



AN ANALYSIS OF TRENDS IN THE AVERAGE TOTAL COST OF MIGRANT REMITTANCE SERVICES

*This Report reflects the latest trends observed in the data published in June 2014.
Remittance Prices Worldwide is available at <http://remittanceprices.worldbank.org>*

Overview

The Remittance Prices Worldwide* (RPW) database monitors remittance prices across all geographic regions of the world. RPW was launched by the World Bank in September 2008,ⁱ and remains a key tool to monitor the cost incurred by remitters when sending money along major remittance corridors. The recently launched fourteenth iteration of RPW covers 226 country corridors worldwide, originating from 32 remittance sending countries and destined for 89 receiving countries.

This Report uses data from RPW's most recent release to analyze the global, regional, and country specific trends in the average total cost of migrant remittances, as well as the factors influencing them. RPW is used as a reference for measuring progress towards the "5x5" objective,ⁱⁱ which has been endorsed by the G8 and the G20 and is being pursued in partnership with governments, service providers, and interested stakeholders.

Main Findings

Based on the data collected for the Q2 2014 release of RPW, and when compared to previous iterations,ⁱⁱⁱ the following main findings have been identified. All figures refer to the cost of sending USD 200 or the local currency equivalent.

- In Q2 2014, the Global Average total cost of sending remittances was recorded at 8.14 percent, declining from 8.36 percent in the previous quarter and reaching a new lifetime low.
- The Global Weighted average was recorded at 5.85 percent in Q2 2014, declining slightly from the last quarter, when it was recorded at 5.91 percent, suggesting that costs continue to be lower where larger volumes are transferred.
- The International MTO Index, which includes the Money Transfer Operators (MTOs) present in over 85 percent of the surveyed corridors, also declined in the last quarter. The Index now stands at 8.22 percent in Q2 2014, down from 8.35 percent in Q1 2014.
- Significant improvements can be observed at the level of individual corridors since the launch of the 5x5 initiative. In Q2 2014, a third more corridors have an average cost below 10 percent compared to 5 years ago and, in the same time period, the percentage of corridors with average cost that is over 15 percent has more than halved.
- The average cost for sending remittances from the G8 countries declined from 7.73 percent in Q1 2014 to 7.54 percent in Q2 2014; the lowest level ever recorded and below 8 percent for the second consecutive quarter. All G8 countries experienced a decline in Q2 2014. Russia remains the least expensive sending country in the G8 group, and Japan remains the most expensive although the cost has consistently been decreasing over the last year.
- In Q2 2014, the cost of sending remittances from G20 countries was recorded at 8.12 percent, compared to 8.31 percent in the previous quarter. The average cost of sending money to the G20 countries that are included in RPW as receiving

* Remittance Prices Worldwide is a product of the Financial Inclusion and Infrastructure Global Practice of the Financial and Private Sector Development Vice-Presidency of the World Bank.

markets experienced a modest increase from the record low of 8.25 percent in Q1 2014 to 8.39 percent in Q2 2014.

- The cost of sending remittances declined for all regions. The cost of remitting to Latin American and the Caribbean (LAC)^{iv} experienced the most notable decline and remains the least costly region to send money to, with an average of 5.57 percent, followed by South Asia (SAR), where the cost is 6.45 percent on average. The cost of sending money to Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) decreased from 11.71 percent in Q1 2014 to 11.55 in Q2 2014, but remains the most expensive region of the world to send money to. MNA and ECA regions remained substantially stable in Q2 2014.

- The average total cost of sending money through commercial banks was 12.05 percent in Q2 2014, well above the Global Average and the most expensive of all Remittance Service Provider (RSP) types. Post offices registered a decrease in Q2 2014, now standing at 4.66 percent, down from 5.93 percent in the previous quarter. The cost of sending money through MTOs also registered a modest decline from 6.69 in Q1 2014 to 6.56 percent in Q2 2014.

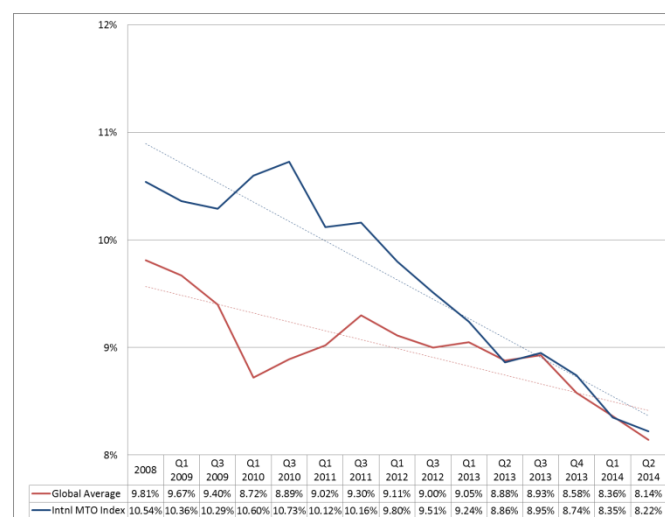
- Cash products remain the most widely available (41 percent of the sample), while other types of services – particularly on-line and account-to-account services – now represent 23 and 16 percent of the sample, respectively.

Global Average cost for remittances declines further, and major MTOs follow a similar trend

In Q2 2014, the Global Average total cost^v for sending remittances was 8.14 percent, a new lifetime low (see Figure 1). This represents a 0.74 percentage point decline over the last year, as in Q2 2013 the same figure was recorded at 8.88 percent. The index then remained substantially stable in Q3 2013, when it was recorded at 8.93 percent. The Global Average experienced a noteworthy decline in Q4 2013 and Q1 2014, when it was 8.58 and 8.36 percent, respectively.

The International MTO Index tracks the prices of MTOs that are present in at least 85 percent of corridors covered in the RPW database. This Index decreased consistently in every quarter from Q3 2011 until Q2 2013, for a total decline of approximately 1.3 percentage points.^{vi} A convergence between the Global Average and the International MTO Index continued until the Q1 2014, when the Index declined significantly to reach 8.35 percent and fell slightly below the Global Average for the first time. In Q2 2014, the Index was recorded at 8.22 percent, representing a further decline from the previous quarter and a return to its position slightly above the Global Average.

Figure 1 Global Average Total Cost for sending USD 200^{vii}

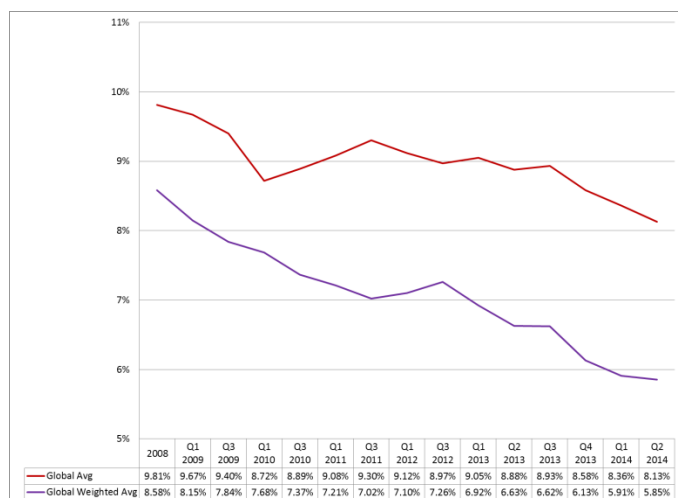


Global weighted average stays below 6 percent

In addition to the Global Average, a global weighted average total cost is calculated, which accounts for the size of the flows in each remittance corridor.^{viii}

The global weighted average of sending remittances, as illustrated in Figure 2, has, at times, shown a different pattern from the simple average. After declining for the first six consecutive iterations, from 2008 to Q3 2011, the global weighted average increased for the first time in Q1 2012. The upward trend continued in Q3 2012, when the global weighted average increased to 7.26 percent, but was reversed in the following quarter. Since Q2 2013, the weighted average has shown an overall declining trend, falling below 6 percent for the first time in Q1 2014. In Q2 2014, the global weighted average slightly decreased to 5.85 percent.

Figure 2 Global Weighted Average for sending USD 200

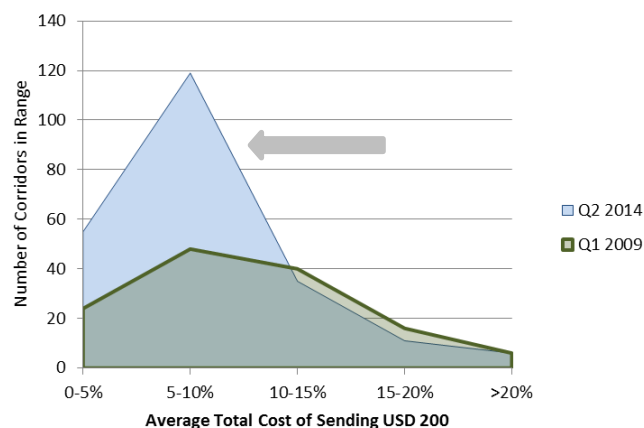


Corridors recording average costs below 10 percent increased significantly since 2009, corridors over 15 percent more than halved

Figure 3 shows that the overall downward trend reflected in the Global Average is even more evident when looking at the level of individual

corridors. While in the global figures the less virtuous cases prevent the averages from dropping to more desirable levels, observing the individual corridors shows the progress that has been made over the years, also thanks to the efforts generated by the “5x5 objective” initiative.

Figure 3 Distribution of Average Total Costs



The percentage of corridors where remitters could pay between 0 and 10 percent on average to send money home has increased significantly since 2009. In Q1 2009, this was the case for only 53 percent of corridors; in Q2 2014, 77 percent of RPW corridors fell in this range.

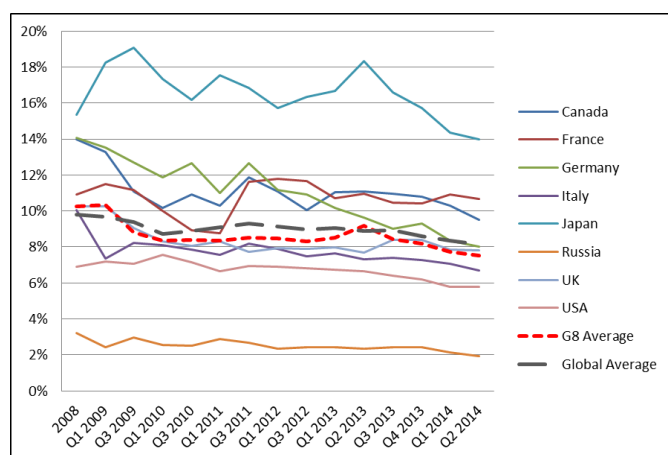
For the higher bands, the percentage has dropped: nearly one fifth of corridors (16 percent) had an average total cost above 15 percent in 2009; today, 7.5 percent of corridors do. Additionally, only 4.9 percent of the corridors are still in the 15-20 percent range, compared to 11.9 percent 6 years ago.

Average cost of sending from G8 countries falls to 7.54 percent

The G8 countries include the major sending countries in the world. The average cost for sending remittances from the G8 countries 7.54 declined from 7.73 percent in Q1 2014 to 7.54 percent in Q2 2014, a new record low.

As Figure 4 illustrates, there are significant disparities in the cost structure across these countries (see also Table 1 in the Annex). The average cost of sending money from Japan, Canada, and France is above both the Global Average and the G8 average, while costs in Russia, the United States, Italy, and the United Kingdom are below. This has been relatively consistent for most countries over the years. The average cost of sending remittances from Germany was consistently above the Global Average and the G8 average, and in this quarter has fallen below both averages for the first time.

Figure 4 Total average in G8 countries



In Q2 2014, all G8 countries registered at least a modest decline in the cost of sending remittances. With an average cost of 1.92 percent in Q2 2014, down from 2.16 percent last quarter, Russia maintains the lowest average total cost across G8 countries. It is important to note that Russia has a unique environment where cross-border remittances are mostly conducted in the same currency and possible additional costs associated with a currency exchange are not known. The Russian market also benefits from relatively low fees charged by the providers when compared to the other G8 countries.

The average total cost of sending remittances from Japan declined from 14.36 percent in Q1 2014 to 14.00 percent in Q2 2014, the lowest ever recorded for Japan. Despite this continued decline, Japan

remains the most expensive country in the G8 group.

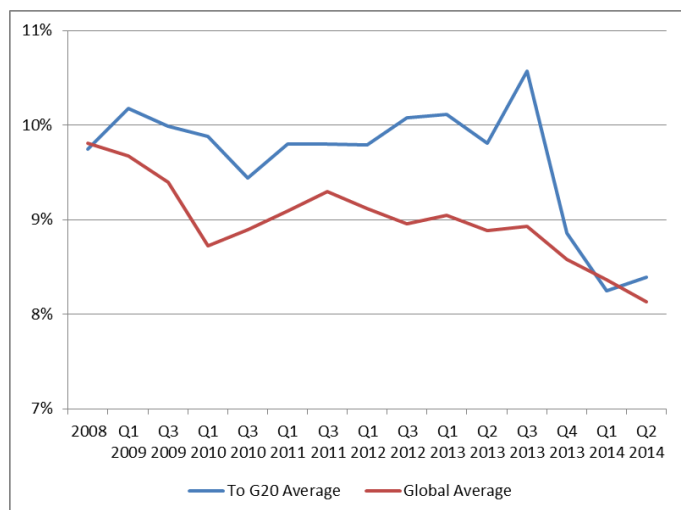
Germany experienced the largest decline, from 8.37 percent in Q1 2014 to 8.03 percent in Q2 2014. Canada and Italy also registered fairly significant declines; from 10.31 percent to 9.50 percent for Canada, falling below 10 percent for the first time, and 7.06 percent to 6.70 percent for Italy, falling below 7 percent for the first time. Declines in other countries were more modest or negligible: 10.91 to 10.65 percent for France, 7.86 percent to 7.80 percent for the UK, and 5.80 percent to 5.78 percent for the USA.

Cost of sending remittances to the G20 countries slightly declines

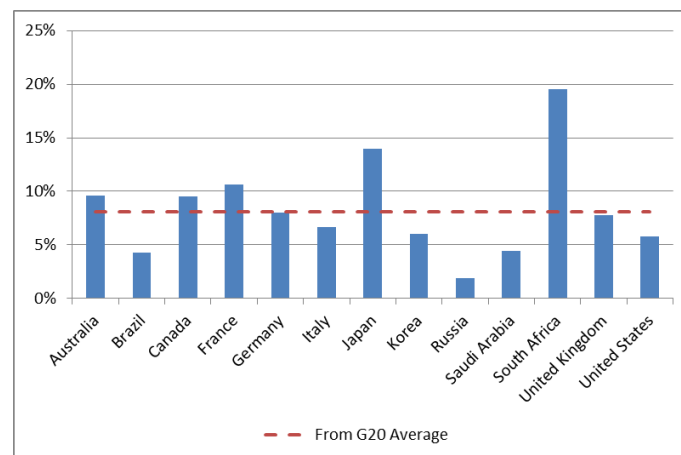
With the exception of Q3 2009, the cost of remitting from G20 countries^{ix} followed the same pattern as the Global Average, until Q1 2013. In Q2 2013, the two figures began to move in opposite directions, and have continued to do so, with the exception of Q4 2013, when both indices declined. Once again, the cost of remitting from the G20 countries moved in the opposite direction to the Global Average cost. The cost of remitting from G20 countries was recorded at 8.31 percent in Q1 2014 and 8.12 percent in Q2 2014, as shown in Figure 5 (see also Table 1 in the annex).

Figure 5 Average cost of sending USD 200 from G20 countries

The average cost of sending money to the G20 countries that are included in RPW as receiving markets also experienced a modest increase and was recorded at 8.39 percent in Q2 2014. Apart from a few quarters, the average cost of sending money to the G20 countries has followed the pattern of the Global Average. The disparity between the average cost of sending money to the G20 and the Global Average increased over time, and reached a peak in Q3 2013 (see Figure 6 and Table 2 in the annex). The convergence between the two figures noted in Q4 2013 and in Q1 2014 was reversed in Q2 2014, when the indices moved in opposite directions.

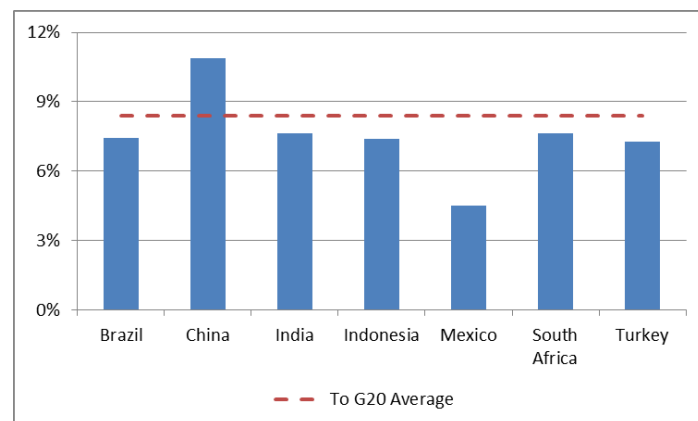
Figure 6 Average cost of sending USD 200 to G20 countries

South Africa remains the most costly G20 country to send remittances from, with an average of 19.56, followed by Japan with an average of 14.00 percent (see Figure 7). The least expensive sending country, together with Russia, is Brazil (4.24), followed by the USA (5.78), and Korea (5.99).

Figure 7 Average cost of remitting from G20 countries in Q2 2014

China is the most expensive country in the G20 to send money to, with an average cost of 10.89 percent in Q2 2014 (Figure 8).

In Q2 2014, Mexico and Turkey were the cheapest receiving markets in the G20 group, with averages of 4.51 and 7.28 percent, respectively.

Figure 8 Average cost of remitting to G20 countries in Q2 2014

Cost of sending money to Latin America drops, while Sub-Saharan Africa remains most expensive region to send money to

The cost for remittance services varies significantly depending on the region where money is being sent (see Figure 9 and Table 3 in the annex). The cost of sending money to Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) declined from 6.21 percent in Q1 2014 to 5.57 percent in Q2 2014, falling below 6 percent for the first time and overtaking South Asia (SA), where the average cost was recorded at 6.45 percent, as the least costly region to send money to.

Due to the peculiarity of the Russian market and its heavy influence on the Eastern and Central Asia (ECA) region, two values have been calculated and considered: an average including and an average excluding Russia. The average including Russia declined slightly, from 6.49 percent in Q1 2014 to 6.35 in Q2 2014, largely driven by a decrease in the cost of sending money from Russia. The average excluding Russia declined from 8.18 in Q1 2014 to 7.92 in Q2 2014.

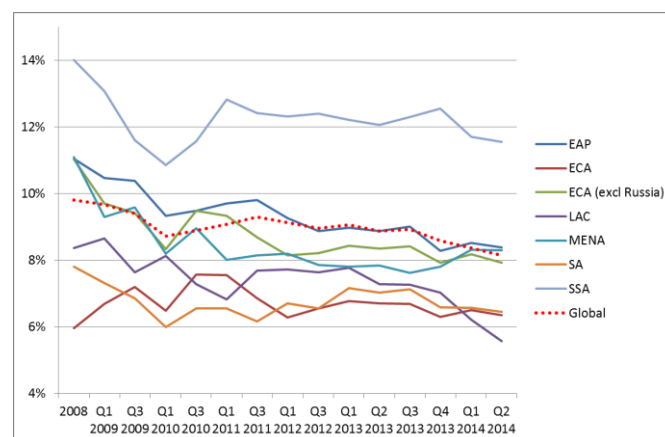
The average cost of sending remittances to the East Asia and Pacific (EAP) region also registered a modest decline from 8.52 in Q1 2014 to 8.38 percent in Q2 2014.

Until 2012, the Middle East and North Africa (MNA) was characterized by a seasonal trend; slight increases in the third quarters followed by drops of the average costs in the first quarters. Unlike previous years, the average price in this region remained relatively stable in Q1 and Q2 of 2013, and registered a fairly significant decline in Q3 2013, from 7.83 to 7.61. In Q1 2014, the cost of sending money to MNA region registered a fairly significant increase from 7.80 percent in Q4 2013 to 8.32 percent. The cost remained substantially stable in Q2 2014, when it was recorded at 8.29 percent.

The cost of sending money to the Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) region declined in the last quarter –

from 11.71 percent in Q1 2014 to 11.55 percent in Q2 2014 – staying below 12 percent for the second consecutive quarter. Still, SSA remains the most expensive region of the world to send money to. These results call for additional efforts of national authorities, as well as the international community, to improve the market for remittances in Africa.

Figure 9 Total averages by region of the world



Post offices remain the least expensive, banks the most costly

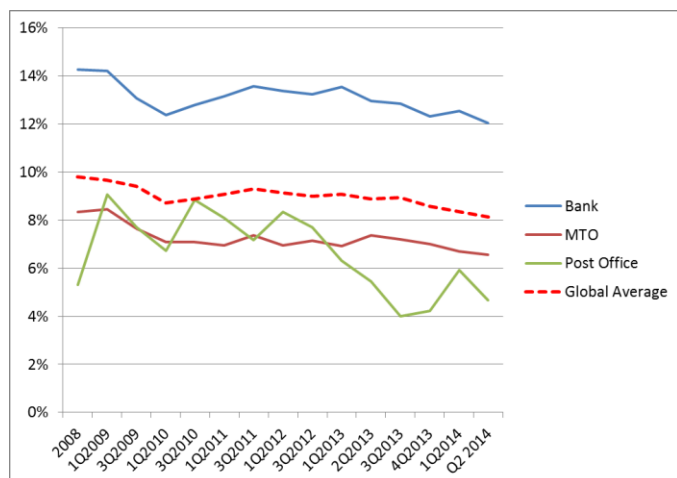
RPW tracks the cost of sending remittances for three main RSP types; commercial banks, MTOs, and post offices. Based on the data from this reporting period (see Figure 10), commercial banks continue to be the most costly RSP type. The cost of sending remittances using a commercial bank declined slightly, from 12.53 percent in Q1 2014 to 12.05 percent in Q2 2014. Despite a modest decline, the cost of sending remittances through banks remains significantly higher than the Global Average and it is also well above the cost of using post offices and MTOs, which are 4.66 and 6.56 percent, respectively.

In Q2 2014, the cost of sending money through MTOs declined from 6.69 to 6.56 percent, reaching a new lifetime low and remaining below 7 percent for the second consecutive quarter.

Post offices remain the cheapest RSP type at 4.66 percent. The notable increase in average cost

recorded last quarter was largely reversed, but prices remain above lifetime low recorded in Q3 2013, when the cost of sending money through Post Offices was 3.99 percent.

Figure 10 Total averages by RSP type



NOTES

ⁱ Several countries/regions operate their own databases to monitor remittance price activity at the national/regional level. The World Bank certifies national and regional remittance prices databases compliant with the minimum mandatory requirements for remittance databases. To date databases for Italy, Central America, Australia/New Zealand, Africa, Norway, France, and Germany have been certified. For more information, visit <http://remittanceprices.worldbank.org/National-Databases>.

ⁱⁱ The 5x5 objective refers to reduction of the Global Average total cost of migrant remittances by 5 percentage points in 5 years. It was adopted by the G8 at the 2009 L'Aquila summit where the commitment was made "to achieve in particular the objective of a reduction of the Global Average costs of transferring remittances from the present 10% to 5% in 5 years." In 2010, the G20 committed to a "significant reduction in the cost of remittances" and established a Development Action for Remittances.

ⁱⁱⁱ The first iteration of the database was released in September 2008. For the following five years, the RPW database was updated every six months with data releases published for Q1 and 3Q 2009, Q1 and 3Q 2010, Q1 and 3Q 2011 and Q1, and 3Q 2012. Starting in 2013, the RPW database will be updated quarterly. Data have been published for Q1 2013, Q2 2013, Q3 2013, Q4 2013, Q1 2014 and Q2 2014.

^{iv} The regions' abbreviations are as follows: East Asia and Pacific (EAP), Europe and Central Asia (ECA), Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), Middle East and North Africa (MNA), South Asia (SAR), Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA).

^v The Global Average total cost is calculated as the average total cost for sending USD 200 with all RSPs worldwide; non-transparent RSPs (i.e. RSPs that do not disclose the exchange rate applied to the transaction) are excluded, as well as corridors from Russia, since in these cases the exchange rates were not provided and cost could be higher if data were complete.

^{vi} The International MTOs Index includes all MTOs that are present in over 85 percent of RPW corridors. Thus far, it has included Western Union and MoneyGram,

which operate in 99 percent and 92 percent of the country corridors covered in the database, respectively.

^{vii} Figures for the global average were adjusted in Q1 2014 following a thorough clean-up of the entire database. Some values slightly vary from data published in the past.

^{viii} It is important to note that, while official data on remittance flows by bilateral corridors are currently not available, estimates (Ratha and Shaw 2007, updated in 2013, available at <http://go.worldbank.org/JITC7NYTTO>) have been used in this calculation. These estimates are based on the Balance Of Payments (BOP) and factor in migrant stocks, destination country incomes, and source country incomes. The methodology for these estimates has been questioned, as well as the accuracy of official data on remittance flows and migrant stocks. However, this still represents the only available comprehensive dataset on bilateral remittance flows. It also seems likely that overall the dataset is sufficiently accurate to reflect at least the proportion between the different corridors, hence offering a good approximation to weight the relevance of each corridor in terms of flow size.

^{ix} In the final declaration of the Cannes Summit on November 3 and 4 2011, the G20 head of state committed to work towards the reduction of the average cost of transferring remittances from 10 to 5 percent by 2014. The G20 adoption of a target created the need for an index that specifically monitors the price of remittances in the G20 members. As some G20 countries are included in RPW as remittance senders, while others are listed as receivers, two different indexes are presented here: (1) average for sending remittances from the G20 member countries; and (2) average for sending remittances to the G20 member countries. The following G20 countries are included in RPW. Sending countries: Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Republic of Korea, Russia, Saudi Arabia, United Kingdom, and the United States. Receiving countries: China, India, Indonesia, Mexico, and Turkey. Countries that are both sending and receiving: Brazil and South Africa. Argentina is not included in RPW. The European Union does not appear as such in RPW, although most EU member countries are included in the database.

ANNEX: TABLES

Table 1 - Total average in G20 sending countries (%)

	2008	Q1 2009	Q3 2009	Q1 2010	Q3 2010	Q1 2011	Q3 2011	Q1 2012	Q3 2012	Q1 2013	Q2 2013	Q3 2013	Q4 2013	Q1 2014	Q2 2014
Australia	-	-	13.98	14.38	13.57	15.21	14.82	11.02	10.84	11.07	10.21	10.19	9.12	9.80	9.60
Brazil	-	-	15.42	15.25	7.12	6.31	11.12	13.00	5.88	8.66	6.35	5.94	9.65	6.35	4.24
Canada	14.00	13.28	11.07	10.18	10.90	10.31	11.87	11.08	10.06	11.03	11.09	10.97	10.79	10.31	9.50
France	10.92	11.50	11.15	10.01	8.95	8.76	11.63	11.78	11.68	10.72	10.96	10.48	10.43	10.91	10.65
Germany	14.07	13.53	12.71	11.85	12.67	10.98	12.64	11.16	10.94	10.16	9.62	9.01	9.31	8.37	8.03
Italy	10.03	7.36	8.21	8.11	7.87	7.57	8.18	7.88	7.47	7.64	7.31	7.42	7.28	7.06	6.70
Japan	15.33	18.24	19.06	17.34	16.16	17.54	16.84	15.70	16.32	16.66	18.31	16.57	15.73	14.36	14.00
Korea	-	-	-	-	8.84	8.28	6.36	6.73	6.65	6.49	6.20	6.43	6.08	5.98	5.99
Russia	3.22	2.42	2.99	2.54	2.52	2.88	2.68	2.33	2.42	2.43	2.34	2.43	2.44	2.16	1.92
Saudi Arabia	5.20	3.86	4.72	4.42	4.60	4.38	4.13	4.22	4.25	3.93	4.46	4.05	4.19	4.09	4.45
South Africa	15.91	16.48	15.03	14.76	14.60	18.29	17.73	18.77	20.56	20.72	20.69	19.29	18.16	19.80	19.56
UK	10.26	10.27	9.05	8.29	8.07	8.33	7.73	7.93	7.88	7.96	7.69	8.40	8.38	7.86	7.80
USA	6.90	7.21	7.06	7.57	7.14	6.67	6.93	6.91	6.80	6.75	6.65	6.42	6.18	5.80	5.78
G8	10.26	10.32	8.80	8.37	8.40	8.36	8.53	8.49	8.31	8.53	9.19	8.44	8.20	7.73	7.54
From G20	9.23	9.07	9.49	9.04	8.92	9.11	9.19	8.98	8.87	9.12	9.52	8.72	8.16	8.31	8.12
Global	9.81	9.67	9.40	8.72	8.89	9.02	9.30	9.11	9.00	9.05	8.88	8.93	8.58	8.36	8.14

Table 2 - Total average in G20 receiving countries (%)

	2008	Q1 2009	Q3 2009	Q1 2010	Q3 2010	Q1 2011	Q3 2011	Q1 2012	Q3 2012	Q1 2013	Q2 2013	Q3 2013	Q4 2013	Q1 2014	Q2 2014
Brazil	14.67	12.42	8.54	14.01	10.93	10.44	13.42	11.31	12.99	13.48	11.56	11.94	10.97	6.35	7.43
China	14.44	15.29	13.66	12.55	11.00	12.58	11.92	11.60	12.01	11.62	11.59	11.99	11.13	10.58	10.89
India	7.65	7.91	7.56	7.34	8.14	7.70	6.96	7.95	7.83	9.05	9.18	8.57	7.86	7.57	7.62
Indonesia	10.49	8.31	9.19	6.40	6.43	6.25	5.94	6.97	6.01	6.69	6.67	7.61	6.53	7.10	7.38
Mexico	5.80	7.01	5.95	7.42	7.37	6.58	5.97	5.86	5.56	5.31	5.67	4.41	5.29	4.48	4.51
South Africa	12.22	12.42	11.64	10.20	8.62	9.55	8.03	7.90	9.57	10.08	9.87	9.55	8.39	7.63	7.62
Turkey	12.17	11.26	11.63	10.05	9.58	9.25	8.76	8.76	7.75	7.26	8.43	7.95	7.24	7.02	7.28
To G20	9.74	10.18	9.99	9.88	9.44	9.80	9.80	9.79	10.08	10.11	9.81	10.57	8.86	8.25	8.39
Global	9.81	9.67	9.40	8.72	8.89	9.02	9.30	9.11	9.00	9.05	8.88	8.93	8.58	8.36	8.14

Table 3 - Total average by regions of the world (%)

	2008	Q1 2009	Q3 2009	Q1 2010	Q3 2010	Q1 2011	Q3 2011	Q1 2012	Q3 2012	Q1 2013	Q2 2013	Q3 2013	Q4 2013	Q1 2014	Q2 2014
EAP	11.05	10.46	10.38	9.33	9.48	9.71	9.80	9.27	8.88	8.97	8.88	9.00	8.28	8.52	8.38
ECA	5.96	6.68	7.19	6.48	7.57	7.55	6.86	6.28	6.54	6.77	6.70	6.68	6.29	6.49	6.35
ECA (x Russia)	11.03	9.70	9.42	8.33	9.49	9.32	8.68	8.14	8.21	8.43	8.35	8.41	7.93	8.18	7.92
LAC	8.37	8.65	7.63	8.12	7.27	6.82	7.68	7.72	7.65	7.77	7.28	7.26	7.02	6.21	5.57
MNA	11.10	9.30	9.58	8.19	8.95	8.00	8.15	8.19	7.85	7.81	7.83	7.61	7.80	8.32	8.29
SAR	7.80	7.31	6.85	5.99	6.54	6.56	6.15	6.70	6.54	7.16	7.02	7.12	6.58	6.56	6.45
SSA	14.01	13.07	11.61	10.86	11.57	12.82	12.41	12.32	12.40	12.21	12.06	12.29	12.55	11.71	11.55
Global	9.81	9.67	9.40	8.72	8.89	9.02	9.30	9.11	9.00	9.05	8.88	8.93	8.58	8.36	8.14

See note iv for list of abbreviations