



FIFA 2026 WORLD CUP: MAPPING TALENT, VALUE AND VISION

Analysis by Market value and Goal Contribution

IST 719 | Akanksh Shetty

1,200,000+ Players
From 2000 to 2025

R Package used: dplyr | tidyr | ggplot2 | lubridate | scales
| ggrepel | maps | rnaturalearth | rnaturalearthdata.

STORY

The FIFA World Cup 2026 will be hosted by the United States, and players with the strongest market value and recent form may tip the balance. Using contribution data, transfer market value, and position trends, we help decision-makers and fans assess the potential of each nation's squad heading into the tournament.

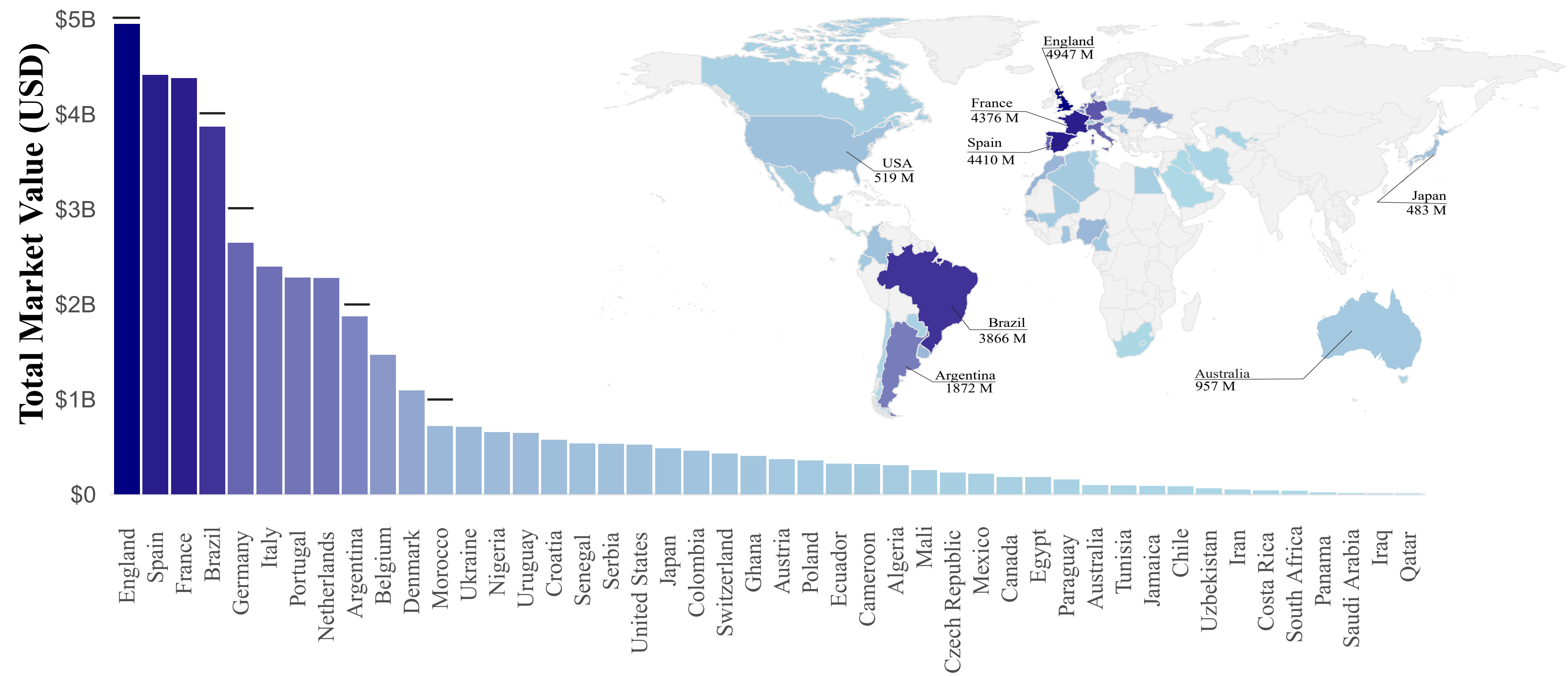
MOTIVATION

Teams can make better squad decisions by understanding the trends in player value and performance leading up to FIFA 2026. National team coaches, analysts, and scouts might be especially interested in identifying high-potential contributors. And of course, fans around the world would love to explore the insights behind their favorite players' and countries' road to glory.

DATA DESCRIPTION

This dataset contains over 1,200,000 player appearance records, covering 60,000+ games from major competitions across multiple seasons. It includes 400,000+ historical market valuations, 30,000+ players, and 400+ clubs. Most of the analysis focuses on aggregating player contributions, transfer value trends, and national team readiness leading up to the 2026 FIFA World Cup.

Where does football talent come from?



Are the most expensive players the best performers?

This bubble plot compares the top 20 football players in 2025 based on two key factors:

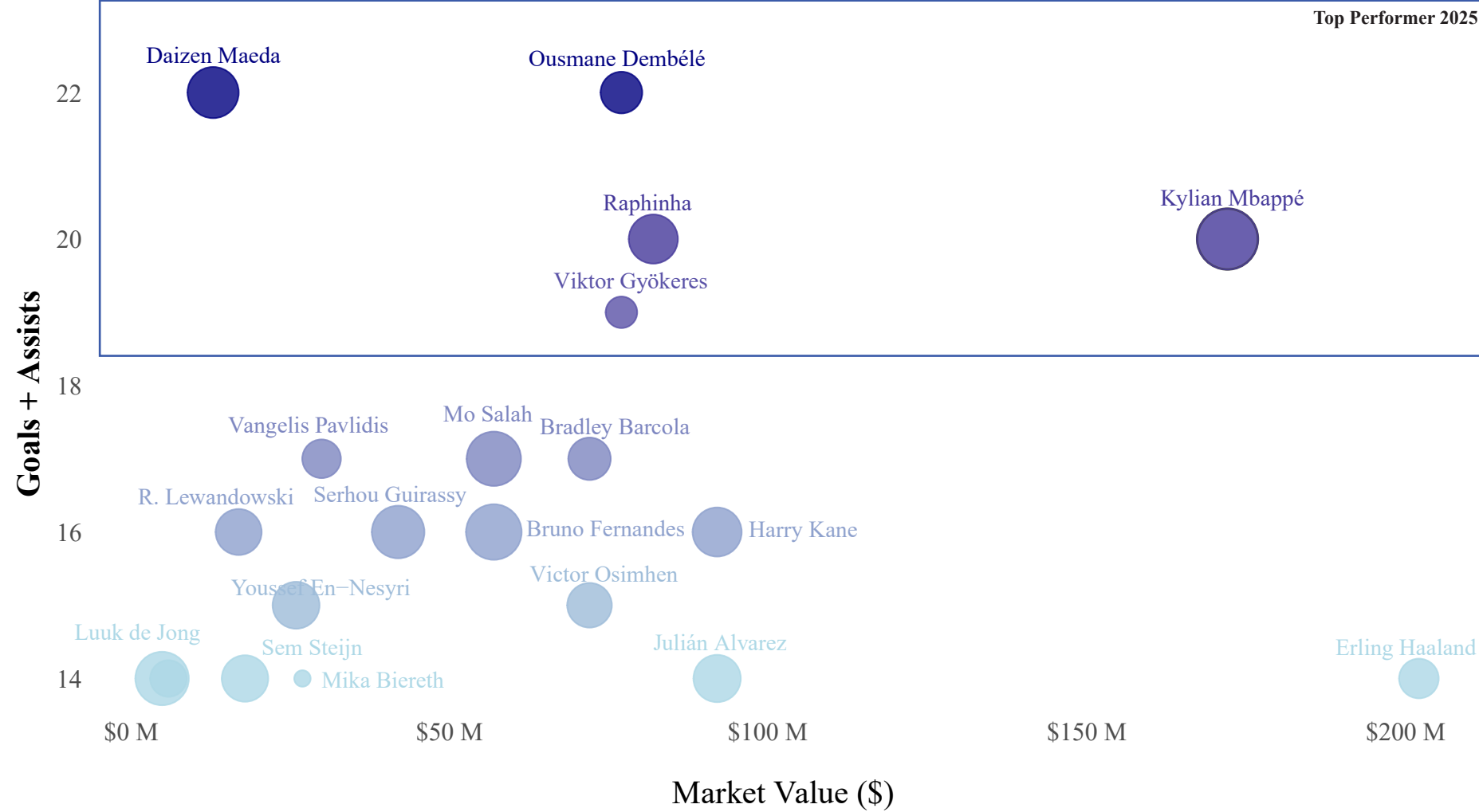
- X-axis: Market Value (€)
- Y-axis: Total Goal Contributions (Goals + Assists)

Each bubble represents a player and encodes two additional dimensions:

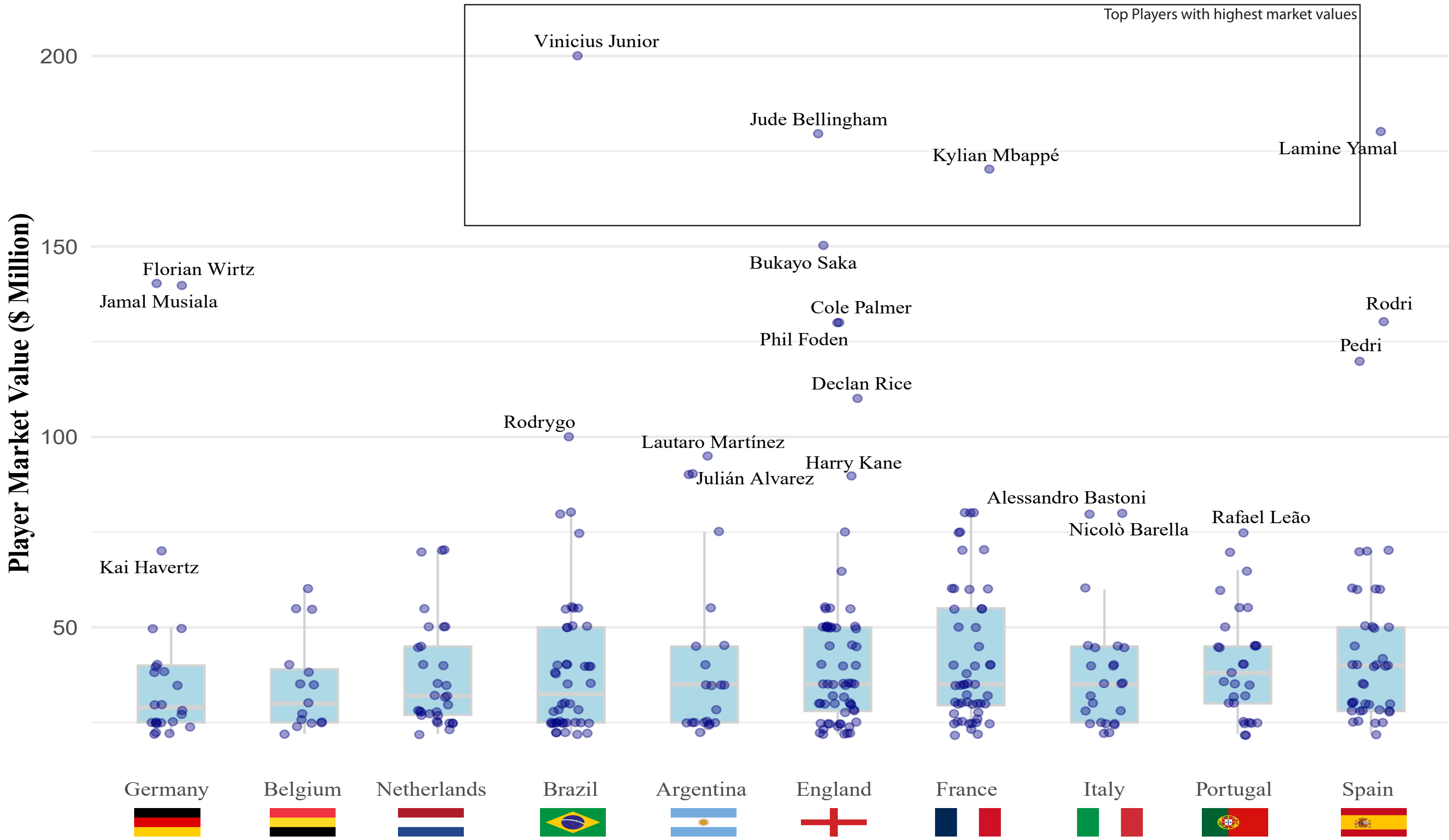
- Size: Total minutes played (larger bubbles = more time on pitch)
- Color: Total contribution (darker = higher goal + assist tally)

Notable insights include:

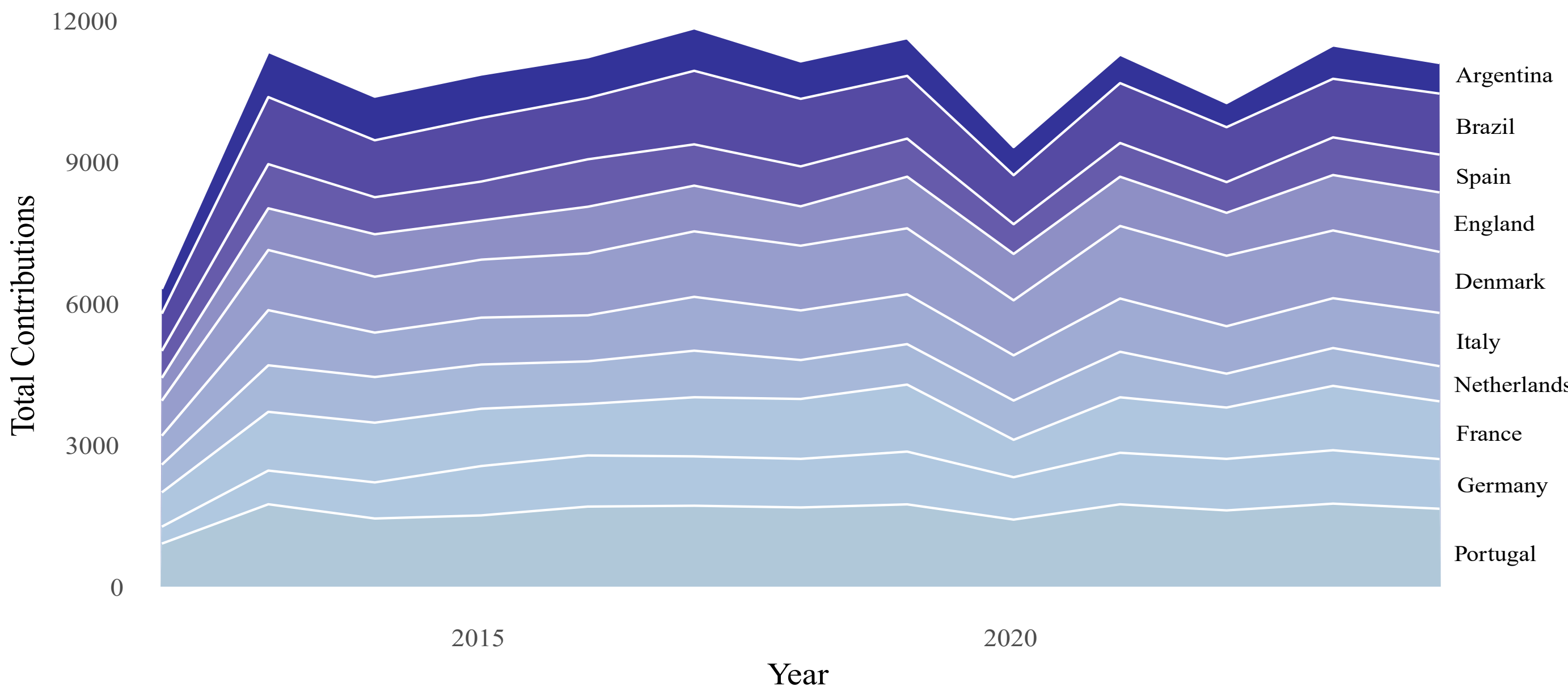
- Kylian Mbappé stands out with both high market value and high goal involvement.
- Daizen Maeda and Ousmane Dembélé show strong contribution levels despite lower market values, indicating undervalued performance.
- Players like Erling Haaland and Julián Álvarez have high market values but lower contribution totals in 2025, suggesting either fewer minutes, injuries, or underperformance that season.



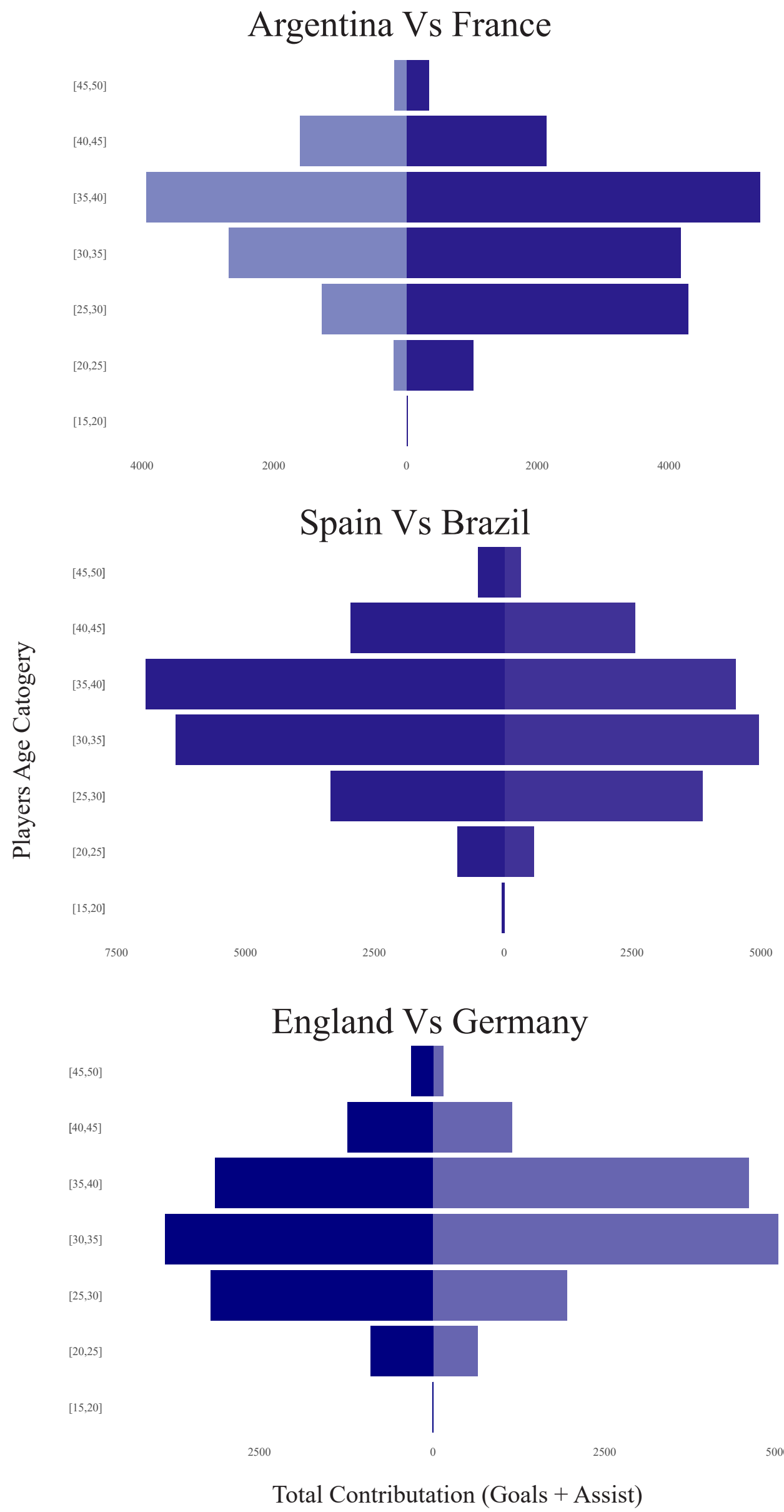
How do the world top soccer nations stack up the in play?



Which nations goals and assists from 2010 to 2024?



Youth Vs Experience who delivers the most?



CONCLUSION

This analysis highlights how player market value, youth versus experience, and goal contributions shape the road to the FIFA 2026 World Cup. Spain, Brazil, and France emerge as major powerhouses, blending elite youth talents like Lamine Yamal with proven stars. Market value distributions reveal that while some teams rely heavily on a few top players, others display greater depth. The shifting balance between U23 players and experienced veterans offers insight into which teams might dominate. By mapping talent, value, and vision, we provide a data-driven perspective on the nations best positioned for World Cup success.