



FIFA 2026 WORLD CUP: MAPPING TALENT, VALUE AND VISION

Analysis by Market value and Goal Contribution

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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.

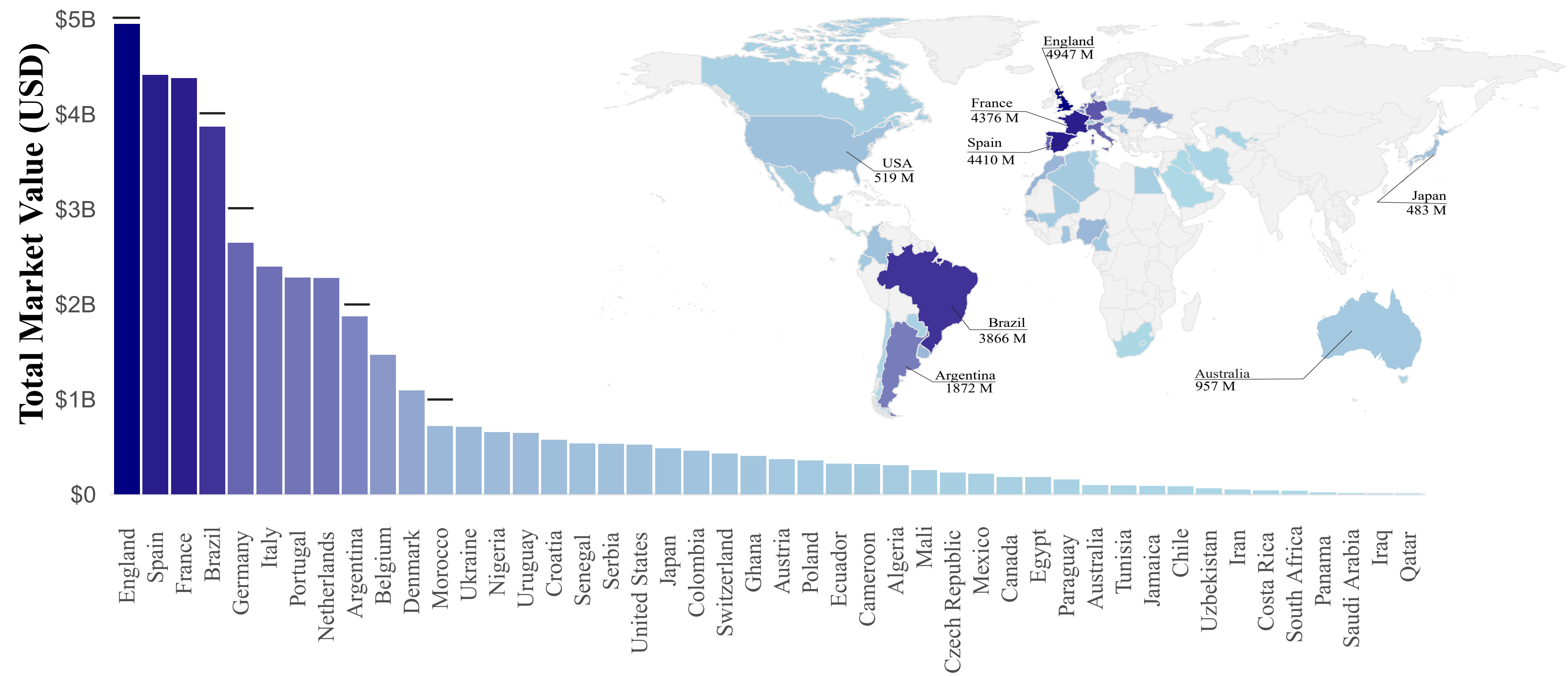
MOTIVATION

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:

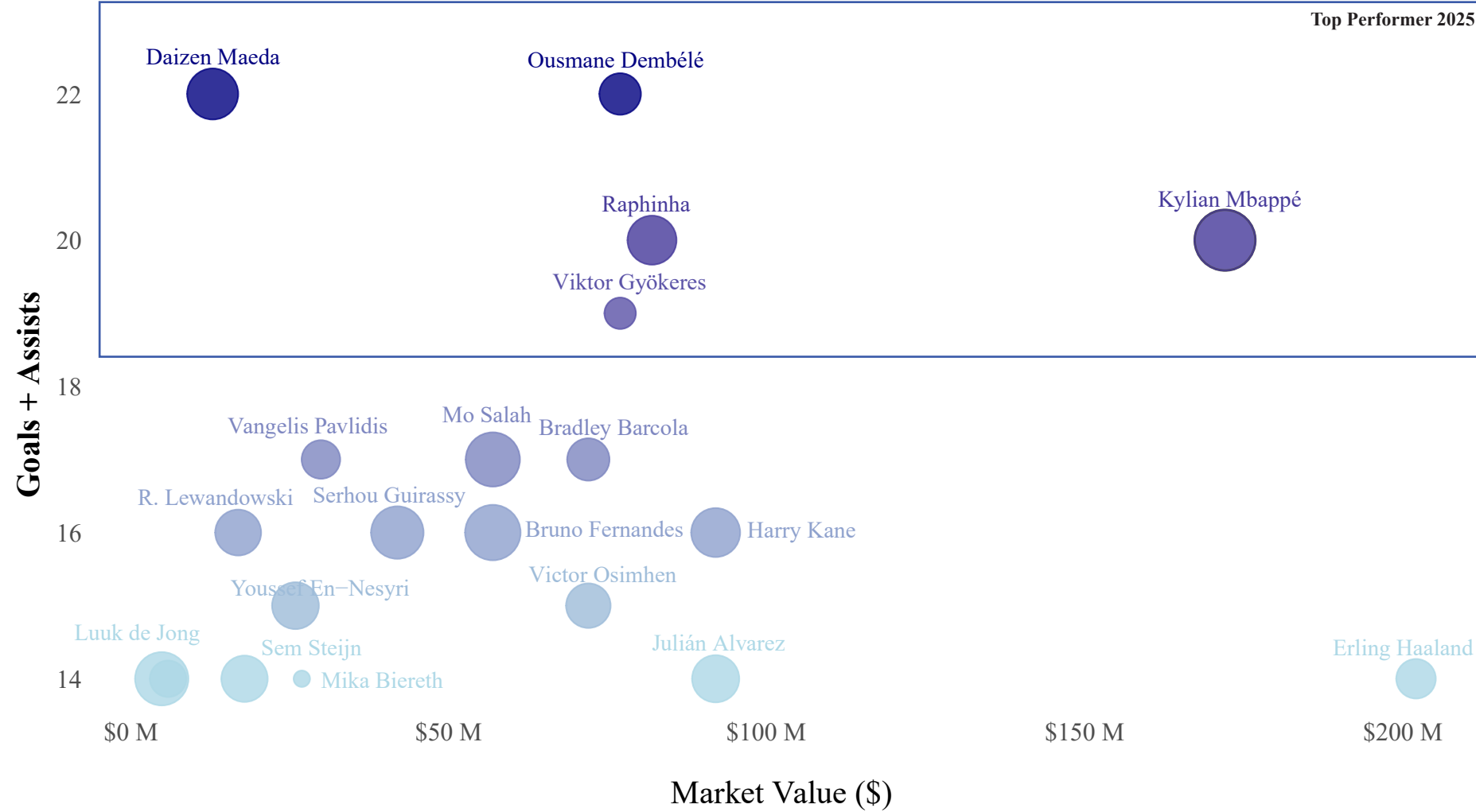
- X-axis: Market Value (€)
- Y-axis: Total Goal Contributions (Goals + Assists)

Each bubble represents a player and encodes two additional dimensions:

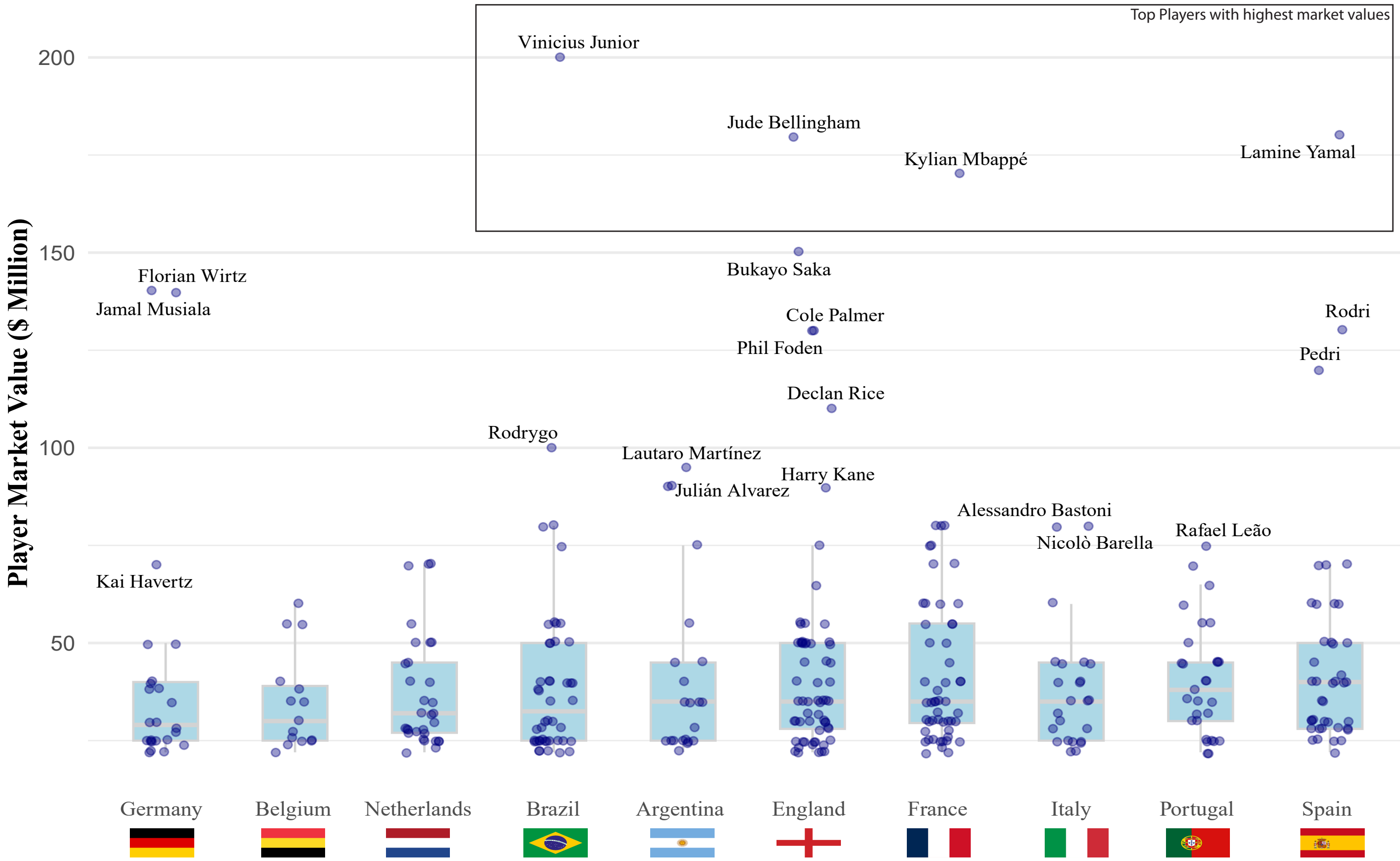
- Size: Total minutes played (larger bubbles = more time on pitch)
- Color: Total contribution (darker = higher goal + assist tally)

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?



This boxplot displays the distribution of market values for the top 500 most valuable football players, grouped by their country of citizenship.

Each box summarizes the central range of player values (from the 25th to 75th percentile), with a line indicating the median market value.

The individual dots represent each player, and several high-value outlier such as Vinicius Junior, Kylian Mbappé, and Lamine Yamal are labeled by name. These standout players significantly exceed their country's average market value.

By comparing countries:

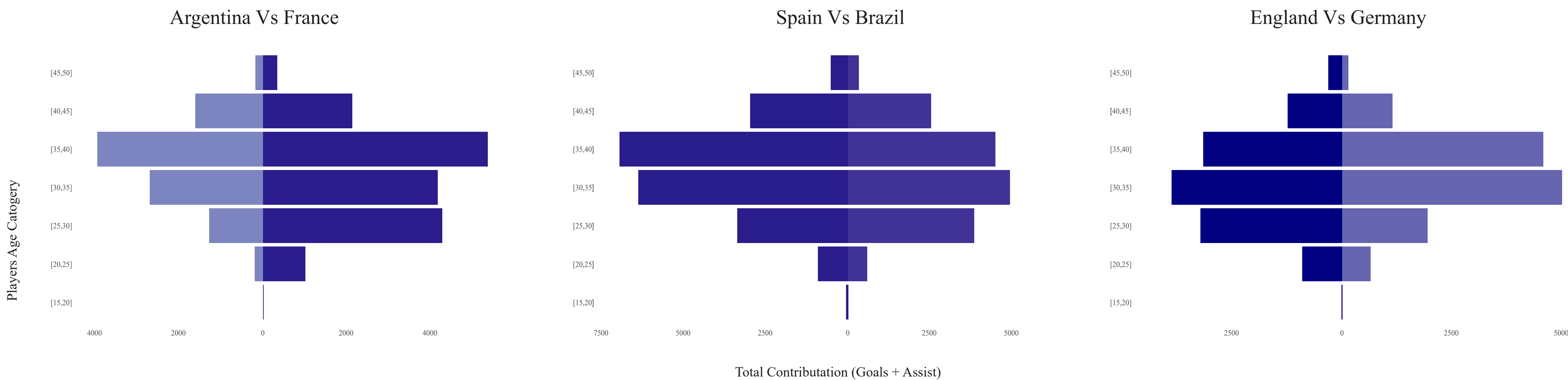
- Nations like Brazil, France, and England show a wide spread, indicating both superstar talent and depth.
- Countries like Belgium and the Netherlands display tighter ranges, suggesting a more balanced squad value distribution without many extreme outliers.

The presence of multiple labeled outliers in countries like France and England indicates that these nations not only have depth but also several world-class players leading their squads.

Overall, it offers a visual comparison of market strength, depth, and star power across major footballing nations.

This visualization helps highlight how player market value is distributed across top footballing nations, offering insights into where both elite and consistent talent is concentrated ahead of FIFA 2026.

Youth Vs Experience who delivers the most?



France's player contributions are heavily concentrated in the 25–29 age bracket, reflecting their reliance on seasoned stars in peak form. Argentina, however, shows a more even split between the 20–24 and 25–29 groups.

This suggests a blend of youthful energy and experience, positioning Argentina as a more age-diverse squad heading into the tournament.

Spain and Brazil both show dominant contributions from players aged 24–29, indicating a shared strategy of fielding players in their athletic prime. However, Spain's contributions are more evenly distributed across age groups, suggesting greater squad depth.

Brazil's heavier reliance on this one age bracket could signal vulnerability if top players face injury or fatigue.

England's standout feature is its high contribution from players aged 20–24, showcasing a rising generation of talent. In contrast, Germany's strongest contributors are from the 25–29 group, reflecting a more traditional reliance on experienced players.

This matchup contrasts youth-driven momentum versus veteran-led consistency—two very different paths to potential World Cup success.