

Global survey reveals how football's regulatory structures fail to protect players

November 29 2016, by Joe Paxton



Credit: University of Manchester

The first-ever worldwide survey of male professional footballers has revealed that the vast majority have short careers with very little job security, and that they face an uncertain future once their career comes to an end.

The research was commissioned by FIFPro, the international federation

of [professional football players](#), who approached the University of Manchester to construct and analyse a [survey](#). FIFPro have been working to improve labour conditions of footballers for the past 50 years.

The survey covered demographic information, information about contracts and salaries, the market for football [players](#) and the workings of the transfer system, contractual, psychological, and physical abuse of players, health and wellbeing, and match-fixing.

13,876 surveys were returned from 54 different countries and 87 different leagues - this accounts for 21% of FIFPro-affiliated players worldwide, and is the largest survey of professional sportspersons utilising direct participant data ever conducted.

The survey revealed that, besides the world's top professionals, the supply of players far outstrips demand. Most have brief careers made up of very short contracts, moving regularly between clubs - and often nations. This provides little career stability and, combined with typically low levels of education, players face uncertain futures once their careers end.

Many players have salary payments delayed, and although transfer fees only apply to a minority of players, those players are often stopped from moving to the employer of their choice. The survey also found that a sizable minority of footballers are subjected to abuse, ranging from being forced to train alone through to physical violence from their management and coaching staff, colleagues, or fans.

The report challenges the popular idea of the 'millionaire footballer' who is in control of his own career, and adds further weight to the ongoing EU legal challenge to the transfer system. The report will assist FIFPro in their continued efforts to improve the playing conditions and wellbeing of professional footballer throughout the world.

"He runs a high risk of suffering delays in payment, physical and psychological abuse, and he may be approached to fix a match. When his short playing career ends, he is likely to have little financial security, or the training and education necessary to embark on a new profession" added Geoff.

"Overall, the findings suggest that the labour market for footballers is highly segmented, as it is distinguished by different working conditions, characteristics and rules," said the report's co-author Dr Aristeia Koukiadaki. "This presents implications for players, but also for clubs and policymakers - greater attention needs to be paid to governance of the employment conditions and enforcement mechanisms in the sector."

Provided by University of Manchester

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