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# WOMEN'S TRANSFERS IN ITMS

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A summary of international  
transfer activity of female  
professional football players

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## Introduction

The International Transfer Matching System (ITMS) is a mandatory platform designed exclusively for member associations and their affiliated professional football clubs to conduct international transfers of players. The use of ITMS has been mandatory for all international transfers of professional male players of eleven-a-side football since October 2010. The purpose of ITMS is to ensure that football authorities have more details available to them on international player transfers which will in turn increase the transparency of individual transactions, improving the credibility and standing of the entire transfer system.

In October 2017, the FIFA Council made a historical decision<sup>1</sup> for the development of women's football, approving amendments to the Regulations on the Status and Transfer of Players (RSTP) that required all international transfers of professional female players of eleven-a-side football to be also processed in ITMS from 1 January 2018 onwards.

With more than half of the calendar year behind us, it is time for a first look at how the professional women's transfer market has developed to date. This report is a summary of the global activity of professional women's transfers in ITMS from 1 January 2018 to 1 September 2018.

Fig. 1: International transfers of female players worldwide (1 January - 1 September 2018)

<b>Total transfers:</b>	577
<b>Total spending:</b>	USD 493,235

## Transfers and spending

In total, 577 international transfers of professional female players have been completed around the world over this 8-month period. These transfers involved 539 players of 65 different nationalities.

Global spending on transfer fees amounts to USD 493,235, with 3.3% of the transfers involving a transfer fee. In contrast to common misconceptions, this percentage is relatively low in the professional men's transfer market too (15.7% over the same period). Nonetheless, the current differences between the women's and the men's international transfer market are evident. Over the same period, as many as 15,049 international transfers of male players were completed globally, generating USD 7.10 billion in transfer fees.

When comparing the two markets however, one must not forget the context.

The men's transfer market has been growing for years. Within the first 8 months after ITMS became mandatory in 2010, 2,363 clubs and 158 FIFA member associations were actively involved in international transfers<sup>2</sup>, a sign that the market was already mature at the time. Instead, **the international football transfer market for female players is still at the very early stages of its development.** Since ITMS became mandatory for international transfers of female players 8 months ago, 198 clubs and 65 of the 211 FIFA member associations have been active on the market. As shown in Fig. 2, over half of these clubs and associations are members of UEFA.

<sup>1</sup>FIFA Circular no. 1601

<sup>2</sup>They had engaged or released at least one player from/to another member association

Fig. 2: Number of FIFA member associations and clubs involved in international transfers of female players by confederation (1 January - 1 September 2018)

Confederation	Associations involved	Clubs involved <sup>3</sup>
AFC	6 of 46	17
CAF	7 of 54	1
CONCACAF	5 of 35	10
CONMEBOL	8 of 10	29
OFC	1 of 11	0
UEFA	38 of 55	141
<b>Total</b>	<b>65 of 211</b>	<b>198</b>

Another aspect to consider is that the number of clubs involved in transfers is strongly dependent on the total number of existing clubs. FIFA’s Global Club Football 2018 report<sup>4</sup> found that over the past season, there were over 50% more men’s teams than women’s teams competing in a national top-tier competition across the world. While the sparse involvement is indeed a sign of the current limits of the women’s transfer market, it also offers an indication of its potential.

In addition, one must remember that ITMS is mandatory for transfers of *professional* players, but currently - even in top-tier competitions - many female players have amateur status. Therefore, international transfers involving such players will not be recorded in ITMS.

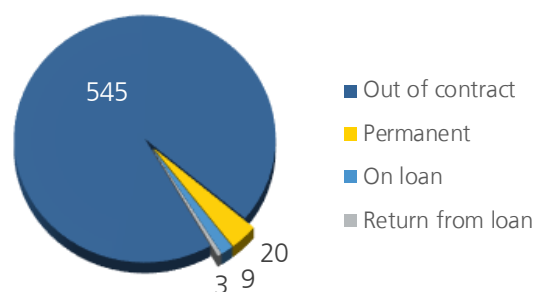
In this sense, the introduction of ITMS sends a strong message to encourage the professionalisation of women’s football, a key step in FIFA’s effort to develop the game across all levels.

### Transfer types<sup>5</sup>

Of the total 577 transfers completed, 94.5% were transfers of players out of contract, 3.5% were permanent transfers, 1.6% were loans and 0.5% were transfers of players returning from a loan.

Transfers out of contract are by far the most common also in the men’s market, although to a lesser extent, as they accounted for 63.3% of all international transfers during the same period. This is one of those aspect where the development of women’s football will likely be reflected in the transfer market. For example, as revenues grow, club-to-club transfers are likely to become more common. Similarly, if there were to be an increase in loans, this would inevitably lead to a greater number of loan extensions and returns from loans, driving the percentage of transfers out of contract further down.

Fig. 3: International transfers of female players by type (1 January - 1 September 2018)



<sup>3</sup>Member associations may be involved in transfers even when their affiliated clubs are not. In the context of a transfer of a player out of contract, the former club is not involved in the transfers, but the former member associations is active in the exchange of the International Transfer Certificate (ITC)

<sup>4</sup><https://www.fifa.com/about-fifa/news/y=2018/m=8/news=fifa-publishes-second-global-club-football-report.html>

<sup>5</sup>For definitions, see glossary on page 6

### Top associations and transfer streams

Clubs from Colombia have been the most active engaging professional female players internationally (69 incoming transfers), followed by the USA (63) and Sweden (52). Instead, the highest number of outgoing transfers came from the USA (69), Australia (48) and Venezuela (35).

Some of these associations are not among those that usually sit atop the rankings of men’s transfers. In certain cases, the reason is readily found, as they simply are among those where women’s football is most developed. In fact, 8 of the 10 associations whose clubs engaged the most female players were represented by their national team in the 2015 FIFA Women’s World Cup™ in Canada, and 7 of them are in the top 15 of the FIFA/Coca-Cola World Ranking<sup>6</sup>.

In other cases, it appears that one of the main drivers of market activity is the fact that many players take part in more than one competition in the same year. This practice is not uncommon in women’s football and is arguably facilitated by the shorter football seasons. As shown in Fig. 5, the most common transfer stream so far is that of players moving from Australia to the USA, with 38 transfers. All but seven of these transfers occurred between the last day of the Australian W-League (12 February) and the opening day of the US National Women's Soccer League (24 March). The second and third most common transfer streams are those of players moving from Venezuela to Colombia and vice versa. Many of these transfers are of Venezuelan players who were engaged by Colombian clubs at the beginning of the year, right before the

Fig. 4: Top 10 associations by number of transfers of female players (1 January - 1 September 2018)

Incoming	Transfers	Outgoing	Transfers
Colombia	69	USA	69
USA	63	Australia	48
Sweden	52	Venezuela	35
Spain	46	Brazil	33
Norway	42	Sweden	31
England	39	Colombia	28
Germany	38	Germany	25
France	29	France	19
Venezuela	25	Norway	18
Portugal	19	Iceland	16

Fig. 5: Top 10 transfer streams by number of transfers of female players (1 Jan. - 1 Sep. 2018)

From	To	Transfers
Australia	USA	38
Venezuela	Colombia	33
Colombia	Venezuela	21
USA	Sweden	11
USA	Norway	9
Germany	England	8
Switzerland	Germany	8
USA	France	8
Brazil	China PR	7
Brazil	Spain	7

start of the Liga Femenina Profesional de Fútbol Colombiano, and signed contracts until the summer. Once the league ended, these players moved back to Venezuela out of contract, in time for the start of the Torneo de Clausura of the Venezuelan Superliga femenina de fútbol.

As the market evolves, this is another aspect that will be interesting to monitor. The further

<sup>6</sup>Latest ranking published on 22/06/2018

professionalisation of women’s football may bring more teams, longer seasons and longer employment contracts, all things that would likely affect transfer streams.

### Player nationality

Fig. 6 shows the ten most common nationalities of female players involved in international transfers. Players from the USA top this ranking with 108 transfers. Among their most frequent destinations are Sweden (14 transfers) and Norway (13), but almost one third were transfers of players returning to the USA from abroad (34). **At the moment, US female nationals are the closest thing to what Brazilians represent for the men’s transfer market.** They were involved in almost twice as many transfers as players of any other nationality; had the most transfers between member associations other than their own<sup>7</sup> (25); and moved to clubs of 18 different associations across the globe, more than anyone else.

Fig. 6: Top 10 player nationalities by number of transfers of female players (1 Jan. - 1 Sep. 2018)

Nationality	Transfers
USA	108
Venezuelan	64
Brazilian	40
British	27
Australian	18
Canadian	16
Ukrainian	15
German	13
Norwegian	13
Swiss	13

### Conclusion

As outlined in this report, transfer activity has - so far - been relatively limited in terms of the total number of transfers, spending and involvement by clubs and associations on a global scale. Yet, this is a normal consequence of the fact that the market for female professional players is still in the early stages of its development.

Women’s football has been growing rapidly in recent years, but global involvement requires time. There are signs that indicate the potential for future growth not only within the member associations, but also in terms of expansion across the globe.

As the women’s game continues to expand globally, we expect to see an increase in the number of professional clubs and professional players, which should translate in increased activity in ITMS. Either directly or indirectly, the growth of the game is likely to influence aspects such as transfer types, the proportion of transfers with fees, and the role of certain associations in global transfer streams.

Only time will tell how the market will evolve, which aspects will converge towards the characteristics of men’s football, and which will go in other directions.

Having the ITMS framework and structures in place at this early stage in the development of the professional women's game is extremely positive, and means FIFA will be able to monitor this growth closely and to support it step by step.

<sup>7</sup>Neither from nor to the USA

# GLOSSARY

## Association

See Member association.

## Club

A member of an association (that is a member association of FIFA) or a member of a league recognised by a member association that enters at least one team in a competition.

## Confederation

A group of associations recognised by FIFA that belong to the same continent (or assimilable geographical region). Confederations are the umbrella organisations of the member associations in each continent:

- AFC – Asian Football Confederation
- CAF – Confédération Africaine de Football (Africa)
- CONCACAF – Confederation of North, Central American and Caribbean Association Football
- CONMEBOL – Confederación Sudamericana de Fútbol (South America)
- OFC – Oceania Football Confederation
- UEFA – Union des Associations Européennes de Football (Europe).

## ITC

International Transfer Certificate: The official document that allows the international transfer of the player's registration from one association to another (cf. art. 9 RSTP).

## ITMS

International Transfer Matching System: A web-based data information system with the primary objective of simplifying the process of international player transfers as well as improving transparency and the flow of information.

## Loan

The type of transfer conducted when a professional player is temporarily engaged by a new club on the basis of a loan agreement during the term of his employment contract with the former club.

## Loan extension

The instruction type entered when the loan is being extended by the new club (where the player is currently on loan) for an additional period of time, with the agreement of the former club and the player.

## Loan to permanent

The instruction type entered when the new club (where the player is currently on loan) wishes to engage the player permanently, with the agreement of the former club.

## Member association

A football association recognised as such by FIFA. A total of 211 member associations are currently affiliated to FIFA.

## Out of contract (transfer)

The type of transfer conducted when a player signs for a new club when he is not contractually bound to any former club and no transfer agreement exists. There are four possible reasons for the player's previous contract termination: The contract with the former club has expired. The contract with the former club was terminated unilaterally. The player mutually agreed an early termination with his former club. The player was not under contract with his former club, i.e. he was an amateur. This type of transfer is also referred to as Permanent transfer without transfer agreement, but FIFA TMS reports use the term Out of contract in order to facilitate the distinction with Permanent transfer with transfer agreement.

## Permanent transfer (with transfer agreement)

The type of transfer conducted when a player is permanently engaged by a new club and a transfer agreement is signed by the new club and the former club.

## Professional player

A player who has a written contract with a club and is paid more for his football activity than the expenses he effectively incurs (cf. RSTP art. 2 par. 2).

## Return from loan

The instruction type entered when a player who was loaned to another club returns to his club of origin after termination of the loan.

## RSTP

Regulations on the Status and Transfer of Players: global and binding rules concerning the status of players, their eligibility to participate in organised football, and their transfer between clubs belonging to different associations.

# DISCLAIMER

## General disclaimer

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

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.

“Spending/receipts by association” refers to spending or receipts on transfer fees by clubs belonging to a specific association.

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 TMS Global Transfers and Compliance  
Zurich, Switzerland

## Methodological approach

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

Transfer data has been analysed for transfers completed between 1 October 2010 and 01 September 2018. All data has been extracted from ITMS on XX September 2018.

Transfers are allocated to a certain date according to the date when they reach the status of “ITC request” in ITMS, irrespective of the date of their first entry.

All information on transfer fees is automatically converted into US dollars on the basis of conversion rates as of the day of the transfer’s first registration in ITMS.

Tables with rankings (e.g. top 10 associations by number of transfers) 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.

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.