

FIFA®

INTERMEDIARIES IN INTERNATIONAL TRANSFERS 2021



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OVERVIEW

In accordance with the FIFA Regulations on Working with Intermediaries, an intermediary can represent players and/or clubs in employment-related and transfer-related negotiations. A player intermediary's primary role is to represent the player in negotiating an employment contract with a club. Meanwhile, clubs use intermediaries to find takers when deciding to move squad members on or to assist with and negotiate the release of players from other clubs.

Under the FIFA Regulations on the Status and Transfer of Players, clubs are required to enter the names and commissions of any club intermediaries involved in an international transfer, as well as the names of any intermediaries acting on behalf of the player, in the Transfer Matching System (TMS) (Annexe 3, art. 4 par. 3). Such declarations made in 2021 are the source of the data in this report.

Since transfer activity is usually very scarce in the month of December (on average, fewer than 20 transfers involving an intermediary were entered in TMS in December across the last five years), this report can be considered to cover the whole of 2021, despite being published just before the end of the year.

In 2021, 17,945 international transfers of male professional players were completed in TMS. Of these, 3,545 (19.8%) involved at least one intermediary, and intermediaries received a total of USD 500.8m in service fees.

Moreover, 494 out of the 4,525 clubs (10.9%) that registered an international transfer also engaged an intermediary as part of the process, and of the 15,533 players who moved across borders this year, 2,452 (15.8%) were represented or assisted by an intermediary.

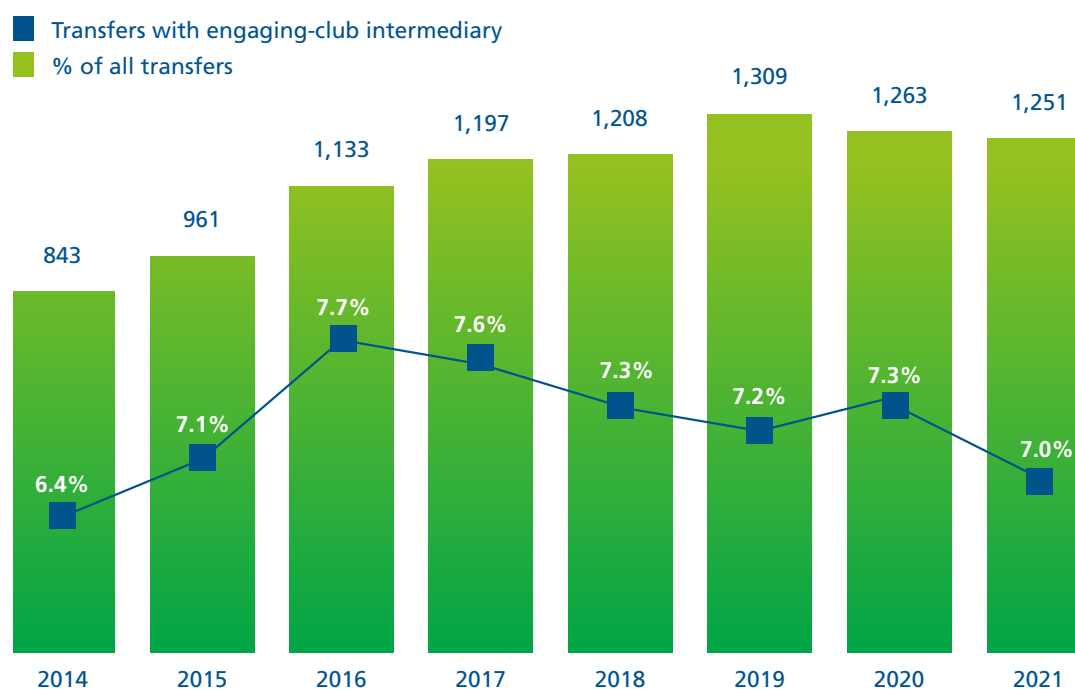


TRANSFERS WITH CLUB INTERMEDIARIES

Engaging-club intermediaries

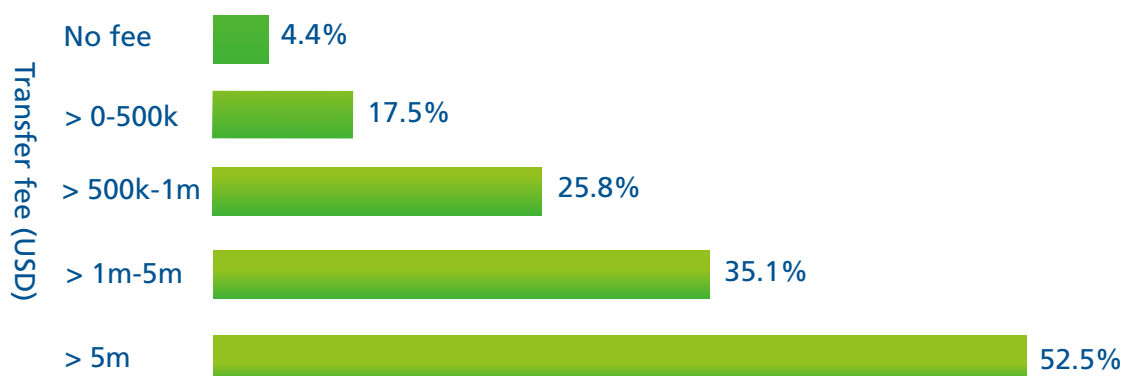
In 2021, engaging clubs employed intermediaries in 1,251 international transfers. This represents a small decrease of 1.0% in comparison to 2020. The overall proportion of transfers with intermediaries acting for the engaging club also slightly decreased from 7.3% last year to 7.0% in 2021.

Figure 1: Number and percentage of international transfers with intermediaries representing the engaging club



Looking only at transfers with transfer fees,¹ the percentage of transfers involving an intermediary acting on behalf of the engaging club is naturally significantly higher, at 25.3%. The higher the transfer fee, the higher the percentage of transfers involving engaging-club intermediaries.

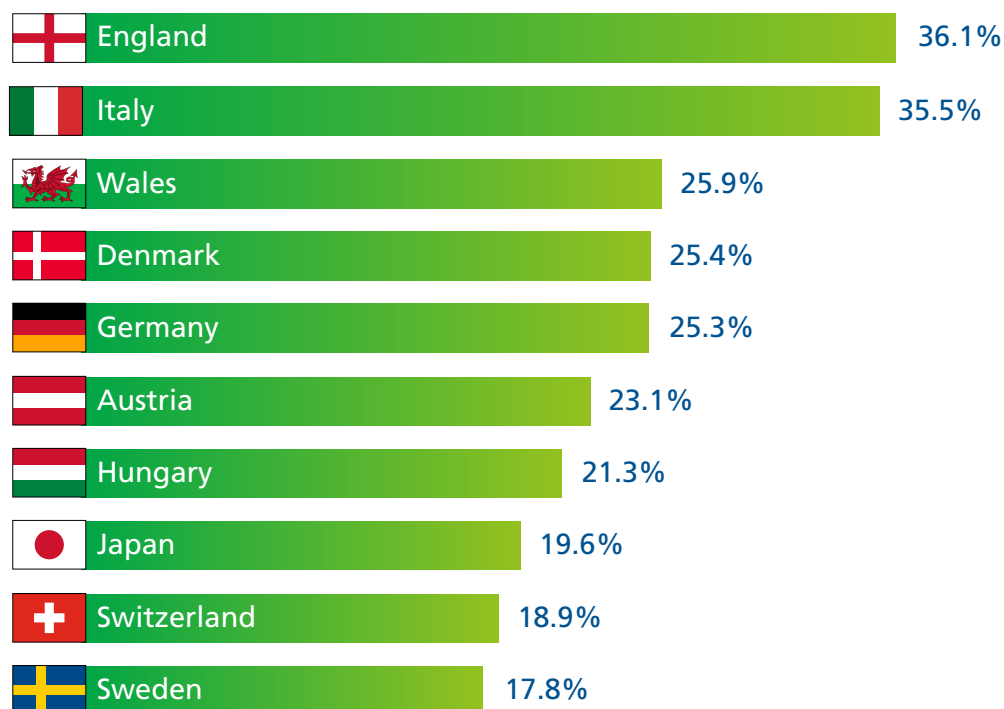
Figure 2: Percentage of international transfers with intermediaries representing the engaging club, by transfer fee (2021 YTD)



¹ Transfer fees refer exclusively to club-to-club compensation and are not to be confused with intermediary service fees, which are covered in a later section.

Transfers involving intermediaries on the engaging club's side spanned a total of 61 associations in 2021. English clubs generally made the most use of intermediaries when engaging players: 203 of their 562 incoming transfers had at least one intermediary representing the engaging club (36.1%). Like last year, Italian clubs have the second-highest such share with 35.5%. Welsh clubs follow with 25.9% and, with the sole exception of Japan, the top ten list is an all-European affair.

Figure 3: Top ten associations, by percentage of international transfers with intermediaries representing the engaging club (2021 YTD)*



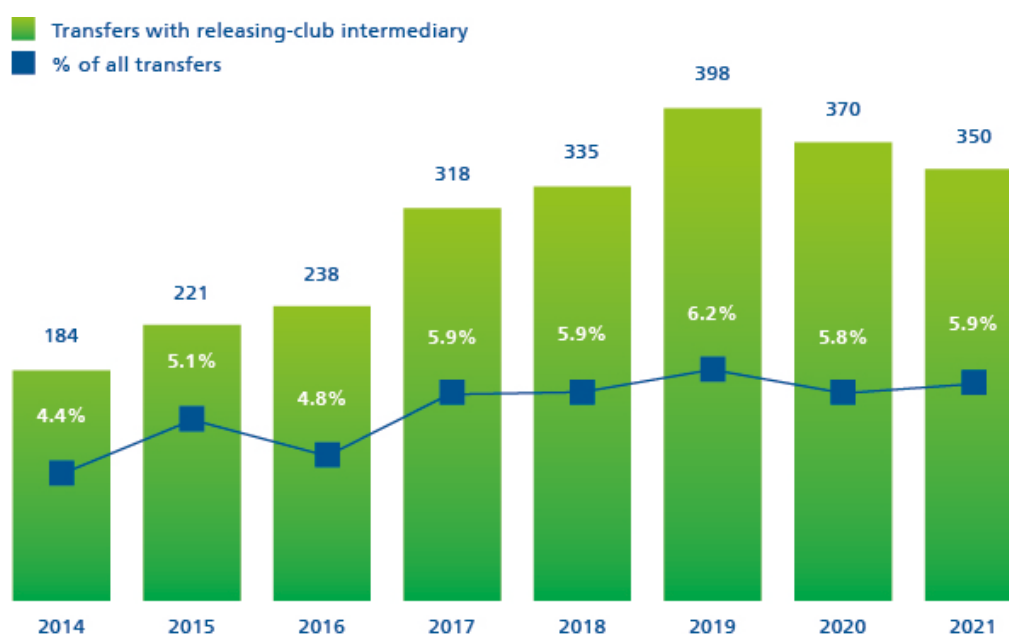
*See the section on methodology.

English clubs engaged an intermediary in **36.1%** of their incoming transfers.

Releasing-club intermediaries

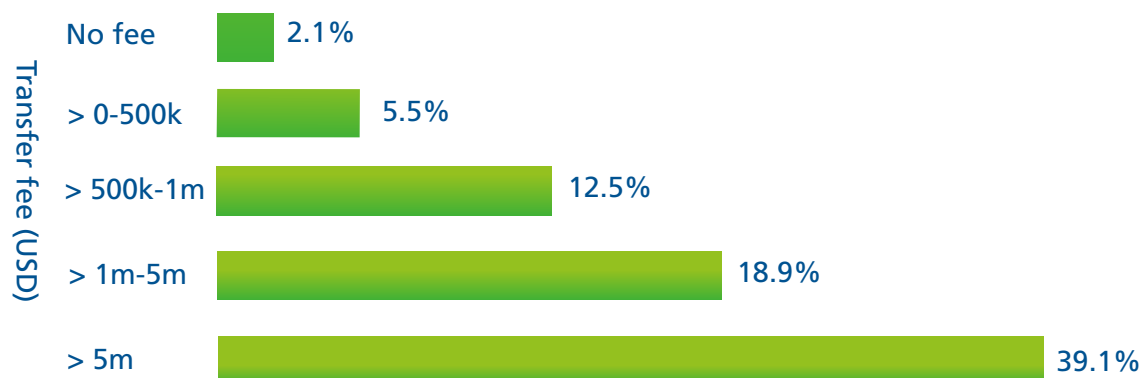
Just over two thirds of all international transfers (66.7% in 2021) are transfers of out-of-contract players. In such transfers, in principle, the releasing club does not play an active part, meaning that, by definition, no releasing-club intermediary could ever be involved. However, in 5.9% of the remaining 5,977 international transfers that did see the active involvement of the releasing club, an intermediary acting on behalf of the said club was present as well – slightly below the figure for transfers involving engaging-club intermediaries (7.0%).

Figure 4: Number and percentage of international transfers with intermediaries representing the releasing club



For deals completed this year, this difference is more pronounced when it comes to transfers with fees: 12.3% of transfers with fees involved a releasing-club intermediary v. 25.3% with an engaging-club intermediary.

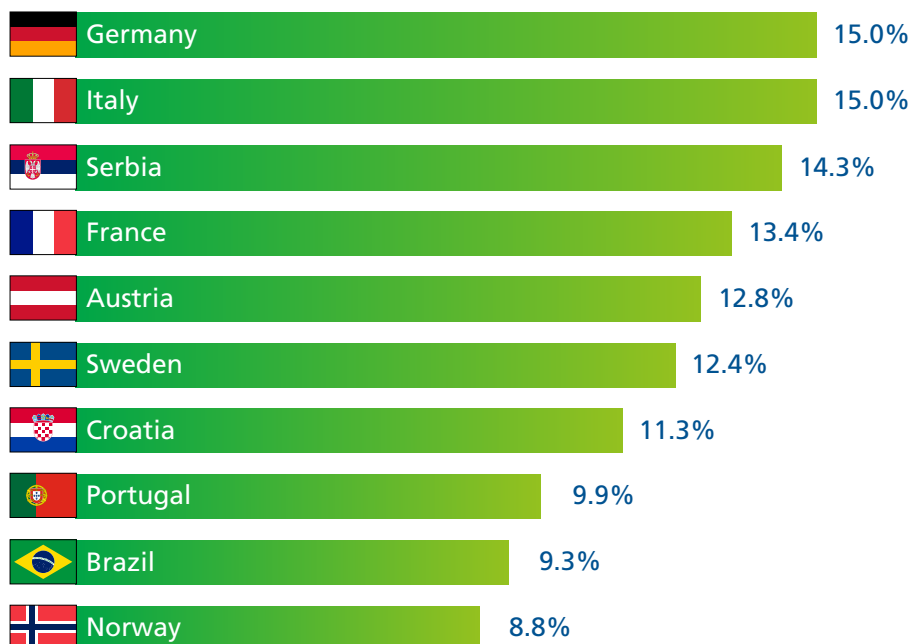
Figure 5: Percentage of international transfers with intermediaries representing the releasing club, by transfer fee (2021 YTD)





Clubs in Germany and Italy relied most frequently on intermediaries when releasing a player: in both of these associations, 15.0% of the outgoing transfers involved at least one intermediary representing the releasing club. Brazil is the only non-European member association in the top ten, with intermediaries involved in 9.3% of its releasing transfers. In total, there were 38 associations where clubs on the releasing side of transfers were represented by at least one intermediary.

Figure 6: Top ten associations, by percentage of international transfers with intermediaries representing the releasing club (2021 YTD)*



*See the section on methodology.

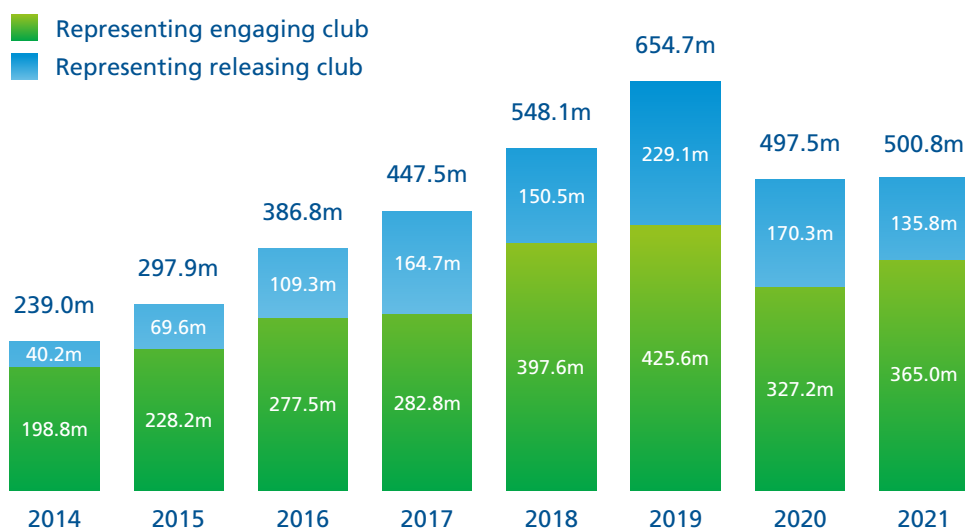
SPENDING ON CLUB INTERMEDIARIES

Overview

After clubs' spending on intermediary service fees dropped by almost 25% in 2020, presumably due to the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic, it remained at the same level in 2021, with a total of USD 500.8m spent on club intermediary service fees. Interestingly, the total outlay for intermediaries representing the engaging club in fact increased by 11.6% compared to 2020, while spending on releasing-club intermediaries decreased by 20.3%. It is also worth noting that this development is not aligned with that of clubs' spending on transfer fees, which decreased for the second year in a row (-13.9% in 2021 and -23.4% in 2020).

Figure 7: Spending on club intermediary service fees (USD)

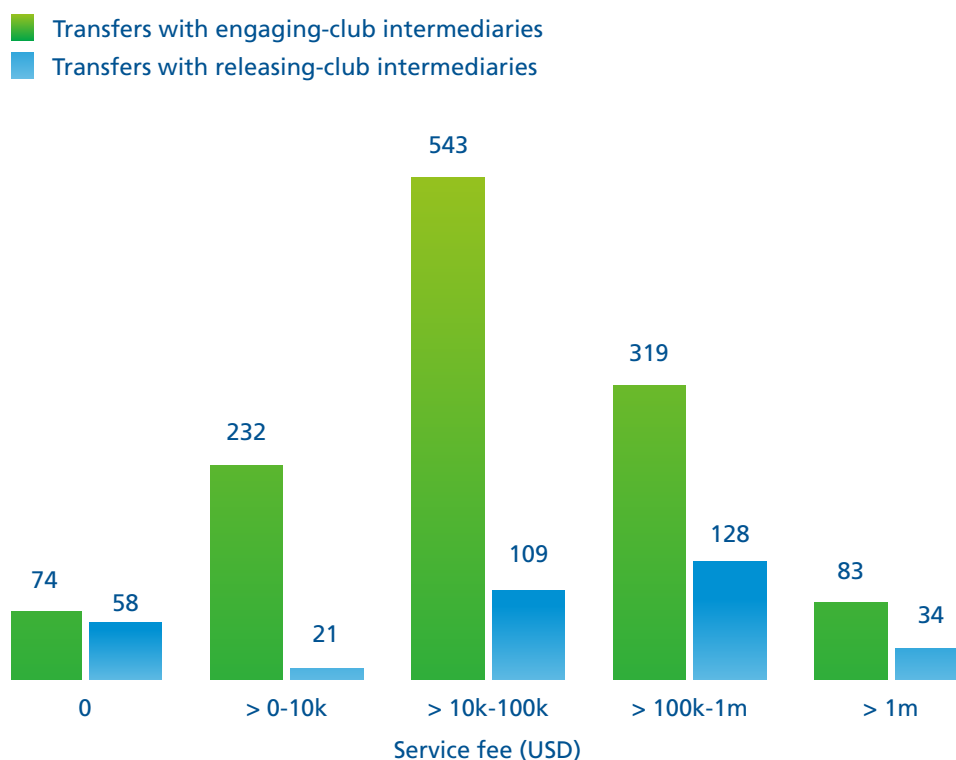
Intermediary type



**USD
500.8m**
was spent
on club
intermediary
service fees.

In more than 90% of cases, club intermediaries received less than USD 1m in service fees per transaction, with USD 10,000 to 100,000 being the most common amount received. However, the 117 instances in which the service fees exceeded USD 1m account for around two thirds (64.2%) of the total amount paid by clubs to intermediaries, with isolated cases of service fees even surpassing USD 10m.

Figure 8: Number of transfers, by size of intermediary service fees paid by clubs (2021 YTD)



Service fees exceeding USD 1m accounted for 64.2% of the total amount paid.

A large proportion of transfers with intermediaries involve European clubs. The gap between UEFA and the other confederations is even more marked when it comes to intermediary service fees. In 2021, clubs affiliated to UEFA member associations accounted for 95.8% of the USD 500.8m spent on intermediary service fees. In fact, clubs from England, Germany, Italy, Spain, France and Portugal alone are responsible for 77.0% of the total sum worldwide.

Figure 9: Clubs' spending on club intermediary service fees in USD and number of transfers involving intermediaries, by confederation (2021 YTD)

Spending on club intermediary service fees
Transfers involving club intermediaries

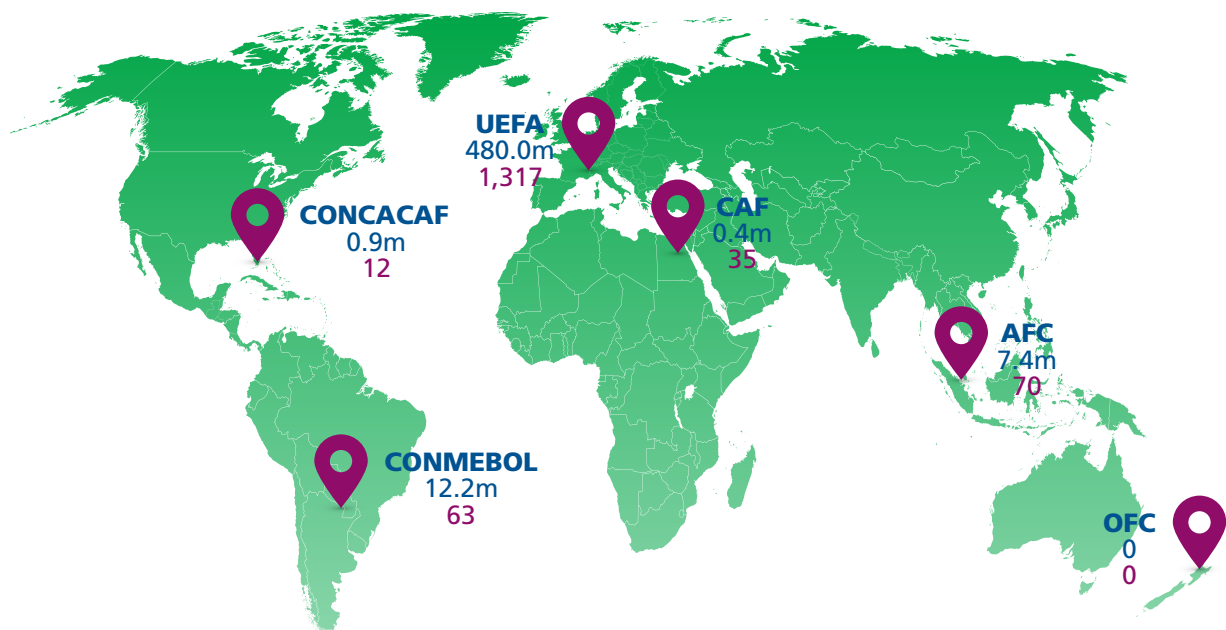
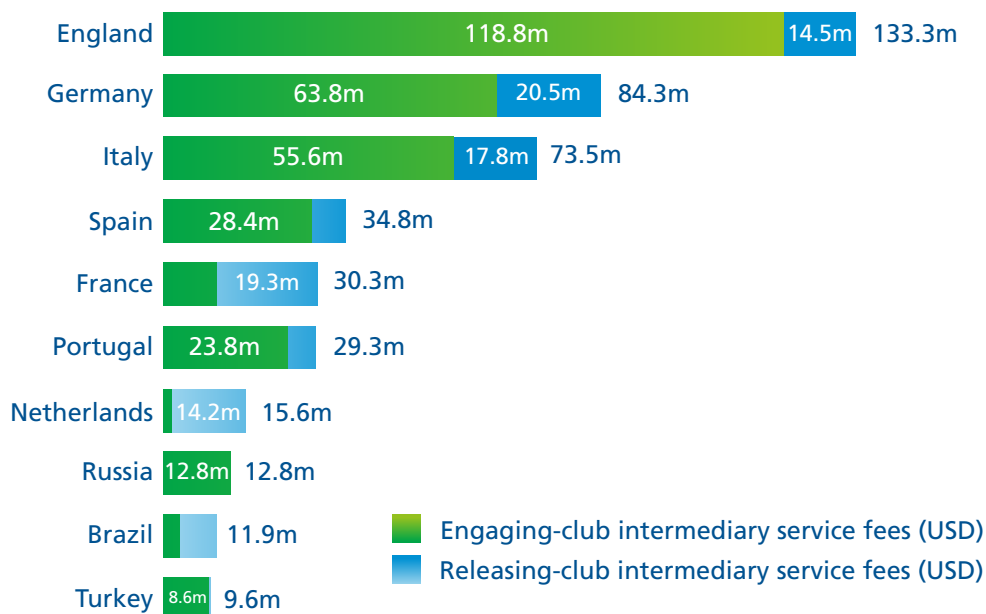


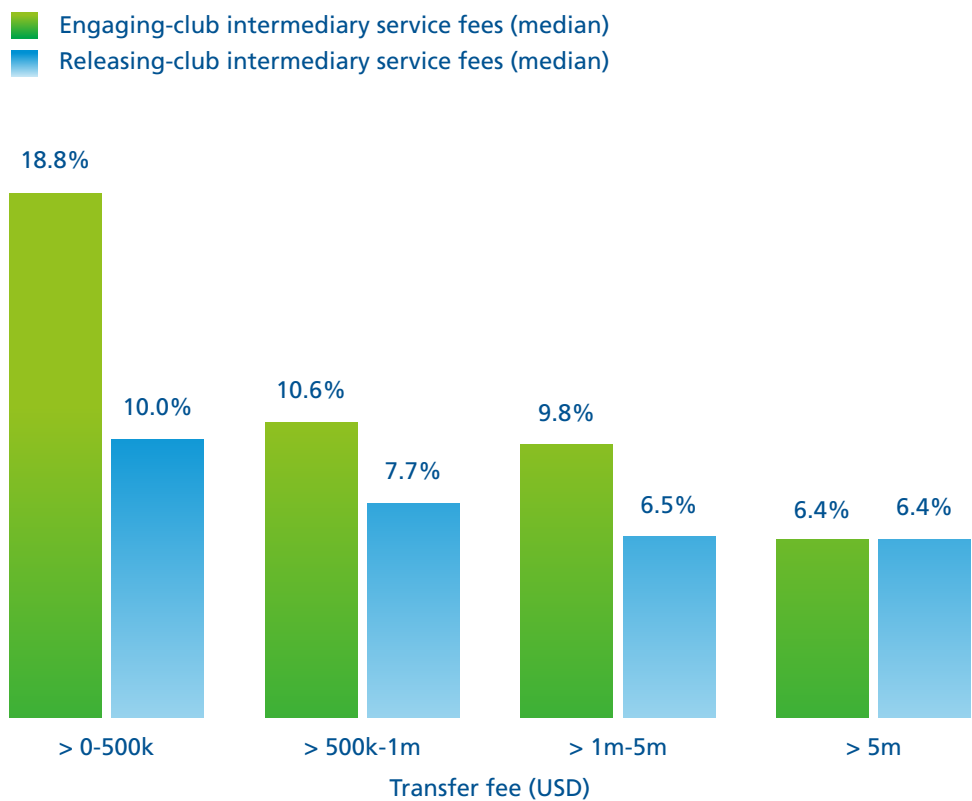
Figure 10: Top ten associations, by clubs' spending on intermediary service fees (2021 YTD)



Club intermediaries in transfers with transfer fees

Service fees paid by clubs to intermediaries can vary significantly from one transfer to another. Figure 11 shows a breakdown of the median service fee paid by clubs to intermediaries as a percentage of the transfer fee.² The median marks the midpoint of the service fees: in other words, half of the service fees paid were less than the median and the other half were greater. In the context of Figure 11, this means, for instance, that for transfers involving an engaging-club intermediary and a transfer fee above USD 5m, half of the service fees amounted to less than 6.4% of the transfer fee, while the other half saw the intermediaries earn over 6.4% of the transfer fee.

Figure 11: Median service fee as percentage of the transfer fee, by size of the transfer fee (2021 YTD)

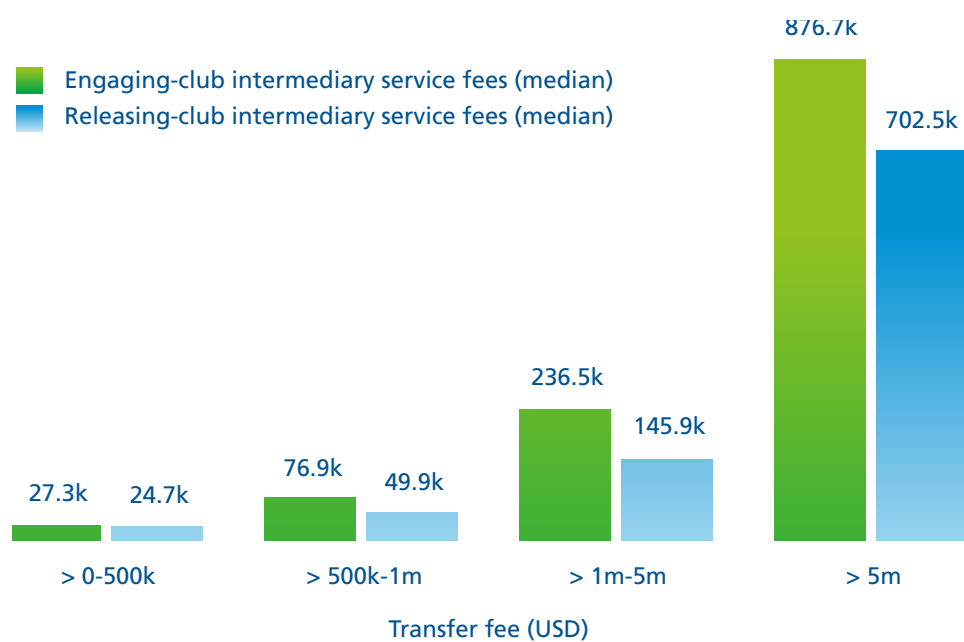


² Throughout this report, the total transfer fee is defined as the sum of fixed, conditional and release (buyout) fees as declared in TMS. All fees are treated as upfront payments for calculation purposes, notwithstanding any instalment plans that may be agreed by clubs. All amounts are converted to USD based on the date on which the transfer was entered in TMS.



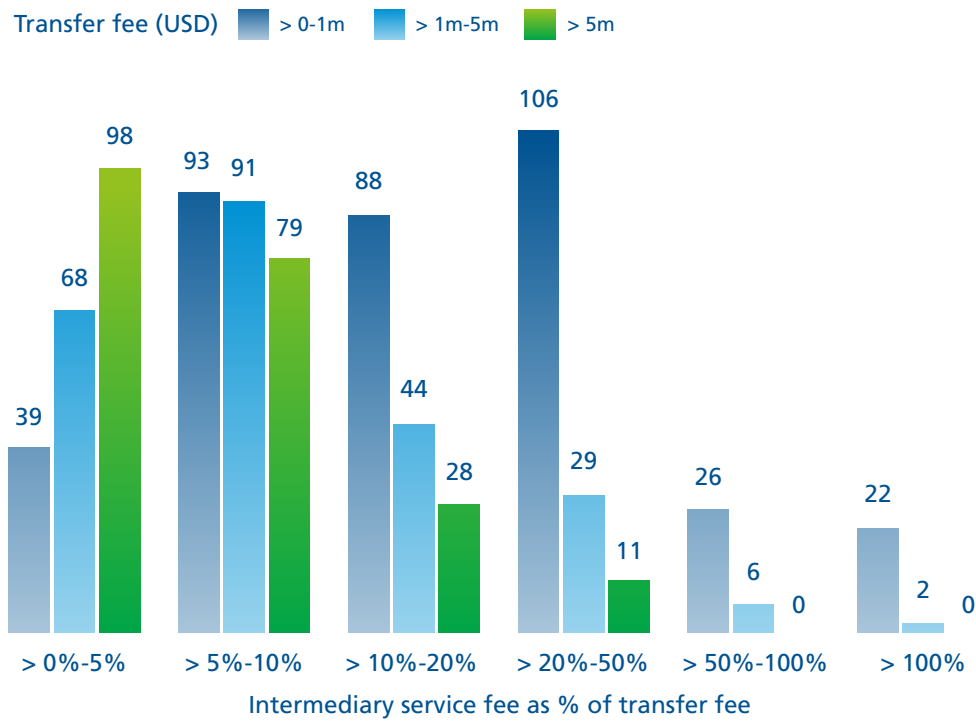
Service fees paid by engaging clubs tend to be higher than those paid by releasing clubs, in particular for transfers with lower transfer fees. It is also noteworthy that, when transfer fees are higher, service fees – as a percentage of the transfer fee – tend to be lower. Unsurprisingly, the picture is reversed in absolute terms, i.e. the higher the transfer fee, the larger the median service fee in USD.

Figure 12: Median service fee in USD, by size of the transfer fee (2021 YTD)



Intermediary service fees also tend to vary more with lower transfer fees. For deals completed this year with transfer fees of under USD 1m, a large degree of variance was seen, with service fees even sometimes exceeding the transfer fee itself. On the other hand, with transfer fees of over USD 5m, the vast majority of service fees were below 10% and precious few exceeded 20%.

Figure 13: Number of club intermediaries in international transfers, by size of the transfer and service fees (2021 YTD)



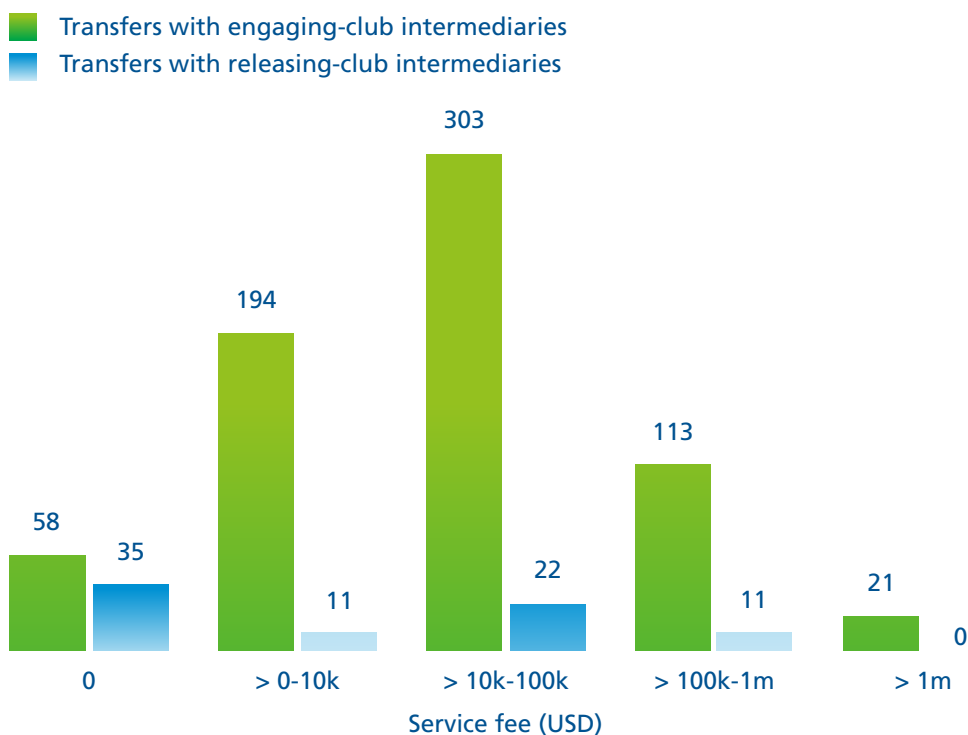
Club intermediaries in transfers without transfer fees

When transfers do not involve a transfer fee, it is, of course, impossible to express the intermediary service fee (if any) as a percentage of the transfer fee. However, clubs still regularly choose to engage the services of intermediaries for transfers in which no transfer fees change hands. It should be noted that transfers without transfer fees are not necessarily without any form of compensation between the clubs involved. They can also be negotiated to include a sell-on fee or a non-monetary benefit, e.g. a player exchange. In fact, out of the 1,251 transfers involving engaging-club intermediaries this year, more than half (689 or 55.1%) had no transfer fee and the same is true for 79 (22.6%) of the 350 transfers involving releasing-club intermediaries.

For engaging-club intermediaries in transfers without transfer fees, the vast majority of service fees (80.6%) this year were below USD 100,000, and service fees exceeded USD 1m in just 3.0% of the cases.

Similarly, releasing-club intermediaries typically earned service fees below USD 100,000 in transfers without transfer fees – this applied in 86.1% of the cases – while just 11 such transfers featured service fees above USD 100,000 on the releasing side.

Figure 14: Transfers involving club intermediaries but no transfer fees, by size of the intermediary service fee (2021 YTD)

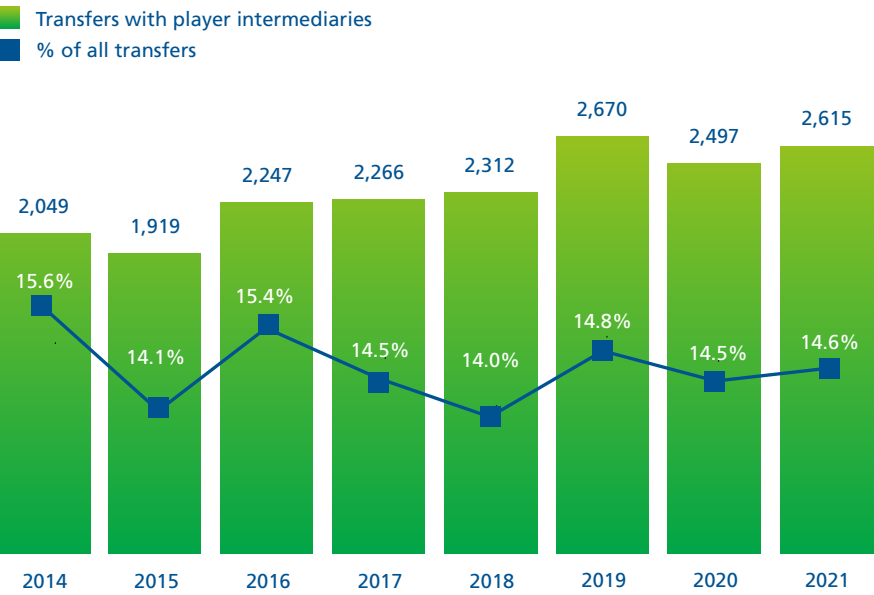


**USD
107.2m**
was spent on
intermediary
service fees
in transfers
without
transfer fees.

TRANSFERS WITH PLAYER INTERMEDIARIES

In 2021, there were 2,615 international transfers in which the player was represented by one or more intermediaries. This equates to 14.6% of all international transfers and makes player intermediaries by far the most common type of intermediaries.

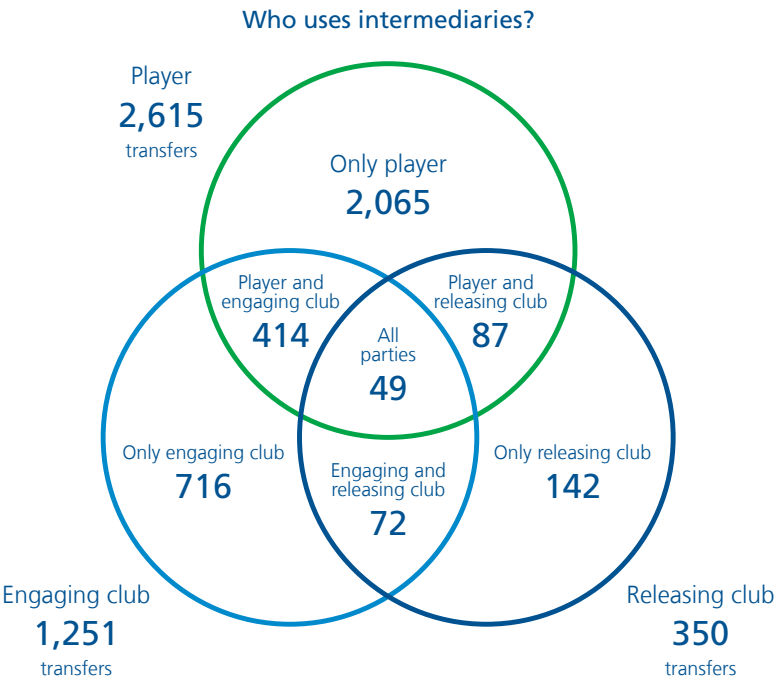
Figure 15: Number and percentage of international transfers with intermediaries representing the player



2,615 transfers involved player intermediaries.

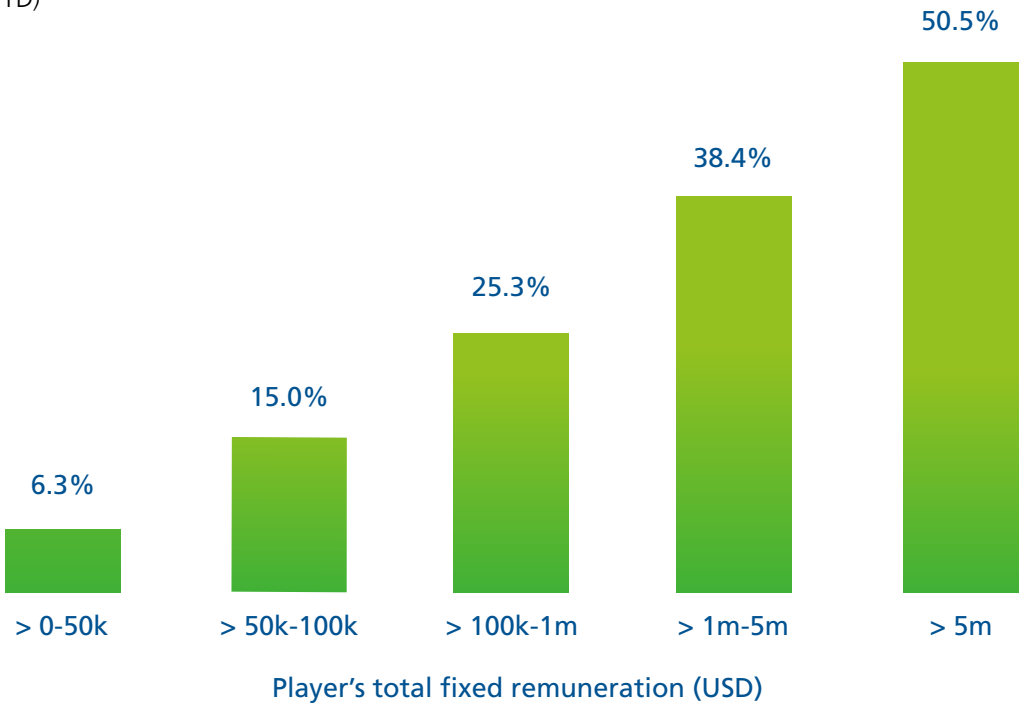
In more than half of all transfers involving any type of intermediary, the only party represented by an intermediary was, in fact, the player (58.3%). The second and third most common cases were transfers that involved just an intermediary for the engaging club (20.2%) and transfers in which both the player and the engaging club were represented by an intermediary (11.7%). Transfers in which all three parties appointed an intermediary were the least common, accounting for just 1.4% of all the transfers that involved at least one intermediary.

Figure 16: Breakdown of international transfers involving intermediaries (2021 YTD)



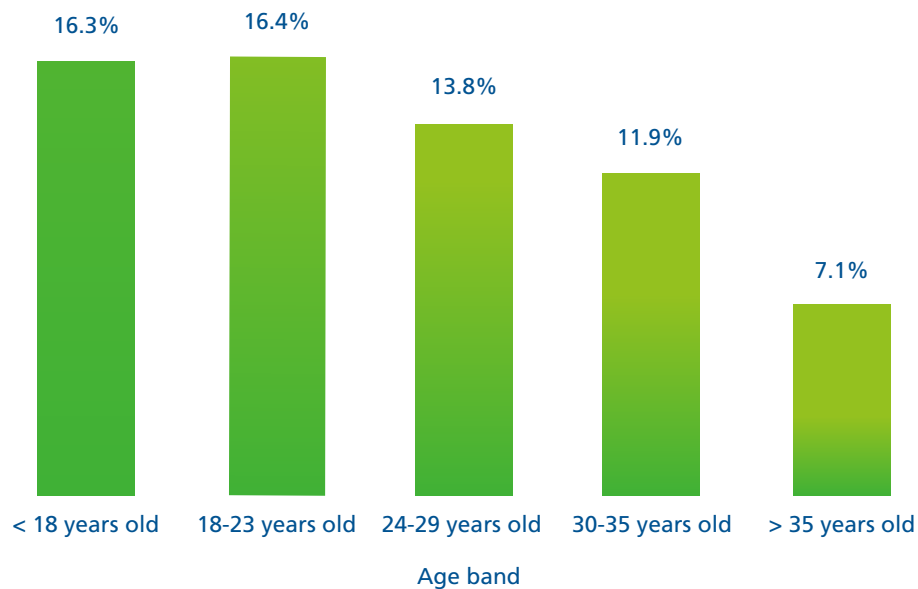
As seen for club intermediaries and transfer fees, the involvement of player intermediaries is also more frequent in transfers with higher player salaries.

Figure 17: Percentage of transfers involving a player intermediary, by total fixed remuneration of the player (2021 YTD)



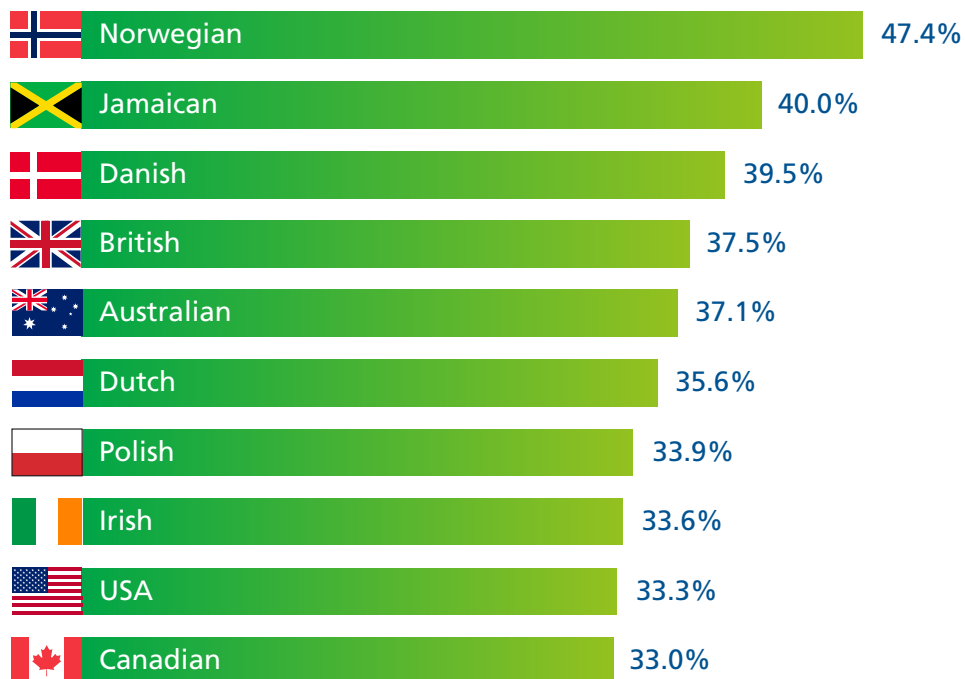
A player's age is another factor that appears to affect whether a player intermediary is involved in a transfer. Players under the age of 18 used intermediaries in 16.3% of their international transfers in 2021. This percentage rises slightly for the 18-23 age bracket, but then decreases gradually for players between 24 and 35 years of age and drops sharply to 7.1% for players over 35.

Figure 18: Percentage of transfers involving a player intermediary, by player age (2021 YTD)



Just as in 2020, Norwegian players used intermediaries the most in 2021, being represented by one or more intermediaries in 47.4% of their 65 international transfers. Players from Jamaica (40.0%) and Denmark (39.5%) complete the top three.

Figure 19: Top ten nationalities, by percentage of transfers with player intermediaries (2021 YTD)*



*See the section on methodology.



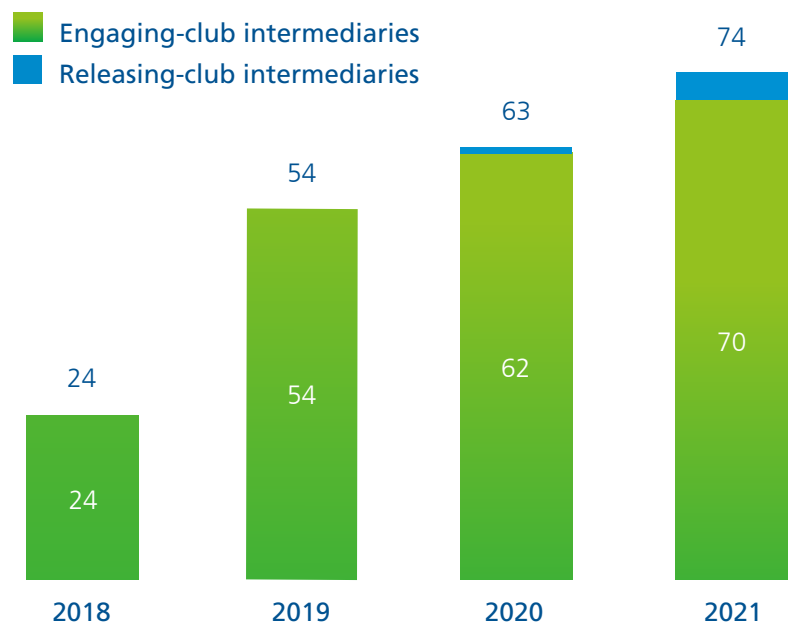
INTERMEDIARIES IN WOMEN’S FOOTBALL

Club intermediaries

In 2021, 1,287 international transfers of female professional players were completed in TMS, 300 of which (23.3%) involved at least one intermediary. Of these, 70 saw intermediaries represent the engaging club, while an intermediary represented the releasing club in just four transfers.

The number of transfers with engaging-club intermediaries increased by 12.9% in 2021 compared to 2020. This rise can largely be attributed to the increase in the actual volume of transfers (24.6% at the time of publication), as the proportion of transfers with intermediaries acting for the engaging club in fact slightly decreased from 6.0% in 2020 to 5.4% in 2021.

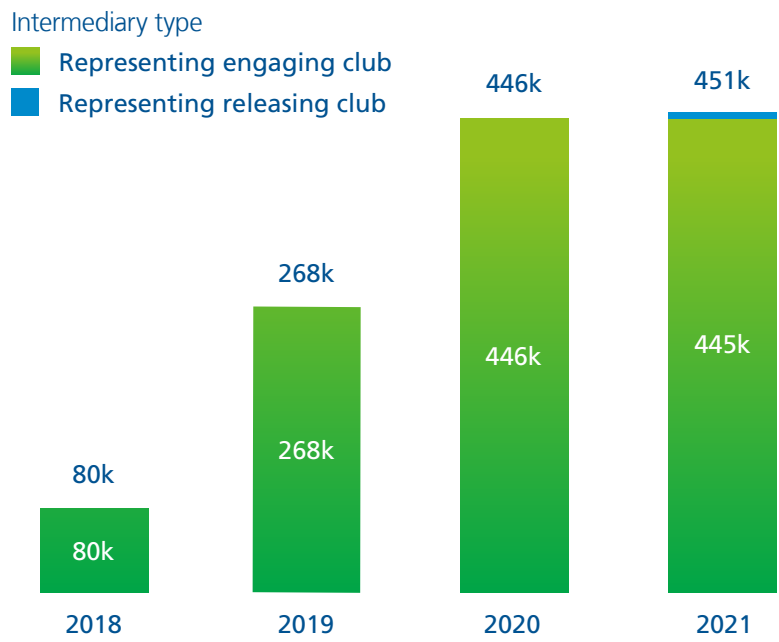
Figure 20: Number of club intermediaries in international transfers in women’s professional football



The two most active FIFA member associations in terms of transfers involving engaging-club intermediaries were England with 16 and Germany with 14.

Clubs paid a total of USD 451,000 in intermediary service fees. Service fees were paid in 66 of the 70 transfers with engaging-club intermediaries and never exceeded USD 40,000.

Figure 21: Spending on club intermediary service fees (USD) in women’s professional football

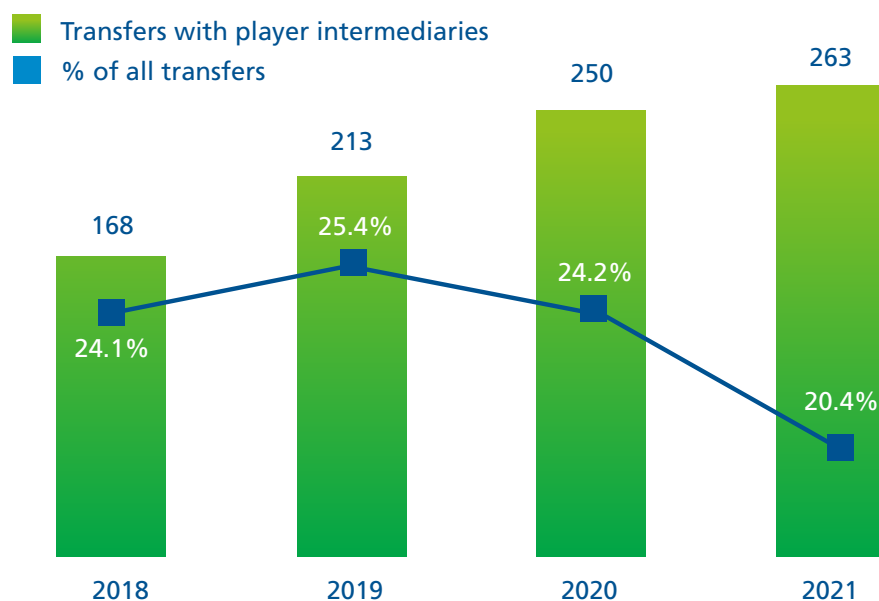


**USD
451,000**
was spent
on club
intermediary
service fees.

Player intermediaries

Intermediaries representing players were involved in 263 of the total of 1,287 international transfers of female players. This amounts to 20.4%, substantially higher than the equivalent figure in men's football (14.6%).

Figure 22: Number and percentage of international transfers with intermediaries representing the player in women's professional football



METHODOLOGY

All transfer data in this report relates exclusively to international transfers of professional football players within the scope of 11-a-side football. Transfer data was analysed for all transfers completed between 1 January 2021 and 5 December 2021. The data was extracted from TMS on 6 December 2021.

Since March 2016, all FIFA member associations have been required to publish a yearly summary of intermediaries' activity on their territory in accordance with the FIFA Regulations on Working with Intermediaries and FIFA circular no. 1519. However, this report is not a consolidation of such summaries, but rather an overview of the information declared by clubs in TMS.

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 automatically converted to USD based on the date on which the transfer was entered in TMS.

The numbers that feature in this report have been rounded.

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 without a transfer agreement between clubs having 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 in 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 in a different association.
- Permanent: when players are permanently engaged by a new club in another association and a transfer agreement is signed between the new club and the former club, or when a club in a different association permanently engages players it has had on loan, with the agreement of the former club.

Graphs showing the top ten associations or player nationalities by the proportion of transfers involving certain types of intermediaries exclude associations and nationalities with fewer than 20 transfers involving engaging-club intermediaries, fewer than five transfers with releasing-club intermediaries or fewer than ten transfers with player intermediaries respectively.

DISCLAIMER

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

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

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

Source of data and preparation of report:

FIFA

Legal Strategic Projects Subdivision

Legal & Compliance Division

Zurich, Switzerland



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