to rank five factors as to their importance in attracting support to ALW, ALW fans clearly prioritised an option related to increased access to players. However, a focus group participant made the point that it is hard to emotionally connect with players who are part-time. From the players' side, practically, it would be easier to invest time in connecting with fans if they did not need to work a second job, as 62% of players did this season.



"It's the personality of the players. You don't get to see that like you do with the Matildas. You can't relate to them on a deeper level. Obviously, if you go and follow their social media, but some of these people still work part-time jobs because they don't get much money."

– ALW focus group participant

The 2026 Women's Asian Cup provides Australian football with the gift of a second chance to draw attention to ALW. The PFA's 2023-24 Report demanded that APL and FA be more strategically aligned to ensure this is done better than in 2023. But the other lesson we can now discern from the Women's World Cup is that in the absence of a compelling product which embodies women's progress, this attention will again be fleeting.



When thinking of the A-League Women, please rank the following factors in terms of their importance in attracting support



Note: % represents share of respondents who included factor in their top two.

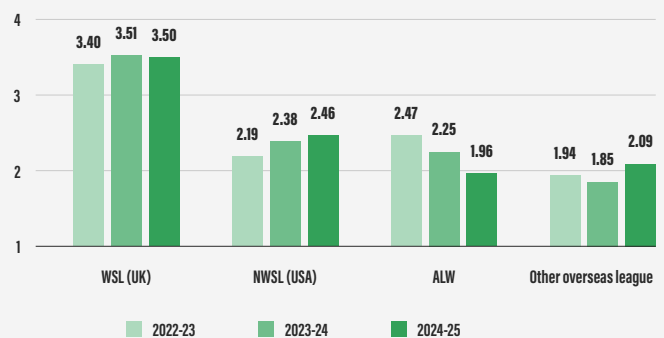
PLAYER PERCEPTIONS

The ALW is now the least preferred league among its own players

For three seasons, the end of season survey has asked ALW players to rank their preference of playing in ALW, WSL, NWSL, and 'other overseas league'. In 2024-25, for the first time, ALW received the lowest average rating of these four options. The trend across time is concerning. As recently as 2022-23, ALW was the second preferred option on average.



Which of these leagues would you most prefer to play in?



Note: The score represents the average ranking on a scale of 1-4, where 4 would be every player most preferring that league.

Since 2017-18, the survey has asked players whether they would recommend their club to other players. This question is mostly used to monitor the performance of individual clubs but the aggregate result can also be used to track the league's general ecosystem.

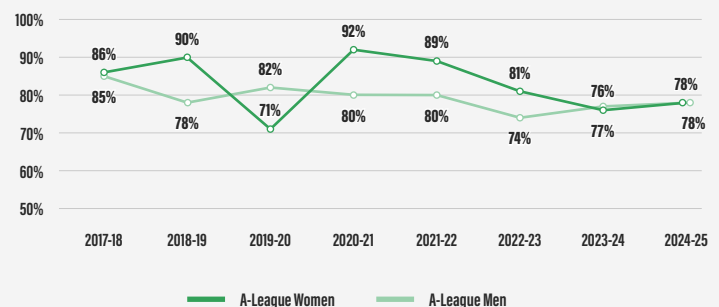
In four of the five seasons from 2017-18 to 2021-22, at least 86% of ALW players recommended their clubs to others. The one exception here was 2019-20, when two clubs with sub-50% approval dragged the average down.

Since 2022-23, the share of players recommending their clubs has been between 77% and 81%. It does appear that there is a slight downward trend in the share of players who feel their ALW environments are meeting their subjective expectations. As a point of comparison, the ALM's league-wide results have been relatively stable across time.

The preferred-league and club-recommendation findings reinforce that professionalising ALW is more than a moral argument. Not keeping pace with conditions in rival competitions is having a detrimental effect on ALW's ability to attract and retain talent.



Would you recommend your club to other players?



Players overwhelmingly prefer an independent commission to APL's current board

At a critical juncture for both A-Leagues, and five years into the journey of independently owned competitions, the PFA has begun asking players their perceptions of the league's management and governance.

In 2024-25, ALW players were about as likely to be satisfied (42%) as dissatisfied (41%) with APL's running of the league. ALW clubs were viewed more positively, with 70% of players satisfied with their performance overall.

Players are more critical when it comes to the league's governance specifically. Forty percent were dissatisfied with the A-Leagues' governance model, compared to 28% who were satisfied, and 33% not sure. There were 15% very dissatisfied and only 3% very satisfied.

Asked whether the current board should be replaced with an independent commission, 61% of players were in favour, compared to 2% opposed and 38% not sure.

The players' views are consistent with countless reviews of Australian football, including the Crawford Report in 2003, which have recommended that the national competition/s be overseen by an independent commission, similar to how AFL and NRL operate.

The players were also asked whether they preferred an independent women's league and clubs, à la NWSL, or to maintain the integrated model, broadly in line with the WSL. Obviously, these are hypothetical questions which would depend on what the independent alternative actually looks like, so responses should be interpreted with that in mind.

Regarding the independently owned and run women's league idea, there were significantly more players in support (38%) than opposed (22%). When it came to clubs, though, there was more of a preference to stay integrated, with 45% generally in favour of integrated clubs and 5% preferring

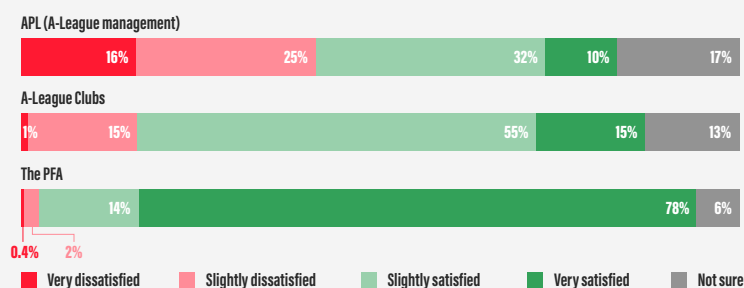
standalone clubs. Another 31% said it depends on the club and 18% were not sure.

Taken together, the results reflect a group of players who recognise the progress made to date and are generally appreciative of their

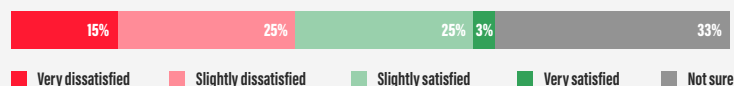
day-to-day club environments, but who are also concerned about whether the league is being given the focus required to take its next steps under current settings.



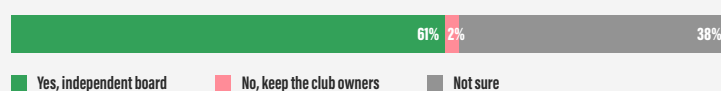
How satisfied are you with the performance of these organisations with regard to the A-League Women competition overall?



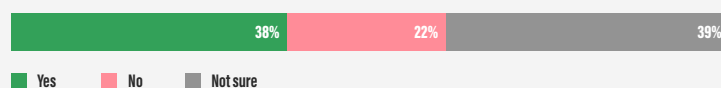
How satisfied are you with the governance model of the A-Leagues?



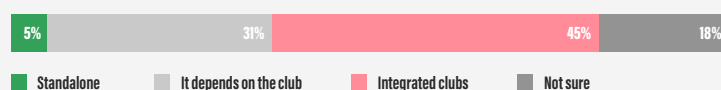
Do you think A-League Women's board should be an independent commission, instead of mostly club owners?



Do you think A-League Women should be owned and run independently of A-League Men?



Do you think A-League Women clubs should be standalone clubs, or integrated with men's clubs?



Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding. No further information was provided to players in the survey other than the question text displayed here.

PLAYER PROFILES

The league's youth skew has become even more extreme

The share of match minutes being played by teenagers in the ALW rose to 18% in 2024-25 from 15% in 2023-24. The share of minutes played by players aged 21 and under rose from 28% to 32%.

The ALW was already providing the most opportunities to young players among the top flights in Australia, the US, England, Sweden and Japan. That gap has now grown wider by a stark degree.

As last year's Report spelled out, it could be seen as a positive for the ALW's development function that so many young players are getting match minutes. But the flip side to that coin is that the league is not providing sustainable careers for peak age and experienced players, who are either seeking better opportunities overseas or leaving the sport entirely.

Even the league's development function could be undermined by its inability to retain talent. Our best young players, and future Matildas, need to be tested against superior, hardened players to maximise their progress. But half of the players on the pitch in the ALW were aged 22 or younger, compared to the WSL and NWSL where half were 25 or younger. In the WSL and NWSL, more than 20% of minutes went to players aged 30+, but in the ALW, only 7% were in this bracket.

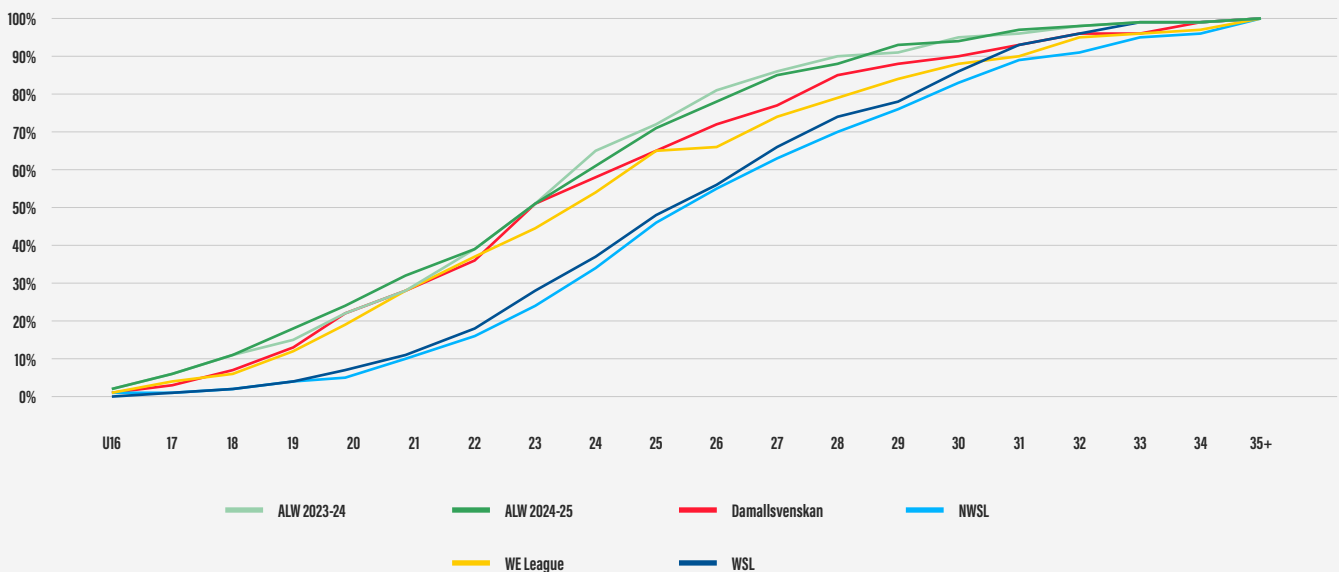
At the time of writing, several more of the ALW's most senior and highest profile players have taken up opportunities abroad ahead of season 2025-26. The past two recipients of the Julie Dolan Medal, Alex Chidiac and Sophie Harding, have departed the league along with Matildas Chloe Berryhill (nee Logarzo), Alana Murphy, Emily Gielnik and Jessika Nash.

The ALW's lagging conditions are having a direct, detrimental impact on the standard of play.

The ALM has also experienced a skew towards younger players over the past five years or so. That league has benefited from exponentially greater transfer revenue as a partial result of giving more opportunities to younger players but also improved contractual stability. The ALW is not currently able to achieve the same outcome because only 15-20% of players are protected by multi-year contracts and therefore able to command a transfer fee.

Share of playing minutes by age

Seasons starting in either 2024 or 2025, plus previous ALW season



COMPETITION FOR TALENT

As predicted, the USL has become a major threat to the ALW's talent retention

The PFA's 2023-24 ALW Report flagged that the introduction of the USL Super League (USLS), a new American professional women's league launching in 2024-25, would pose a "major threat" to the ALW's talent levels, due to the ALW's historical reliance on American imports.

Player movement data from the windows before and during the 2024-25 ALW season show that this warning was well-founded. Thirteen ALW players moved to the new USLS league across those windows, making it by far the most common destination for our outgoing talent. The NWSL was the second most common overseas recruiter of ALW players with six, followed by the Swedish Damallsvenskan with four. Another new league flagged by last year's PFA Report, Canada's Northern Super League, took three ALW players.

As well as directly poaching our existing talent, the USLS is likely having an effect on the quality of foreign players the ALW is able to recruit. The PFA's 2023-24 Report showed that the NWSL was by far the most common overseas league from which ALW players originated between 2018 and 2024; there were 76 NWSL to ALW moves in that period, followed by 13 from the Norwegian Toppserien. For the 2024-25 season, only three players were recruited from the NWSL. Olivia Sekany was recalled from her loan to Brisbane Roar by Racing Louisville mid-season, and Maya McCutcheon has since signed for USLS club Dallas Trinity. It is probable that the USLS is absorbing the talent pool on the fringes of the NWSL from which the ALW formerly recruited.

Referencing the creation of the new leagues across North America, the PFA's 2023-24 Report said "to stand still against this backdrop is to move backwards".

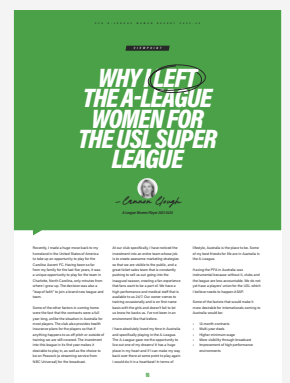
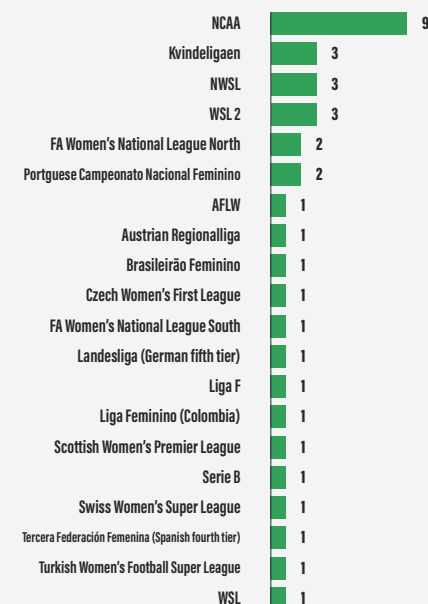
The source leagues of the foreign imports to the ALW in 2024-25 point to the increasing difficulty for our clubs to compete for top talent in the global market. The previous leagues of new foreign players included the German fifth tier, Spanish fourth tier, and the Austrian and English third tiers.

Some of the most impactful foreign imports to the 2024-25 ALW came from leagues such as the Scottish Premier League (Brooke Nunn), the English second division (Jade Pennock), and the American college system (Lourdes Bosch). This off-season, we have seen some of the league's leading players depart for clubs in European second divisions. An example is Durham WFC's purchase of Mariana Speckmaier from Melbourne City, showing that even the potential earnings from the AFC Women's Champions League was not enough to make the ALW competitive with a WSL2 side.

Destination leagues for ALW exports, 2024-25 (pre- and mid-season windows)



Source leagues for ALW imports, 2024-25



The PFA's 2023-24 ALW Report highlighted the threat of the USL Super League

FOOTBALL REVENUE

Transfer revenue is projected to exceed \$10m by 2027 under full-time professionalism

The global women's transfer market is growing at an accelerated rate, creating an increasingly massive financial opportunity for ALW clubs.

Total spending in the year 2024 reached \$23.7m, two and a half times the \$9.3m spent in 2023.¹ Last year's PFA ALW Report highlighted that spending had increased by just less than double in each year from 2020 to 2023, making this latest full-year result an even faster increase.

FIFA's data for the January 2025 transfer window shows that it featured an increase of 180% – or nearly triple – in spending over January 2024.² FIFA's data shows that the midyear window of 2025 was about 1.8 times the size of the same period in 2024. So total spending in 2025 is looking likely to be worth just over double 2024, or around \$50m.

Global transfer spending is being driven primarily by two markets: USA (38% of global spending in 2024) and England (29%). The PFA's ALW reports have continually highlighted the massive economic growth of the leagues in those countries. In the NWSL, for example, the 2024-2027 broadcast deal is worth 40 times more than the previous deal, and that is with one third of match content still to be sold.³ The values of NWSL club licences have grown by up to 100 times since 2022.⁴

It follows that there is no reason to believe that global transfer growth is about to hit a wall or even slow down any time soon. If it doubles again in each of the next two years, it would be set to exceed \$200m by 2027. The next question is what share of the total pie ALW clubs can expect or strive to receive.

In 2024, Australian clubs received 1% of the total global spend. This placed Australia 16th

among all nations. If the ALW continued to earn this share, total receipts would exceed \$1m as soon as 2026.

But the league is perfectly placed to increase its share of the total pie. If the league made the step to full-time professional contracts, the share of players protected by multiyear contracts would rise and the quality of players would improve. Both factors would drive higher transfer revenue. The next paragraphs step these two points out.

The share of ALW players on multiyear contracts in 2024-25 was approximately 15%. In a world with 12-month, fully professional contracts, this share would likely double or triple, meaning that far more players would require a transfer fee to be paid in order to move to an overseas club.

FIFA's 2024 Benchmarking Report on Women's Football revealed that the average player salary in 'Tier 1' leagues – the 22 most professional women's leagues – was \$36,600. The 2024-25 ALW average salary was just over \$30,000. If the ALW went full-time pro, this average would approximately double. Clearly, given the still relatively modest salaries across much of women's football, this step change would rocket the ALW back up the list to be sitting behind only the most elite few leagues in terms of its ability to attract and retain top talent (as it was until recently).

FIFA's benchmarking report does not reveal which 22 markets comprise Tier 1. But FIFA's transfer data shows that in 2024, clubs from 21 countries paid a transfer fee of any size, and in terms of fees received, 99% of fees were claimed by clubs from 22 countries. So there is likely a strong overlap between those Tier 1 leagues where the average salary is \$36,600 and the leagues which are active in the transfer market. If we rank

those 22 top countries by fees received in 2024, and imagine Australia rising quickly up the list, it appears plausible the ALW could capture upwards of 5% of global spend.

To reinforce the point, the ALW has a proven track record of producing players who have gone on to conquer the pinnacle of European women's football, including three UEFA Champions League winners in 2024-25. In the men's game, key development markets Belgium and the Netherlands each capture around 5% of global spending.

So again, that 5% benchmark seems like a reasonable estimate for what a professionalised ALW could expect. If the global women's transfer market continues its current growth trend (or even slows down slightly), and ALW clubs increase their share of the overall pie to 5%, annual transfer revenue would be projected to exceed \$10m by 2027.

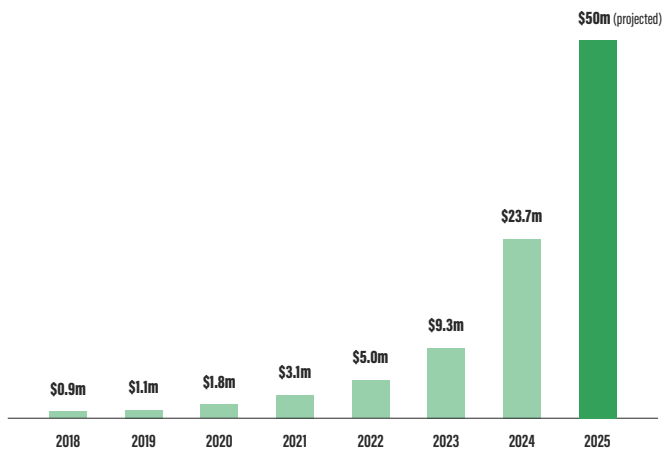
¹ <https://inside.fifa.com/transfer-system/global-transfer-report/womens-professional-football>

² <https://inside.fifa.com/transfer-system/international-transfer-snapshot>

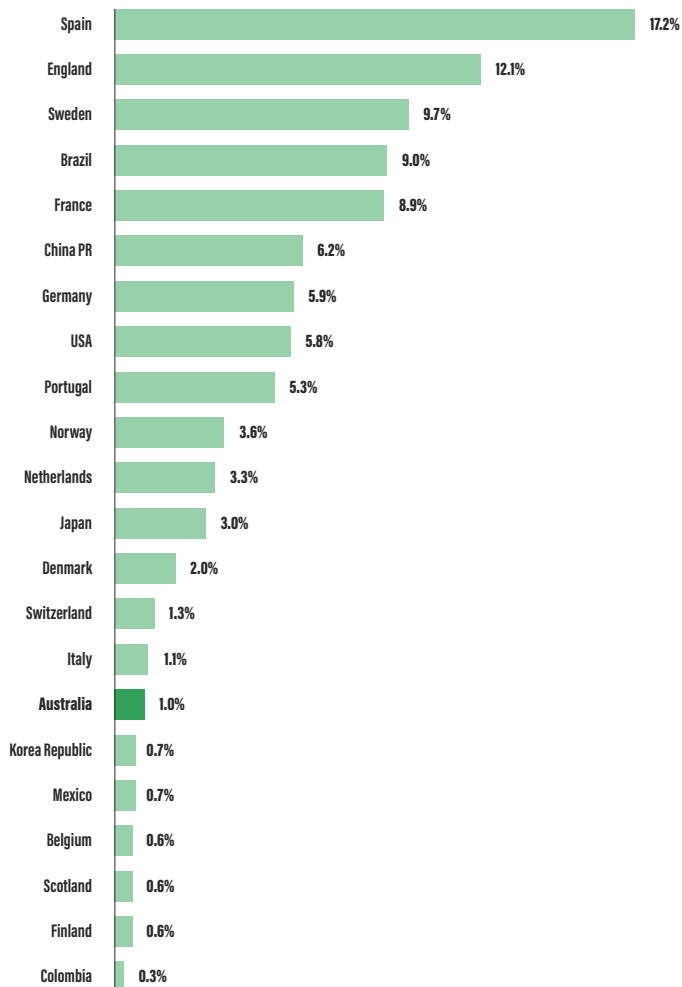
³ <https://www.sportspro.com/news/nwsl-domestic-tv-rights-package-broadcast-2026-april-2025/>

⁴ <https://www.forbes.com/sites/brettknight/2025/06/02/the-nwsls-most-valuable-teams-2025/>

Global women's transfer spending (AUD)



Share of global women's transfer receipts, 2024



All figures in Australian dollars, based on conversion of A\$1 = US\$0.66



Melbourne City's Champions League windfall is just the beginning for prize money

Melbourne City received US\$860k (approx. A\$1.2m) in total prize money for the inaugural AFC Women's Champions League (AWCL). This included US\$100k for qualifying, US\$20k for each group stage win, US\$200k for progressing through the knockout stages, and US\$500k as runner-up. China's Wuhan Jiangda received US\$1m as champions, in addition to their prizes for earlier stages.

Due to the way the AFC has structured the competition, City's costs were lower than what our men's teams have historically had to incur to participate in AFC club competitions. The AWCL group stage was held in central hubs, and the semi-finals and final were also held together in one location, meaning that City only had to make two international trips in addition to hosting one match.

City's performance in the tournament showed that ALW clubs will be very competitive on this stage, making for a significant annual opportunity. But this opportunity is not limited to one club pushing for Champions League glory.

The AFC has locked in the one-team-per-nation slot allocation model for the AWCL until the 2027-28 season. From 2028-29, it is likely that Australia will receive more than one berth, expanding our league's opportunity to capture a share of the prize money.

Further, FIFA has announced that it will stage a Women's Club World Cup every four years starting in 2028-29, with a smaller Women's Champions Cup in the other three years of each cycle, starting in the 2025-26 season.⁵ The former tournament will feature 19 clubs, including 2.5 from Asia (one club will play off to enter the 16-club group stage).

The Women's Champions Cup will simply feature the six confederation champions. If Wuhan Jiangda can beat the champions of Oceania and Africa, they will play in a

semi-final against Arsenal. But for one kick, City could have been looking forward to that path this season and probably a place in the 2028-29 Women's Club World Cup as well. City will have another opportunity to pursue continental honours and these additional opportunities as our AWCL entrants for 2025-26.

The introduction of these new tournaments comes with pros and cons. FIFA has not announced the prize money or other conditions for either competition, but if it follows the lead of the expanded Men's Club World Cup, one could expect lucrative incentives from an Australian perspective.

On the other hand, FIFA's creation of new competitions in the absence of proper consensus is problematic. FIFPRO Europe member unions took legal action against FIFA last year regarding its unilateral imposition of the new Men's Club World Cup and the match calendar generally. Regarding the new women's competitions, NWSLPA executive director Meghann Burke said they may have merit in theory but criticised the lack of consultation with players in developing the competition calendar.

She told ESPN: *"The lack of planning, lack of consideration to workload management and schedule compaction and lack of broadcast or sponsorship considerations, not to mention their failure to adequately fund prize money, compound the problems we are already trying to solve."*⁶

For his part, FIFA president Gianni Infantino said the new Women's Club World Cup was launched "following extensive consultation with key stakeholders".

For players from the NWSL or Europe's leading clubs, the creation of new competitions over the top of their existing leagues, cups, and international duties risks leading towards a congested calendar as witnessed in the men's game. For players from semi-professional leagues including

the ALW, it's not clear how international club duties are supposed to be accommodated by part-time players. Whether or not the new tournaments are a net positive, they can only be improved by including the players' voice in their design and development.

⁵ <https://inside.fifa.com/womens-football/media-releases/timelines-and-formats-of-landmark-fifa-womens-club-competitions-confirmed>
⁶ https://www.espn.com.au/football/story/_/id/44118870/fifa-women-club-world-cup-delayed-2028-new-champions-cup-launched



US\$860K

Melbourne City's 2024-25 AFC Women's Champions League prize money

COMPETITIVE BALANCE

Mixed results for competitive balance raise questions for league policy

The league’s longest ever season allowed Melbourne City to retain their Premiership with a record points total of 55 from 23 matches. This rate of 2.39 points per match was the highest since Sydney FC’s 2.5 per match in 2021-22.

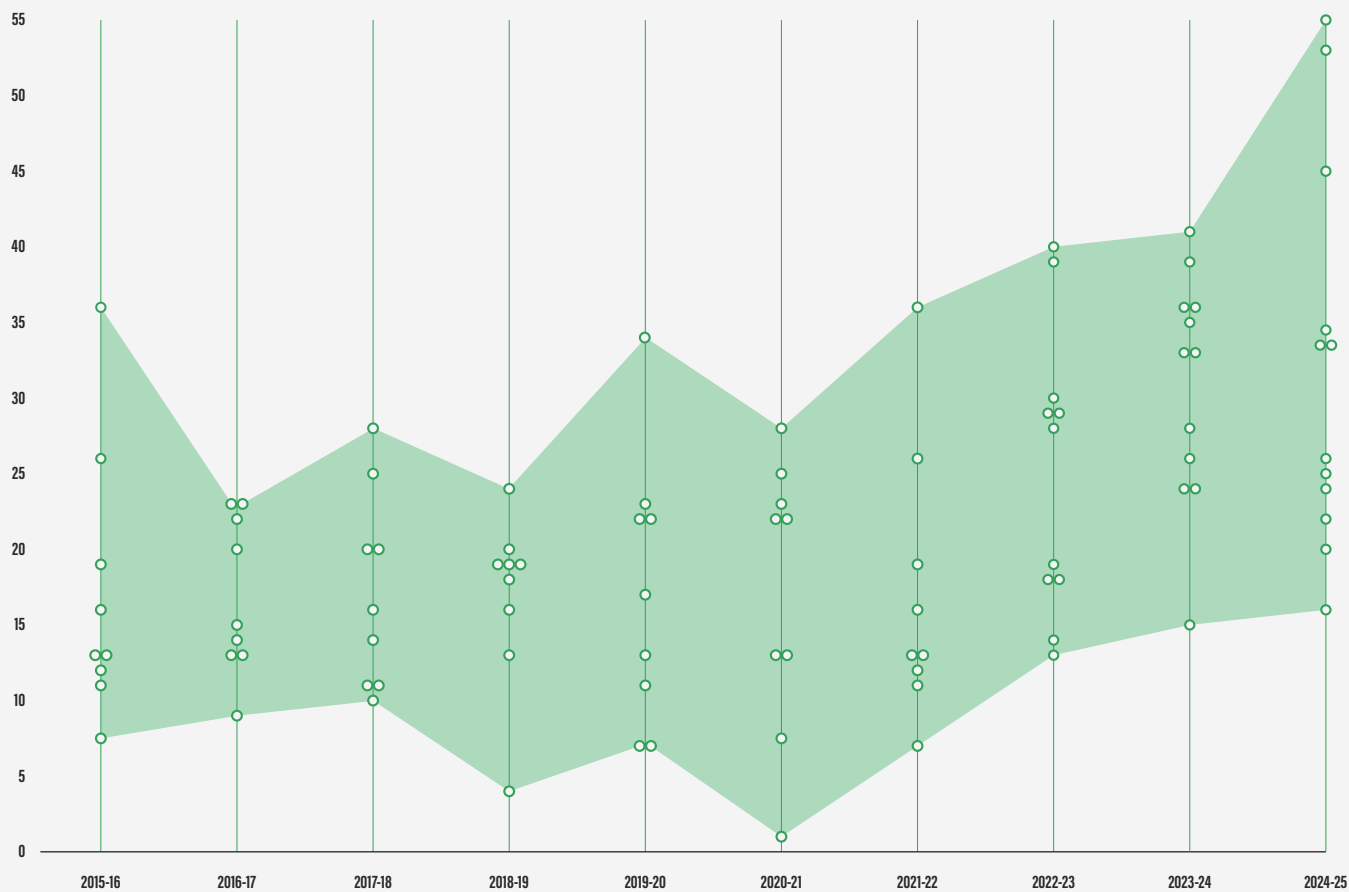
But in positive signs for the league’s competitive balance, Melbourne Victory competed closely for the Premiership, Central Coast emerged to win the Championship, and Adelaide United and Canberra United rose from the bottom two

in 2023-24 to reach the finals. Sydney FC missed the top four for the first time ever, falling to 9th out of 12 teams.

The most concerning result from a competitive balance point of view is that a familiar handful of clubs continue to miss the finals. Hopefully, these clubs can find the right formula in coming seasons to repeat the feats of Adelaide and Canberra this year. However, the league must also consider what settings will best enable the league to share success more equally in future.

There is little sense in pulling the likes of Melbourne City back to the pack; the club is striving to succeed on the Asian stage and is producing a disproportionate number of the league’s homegrown Matildas. Rather, the question must be asked as to whether all clubs are being supported and enabled to keep up and catch up with the leading clubs.

Point spread comparison





EMPLOYMENT FRAMEWORK

20. CBA progress | 22. Path to full-time professionalism | 26. Western United
27. Heat and scheduling | 29. Mental health and wellbeing

CBA PROGRESS

Record player payments belie a league failing to keep pace in women's sport

Total player payments edged up to \$8.7m in the fourth year of the 2021-2026 A-Leagues CBA, eclipsing the previous record of \$8.4m in 2023-24.

Player payments per club in 2024-25 were approximately \$720k on average, up from around \$700k in 2023-24. Across the league, payments outside the salary cap were fairly evenly split between the handful of Marquee players (including Women's World Cup Legacy Players) and the many Scholarship and Youth players.

A \$750 increase to the minimum wage was the major change for 2024-25, and the same increase will apply into 2025-26, the final year of the CBA.

The ALW salary cap will increase to \$640k for the 2025-26 season, rather than the previously agreed \$600k. The salary floor will rise to \$520k, as previously agreed. The PFA cannot, in good faith, report on this salary cap change under the pretence that it was decided in a normal or appropriate way. The APL apparently took the decision

internally sometime in June and notified clubs in early July. It was only in October that the PFA became aware of the APL's intention to make the change.

The APL has apologised for not communicating with the PFA sooner, but this misses the point. To change the salary cap is to amend the CBA. If the APL wishes to amend the CBA, their first call – not their last – must be to the PFA and the players. The same applies in both directions and regardless of whether the positions are likely to be supported by the other party. The APL continues to demonstrate a concerning lack of understanding of and respect for the fundamental importance of collective bargaining.

The change itself is a step in the right direction, while falling well short of what the PFA believes is required. Given the choice of accepting or blocking the change after clubs had completed their recruitment, the PFA and the players consented. The APL's rationale for the change includes accommodating the uplift in minimum

salaries, keeping pace with other leagues, and remaining competitive in Asia. The PFA's analysis of these factors and the appropriate response is laid out in these pages.

The second major change for 2025-26 is the creation of a new Matildas Marquee player category. This concession replaces the Women's World Cup legacy player and is designed to help clubs capitalise on the 2026 Women's Asian Cup on Australian soil.

The onset of the final season of the five-year CBA provides an opportunity to reflect on the performance of the deal. During the course of the 2021-2026 A-Leagues CBA, most other Australian women's leagues have agreed game-changing new pay deals which propel them towards a fully professional future. After having one of the highest minimum wages among women's domestic leagues before COVID-19, ALW players now trail cricketers, AFLW players, rugby league players, netballers, and basketballers.

Minimum salaries, Australian women's sports leagues

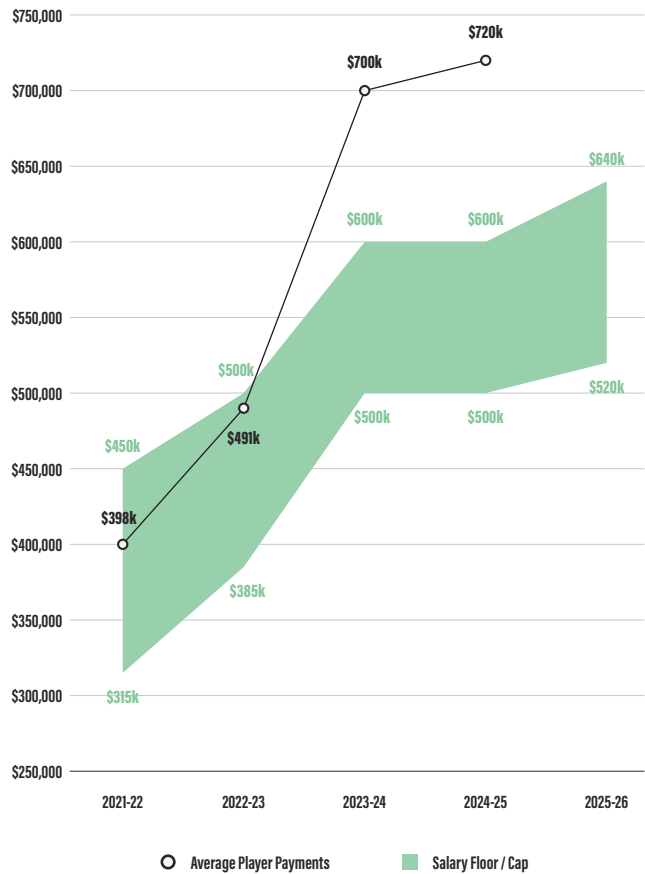
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028
		\$10,292	\$10,601	\$10,919	\$11,246	\$48,685	\$49,171	\$71,945	\$73,384	\$74,851			
		\$8,500	\$9,276	\$13,400	\$16,263	\$17,473	A: \$20,239 B: \$39,184	\$51,290	\$56,077	\$67,337	\$70,030	\$72,373	
			\$4,000	\$6,000	\$6,000	\$8,000	\$10,000	\$30,000	\$34,000	\$41,800	\$46,200	\$50,600	
	\$13,250	\$27,375	\$27,375	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$33,000	\$40,000	\$40,000	\$44,000	\$45,320	\$46,680		
		\$10,000	\$12,287	\$16,344	\$16,344	\$16,344	\$20,608	\$25,000	\$25,750	\$26,500			

Note: WBBL 2017-2020 excludes state contract (no minimum). WBBL 2021-2025 includes state contract.

“Sick of having to balance [work and football] during soccer seasons. Makes me want to be back in AFLW when you can just be an elite athlete.”

– ALW player, 2024-25 end of season survey

Player payments, per club



Minimum salary



PATH TO FULL-TIME PROFESSIONALISM

ALW players' self-reported financial health continues to decline

ALW players' self-reported financial health declined again in 2024-25 as they continued to struggle to balance football with still-necessary non-football employment.

The share of players who said their financial situations were either 'not at all' or only 'slightly' secure grew to 76% in 2024-25, up from 66% two years ago. The share of players working outside football remained at 62%, with 59% of those working more than ten hours per week on average. As such, 60% were 'not at all' or only 'slightly' satisfied with their life balance.

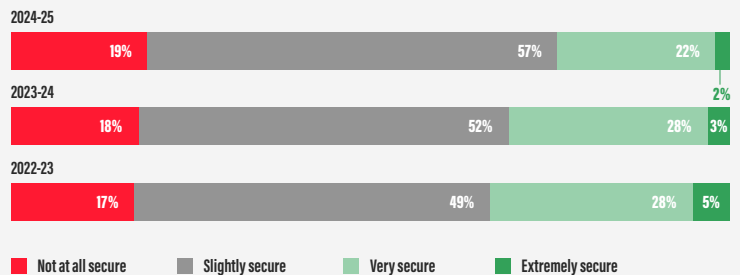
A new element to this dynamic this season was Melbourne City's successful campaign through the AFC Women's Champions League, which saw the team spend around a week in each of Thailand and China. The players were rewarded for their time with tournament prize money, and players, the PFA, clubs, and the league are all in agreement that the competition is an exciting development. But it is emblematic of an industry which is increasingly incompatible with part-time commitments.

In the 2023-24 end of season survey, 59% of ALW players said low club salaries would be a reason why they might leave football early.

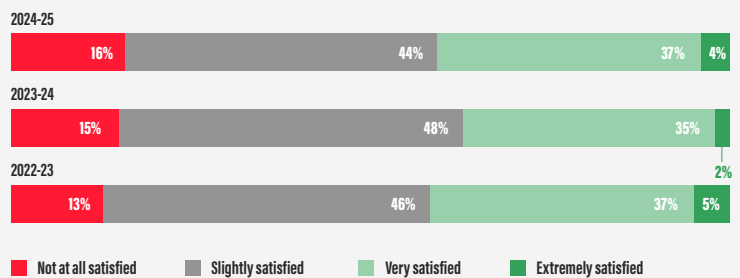
Together with the data in this Report regarding player movements and player age profiles, the picture could not be clearer: the part-time tug-of-war is pulling the league's talent pool to the brink.



How would you describe your financial situation?



How satisfied are you with your current balance between football/work/study/life?



"It's a personal choice but we basically sacrifice so much just for the love of chasing our football career."

"It's hard especially when football schedule changes, I have been getting in trouble for calling out of work and asking to leave training / gym early and it's been really bad disappointing both my bosses and coach and don't know what to do."

"This year was the first time I noticed the impact working 30 hours a week had on my body's recovery. Especially with injuries I had no extra time to get treatment, go to recovery centres or just get adequate sleep."

"I work as a teacher outside of A-league. It was literally impossible to balance both training and work ... A-league salary did not match the money I was losing from not being at work. This is not financially viable long term."

"Playing football under a scholarship contract has proven difficult to maintain a healthy income. As I live quite a distance away from training and unable to get work consistently due to training schedules (I have to work casual otherwise I won't have a job), it has been difficult paying for essentials. I am unable to afford study, so I try my best teaching myself"

Sermanni's assessment lays out the cost of stagnation to Australian football

The impacts of the part-time dynamic fall not only on ALW players but on the entirety of Australian football.

In May this year, towards the end of his stint as interim Matildas coach, Tom Sermanni explained how the current situation is threatening our talent production and

seeing the ALW fall behind overseas leagues.

In addition to a lack of year-round, full-time programs, Sermanni highlighted club staffing as an area where the league is falling short.

"We really need to have, at A-League level, a real rethink. The league has been going for 17 years. When we started the league, and the coaches came from our institute programs, we had full-time coaches and more full-time staff than we have now, 17 years in.

"The A-League separated five years ago and what we have done since then is we've got home and away, which is an improvement, but we are still grossly underinvested in the women's game here.

"I don't know if there's a thought process going forward about where they want to take the league or what they want to do. But there's a huge amount of work that actually needs to be done.

"It's even more irritating, when you think how we had the most successful World Cup ever two years ago, and A-League Women are in the situation that they're in now, it's just not good enough. [When the league started], our league

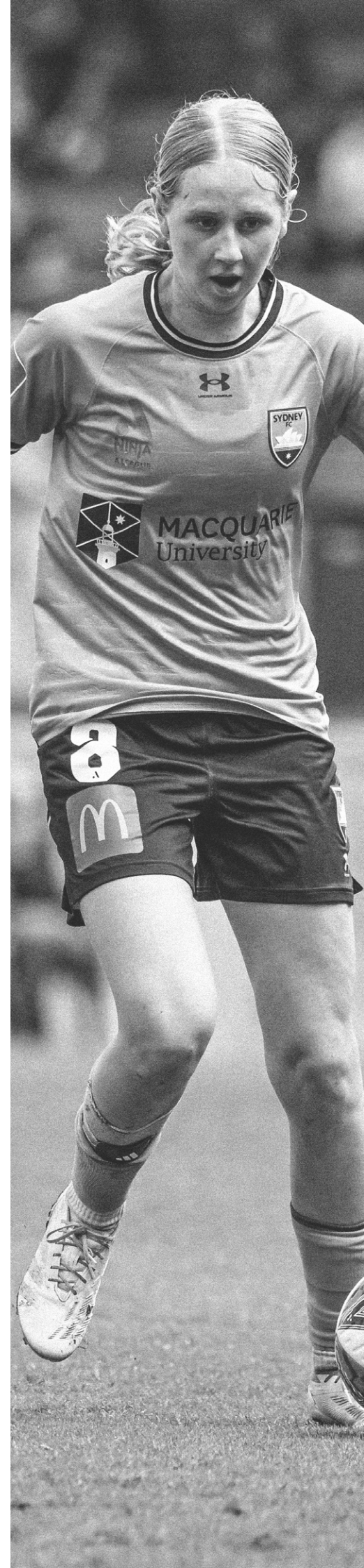
was the forefront of women's leagues, to be perfectly honest. It's still very important, and coaches, staffs and players are doing exceptionally well. But the league itself is in need of significant improvement in its professionalism.

"There are three clubs that are suitably staffed - that's Melbourne City, Melbourne Victory and Wellington Phoenix. And the rest of the clubs are completely inadequately staffed. Players get 35-week contracts now.

"A league has just started in Canada - football wise, we're well in advance of Canada - where the base salary is twice what our basic salary is, where there's full-time staff, full-time players.

"And we are still trying to produce players when we have a space of three months where the club has got no contact, no control, no reference point for the players, to actually keep them and know what's happening."

Quotes via The Guardian



Fans are adamant that players should be full-time athletes

According to a major survey of Australian football fans, 62% agree that ALW players should be full-time professional athletes, while only 8% disagree.

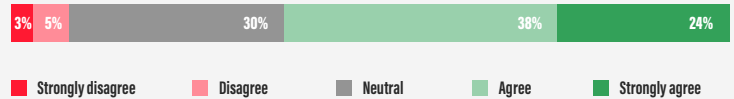
In 2024, the PFA engaged Gemba, a leading sports intelligence agency, to conduct market research about the A-Leagues including a fan survey. Among the 62% of fans who wanted to see players go full-time were 24% who strongly agreed.

The findings were in line with insights from fan focus groups conducted by the PFA last year. Several women's football fans, who were mostly new converts to the Matildas who had dabbled in the ALW since the Women's World Cup, mentioned that the part-time nature of the ALW made it harder to connect to players off the pitch and harder to appreciate the on-field product.

The step up to full-time professionalism will of course require increased financial investment. The lessons of the Matildas and leading overseas women's leagues is that fan support follows professionalisation. The fan survey and the focus groups support the case that professionalising the ALW will also make it far more appealing to an audience which sees the current underinvestment as a turn-off.



Do you think A-League Women players should be full-time professional athletes?



Quotes from PFA fan focus groups:

"I don't think just championing inclusion and championing feminism would be enough to sell [the ALW]. I think we would actually have to see the product and the professionalism take a step up rather than people being on like part-time, no jobs and that sort of thing."

"There's just so much about it not being a fully properly professional league that impacts the whole experience. You can see the difference. I'm much more engaged in the WSL than I am the A-League, even though I go to games here. Not having the remuneration for the players means that they're also a lot younger. The quality of the football is not the same, and then everything around it. I feel bad, but I can find A-League games frustrating sometimes."

"It's the higher pace. I think it would be hard to have to work part-time and then go and throw the extra of your life into this game where you're putting your body on the line and you're not getting much compensation back for it."



Full-time players will be enabled to play critical role in growing support

Research tells us that, in general, women's football fans are more likely than men's football fans to connect with individual player stories and personalities. But the part-time nature of ALW contracts is inhibiting players' ability to foster those connections, in part because they literally do not have the time to invest.

One way we can quantify this is by comparing the number of commercial and community appearances made by ALW and ALM players during the 2024-25 season. The PFA's end of season surveys reveal that 38% of ALW players made at least three commercial appearances, compared to 57% of ALM players. Similarly, 44% of ALW players made at least three community

appearances, compared to 66% of ALM players. At the same clubs, within the same commercial programs, ALM players are made available while ALW players are running off to their second jobs.

As one participant of the PFA's fan focus groups put it, the accessibility of the Matildas is a key driver of their appeal:

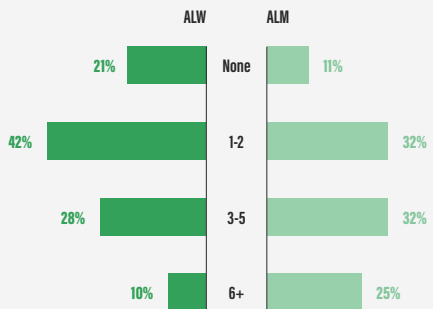
"[Football Australia] have been very clever, the strategy of making them as accessible as they are. You think that you could be friends with them and you'd enjoy their company, you'd love to have them around. They've really humanised them so they're not just players on a field."

Gemba's survey asked fans to rank a list of five factors with regard to their importance in attracting support to the league. For ALW 'fanatics' (Gemba's category of the most ardent supporters), creating access to players was clearly the most important factor. Engaging with the local community was the equal second-most important factor.

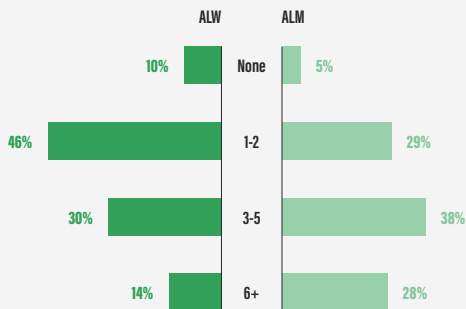
It could not be clearer that unburdening players from their non-football work requirements, and allowing them to connect with fans as elite full-time athletes, will have a dramatic impact on the league's ability to build support.



Number of commercial appearances, 2024-25



Number of community appearances, 2024-25



When thinking of the A-League Women, please rank the following factors in terms of their importance in attracting support



Note: Question asked to ALW 'fanatics', percentage reflects share who ranked option in their top two

WESTERN UNITED

Players were left stranded by the last-minute decision to 'hibernate' the club

The governance failures around the handling of Western United caused significant harm to the club's players in particular.

The club's ability to participate in the 2025-26 seasons was under challenge by two parallel processes: the club's attempt to be licensed by Football Australia (FA), and a pursuit of outstanding debts by the Australian Taxation Office (ATO). The two processes are related because FA's licensing criteria require that clubs can operate without the significant threat of liquidation, which was the remedy sought by the ATO.⁷

By early September, both processes continued to drag on due to appeals by the club. The APL decided season preparations could wait no longer, and announced on September 6th that the club would be put into 'hibernation' for the 2025-26 season.

The removal of a club (even if it is temporary) is obviously a catastrophic outcome for fans, staff, players, and all people involved. The timing of this decision, so close to the new seasons, severely impacted players in particular, due to the reduced opportunities to find new employment.

This impact landed differently on the women's and men's squads due to the different nature of contracting in the two leagues.

On the men's side, the vast majority of players have been able to secure new clubs, but most players have had to accept reduced salaries compared to their Western United contracts. Some players dropped down to NPL clubs and several players lost the security of multi-year deals.

On the women's side, there were fewer players contracted but around one in three have been left without a club. Of those who did find a new ALW club, most will receive similar salaries, but they have had to move interstate or across Melbourne. So they would need to rebuild the life of a part-time ALW player in a new home, which for most players includes finding supplementary employment. Several ALW players also lost the security of multi-year deals.

This combination of direct and indirect harms was exacerbated by the last-minute timing of the hibernation decision, which should have been avoided. According to its regulations, FA's licensing process was supposed to be completed by the end of May, 2025 (including an appeal period).

This deadline exists to give all stakeholders certainty ahead of a new season. The fact that the licensing decision had still not been finalised more than three months later shows that FA was either unable or unwilling to enforce its own regulations.

As the likelihood of the club's exclusion firmed, the PFA tabled a proposal with the APL that modest concessions be made to the salary caps and squad regulations of both leagues. The concessions would have given other clubs the option to rehome Western United players without impacting the rest of their rosters. Even though the ALW salary cap had already been increased slightly, it was the disadvantageous timing of the hibernation decision that needed remedy; other clubs were well advanced in their recruitment for the new seasons before Western's players became available. The proposal was rejected by the APL Board.

The PFA commends the players and staff of Western United for their professionalism and dedication in the face of extreme adversity.

⁷ <https://footballaustralia.com.au/sites/ffa/files/2025-03/Football%20Australia%20Club%20Licensing%20Regulations%202025%20.pdf>



HEAT AND SCHEDULING

Cooling in change rooms is required to supplement the ALW's heat approach

Extreme heat remained an ongoing challenge for the summer-bound ALW. Players reported experiencing extreme heat in 23% of the fixtures where a post-match survey was completed (68% of all regular season matches).

As the PFA has previously reported, the ALW tends to be more susceptible to extreme heat than the ALM because its matches are usually scheduled earlier in the day and its facilities are not as advanced.

Among the players who reported extreme heat, 15% said there was not sufficient shade on the bench and 38% said there was not sufficient cooling in the change rooms. A quarter said their match should have been postponed and 70% said the weather impacted the players' performance. One in five said they or a team-mate experienced health problems resulting from the conditions.

The A-Leagues do have a relatively robust heat policy which commands interventions such as drinks breaks or postponements at lower thresholds than FIFA's guidance. In addition, to reduce the need for on-the-day interventions which disadvantage players, fans, and the broadcaster, the leagues do not schedule kick-offs before 5pm during the Australian summer. The APL also works proactively with the PFA throughout the season to identify matches where extreme heat is forecast and change the schedule if possible.

The NWSL has experienced high profile issues with extreme heat during this 2025 season, with a match in Kansas City kicking off three and a half hours after the scheduled 3pm slot following several on-the-day postponements. Local media reported that 16 people at the stadium were treated for heat-related issues, with one taken to hospital.

The Athletic reported that the NWSL commissioner rejected the clubs' pre-match requests to move the match, and threatened to fine Kansas City Current for bumping the match out of a lucrative broadcast slot.⁸ The NWSL Players' Association reportedly flagged the match as a heat risk with the league when it received a draft schedule back in January.

The episode highlights the benefit of the A-Leagues' measures. While the PFA and ALW players appreciate the need to maximise the broadcast value of the league as it steps into its professional future, it is self-defeating for all stakeholders to attempt to deny the reality of hotter summers. A 'schedule and hope' approach only leads to inevitable and costly last-minute scrambles and conflicts of interest which do more damage than constraining the leagues with sensible, proactive policies.

An area which requires urgent and relatively low-cost attention is the cooling in change rooms at some ALW venues. Players have reported change rooms being hotter and more humid than the outside air. Portable fans are not effective enough and air conditioning must be installed in all venues.

⁸ <https://www.nytimes.com/athletic/6566406/2025/08/21/nwsl-weather-delay-threat-fine-kc-current/>





Was there a drinks break during the match?



■ Yes ■ No

Was there sufficient shade on the bench?



■ Yes ■ No

Was there sufficient cooling in the change rooms?



■ Yes ■ No

Do you think the match should have been postponed because of the weather conditions?



■ Yes ■ No

Did the weather conditions impact on the players' performance?



■ Yes ■ No ■ Not sure

Have you or a team-mate experienced any health problems resulting from the weather conditions during the match?



■ Yes ■ No

"Extreme heat was definitely felt - perceived was not as bad due to the wind. There were a lot of reports of heat related fatigue during the end of the match and also quite a few reports of people feeling ill after the game and even back at the hotel (nauseous, exhaustion)."

- Away player at the Home of the Matildas

"Changerooms lacked ability to cope with the humidity. It was more humid in the changeroom than outside despite efforts with portable fans."

- Away player at Perry Park

"No air-conditioning or fan in the change room got very hot."

- Away player at Woy Woy Oval

"The changerooms are extremely hot, worse than outside temp and we only had a single fan to blow that air around. Cannot imagine how bad it gets in 30+ degree weather."

- Away player at Leichhardt Oval

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Sport-related psychological distress, anxiety, and depression have increased among ALW players

In partnership with FIFPRO (the global players' union), the PFA undertook a mental health audit of members playing in the A-Leagues or National Teams players overseas. A total of 553 A-Leagues players completed the e-survey, including 240 ALW players. The study follows up a similar project in 2020 (before the pandemic), allowing for a comparison across time.

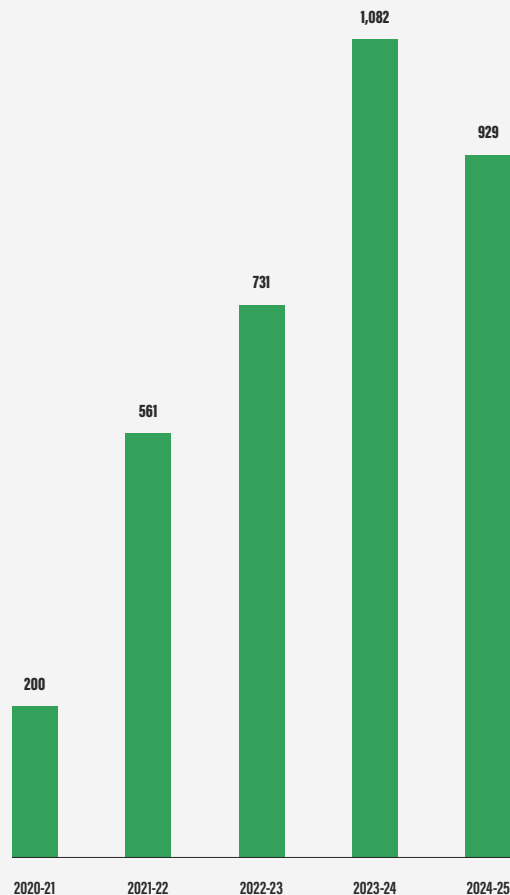
Sport-related psychological distress (a range of symptoms specific to the context of being an elite athlete) was prevalent among 67% of ALW players and 43% of ALM players. The prevalence of sport-related psychological distress among ALW players had increased slightly from 2020 (63%). Over the same period, it had decreased among ALM players (down from 52% in 2020).

The share of ALW players experiencing global (general) psychological distress, anxiety, and depression was also significantly higher in 2025 than in 2020.

In 2024-25, 41% of ALW players experienced disordered eating, 34% experienced alcohol misuse, and 28% had disturbed sleep. Suffering an injury in the past six months meant that a player was statistically more likely to experience problem gambling or alcohol misuse.

Through the PFA Player Development Program, all members have access to confidential psychological services. The use of the services has increased steeply over time, the greatest driver of which is likely an increased awareness of the program among players. In 2024-25, the PFA funded 929 counselling sessions, just below the previous record of 1,082.

PFA-funded confidential counselling sessions, by season





CLUB BENCHMARKING

31. Club Indices | 33. Safety | 34. Matchday venues

CLUB INDICES

Wellington joined City in players' circle of excellence, but Integration scores declined

Players' satisfaction with ALW club environments declined slightly from 2023-24 to 2024-25, according to the PFA's end of season mass player survey. This reverses a finding published in last year's ALW Report showing scores had generally improved from 2022-23 to 2023-24.

The PFA reconfigured its end of season surveys in 2022-23 to produce Index scores for club Operations, Facilities, and Culture, aggregating feedback across many specific elements of the club environments into single numbers for each area to allow for better comparison and tracking. Those three Index scores are averaged to produce a Club Performance Index as an overall health check for each club.

The Club Performance Index score declined for eight of the 12 clubs in 2024-25 when compared to the previous season, although some of these changes were marginal. The declines were driven by player satisfaction across each of the three sub-indices, each of which saw a majority of clubs receive a lower score than the previous season.

The average Club Performance Index score in 2024-25 was 2.98, compared to 3.01 in 2023-24 and 2.96 in 2022-23.

Melbourne City (3.51) and Wellington Phoenix (3.46) had the highest Club Performance Index scores (on a scale of 1-4), underpinned by the near perfect ratings for their world class training facilities. Wellington and Adelaide United showed large improvement in their Operations and Culture scores, propelling them into the top four for each of those metrics.

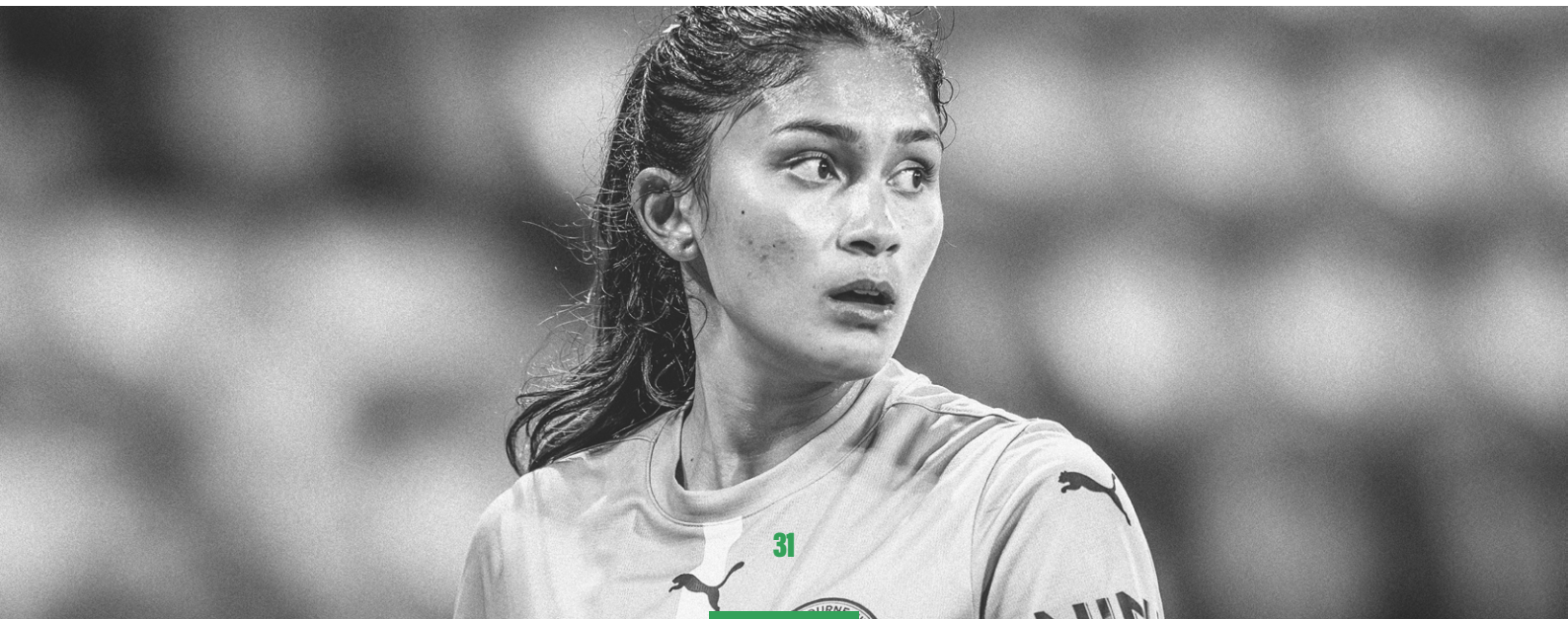
Melbourne Victory led the way for the Operations Index, which covers aspects such as coaching, medical, and football logistics. The Championship-winning Central Coast Mariners had the second highest score for the Culture Index, which measures agreement with eight statements that reflect the interpersonal aspects of the club environment. This Index has tended to correlate most strongly with on-field success.

A fourth index, the Club Integration Index, tracks the players' agreement with six statements that reflect the way the women's team is integrated, respected, and prioritised within their club. This is only asked of ALW players in dual-club setups (i.e. Canberra United is excluded). This Index does not feed into the overall Club Performance Index.

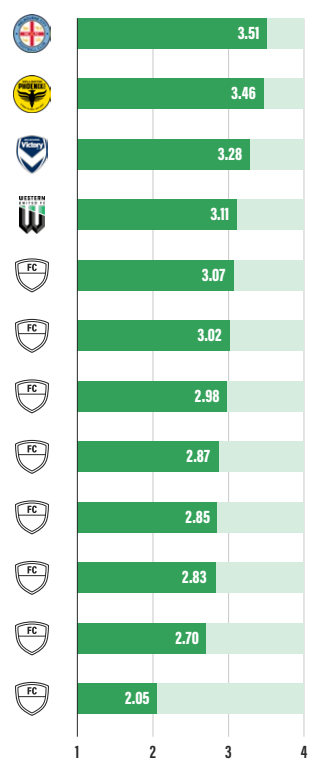
Wellington showed a large improvement in their Integration Index, lifting from 2.64 in 2023-24 to a league record high of 3.32 in 2024-25. Given that Wellington finished ninth, this result is evidence that the players' survey feedback is not simply a reflection of the vibes created by on-field results, but a genuine attempt to assess distinct elements of their experiences. The club deserves credit for the environment it has created.

However, in another worrying sign about the ALW's general trajectory, all other clubs' Integration scores were either static or declined.

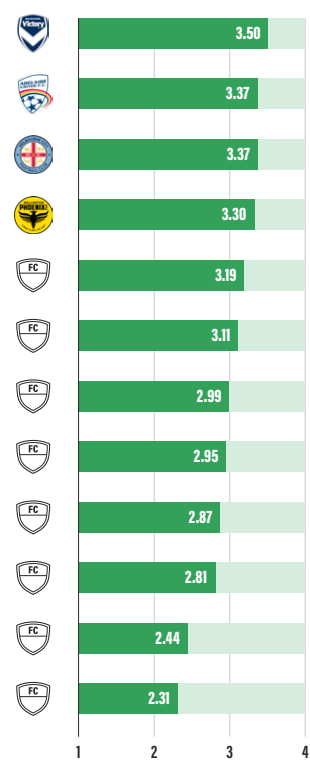
As with last year's Report, the PFA is publishing the top four clubs in each category to acknowledge their success and progress. The PFA attempts to engage with all clubs to present the full survey results and discuss areas for potential improvement. This off-season, all clubs engaged with the PFA.



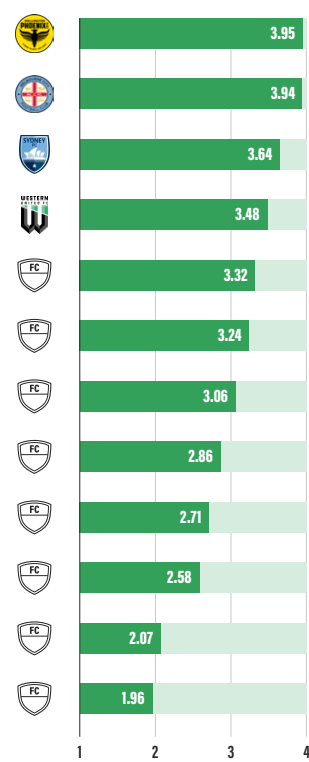
Club Performance Index



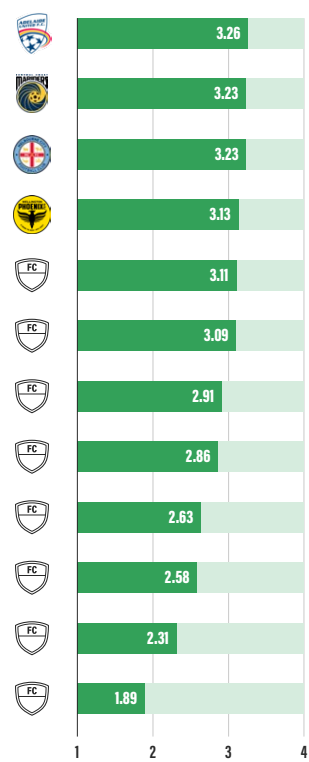
Club Operations Index



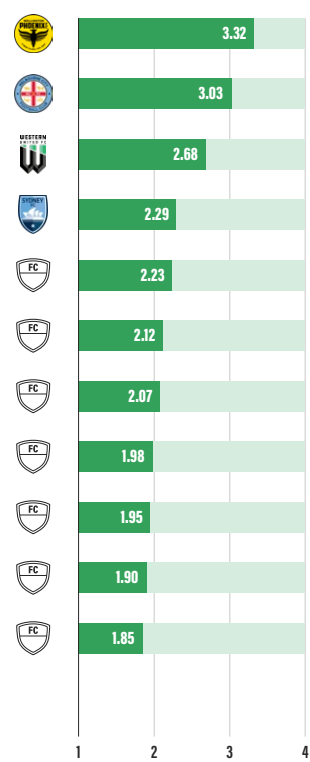
Club Facilities Index



Club Culture Index



Club Integration Index



Index methodology

At least half of every ALW squad answered the survey, providing a sufficient sample for robust club-by-club comparison. Each Index has a 1-4 scale where 1 would be total dissatisfaction from every player in every aspect, and 4 would be universal satisfaction. 2.5 is the midpoint. N/A responses are excluded.

SAFETY

Several ALW club environments raised significant safety concerns

One in six ALW players felt that their club environment posed some kind of safety risk during the 2024-25 season, with the majority of these concentrated in four clubs.

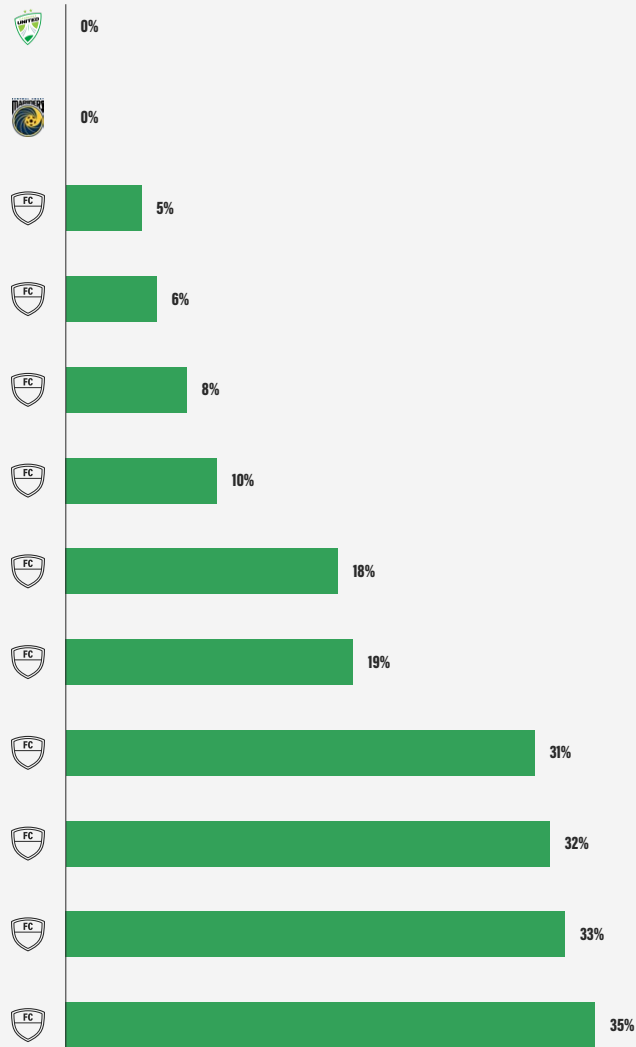
The 16% of ALW players was higher than the 9% of ALM players who felt their club environment posed a safety risk. Four ALW teams had over 30% of their players flagging a risk while no more than 21% of any ALM team flagged a risk.

To be clear, the end of season survey question is broad and purposely casts a wide net. A follow up question asks players who reported a risk to explain what it was (this question is made optional for participant safety). Risks identified range from low to high and include physical and psychological types. The PFA is not implying that clubs with players identifying risks has allowed a critical failure and the PFA attempts to work through these results with every club to highlight issues and seek solutions.

Rather, we are publishing these results to highlight a trend, particularly in comparison with the ALM results. Inside largely the same set of clubs, women players are reporting feeling at risk at nearly double the rate of their men's counterparts. There is a systemic issue where the lower investment into and prioritisation of women's programs is leading to, on average, inferior infrastructure, poorer conditions, insufficient staffing, and less oversight.



At any time did you feel that your club environment posed a risk to your physical or mental safety?



MATCHDAY VENUES

The league still lacks Goldilocks venues which balance quality and size

The 2024-25 post-match player surveys again highlighted that the ALW has few matchday venues that meet the needs of both players and fans.

Western United's purpose-built mini stadium at Tarneit scored well for the quality of its pitch and facilities as well as for atmosphere. In general, though, there was a trade-off between these elements. Appropriately sized venues that made for a good atmosphere tended to be dated suburban grounds with subpar infrastructure. The best pitches and facilities were usually found at major stadia that are too big for the ALW's current crowds.

The PFA attempts to survey at least one away team player after every match, gaining feedback on elements of the home venue as well as the match officials and any extreme

weather. During the 2024-25 season, surveys covered 68% of ALW matches. The pitch quality, atmosphere, and facilities are rated on a 1-5 scale, making 3.0 the midpoint.

The best average atmosphere among regularly used venues was to be found at Sydney FC's Leichhardt Oval (4.0). Canberra's McKellar Park, Brisbane's Perry Park, and Wellington's Porirua Park all scored well on this metric. But those three latter venues also received negative or neutral average scores for their facilities and middling scores for their pitches.

Most clubs continued to use multiple home grounds throughout the season. The use of major stadia for occasional marquee fixtures or double headers is not necessarily the wrong approach, with Adelaide United

finding a successful formula at Coopers Stadium. But the aggregate effect of the lack of suitable permanent homes for ALW teams is an inconsistent experience for fans attending or viewing matches.

Developments at Melbourne City light a path forward. The club has secured government funding to assist in the construction of its own mini stadium at its training base in Casey Fields. The project was achieved in partnership with rugby league club Melbourne Storm, which sees the venue being used by development teams and potentially its NRLW team. Rugby league could prove a valuable lobbying partner to 'fill the gap' of small and boutique sized elite rectangular venues that the ALW and ALM desperately require.



Matchday venue player ratings, 2024-25

Club	Stadium	Games surveyed	Pitch quality (ave.)	Atmosphere (ave.)	Facilities (ave.)
	Coopers Stadium	4	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
	Marden Sports Complex	2	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
	ServiceFM Stadium	1	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
	Perry Park	9	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
	McKellar Park	9	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
	Industree Group Stadium	5	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
	Woy Woy Oval	2	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
	ctrl:cyber Pitch	4	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
	AAMI Park (MCY)	3	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
	Home of the Matildas	4	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
	AAMI Park (MVC)	2	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
	No.2 Sportsground	4	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
	McDonald Jones Stadium	1	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
	Maitland Sports Ground	1	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
	Cessnock Sportsground	1	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
	Sam Kerr Football Centre	6	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
	Leichhardt Oval	5	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
	Allianz Stadium	2	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
	Porirua Park	10	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
	Wanderers Football Park	5	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
	CommBank Stadium	1	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
	Marconi Stadium	1	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
	Ironbark Fields	7	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
Unite Round	Netstrata Jubilee Stadium	5	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★

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