

FIFA®



# Football Agents in International Transfers

DECEMBER 2023



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# 01. OVERVIEW

As part of its objective to bring more transparency to the football transfer system, FIFA publishes an annual report on football agents. For the first time, due to the adoption and entering into force of the new FIFA Football Agent Regulations (FFAR), this report not only presents extensive analyses of football agents' activity in international transfers, but also provides insightful information about the newly introduced licensing system.

The report covers all football agents' activity in the scope of any representation of players and/or clubs in employment-related and transfer-related negotiations. Under the FIFA Regulations on the Status and Transfer of Players, clubs are required to enter the names and service fees of any club agents involved in an international transfer, as well as the names of any football agent acting on behalf of the player, in the Transfer Matching System (TMS). Such declarations made in 2023 are the source of the data in this report.

This entails information on engaging- and releasing-club agents, but also information on player agents in connection with international transfers in men's and women's football. All this information will allow readers to understand how agents' activity developed in 2023.

In 2023, with respect to male professional players, the total amount of service fees for club agents declared in international transfers was USD 888.1 million. This constitutes the highest-ever total for a full year and corresponds to nearly 10% of the total spending on transfer fees. As TMS only captures service fees paid for club agents in international transfers, this total does not include service fees paid in the context of domestic transfers or any service fees paid to player agents. The full revenue of all football agents is thus likely to be even substantially higher.

In the context of international transfers of female professional players during the same period, football agents were involved in 125 transfers by representing clubs and in 375 transfers by representing players (more than 20% of the total). However, the earnings of club agents in women's football are still significantly lower than in men's football, with just under USD 1.4 million in service fees earned in 2023. Nevertheless, there has still been great growth across the last five years, with the figure for 2023 more than 60% higher than in 2022 and more than five times the level of 2019.



# 02. LICENSING SYSTEM

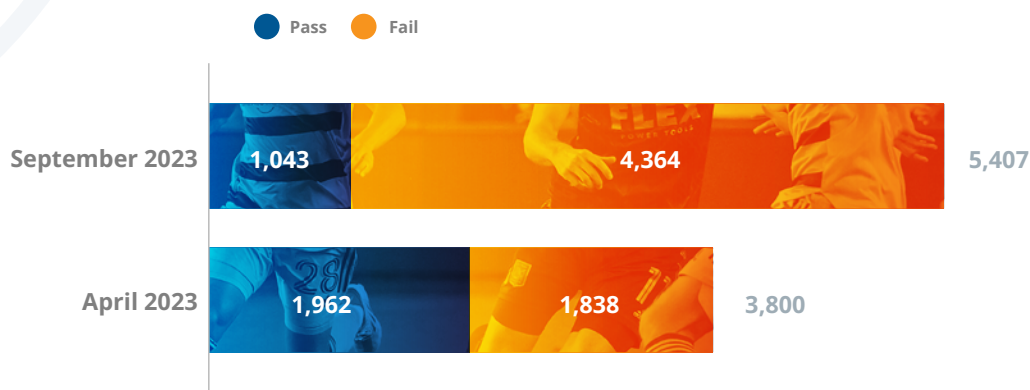
The process for obtaining a licence and becoming a football agent under the FFAR opened on 9 January 2023 and all individuals could apply for such a licence. Individuals who are required to take the exam to obtain a licence to act as a football agent (exam applicants) must:

- submit a complete application via the FIFA Agent Platform on agents.fifa.com;
- comply with the eligibility requirements;
- successfully pass the football agent exam conducted by FIFA; and
- pay an annual fee to FIFA.

At the same time, there was another process for obtaining the licence, namely the legacy process. Those who complied with the requirements set out in article 23 of the FFAR (e.g. to be formerly licensed as agents pursuant to the FIFA Players' Agent Regulations (1991, 1995, 2001 or 2008 edition) and to have been registered as an intermediary) were exempt from the requirement to take the exam.

During the period covered by this report (1 January 2023 to 4 December 2023), FIFA received 19,973 licensing applications, of which 16,969 were from exam applicants and 3,004 were from legacy applicants. Out of the total number of exam applicants, 9,207 took the exam on one of two dates. The first exam was held on 19 April 2023, with testing locations at 138 member associations, and the second exam took place on 20 September 2023, with testing locations at 157 member associations. Out of the 9,207 attempts, 32.6% passed the exam.

Figure 1: Total number of exam attempts, by result



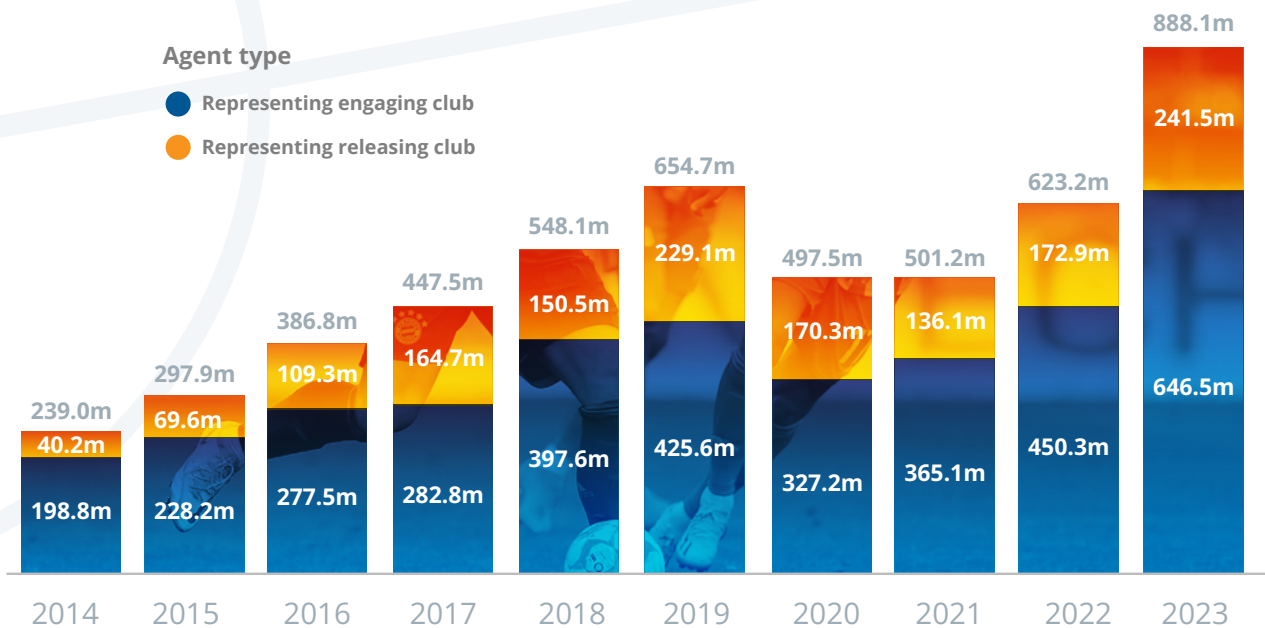
Finally, as from 1 October 2023, clubs, players, coaches, member associations and single-entity leagues are obliged to only utilise licensed football agents for football agent services in relation to all transactions. To provide more transparency and assist all stakeholders in understanding which individuals are licensed football agents, FIFA published a list of all licensed agents on the FIFA Agent Platform. During this period, a total number of 5,319 licences were issued. Of these newly licensed agents, 95.2% were male and the average age of all these agents was 42 years. Agents from the UK were the most represented group, followed by those from Spain, Italy, France and Brazil.

# 03. AGENTS IN MEN'S PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALL

## Club agents

Total spending on club agent service fees reached unprecedented heights in 2023, with a total outlay of USD 888.1 million. This is an increase of 42.5% compared to the level of spending in 2022, and even surpasses the previous record from 2019 by more than one third.

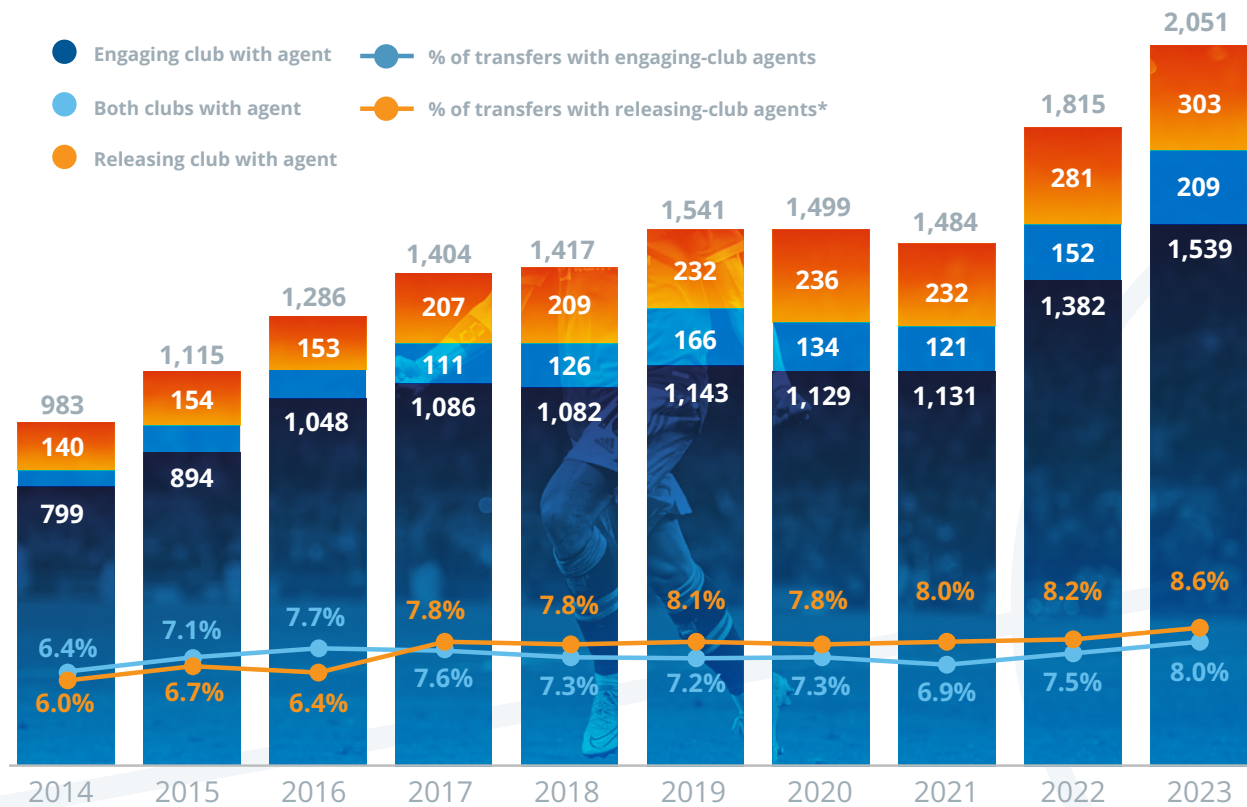
Figure 2: Clubs' spending on agent service fees (USD)



In 2023, club agents were involved in a total of 2,051 international transfers: in 1,539 of these, only the engaging club had an agent; in 303, only the releasing club had one; and in the remaining 209 transfers, both clubs employed an agent to represent them in the transfer. This is a new record and represents an increase of 13.0% compared to 2022.

While the absolute number of transfers involving an engaging-club agent is substantially higher than that involving releasing-club agents, they are quite similar in relative terms. In 8% of all international transfers completed in 2023 so far, there was an engaging-club agent involved. Similarly, a releasing-club agent was present in 8.6% of all transfers in which the releasing club was involved in the transfer process in TMS.\*

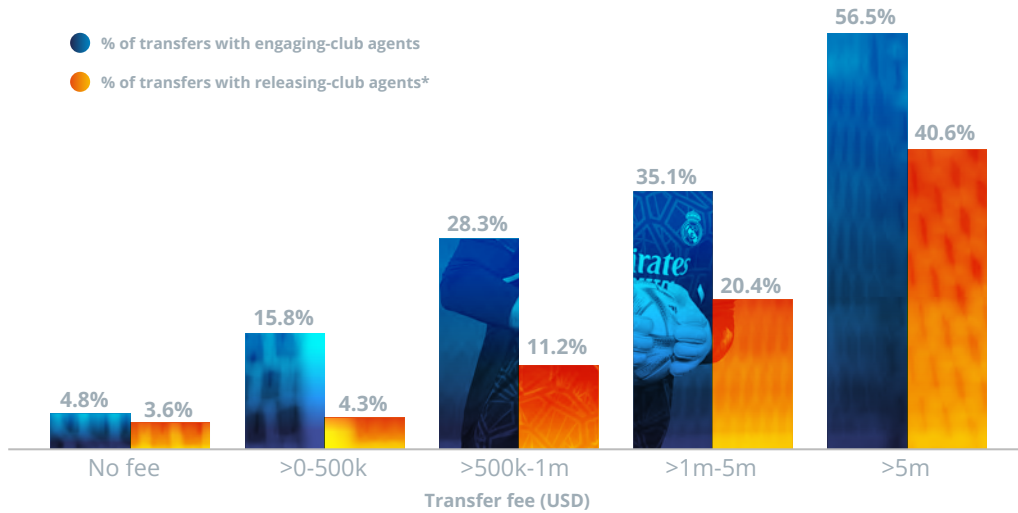
Figure 3: Number and percentage of international transfers with club agents



\*The percentage of transfers with releasing-club agents is based on all transfers excluding out-of-contract transfers and returns from loans as they do not involve a releasing club and hence can never involve a releasing-club agent.

As in previous years, the share of transfers with club agents was substantially higher among transfers that involved a transfer fee compared to transfers in which the engaging club paid no transfer fee to the releasing club. In transfers that included a transfer fee, the share of transfers with a club agent was at 12.8% in the case of transfers with releasing-club agents and it even reached 26.1% for transfers involving engaging-club agents. As shown in the figure below, these shares were even higher where the respective transfer fee was higher.

Figure 4: Percentage of international transfers with club agents, by size of transfer fee (YTD)

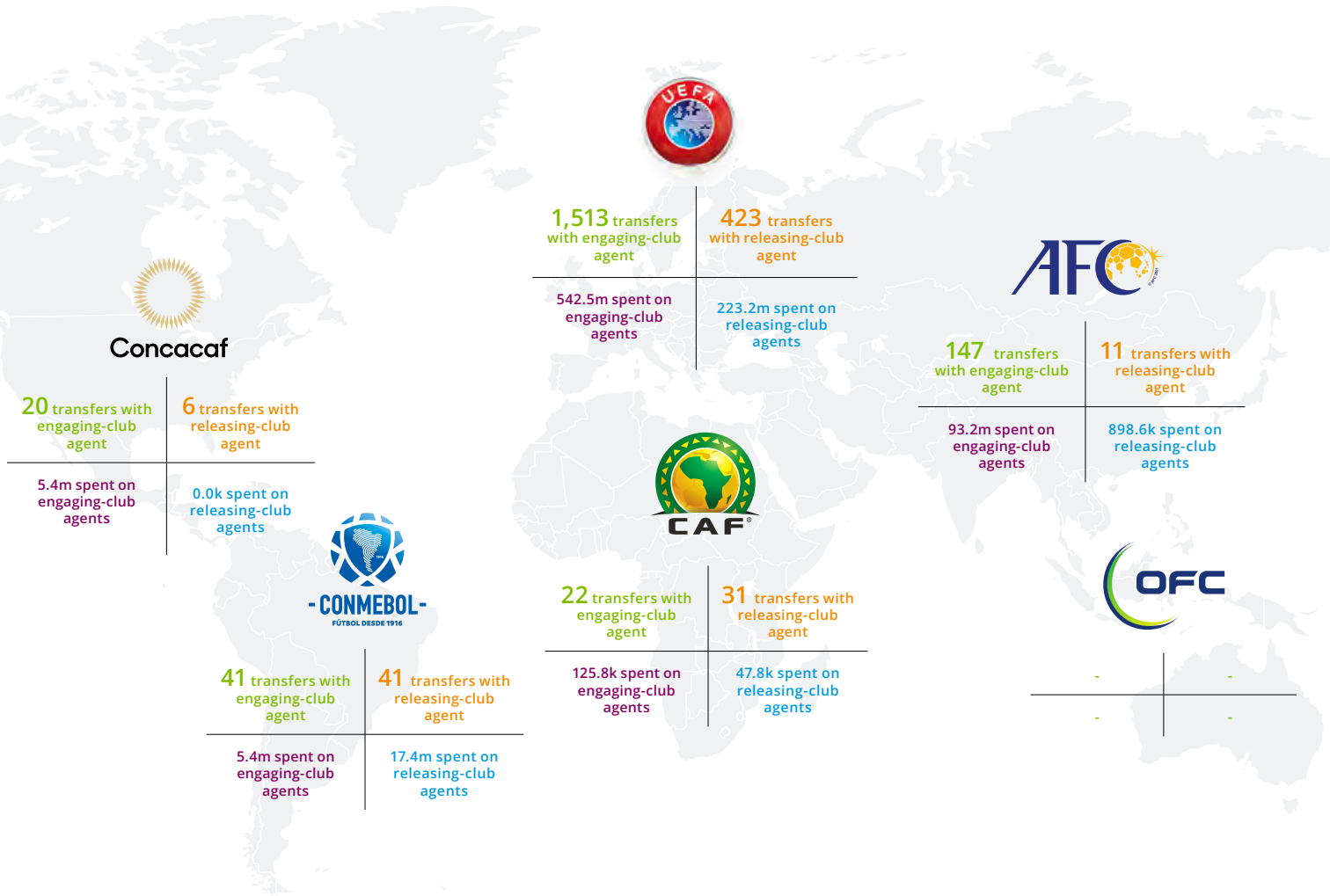


\*The percentage of transfers with releasing club agents is based on all transfers except out-of-contract transfers and returns from loans as they do not involve a releasing club and hence can never involve a releasing club agent.



By far, the largest proportion of all club agents were employed by clubs in UEFA, which also account for the lion's share of global spending on club agents. In 2023, clubs affiliated to UEFA member associations accounted for 86.6% of the total outlay for all club agent service fees in international transfers worldwide. Similarly, European clubs employed 86.6% of all engaging-club agents and 82.6% of all releasing-club agents.

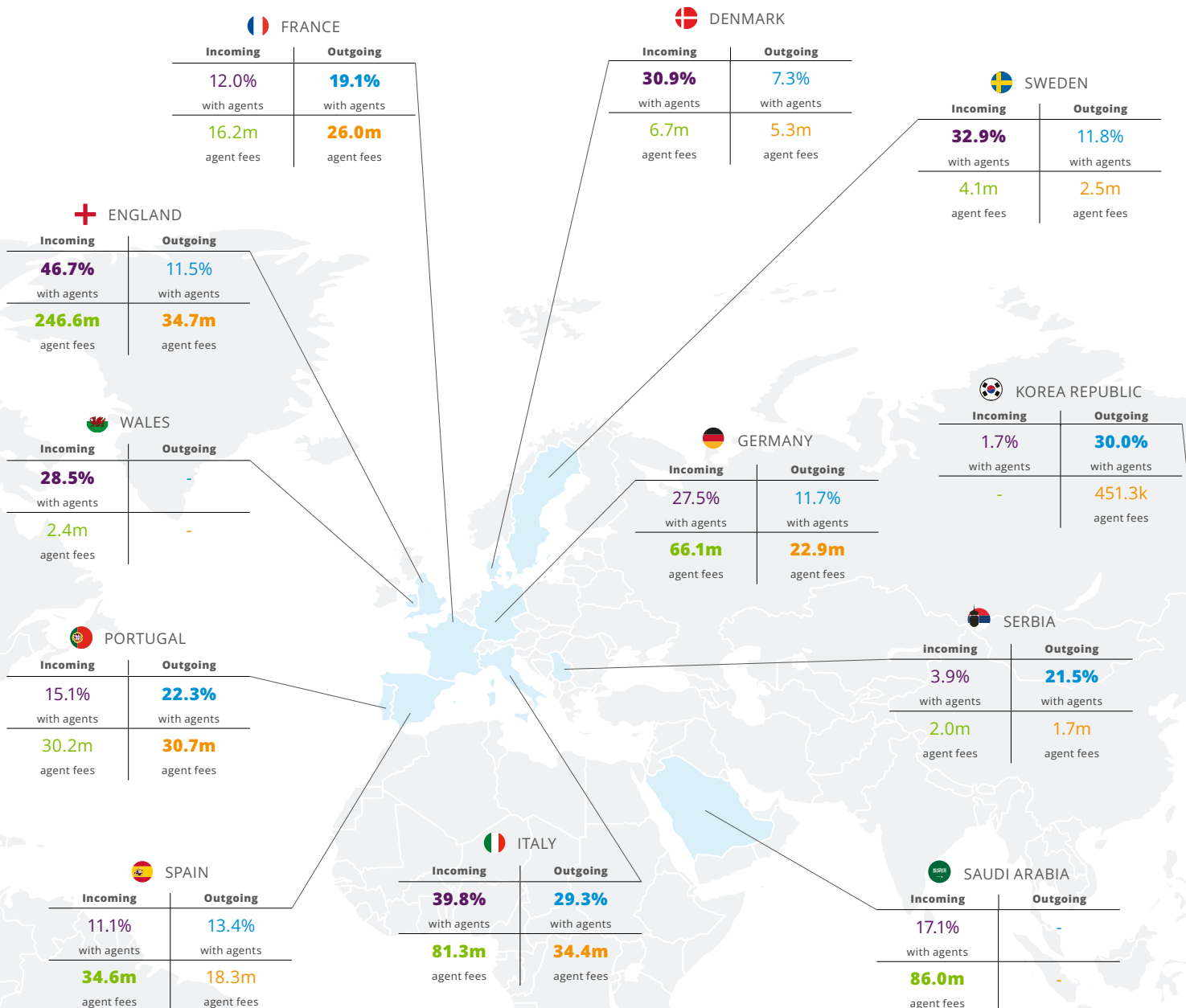
Figure 5: Clubs' spending on agent service fees in USD and number of transfers with club agents, by confederation (YTD)





In large part, the European dominance in spending can be attributed to clubs from England, which were the number-one spenders by a long shot, with a combined total of more than USD 280 million. While not investing in releasing-club agents, Saudi Arabian clubs had the second-biggest spending on engaging-club agents with USD 86.0 million. England also had the highest share of incoming transfers that involved an engaging-club agent, with 46.7%, whereas Korea Republic had the greatest share of outgoing transfers with a releasing-club agent, with 30.0%.

Figure 6: Associations featuring in at least one of the top-five rankings by spending on engaging-club and releasing-club agents (USD) and by percentage of incoming and outgoing transfers with engaging-club and releasing-club agents (YTD)



Note: Spending on engaging-club and releasing-club agents is only shown for associations with at least five transfers with agents representing the engaging/releasing club respectively.

In just over 90% of all cases, club agents received less than USD 1 million in service fees per transaction, with service fees ranging between USD 10,000 and USD 100,000 being the most common. However, the 224 instances in which the service fees exceeded USD 1 million accounted for more than two thirds (68.8%) of the total amount paid by clubs to agents, with isolated cases of service fees even surpassing USD 10 million. Higher service fees for agents were also more common among transfers that also included a transfer fee.

In absolute terms, the median service fees were higher in transfers with higher transfer fees. This was true for both engaging-club and releasing-club agents. When expressed as a percentage of the transfer fee, however, the median service fees decreased as the transfer fee increased.

Figure 7: Number of transfers with club agents, by transfer fee and size of agent service fees paid by clubs (YTD)

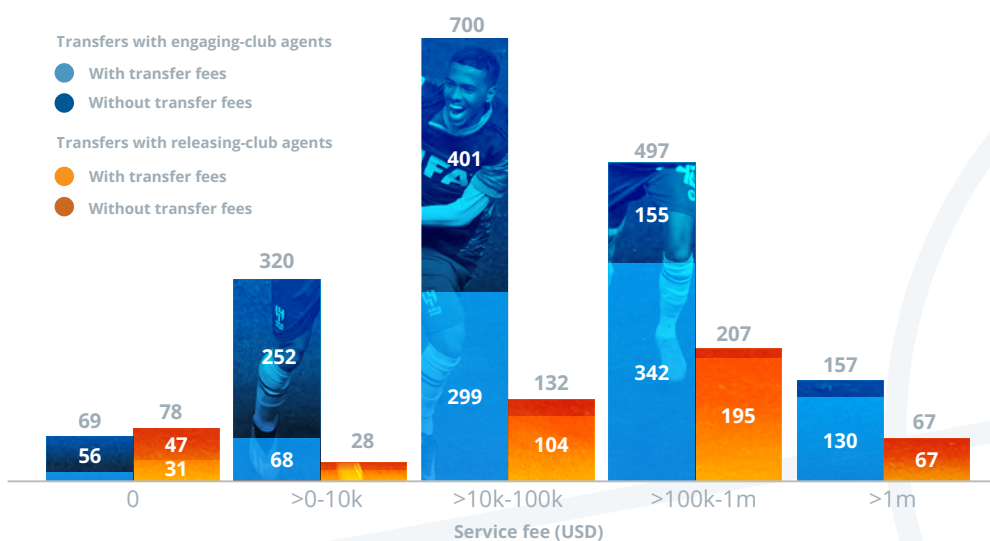
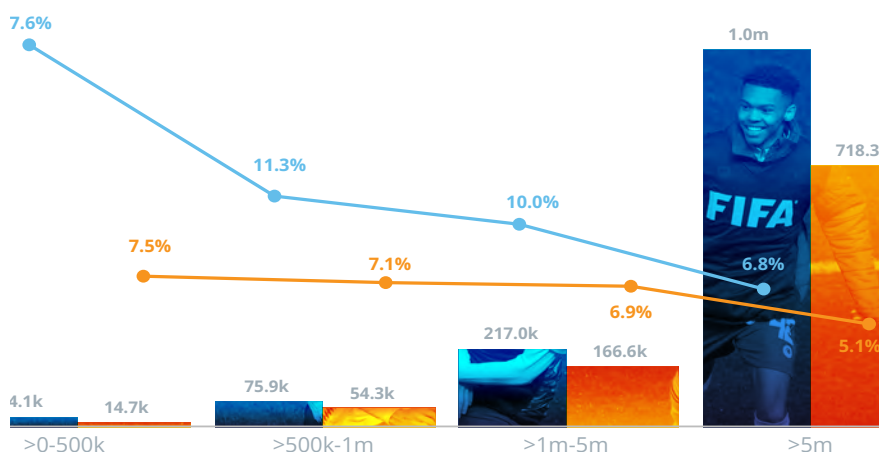


Figure 8: Median club agent service fees in USD and in % of the transfer fee, by size of the transfer fee (YTD)



## Player agents

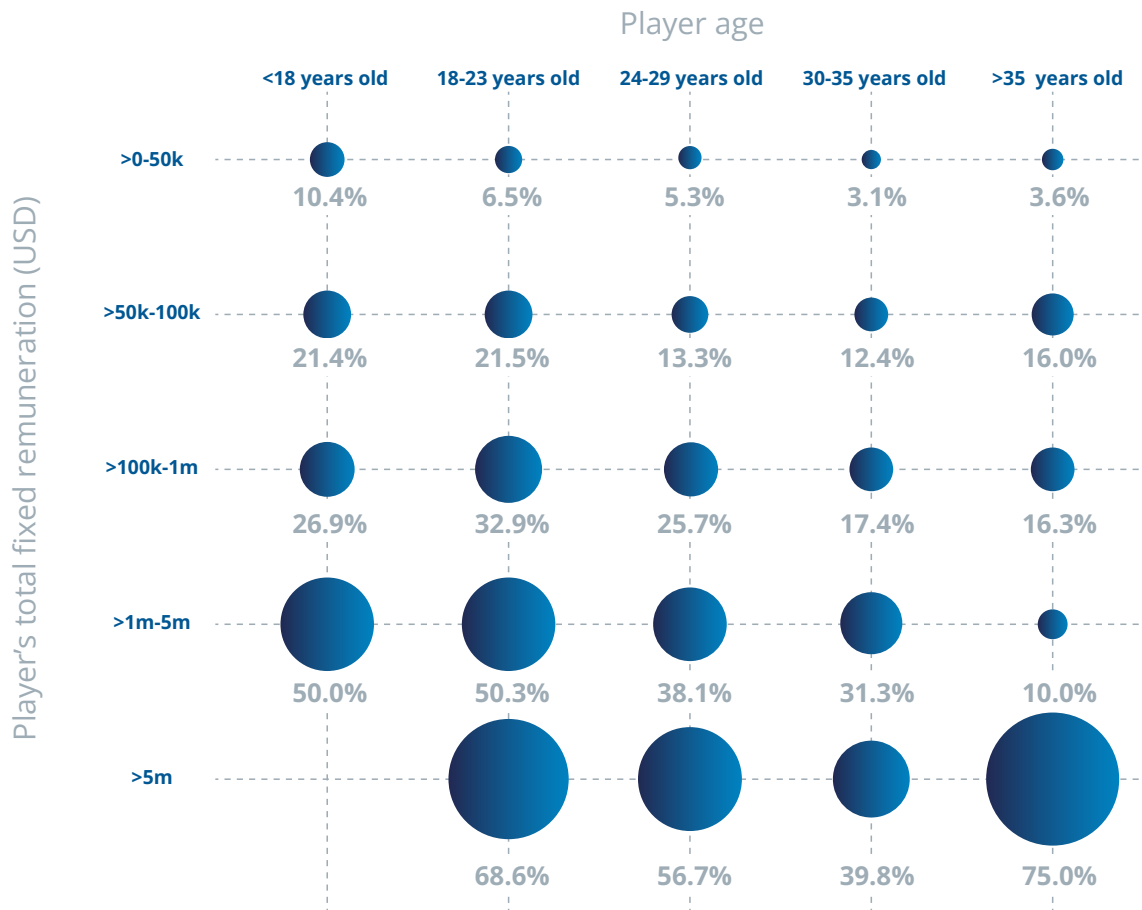
The number of international transfers with an agent acting on behalf of the player reached a record high in 2023 with a total of 3,353 transfers. This corresponds to 15.4% of all transfers and represents an increase of 8.4% compared to 2022.

Figure 9: Number and percentage of international transfers with player agents



In a similar way to the relationship between transfer fees and the involvement of club agents in transfers, player agents tend to appear more frequently in transfers with higher player salaries, in particular for younger players. Overall, player agents become less frequent the older the player, but this effect is less pronounced than that of the player's total fixed remuneration.

Figure 10: Percentage of transfers with player agents, by player age and total fixed remuneration (YTD)



Players from Aotearoa New Zealand used agents the most in 2023, being represented by one or more agents in more than half (52.2%) of their international transfers. Players from Norway (45.3%) and Czechia (43.3%) complete the top three.

Figure 11: Top five nationalities, by percentage of transfers with player agents (YTD)



# 04. AGENTS IN WOMEN'S PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALL

## Club agents

For the first time ever, clubs in women's professional football in 2023 spent more than USD 1 million for the services of club agents, with a total outlay of just under USD 1.4 million. Club agents were present in a record number of 125 transfers: 120 with just an engaging-club agent, two with both clubs represented by an agent and three with just a releasing-club agent. Compared to 2022, the number of transfers involving a club agent increased by more than 20%.

Figure 12: Clubs' spending on agent service fees (USD) in women's professional football

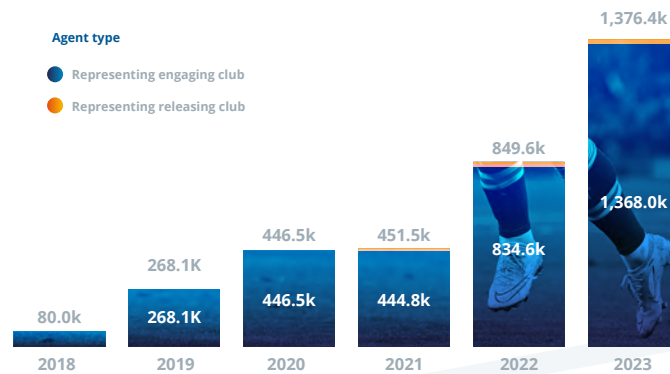
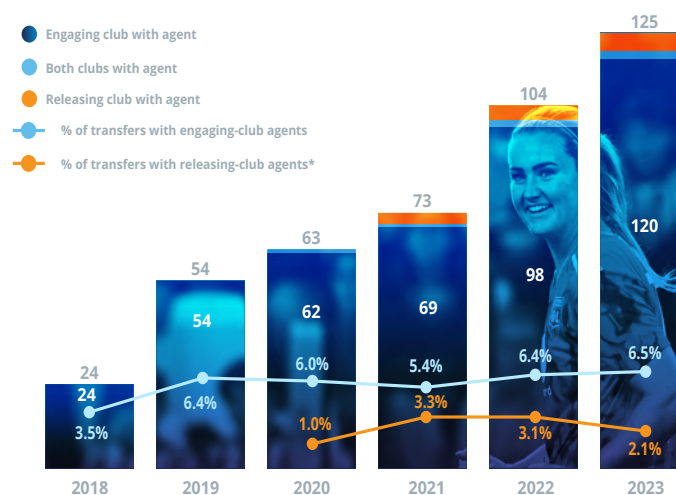


Figure 13: Number and percentage of international transfers with club agents in women's professional football



\*The percentage of transfers with releasing-club agents is based on all transfers excluding out-of-contract transfers and returns from loans as they do not involve a releasing club and hence can never involve a releasing-club agent.

## Player agents

The number of transfers with an agent representing the player increased by 9.7% compared to 2022, reaching a new high of 375 transfers with player agents in 2023. These transfers represent 20.1% of all international transfers in women's professional football, almost five percentage points higher than the equivalent figure in men's football.

Figure 14: Number and percentage of international transfers with player agents in women's professional football



Norwegian players were most prone to employ an agent in 2023, with more than half of their transfers (53.1%) involving a player agent. Players from the Netherlands and Australia followed close behind with 48.4% and 47.2% respectively.

Figure 15: Top five nationalities, by percentage of transfers with player agents (YTD)



# 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 2023 and 4 December 2023. The data was extracted from TMS on 5 December 2023.

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



# DISCLAIMER

The information in this report is based:

- on individual transaction data provided directly by football clubs and associations in TMS; and
- on data that candidates or football agents provided on the FIFA Agent Platform.

FIFA assumes no responsibility for the accuracy, completeness and reliability of the information provided by the clubs, associations, candidates and football agents. 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

The source of all data and information (unless explicitly stated otherwise) is:

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Legal Strategic Projects Subdivision  
Legal & Compliance Division  
Zurich, Switzerland

## Data protection

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