



FIFA®

INTERMEDIARIES IN INTERNATIONAL TRANSFERS 2019

**MEN AND WOMEN
PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALL**



Over a number of decades, we have seen a continuous increase in expenditure as clubs around the world invest to make their squads ever more competitive, with the most sought-after players commanding transfer fees that run into hundreds of millions of dollars.

Intermediaries certainly play an important role in this context. They are frantically glued to their phones during the entire registration period, representing players and clubs in their negotiations, often until the very last second available to conclude a transfer.

As world football's governing body, FIFA is responsible for creating a regulated and fair footballing environment, in particular regarding the transfer market, for ensuring that the market abides by the core principles of transparency, integrity and good governance.

This report, in its 4th edition, provides a detailed study of intermediaries' activities in 2019 in the context of international transfers of players and how these have been reflected in the International Transfer Matching System (ITMS). We hope you will find it an enlightening and enjoyable read.

Yours sincerely,



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Introduction

This report offers a summary of the involvement of intermediaries in international¹ transfers completed in FIFA's International Transfer Matching System (ITMS) in 2019².

Typically, three parties are involved in the negotiation of a transfer: the player, the engaging club, and – if the transfer is not of a player out of contract – the releasing club. Each party can choose to employ one or more intermediaries. When completing a transfer in ITMS, clubs must provide information regarding the intermediaries involved, including commissions³.

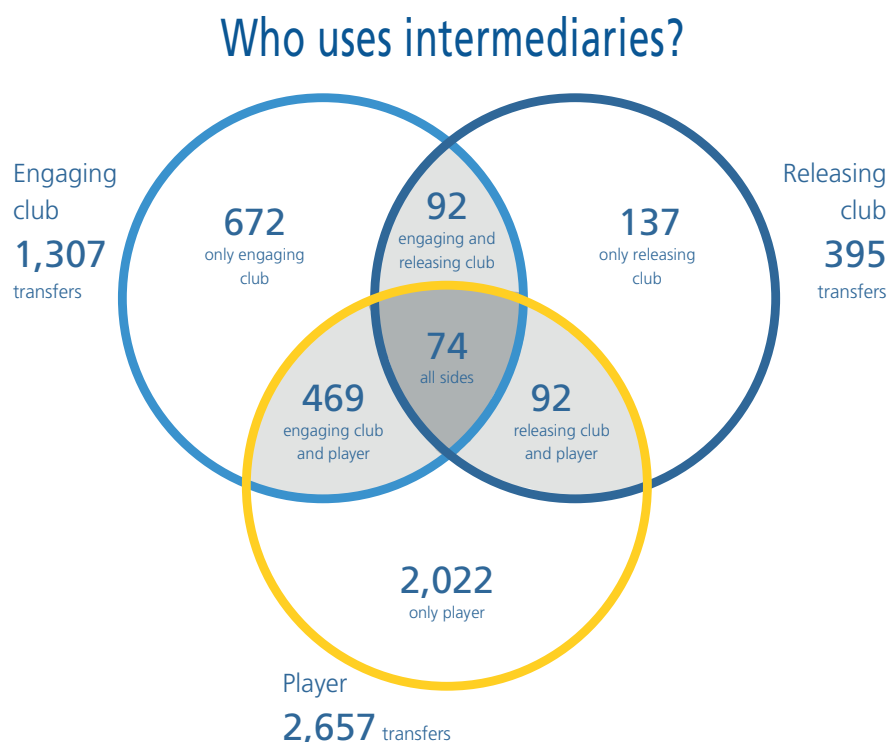
In 2019 so far, 17,896 international transfers of male⁴ professional players have been completed in ITMS. Of these, **3,558 transfers** (19.9%) **involved at least one intermediary, and USD 653.9 million was paid as commissions to club intermediaries.**

In total, 490 of the 4,161 clubs involved in international transfers and 2,490 of the 15,366 players involved were represented by an intermediary at least once.

Figure 1 shows the different scenarios in transfers with intermediaries. Among transfers that involved intermediaries since 1 January 2019, in most cases only one party used representation (2,831 transfers), and far less often (727 transfers) more than one party chose to be represented by one or more intermediaries. Overall, the most common case is that of intermediaries representing the player (2,657 transfers), followed by those with intermediaries representing the engaging club (1,307) and the releasing club (395).

Note: in accordance with the FIFA Regulations on Working with Intermediaries and FIFA circular no. 1519, since March 2016, all FIFA member associations are required to publish a yearly summary of intermediaries' activity on their territory. This report is not a consolidation of such summaries, but an overview of the information declared by the clubs in ITMS in the context of international transfers.

Fig. 1: Number of international transfers with intermediaries (2019 YTD)



¹ Between clubs of two different FIFA member associations

² Until 1 December

³ Data on commissions is collected for club intermediaries, but not for player intermediaries (FIFA Regulations on the Status and Transfer of Players, Annexe 3, art. 4 par. 3)

⁴ Data on intermediaries in women's football can be found in the dedicated section on page 13

Club intermediaries

Engaging clubs

In 2019 so far, engaging clubs have employed intermediaries in 1,307 international transfers. With about a month left before the end of the year, this already represents an increase (+8.3%) in comparison to the whole of 2018. However, this increase is simply a reflection of the overall increase in activity on the transfer market. In percentage terms in fact, **transfers with intermediaries acting for the engaging club have remained stable at 7.3%** of all transfers.

When transfers involve transfer fees⁵, this percentage is significantly higher, at 23.3%. As shown in figure 3, **the higher the transfer fee, the higher the percentage of transfers with engaging club intermediaries.**

Italian clubs are those that relied upon intermediaries the most when engaging players internationally: 151 of their 371 incoming transfers had at least one intermediary representing the engaging club (40.5%, versus 45.1% in 2018). English clubs have the second highest percentage with 36.4% (38.7% in 2018), followed by Welsh clubs with 29.1% (25.6% in 2018).

Fig. 2: Number and percentage of international transfers with intermediaries representing the engaging club

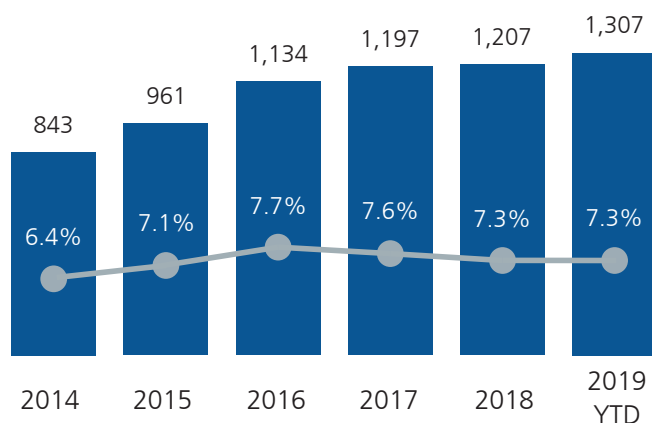


Fig. 3: Percentage of international transfers with intermediaries representing the engaging club, by transfer fee (2019 YTD)

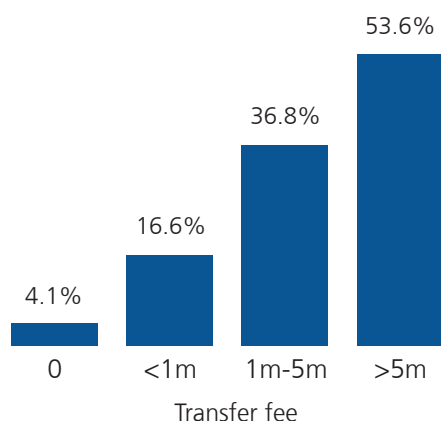


Fig. 4: Top 10 associations by percentage of international transfers with intermediaries representing the engaging club (2019 YTD)

Country	Transfers	As % of incoming transfers
Italy	151	40.5%
England	252	36.4%
Wales	34	29.1%
Japan	38	24.8%
Germany	115	23.7%
Denmark	41	22.4%
Sweden	48	19.7%
Scotland	44	17.3%
Portugal	103	15.9%
Poland	39	15.6%

Minimum 20 transfers with intermediaries

⁵ Transfer fees refer exclusively to club-to-club compensation and are not to be confused with intermediary commissions, which will be covered in a later section

Releasing clubs

Only 395 of the 17,896 international transfers completed worldwide this year involved an intermediary representing the releasing club. The main reason for such a low number is that about two thirds of all international transfers are of players out of contract, which are transfers where there is no releasing club involved.

Considering only club-to-club transfers in fact, **the percentage of those with an intermediary representing the releasing club is**

6.2%, just below the 7.3% recorded for transfers with engaging club intermediaries. Still, the difference is not negligible, especially when it comes to transfers with fees (11.0% vs. 23.3%). A possible explanation is that clubs may be more inclined to use intermediaries to facilitate the arrival of a player, rather than the departure of one.

Figure 7 shows the top 10 member associations whose clubs relied most frequently on intermediaries when releasing a player. Serbia sits on top, as 20.8% of their outgoing transfers had at least one intermediary representing the releasing club (vs. 16.9% in 2018). Second is Italy with 19.9% (16.9% in 2018) and third France with 15.4% (15.0% in 2018).

Fig. 5: Number and percentage of international transfers with intermediaries representing the releasing club

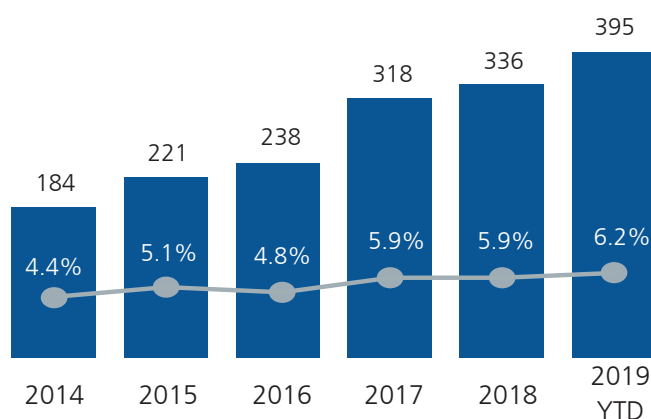


Fig. 6: Percentage of international transfers with intermediaries representing the releasing club, by transfer fee (2019 YTD)

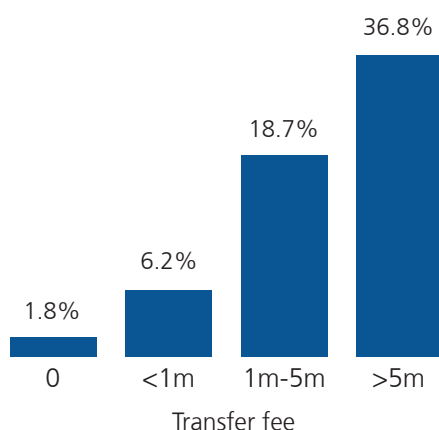


Fig. 7: Top 10 associations by percentage of international transfers with intermediaries representing the releasing club (2019 YTD)

Country	Transfers	As % of outgoing transfers
Serbia	16	20.8%
Italy	53	19.9%
France	39	15.4%
Portugal	41	13.1%
Germany	26	12.3%
Croatia	10	11.9%
England	57	10.9%
Nigeria	7	10.6%
Belgium	18	8.5%
Austria	6	8.2%

Minimum 5 transfers with intermediaries.

Percentage of outgoing transfers only refers to club-to-club transfers.

Total commissions to club intermediaries

As shown in figure 8, **spending on intermediary commissions has grown to USD 653.9 million** to date in 2019, a 19.2% increase from last year. Of this amount, about two thirds (USD 425.5 million) was paid to intermediaries representing engaging clubs and about one third (USD 228.4 million) to intermediaries representing releasing clubs.

Figure 9 shows the distribution of intermediary commissions paid by clubs in 2019 so far. **In more than 90% of the cases, club intermediaries received commissions under USD 1 million**, with USD 10,000 to 100,000 being the most common scenario. However, the 148 instances where commissions were above

USD 1 million account for two thirds (65.9%) of the total commissions paid by clubs to intermediaries.

A large proportion of transfers with intermediaries involves European clubs. Figure 10 shows how the gap between UEFA and the other confederations is even more marked when it comes to intermediary commissions. To date in 2019, **clubs affiliated to member associations of UEFA have accounted for 95.7%** of the USD 653.9 million spent on intermediary commissions.

For the most part, spending on intermediary commissions comes from just six member associations. In fact, Italy, England, Germany, Portugal, Spain and France are responsible for 80.1% of the global spend on commissions paid to intermediaries this year. Portuguese clubs have spent USD 78.1 million on intermediary commissions in 2019 so far, almost half as much as they have spent on transfer fees to engage players (USD 181.9 million).

Fig. 8: Spending on club intermediary commissions

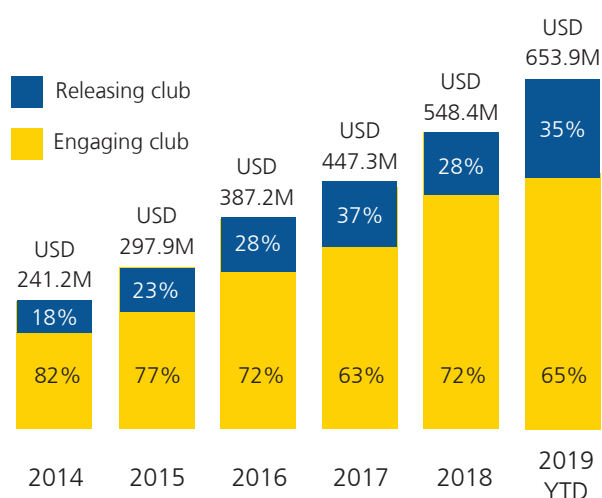


Fig. 9: Number of transfers by club intermediary commission in USD (2019 YTD)

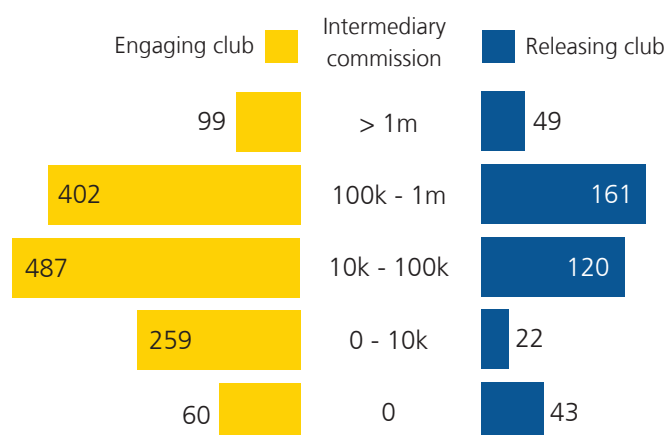


Fig. 10: Spending on club intermediary commissions in USD million, by confederation and top 10 associations. In parentheses, number of transfers with club intermediaries (2019 YTD)

Confederation	Engaging	Releasing	Total
UEFA	404.6 (1,177)	221.3 (339)	625.9
CONMEBOL	8 (29)	6.6 (23)	14.6
AFC	12.8 (86)	0.2 (4)	13
CAF	0.1 (9)	0.2 (22)	0.4
CONCACAF	<0.1 (6)	0.1 (6)	0.1
OFC	0 (0)	<0.1 (1)	<0.1
Association	Engaging	Releasing	Total
Italy	101.4 (151)	29.1 (53)	130.5
England	87.4 (252)	16.2 (57)	103.6
Germany	52 (115)	32.6 (26)	84.6
Portugal	32.1 (103)	46.1 (41)	78.1
Spain	59.4 (76)	15.7 (24)	75
France	20.5 (64)	31.3 (39)	51.8
Netherlands	0.1 (4)	25.5 (6)	25.5
Russia	22 (19)	1.3 (3)	23.2
Brazil	7.9 (25)	5.5 (16)	13.4
Belgium	4 (30)	5.2 (18)	9.2

Average commissions to club intermediaries

Commissions paid by clubs to intermediaries can vary significantly from one transfer to another. Figures 11 and 12 show a breakdown of the average and median commission paid by clubs to intermediaries as a percentage of the transfer fee⁶.

Two takeaways emerge from the data: first, **commissions paid by engaging clubs tend to be higher than those paid by releasing clubs**. Second, **when transfer fees are higher, commissions – as a percentage of the transfer fee – tend to be lower**.

Intermediary commissions also tend to vary more in transfers with lower transfer fees. In transfers completed this year in which transfer fees were less than USD 1 million there is a large variance, as percentages sometimes exceeded 100% of the transfer fee. Such cases inflate the average significantly, which is why it is important to look at the median too. Instead, where transfer fees were over USD 5 million, the vast majority of commissions were below 10%, and only very few exceeded 20%.

As seen in the previous pages, intermediary involvement is more common in international transfers with fees. Nonetheless, intermediaries involved in transfers without fees often still receive a commission. In 2019 so far, there have been 680 free transfers with club intermediaries involved, and total spending on commissions in these transfers was USD 89.0 million.

Fig. 11: Average and median commission as a percentage of the transfer fee for intermediaries representing the engaging club, by transfer fee (2019 YTD)

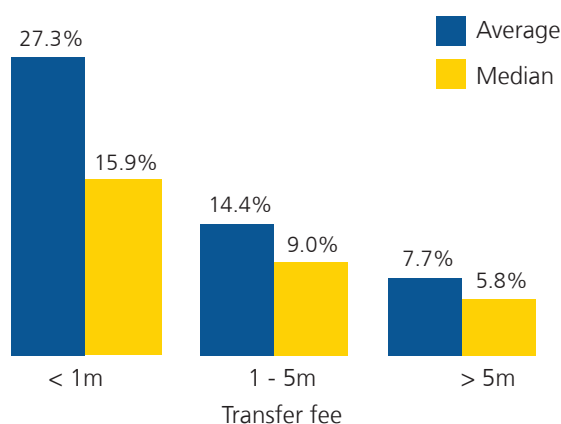
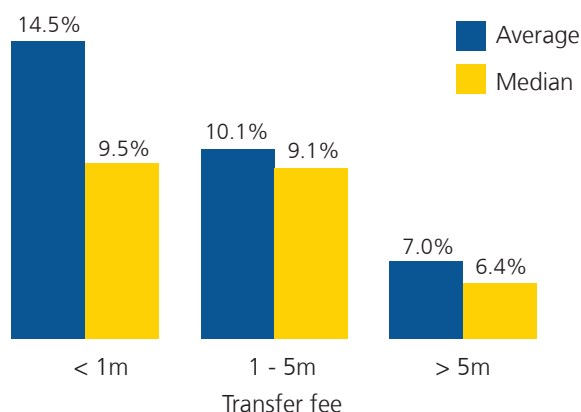


Fig. 12: Average and median commission as a percentage of the transfer fee for intermediaries representing the releasing club, by transfer fee (2019 YTD)



Note: average commissions must be looked at with slight scrutiny. In the presence of unusually high values, averages can be affected significantly. For example, a club might engage a player and pay a USD 10,000 transfer fee but reward the intermediary with a USD 30,000 commission, which corresponds to 300% of the transfer fee. Because such transfers exist, the average of all commissions will result in a very high value, but will not be a meaningful depiction of the actual situation. For this reason, it is important to also look at median commissions. By definition, the median value is the one that lies at the midpoint of a range of values. For example, the median of 10, 20, 30, 40, 1000 is 30 and the average is 220. In this case, the median is very close to most of the values in the range, while the average is inflated because of one extreme value.

⁶ To limit the effect of extreme outliers, commissions above 100% were considered as equal to 100%. "Transfer fee" throughout this report is intended as the total transfer fee, the sum of fixed, conditional, release (buy-out) clause, training compensation and solidarity contribution.

Player Intermediaries

In 2019 so far, there have been 2,657 international transfers in which the player was represented by one or more intermediaries. In percentage terms, this corresponds to 14.8% of all international transfers. As was the case for club intermediaries, the involvement of player intermediaries is also more frequent in transfers with higher transfer fees (figure 14).

Australian players are those that used intermediaries the most in 2019. One or more intermediaries was involved on their behalf in 43.5% of their 115 international transfers. Players from Norway (42.0%) and Canada (41.9%) complete the top 3.

A player's age is another factor that appears to affect whether a player intermediary is involved in a transfer: as shown in figure 16, players under the age of 18 used intermediaries in 17.0% of their international transfers in 2019. Between 18 and 35 years of age, this percentage decreases gradually, until dropping to 7.6% for players over the age of 35.

Another interesting observation comes from transfer types. In 2019, **players used intermediaries about three times as often in permanent transfers⁷ (30.7%) than when they moved out of contract (10.3%)**. Players returning from a loan were represented by intermediaries in 22.5% of the cases and players going out on loan in 16.5%.

Fig. 13: Number and percentage of international transfers with intermediaries representing the player

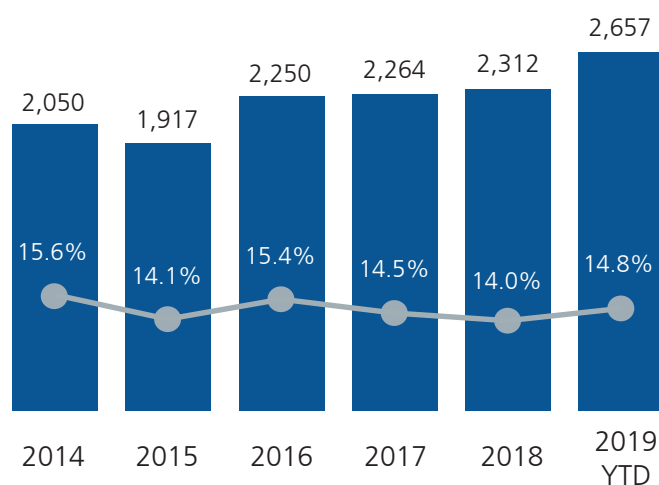


Fig. 14: Percentage of international transfers with intermediaries representing the player, by transfer fee (2019 YTD)

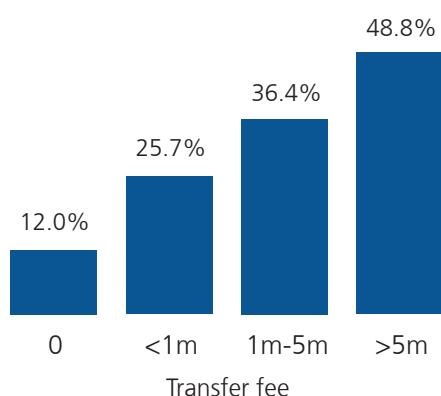
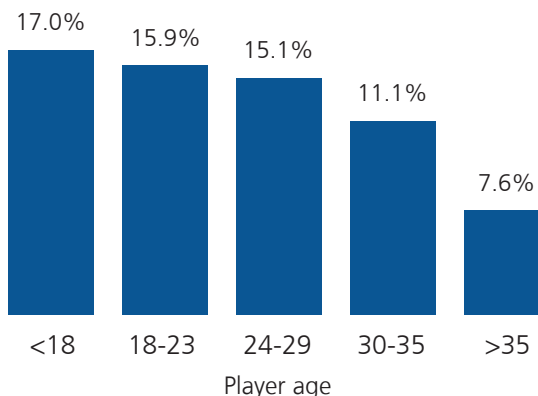


Fig. 15: Top 10 player nationalities by percentage of international transfers with player intermediaries (2019 YTD)

Player Nationality	Transfers	As % of all transfer
Australian	50	43.5%
Norwegian	47	42.0%
Canadian	36	41.9%
Danish	67	41.6%
Austrian	49	36.8%
German	98	36.3%
Dutch	121	36.0%
Polish	43	34.7%
British	264	33.1%
USA	80	32.7%

Fig. 16: Percentage of international transfers with player intermediaries by player age (2019 YTD)



⁷ An international permanent transfer with a transfer agreement between the two clubs





Women's Football

Intermediaries representing clubs

In 2019 so far, 828 international transfers of female professional players have been completed in ITMS, and 242 of such transfers (29.2%) involved at least one intermediary. Of these, 51 were with intermediaries representing the engaging club, while – just like last year – none was with intermediaries representing the releasing club.

Transfers with engaging club intermediaries more than doubled in 2019, from 24 in 2018. This rise partially comes from an overall increase in transfers – which are up 19.0% so far – but also reflects an increase in percentage terms, as transfers with intermediaries acting for the engaging club have grown from 3.4% to 6.2% of all transfers.

The 51 transfers with club intermediaries were completed by clubs of seven different FIFA member associations: England and Portugal (both with 15 transfers with engaging club intermediaries), France (9), Germany (6), Sweden (3), Norway (2) and Scotland (1).

Commissions to intermediaries representing clubs

Engaging clubs paid a total of USD 216,000 in intermediary commissions. Commissions were paid in 50 of the 51 transfers with engaging club intermediaries, and never exceeded USD 20,000. Of these transfers, 39 did not involve a transfer fee. Among the remaining 12, intermediary commissions as percentages of the transfer fee varied widely: 3 were between 0 and 10%, 7 between 10% and 50%, and 2 were above 50%.

Intermediaries representing players

Intermediaries representing players were involved in 209 of the total 828 international transfers. This corresponds to 25.2%, ten percent higher than the equivalent figure in men's football.

Disclaimer

General disclaimer

The information contained in this report is based on individual transaction data provided directly by football clubs and associations in ITMS. FIFA assumes no responsibility for the accuracy, completeness and reliability of the information provided by the clubs and associations.

With regards to technical references possibly included in the present report, please be advised that in the event of any contradiction between the contents of this report and the actual text of the relevant regulations, the latter shall always prevail. Equally, the contents of this report may not alter existing jurisprudence of the competent decision-making bodies and is without prejudice to any decision which the said bodies might be called upon to pass in the future.

Due to the nature of the ITMS database, the presence of pending transfers, the potential cancellation of transfers, and data correction, numbers may differ from one report to another. In the event of any contradiction between the content of this report and other publications by FIFA, the most recent shall always prevail.

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Source of data

The source of all data and information (unless explicitly indicated differently) is:

FIFA Legal & Compliance Division
TMS Global Transfers & Compliance Department
Zurich, Switzerland

Methodology

Transfer data has been analysed for transfers completed between 1 January 2013 and 1 December 2019. All data has been extracted from ITMS on 2 December 2019.

Data and analyses provided concern international transfers of professional male and female football players within the scope of 11-a-side football.

Transfers are allocated to a certain date according to the date of "ITC request" in ITMS, irrespective of the date of their first entry.

Information on monetary amounts is converted into US dollars on the basis of conversion rates as of the day of the transfer's creation in ITMS.

Tables with rankings may present multiple entries with the same values. In some cases (e.g. two associations ranked 10th), entries may be left out based on sorting in alphabetical order.

"Spending on club intermediary commissions by association" refers to spending on club intermediary commissions by clubs belonging to a specific association (likewise for confederations).

Numbers in the report are rounded.

Data protection

The data contained in ITMS and in this report are covered by Swiss data protection law. Those associations and clubs whose names appear in this report have expressly authorised FIFA to disclose information concerning their transfers for reporting purposes.



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