



# **INTERNATIONAL TRANSFER MARKET SNAPSHOT**

**JUNE - OCTOBER 2020**



**FIFA®**

# Overview

The vast majority of FIFA's member associations usually have one of their two transfer windows open for the completion of international transfers between 1 June and around the end of August. In previous years, the lion's share of international transfer activity has consistently been conducted in the months from June to early September. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2019/2020 season was extended in numerous associations, many of which also pushed back their transfer window as a consequence. In 2020, the busy period thus actually ran well into October.

FIFA's first snapshot<sup>1</sup> of the global football transfer market covers the period from 1 June to 5 October 2020.<sup>2</sup> This reflects the so-called "summer transfer window", which normally runs from the end of the campaign in most of the European and northern hemisphere leagues until more or less the beginning of the following season. The bulk of international transfers of football players take place in this period, with clubs assembling their squads with a view to the upcoming campaign, albeit this time round, the season had predominantly already started well before the actual conclusion of the window.

Following the interruption of football for more than three months at the tail end of last season, after which it was only possible to return to action behind closed doors in most countries, spending on transfer fees<sup>3</sup> in men's professional football declined significantly. Moreover, not only the value but also the actual number of transfers decreased with respect to previous years. For example, compared to the period from 1 June to 2 September 2019, the total number of international transfers fell by roughly 18%. Meanwhile, the number of transfers involving a fee dropped by almost 25%; you have to go back to 2016 to find a tally in the same ballpark. With regard to the size of the transfer fees agreed, the impact is starker still, with the total value plunging approximately 30% compared to last year and regressing to near 2016 levels.

On the other hand, although transfers of female professional players remain relatively rare, the women's game seemed less affected by the COVID-19 pandemic: indeed, the number of international transfers rose from 385 between 1 June and 2 September 2019 to 522 between 1 June and 5 October 2020, an increase of more than 35%. The spending on fees for international transfers of female players also grew significantly.

<sup>1</sup> This new snapshot is intended to provide a topical insight into the activity in the latest window. A more comprehensive analysis of transfers in 2020 will follow in our annual Global Transfer Market Report, to be published at the beginning of next year.

<sup>2</sup> Throughout this report, for comparisons with previous years, we consider the interval from 1 June to the last day of the official registration period of most European associations, i.e. 2 September for 2019 and 1 September for 2016, 2017 and 2018.

<sup>3</sup> All references to transfer fees in this report are to the fixed, conditional and release (buyout) fees as declared in TMS. Fees are treated as upfront payments for calculation purposes, notwithstanding any instalment plans that may be agreed by clubs. All amounts are converted to USD based on the date when the transfer was entered in TMS.

### Number of transfers and transfer fees

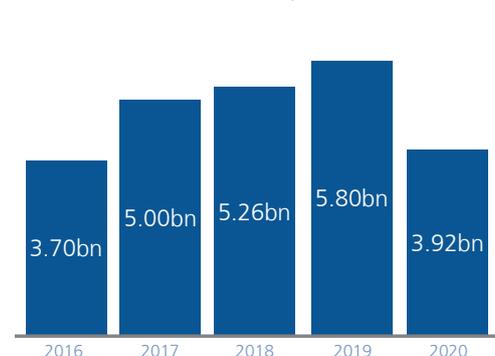
After reaching an all-time high of 9,087 in the period between 1 June and 2 September 2019, the number of international transfers of professional players dropped significantly in the corresponding window this year (see Figure 1).<sup>4</sup> The decrease was even sharper for transfers with a fee, of which there were almost 25% fewer in the reporting period compared to 2019.

Figure 1: Number of international transfers worldwide, June-September/October



In the recent window, the fees accompanying the international transfers of professional players amounted to a total of USD 3.92 billion (see Figure 2). This represents a steep drop of more than 30% in comparison to 2019, when clubs spent a total of USD 5.8 billion on 1,623 transfers.

Figure 2: Transfer fees (in USD) for international transfers worldwide, June-September/October



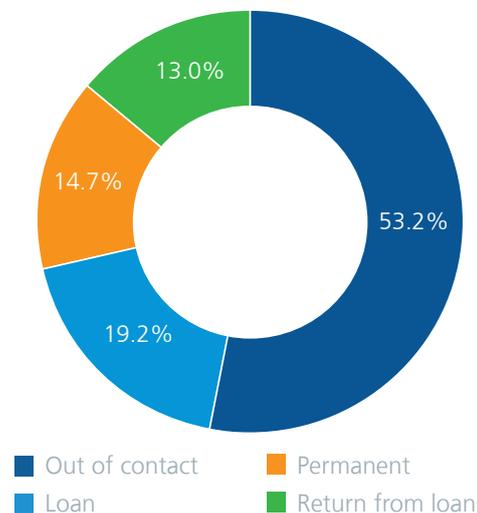
### Distribution according to transfer type

We distinguish between four types of international transfers:

- **Out of contract:** when players who are no longer contractually bound to any former club sign an employment contract with a new club in a different association and no transfer agreement between clubs has been signed.
- **Loan:** when players are temporarily engaged by a new club: a) on the basis of a loan agreement between the club with which they have an employment contract and a club of another association, during the term of their employment contract with their parent club; or b) when the loan is extended by the new club with the agreement of the parent club.
- **Return from loan:** when players return to their parent club after a loan spell at another club.
- **Permanent:** when players are permanently engaged by a new club and a transfer agreement is signed between the new club and the former club, or when a club permanently engages players it has had on loan, with the agreement of the former club.

Figure 3 shows that deals for out-of-contract players constituted by far the largest proportion (well above 50%) of the transfers registered in the reporting period, while loans and returns from loans jointly represented around 32%. Permanent transfers of players from one club to another therefore accounted for just 14.7%.

Figure 3: Distribution of transfer types, 1 June - 5 October 2020



<sup>4</sup> At the time of publication, there were 479 pending transfers for which an International Transfer Certificate (ITC) had already been requested by the engaging association between 1 June and 5 October 2020. If the releasing association delivers the ITC, these transfers will also count towards the total in this period.

**Distribution according to player age**

Where international transfers of male professional players are concerned, the most active age cohort comprised players between 18 and 23 years old, who were involved in practically half of the transfers (see Figure 4). By contrast, transfers of over 35s and of minors (players under 18 years of age) represented a meagre minority (less than 1% and 2% respectively).

Spending on transfer fees was split almost equally between the acquisition of younger talents and more experienced campaigners (see Figure 5). Signings of players under 24 years of age – who are likely to still be developing and learning their trade – represented almost 48.2% of the total transfer value, compared to 47.2% for the age range between 24 and 29 years, a period that often represents a player’s prime.

Figure 4: Distribution of transfers according to player age, 1 June – 5 October 2020

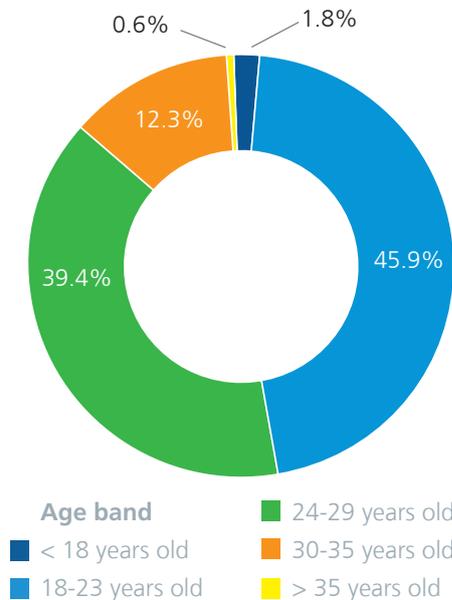
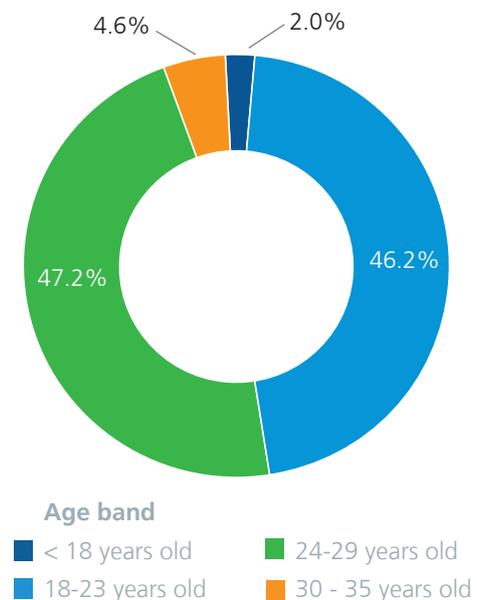


Figure 5: Distribution of transfer fees according to player age, 1 June – 5 October 2020



### Geographical/continental distribution

Continuing the trend from previous windows, in an overwhelming majority (over 80%) of the cases, players' moves across borders were in order to join a European club (see Figure 6). Out of a total of 7,424 international transfers in the reporting period, 6,097 entailed players going to a club in Europe, followed next – albeit at a distance – by South America, with just one in every 20 international transfers featuring an engaging club from the CONMEBOL region.

Figure 6: Distribution of international transfers according to confederation of engaging club, 1 June – 5 October 2020



Having completed the most international deals, European clubs unsurprisingly also agreed to pay the highest amount in transfer fees (see Figure 7). UEFA clubs accounted for a total of USD 3,776.9 million in outgoing transfer fees: clubs from the AFC ranked second on this score, but with a considerably lower outlay (USD 86.8 million).

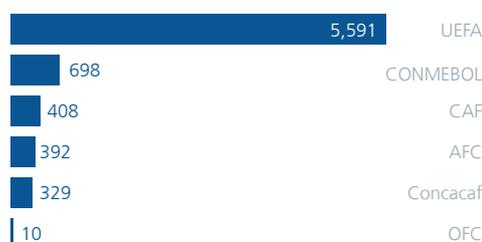
Figure 7: Distribution of transfer fees (in USD) according to confederation of engaging club, 1 June – 5 October 2020



European clubs were also the most active on the releasing side (see Figure 8). Whereas clubs from UEFA released 5,591 players for international transfers (while engaging 6,097, as shown in Figure 6 above), South American sides, which ranked second for the volume of both incoming and outgoing transfers, released 698 and engaged 491 players internationally.

Asian clubs' international ins (390) and outs (392) almost balanced out, while clubs from Concacaf saw more players depart overseas (329) than arrive from abroad (260), and African clubs released more than twice as many players (408) as they engaged (190).

Figure 8: Distribution of international transfers according to confederation of releasing club, 1 June – 5 October 2020



While releasing around 75% of the players transferred internationally, European sides actually accounted for 89% of receipts from such transfers. Since they were also the biggest spenders, this points to a plethora of relatively high-value deals among UEFA clubs. In all, European sides received USD 3,489.5 million and paid out USD 3,776.9 million (see Figure 9 below and Figure 7 above).

Figure 9: Receipts from international transfer fees (in USD) according to confederation of releasing club, 1 June – 5 October 2020



### Most active clubs according to member association affiliation

Brazil, which saw 202 players arrive from abroad, is the only non-European name on the list of the top ten associations in terms of the number of incoming transfers (see Figure 10). Particularly striking is Cyprus's position in ninth, above Brazil.

Figure 10: Top ten associations by number of incoming international transfers, 1 June – 5 October 2020

Engaging association	No. of transfers
England	485
Spain	439
Portugal	359
Germany	322
Italy	290
Turkey	274
France	259
Belgium	224
Cyprus	222
Brazil	202

The picture is somewhat different when it comes to international transfer spending. The top-ten list is an all-European affair (see Figure 11), with English clubs (USD 1,251.9 million) way out ahead and Italy occupying second place with less than half that amount.

Figure 11: Top ten associations by spending on international transfer fees, 1 June – 5 October 2020

Engaging association	Transfer fees (USD)
England	1,251.9M
Italy	543.9M
Spain	486.6M
France	455.2M
Germany	348.3M
Portugal	156.1M
Netherlands	109.0M
Belgium	97.1M
Russia	75.7M
Turkey	61.1M

Clubs from England also released by far the largest number of players (524) for international transfers. Moreover, the top-ten list (see Figure 12) is once again dominated by European associations, whose stranglehold is broken only by two South American nations: Brazil (fifth) and Argentina (tenth).

Figure 12: Top ten associations by number of outgoing transfers, 1 June – 5 October 2020

Releasing association	No. of transfers
England	524
Spain	419
Portugal	380
France	353
Brazil	329
Germany	317
Italy	309
Netherlands	244
Belgium	229
Argentina	183

With Brazil (eighth) a solitary exception, European clubs also occupy practically all of the top ten positions for international transfer receipts (see Figure 13); Spanish clubs head the list with USD 672.1 million (roughly 17% of the total transfer fees paid). Also important to note is that the clubs from these ten associations received more than 80% of the money spent on fees, roughly USD 3.18 billion out of the grand total of USD 3.92 billion.

Figure 13: Top ten associations by receipts from international transfer fees, 1 June – 5 October 2020

Releasing association	Transfer fees (USD)
Spain	672.1M
Italy	484.2M
England	396.5M
France	378.6M
Germany	354.7M
Portugal	270.9M
Netherlands	215.7M
Brazil	195.8M
Belgium	137.3M
Turkey	72.3M



# Women's football – international transfers

Since 2018, international transfers of female professional players have also had to be processed via TMS. Although the number of transfers of female players does appear to be steadily increasing – the latest tally is 36% up on the equivalent period in 2019 – the actual number of transfers remains relatively low. Transfers involving a fee are even less common and there were just 18 such deals this time round (see Figure 14).

Figure 14: Number of international transfers worldwide, June-September/October

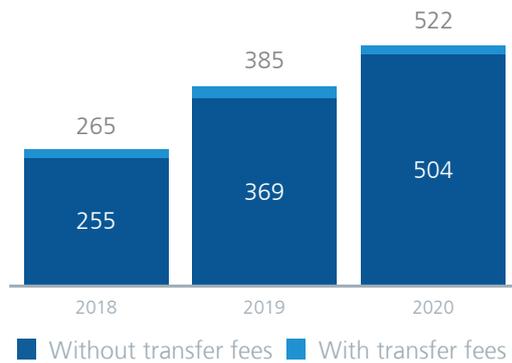
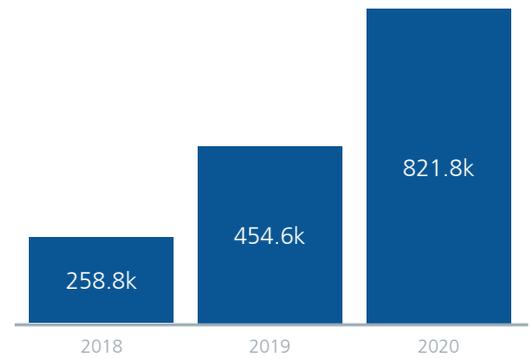


Figure 15 below depicts the change in spending on transfer fees for international transfers of female players. While the number of transfers with fees remained relatively stable (16 in 2019 compared to 18 in 2020), spending on fees almost doubled.

Figure 15: Transfer fees (in USD) for international transfers worldwide, June-September/October



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## General disclaimer

The information contained in this report is based on individual transaction data provided directly by football clubs in TMS. FIFA assumes no responsibility for the accuracy, completeness and reliability of the information provided by the clubs. With regard to any technical references 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 are without prejudice to any decision which the said bodies might be called upon to pass in the future.

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Any views expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect those of FIFA.

## Source of data

The source of all data and information (unless explicitly indicated differently) is:  
FIFA  
Legal & Compliance Division  
Zurich, Switzerland

## Data protection

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