

05

One Boot in Eight

The global football boot market, and how much of it is the Predator

Research Paper 05

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25 sources

When the Predator went on sale in 1994, Nike's entire football business was worth about \$40 million a year. Thirty years on, the boot market is a two-brand fight worth billions, with Puma a distant third and a queue of newcomers trying to buy their way in. Nobody publishes the size of that market, and the estimates that do exist disagree by a factor of seven. So we built our own, and then asked the question this site exists to answer: how much of it is the Predator?

c. €3.4bn

Global branded boot sales a year, at brand revenue **Our estimate**

12.8%

Players wearing Predators at the 2026 World Cup **Reported** ¹⁵

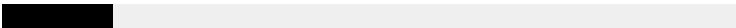
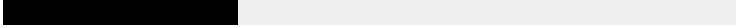
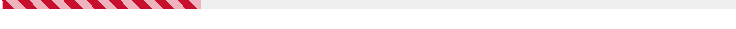
1 in 8

The Predator's share of the market by value **Our estimate**

1. A market nobody can measure

Search for the size of the football boot market and you will find confident numbers. The trouble is that they cannot all be right. For 2025 alone, published market research puts football footwear at anything from \$4.3bn to \$29.4bn, a nearly sevenfold spread.¹⁻⁶ Some reports measure "football shoes", some "football boots"; few say whether they count shop prices or what the brands receive, or whether trainers inspired by football are in or out.

Published estimates of the football boot market, 2025 (US\$; our figure for comparison)

Market Growth Reports Football shoes		\$4.3bn
FnF Research Football boots		\$9.4bn
Data Bridge Football shoes		\$20.8bn
SkyQuest Football shoes		\$21.6bn
Fact.MR Football shoes		\$25.5bn
Mordor Intelligence Football shoes		\$29.4bn
Our estimate Branded boots at shop prices		c. \$8bn

Sources: ¹ to ⁶. FnF Research and Dataintel both give \$9.4bn. Our estimate converts €7bn at shop prices; see section 5. Bar lengths are indicative.

The top of that range does not survive a simple check. In their last disclosures, the entire football businesses of Nike and adidas, including shirts, balls and training kit as well as boots, came to around \$2bn to \$3bn each.^{9,10,13} Even allowing for growth and for shop mark-ups, it is hard to get from there to \$25bn of boots alone. One of the reports cites a figure of around 265 million people playing football regularly;⁴ a \$25bn market would mean every one of them spending close to \$100 on boots each year. **Our estimate** Our own estimate, built from the brands up, lands near the bottom of the published range.

2. How the market was made

In 1994 football boots belonged to the European brands. adidas and Puma had been making them for decades, and the Predator arrived as adidas's big new idea. Nike, by its own account, had a football business worth about \$40 million in the early 1990s.⁸

What followed was one of the great land-grabs in sportswear. By 2007 Nike's football revenue had reached about \$1.5 billion, and it agreed to buy Umbro for around \$582 million to add an English heritage brand to the portfolio.⁸ By the year to May 2014 Nike's global football business had grown to \$2.3bn, and that figure excluded its football lifestyle clothing.⁹ At the 2014 World Cup, Nike said more players wore its boots than every other brand combined.⁹

What the two giants last disclosed

Year	adidas football	Nike football
Early 1990s	Not disclosed	c. \$40m Confirmed ⁸
2006	€1.2bn Confirmed ¹²	Not disclosed
2007	Not disclosed	c. \$1.5bn Confirmed ⁸
2010	At least €1.5bn, forecast Confirmed ¹²	Not disclosed
2014	€2.1bn Reported ¹³	\$2.3bn, year to May, excluding lifestyle clothing Confirmed ⁹
2016	€2.5bn, 13.5% of group sales Reported ¹³	Not disclosed
2018	Not disclosed	\$2.1-2.2bn Reported ¹⁰
2025	€3.0-3.5bn Our estimate ¹⁴	Not disclosed

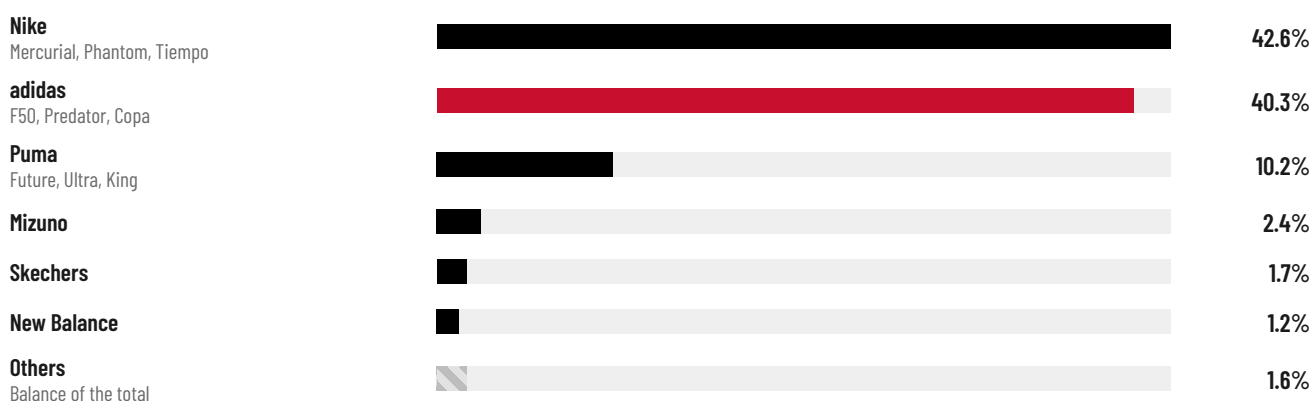
The figures cover each brand's whole football business, not just boots, and are not measured on the same basis. At 2014 exchange rates, Nike's \$2.3bn was in the region of €1.7bn. **Our estimate**

The table ends where the disclosures stop. adidas has not put a number on football since 2016, and Nike has not repeated its 2018 figure. Nike's 2026 accounts report \$46.4bn of revenue, \$29.5bn of it from footwear, without a football line.¹¹ Anyone who wants to know the size of the boot market now has to work it out.

3. Who wears what

The one market share that can be counted is the one on the pitch. At every major tournament, specialist sites log the boots of every player in every squad. Two separate counts at the 2026 World Cup reached almost identical answers: Nike just ahead on around 43% of players, adidas on around 40%, and Puma on around 10%.^{15,16}

Boot brands worn by players at the 2026 World Cup (share of players)



Source: Fútbol Emotion count, as reported by Footy Headlines ¹⁶. A separate count by Footpack gives Nike 42.8%, adidas 39.7% and Puma 10.0% ¹⁵. "Others" is the balance, calculated by us.

The direction of travel is the story. Footpack's counts show Nike on 62.8% of World Cup players in 2018 and 50.1% in 2022, falling to 42.8% in 2026. adidas rose from 33.2% in Qatar to 39.7%. ¹⁵ By continent, Nike still leads among Asian, Oceanian and North American squads, while adidas leads in Europe, Africa and South America. ¹⁵ Among starting line-ups on one count, the gap was just 232 players to 218. ¹⁷

The most-worn boot lines at the 2026 World Cup (share of all players)



Source: Footpack study, as reported by FashionNetwork ¹⁵.

The Predator was the third most-worn boot at the tournament, on 12.8% of players, behind the F50 and the Mercurial. ¹⁵ The two counts disagree on which speed boot came first: Footpack puts the F50 narrowly ahead, while the Fútbol Emotion figures imply the Mercurial was more popular. ^{15, 16} On the Predator they agree. Fútbol Emotion has 32.8% of adidas players in Predators, which works out at about 13% of the whole tournament. ¹⁶ Our estimate

Pitch share is not shop share. Professionals are paid to wear their boots, and a brand can buy visibility with a handful of contracts. But it is the clearest public signal of which boots the next generation will want, and it is the only share that anyone can check.

4. The challengers

Below the big two, every other brand is fighting over roughly one player in six. Puma is the only one with real scale. Its King has been worn since 1966, reached its 20th version in 2025, and runs the Future and Ultra as its two performance

lines.¹⁸ Football is one of the four categories it has picked to drive growth, but the company is in the middle of a reset: its footwear sales fell 13% in euro terms to €4.1bn in 2025 and it has called 2026 a transition year.^{18, 19}

The rest of the field

Mizuno	The Japanese specialist, on about 2.4% of 2026 World Cup players and aimed squarely at purists. ^{15, 16}
New Balance	Entered football in February 2015, taking over from its own Warrior brand, which had arrived in 2012. On about 1.2% of World Cup players in 2026. ^{16, 20}
Skechers	The newest serious entrant. Its first boots launched in the UK and Europe in September 2023, fronted by Harry Kane, and reached the United States in 2024. On about 1.7% of World Cup players. ^{16, 21, 22}
Under Armour	Still in the game with the Magnetico and Shadow, and trading on scarcity: its 2025 Mansory edition, worn by Antonio Rüdiger, ran to 96 pairs. ²³
Everyone else	Umbro, Lotto, Asics, Decathlon's Kipsta and Chinese brands including Li-Ning, Anta, Xtep and Peak, most of them strongest in their home markets and at lower prices. ⁷

Skechers shows what entry costs now. It did not try to out-engineer Nike and adidas; it built a boot business around one striker and a comfort message, then filled in the Academy and youth tiers behind him.²² Three years on, it is on fewer than one World Cup player in fifty. Our estimate

5. Our model: the market in money

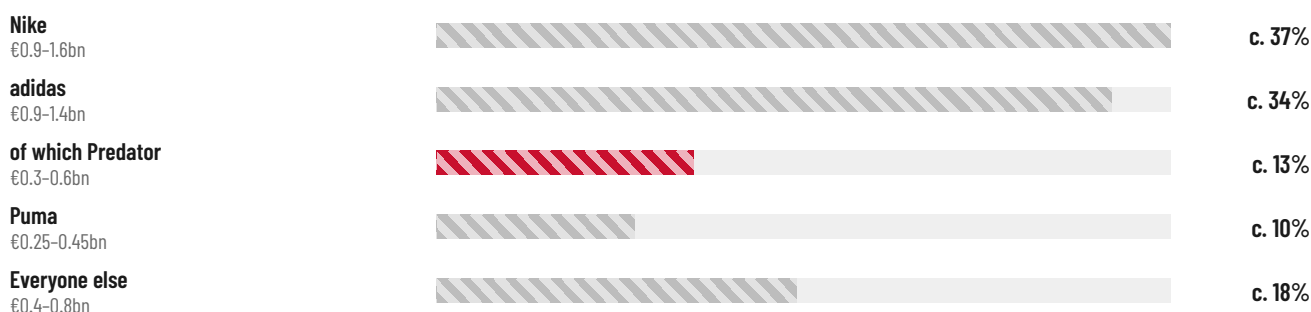
We built the estimate brand by brand, starting from our Paper 02 model of adidas's football footwear and scaling the others against it. Every assumption is shown; the ranges are deliberately wide.

The global football boot market, 2025

Step	Figure	Basis
adidas football boots	€0.9–1.4bn	Our estimate Paper 02 model ¹⁴
Nike football boots	€0.9–1.6bn	Our estimate football businesses of similar size when last disclosed ^{9,13} ; Nike leads on the pitch ¹⁵
Puma football boots	€0.25–0.45bn	Our estimate around a quarter of adidas's pitch share ¹⁶
Everyone else	€0.4–0.8bn	Our estimate small at elite level, bigger in budget and regional markets ⁷
Branded boots, at brand revenue	€2.5–4.3bn	Our estimate central case in the region of €3.4bn
Mark-up to shop prices	× 2.0–2.2	Our estimate tax and retail margin, from Paper 02's price breakdown ¹⁴
Branded boots, at shop prices	€5–9bn	Our estimate central case in the region of €7bn, about \$8bn
Average revenue per pair	€35–50	Our estimate lower than the Predator's €45–65, given budget brands and kids' sizes ¹⁴
Branded pairs sold	50–120 million	Our estimate central case in the region of 80 million

Brand revenue means what the brands receive, not what shoppers pay. The model covers performance football boots only, including artificial grass, turf and indoor versions. Football-inspired trainers and unbranded boots are excluded.

Share of global boot sales by brand, 2025 (central case; brand revenue in grey)



All figures are our estimates. The Predator is part of adidas's share, not in addition to it.

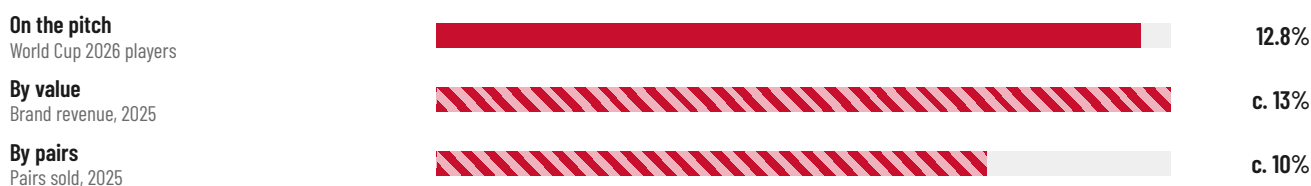
On this model the market is close to an even split between Nike and adidas, with Nike slightly ahead, which is also what the pitch shows. It suggests the smaller published estimates are nearer the truth, and that the \$20bn-plus figures are counting something much wider than football boots.

6. How much of it is the Predator?

Paper 02 estimated Predator boot revenue at in the region of €0.45bn a year, from about 8 million pairs.¹⁴ Set against the market above, that gives the Predator in the region of 13% of global boot sales by value and about 10% by pairs.

Our estimate The two figures differ because the Predator sells more at the top of the range than the market as a whole.

The Predator's share of the football boot market, three ways



Pitch share: Footpack ¹⁵. Value and pairs: our estimates, using the central cases of this paper and Paper 02 ¹⁴.

The measures land close together. On the pitch and in the money, the Predator is about one boot in eight; counted in pairs, about one in ten. Taking every extreme of both models at once would stretch that to anywhere between 7% and 25%, but the extremes are unlikely to coincide; our central case is in the region of 13%. Our estimate!

Within adidas, the Predator is the control boot beside the F50's speed and the Copa's leather. It is on about a third of adidas players at the World Cup ¹⁶ and, on our Paper 02 estimate, 35–45% of adidas boot sales. ¹⁴ The gap is consistent with a boot that sells harder to amateurs than it is worn by professionals, which is what a heritage name should do.

7. What a World Cup does

The 2026 World Cup was adidas's biggest commercial tournament yet. The company expected around €1.5bn of event-related sales, having sold four times as many shirts and twice as many balls as in 2022. ²⁵ Its second quarter set a sales record. ²⁴

Boots were not where the money went. In that quarter adidas's apparel sales rose 35% while footwear rose just 1%, held back by discounting in lifestyle trainers. ²⁴ Tournaments sell shirts; boots sell on a slower cycle of launches, packs and pitch visibility. For the Predator, the World Cup's value is the 12.8% of players who wore it on television, and whether that shows up in the boot sales of 2027.

What the money tells us

- **Nobody knows how big the market is.** Published estimates for 2025 range from \$4.3bn to \$29.4bn, and both giants stopped disclosing their football sales years ago. Our model puts branded boots at in the region of €3.4bn at brand revenue, or €7bn at shop prices.
- **It is a two-horse race, and the gap is closing.** Nike's share of World Cup players has fallen from 63% in 2018 to 43%; adidas has risen to 40%.
- **The Predator is one boot in eight.** It was on 12.8% of World Cup players in 2026, and on our estimate it takes around 13% of global boot sales by value.
- **Newcomers rent attention.** New Balance, Skechers and Under Armour have each bought their way on to the pitch; none has yet reached one World Cup player in forty.

Method and confidence

Every figure is tagged. **Confirmed** means the number comes from a company filing, announcement or official rate. **Reported** means it has been published by one or more outlets but not confirmed by the company concerned. **Our estimate** means it is our own calculation or judgement, expressed as "in the region of". No brand publishes football boot sales, so every revenue figure for 2025 in this paper is an estimate. Pitch shares come from independent counts of World Cup squads, which differ slightly in method. All inputs are shown so readers can substitute their own. Bar lengths are indicative only. We welcome corrections and better data at hello@adidaspredator.com.

Cite this paper

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