

The Rise of Women's Football in Thailand





Thailand's women's football sits at a pivotal moment, balancing a proud past with a rapidly professionalising future. Twice a FIFA Women's World Cup participant and now ranked among Asia's rising forces, Thailand is leveraging targeted investment, a revamped domestic league, and the hosting of key youth tournaments, such as the AFC U-20 Women's Asian Cup 2026 to build a genuine pathway from grassroots to the global stage.

Context, Momentum & Performance

Thailand's football market was valued at **USD 21.42 million in 2024** and is projected to reach **USD 28.96 million by 2033** (CAGR 3.41%), with women's football investment highlighted as a key growth driver.

Thailand's women's national team has competed in all **14 SEA Games women's football tournaments**, with an all-time record of **59 matches: 40 wins, 11 draws, 8 losses**, scoring **182 goals** and conceding 49 (+133 GD).

HONOURS INCLUDE:

- 1 AFC Women's Asian Cup title (1983)
- 4 AFF Women's Championships (2011, 2015, 2016, 2018)
- 5 SEA Games gold medals (1985, 1995, 1997, 2007, 2013)

World Cup performance:

Thailand has made two FIFA Women's World Cup appearances (2015, 2019), exiting at the group stage on both occasions.

Current form (2025 friendlies):

Thailand recorded 8 wins, 1 draw, and 1 loss (80% win rate), scoring 38 goals, with an average expected goals (xG) of 2.23 per match.

FIFA ranking:

Thailand has historically peaked at 28th (July 2011, June 2018) and is currently ranked 53rd in the FIFA Women's World Ranking (as of 11 December 2025), placing them firmly among the top teams in ASEAN.

Domestic Ecosystem & League

The **2025 Thai Women's League 1** marks the **11th season** of the top division, featuring **8 teams across 6 provinces** (Bangkok, Chonburi, Khon Kaen, Lampang, Nakhon Si Thammarat, Surin).

The **second tier (Thai Women's League 2)** also includes **8 teams**, with representation from Bangkok and six additional provinces (Buriram, Chonburi, Khon Kaen, Nakhon Sawan, Pathum Thani, Sisaket).

Historically, clubs such as **BG Bundit Asia** and **Chonburi** have dominated the competition. However, the expansion to a two-tier structure signals a more distributed ecosystem, with increasing regional representation beyond Bangkok.



In January 2025, FA Thailand increased investment in the women's game...

Division 1

champions' prize money increased to **600,000 THB**

Each Division 1 club now receives **500,000 THB in operational support**

Division 2

funding increased from **100,000 THB to 300,000 THB per club**

Prize money distribution has also been expanded to include the top six Division 1 clubs, rather than just the top three, broadening financial incentives across the league.

FA Thailand's strategy, "From Grassroots to Greatness" (2025 - 2029), developed under the AFC - UEFA Women's Football Programme, sets a clear objective: qualification for the FIFA Women's World Cup, aligned to the "Road to Brazil 2027" campaign.

Youth Pathway & AFC U-20 Women's Asian Cup

The AFC U-20 Women's Asian Cup Thailand 2026 will take place from 1 - 18 April 2026 in Bangkok and surrounding provinces, with venues including Thammasat Stadium, Pathum Thani Stadium, and Nonthaburi Stadium. The tournament expands to a 12-team format (from 8 teams), increasing access to elite competition across Asia.

FA Thailand aims to:

- Increase female participation to ~2,000 players nationwide
- Expand school and academy networks
- Strengthen pathways into U-17 and U-20 national teams



Popularity, Fans & Media

At the regional level, women's football in the SEA Games has effectively become a two-horse race, with Vietnam (8 golds) and Thailand (5 golds) dominating.

However, comparison with other sports highlights the growth opportunity: Thailand's women's volleyball team has secured 17 SEA Games gold medals, including six consecutive titles (2015 - 2025) setting the benchmark for female team-sport popularity.

The projected growth of the Thai football market is directly linked to:

- **Increased investment in women's football**
- **Enhanced youth development programmes**
- **Greater financial support for domestic leagues**

Challenges

Despite increased funding, disparities remain:

- Division 2 clubs receive 300,000 THB, compared to 500,000 THB in Division 1, potentially limiting full professionalisation beyond the top tier

Performance-wise:

- SEA Games results remain strong (e.g. 2023 bronze: 21–4 GD; 2025 bronze: 13–1 GD)
- However, this success has yet to translate into consistent top-tier Asian performances or deeper World Cup runs

While recent friendly results (80% win rate, 38 goals in 10 matches) highlight attacking potential, a gap remains between Thailand and Asia's leading teams (Japan, Australia, China, Korea). Closing this gap will require:

- Higher-intensity competition
- Continued investment
- Further professionalisation of the domestic and national-team environment

