USA Today ESPN Division I Top 25 women's basketball poll, with first-place votes in parentheses, total points based on 25 points for first place through one point for 25th.

**1996-97**

| | Pre Season | N 18 | N 25 | D 2 | D 9 | D 16 | D 23 | D 30 | J 6 | J 13 | J 20 | J 27 | F 3 | F 10 | F 17 | F 24 | M 3 | M 10 | F |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Tennessee | 4 | 2 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 6 | 8 | 9 | 9 | 9 | 9 | 9 | 9 | 8 | 11 | 11 | 11 | 1 |
| Old Dominion | 7 | 9 | 8 | 6 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 |
| Stanford | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 |
| Connecticut | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 4 |
| Notre Dame | 25 | 17 | 12 | 14 | 17 | 19 | 21 | 22 | 24 | 24 | 22 | 22 | 21 | 18 | 17 | 15 | 15 | 14 | 5 |
| Florida | 21 | 22 | 22 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 18 | 15 | 12 | 12 | 13 | 9 | 8 | 6 |
| Georgia | 3 | 3 | 2 | 5 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 5 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 5 | 5 | 4 | 4 | 6 | 6 | 7 |
| Louisiana Tech | 11 | 8 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 5 | 3 | 3 | 6 | 6 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 7 | 5 | 4 | 4 | 8 |
| **North Carolina** | **-** | **-** | **-** | **25** | **22** | **20** | **19** | **18** | **15** | **10** | **8** | **8** | **6** | **6** | **5** | **6** | **5** | **5** | **9** |
| George Washington | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 23 | 18 | 18 | 17 | 16 | 10 |
| Alabama | 2 | 5 | 6 | 8 | 9 | 8 | 7 | 6 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 7 | 7 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 7 | 11 |
| Louisiana State | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 23 | 23 | 17 | 12 | 13 | 13 | 9 | 10 | 10 | 12 |
| Illinois | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 25 | 20 | 21 | 20 | 18 | 19 | 13 |
| **Virginia** | **9** | **7** | **14** | **11** | **11** | **11** | **11** | **10** | **13** | **8** | **7** | **7** | **8** | **8** | **9** | **10** | **12** | **12** | **14** |
| Colorado | 15 | 15 | 13 | 15 | 20 | 25 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 21 | 15 |
| Kansas | 13 | 16 | 18 | 19 | 19 | 18 | 20 | 21 | 20 | 15 | 15 | 13 | 11 | 14 | 11 | 8 | 7 | 9 | 16 |
| Vanderbilt | 8 | 6 | 7 | 13 | 15 | 15 | 17 | 12 | 8 | 7 | 11 | 14 | 14 | 10 | 13 | 17 | 19 | 20 | 17 |
| Texas | 20 | 21 | 20 | 20 | 18 | 16 | 16 | 16 | 12 | 16 | 14 | 12 | 10 | 11 | 10 | 12 | 13 | 13 | 18 |
| Texas Tech | 12 | 11 | 9 | 7 | 7 | 10 | 9 | 9 | 7 | 12 | 13 | 11 | 13 | 15 | 15 | 16 | 15 | 18 | 19 |
| Auburn | 22 | 23 | 23 | 23 | 21 | 17 | 14 | 10 | 18 | 21 | 19 | - | - | - | - | - | 20 | 15 | 20 |
| Michigan State | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 24 | 24 | 24 | 19 | 20 | 19 | 22 | 24 | 21 |
| Stephen F. Austin | 24 | 25 | 24 | 24 | 24 | 23 | 22 | 23 | 22 | 20 | 18 | 16 | 17 | 16 | 16 | 14 | 14 | 17 | 22 |
| Purdue | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 24 | - | - | 23 |
| Tulane | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 24 | - | - | 23 | 24 |
| **Clemson** | **23** | **24** | **25** | **21** | **23** | **22** | **18** | **15** | **16** | **11** | **10** | **15** | **18** | **21** | **22** | **25** | **21** | **22** | **25** |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Portland | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 25 | 21 | 23 | 25 | - |
| **Duke** | **18** | **18** | **17** | **16** | **16** | **14** | **13** | **17** | **14** | **18** | **20** | **21** | **20** | **17** | **19** | **22** | **24** | **-** | **-** |
| San Francisco | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 23 | 22 | 25 | 25 | - | - | - | - | 25 | - | - |
| Arkansas | 17 | 19 | 21 | 22 | 25 | - | 24 | 20 | 17 | 19 | 16 | 19 | 19 | 24 | 23 | 23 | - | - | - |
| Wisconsin | 19 | 20 | 19 | 18 | 13 | 13 | 12 | 13 | 11 | 14 | 12 | 10 | 16 | 22 | - | - | - | - | - |
| **NC State** | **16** | **12** | **16** | **12** | **10** | **9** | **8** | **7** | **10** | **13** | **17** | **20** | **23** | **25** | **-** | **-** | **-** | **-** | **-** |
| Western Kentucky | 10 | 13 | 15 | 17 | 14 | 12 | 10 | 14 | 19 | 17 | 21 | 23 | 22 | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Penn State | 14 | 14 | 11 | 9 | 8 | 7 | 15 | 19 | 21 | 25 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| DePaul | - | - | - | - | - | 24 | 23 | 24 | 25 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Nebraska | - | - | - | - | - | - | 25 | 25 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Iowa | 6 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 12 | 21 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |