

DEMOGRAPHY OF PLAYERS AND LEAGUE HIERARCHIES IN EUROPEAN FOOTBALL

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How do demographic features of players influence the sporting results of clubs ?

This question is tested for the issues of players' age, height, international experience and geographic origin.

The sample comprises more than 11'000 footballers employed in October 2008 by 456 top division clubs in 30 UEFA countries.

The Demographic Study

30 Leagues

456 Clubs

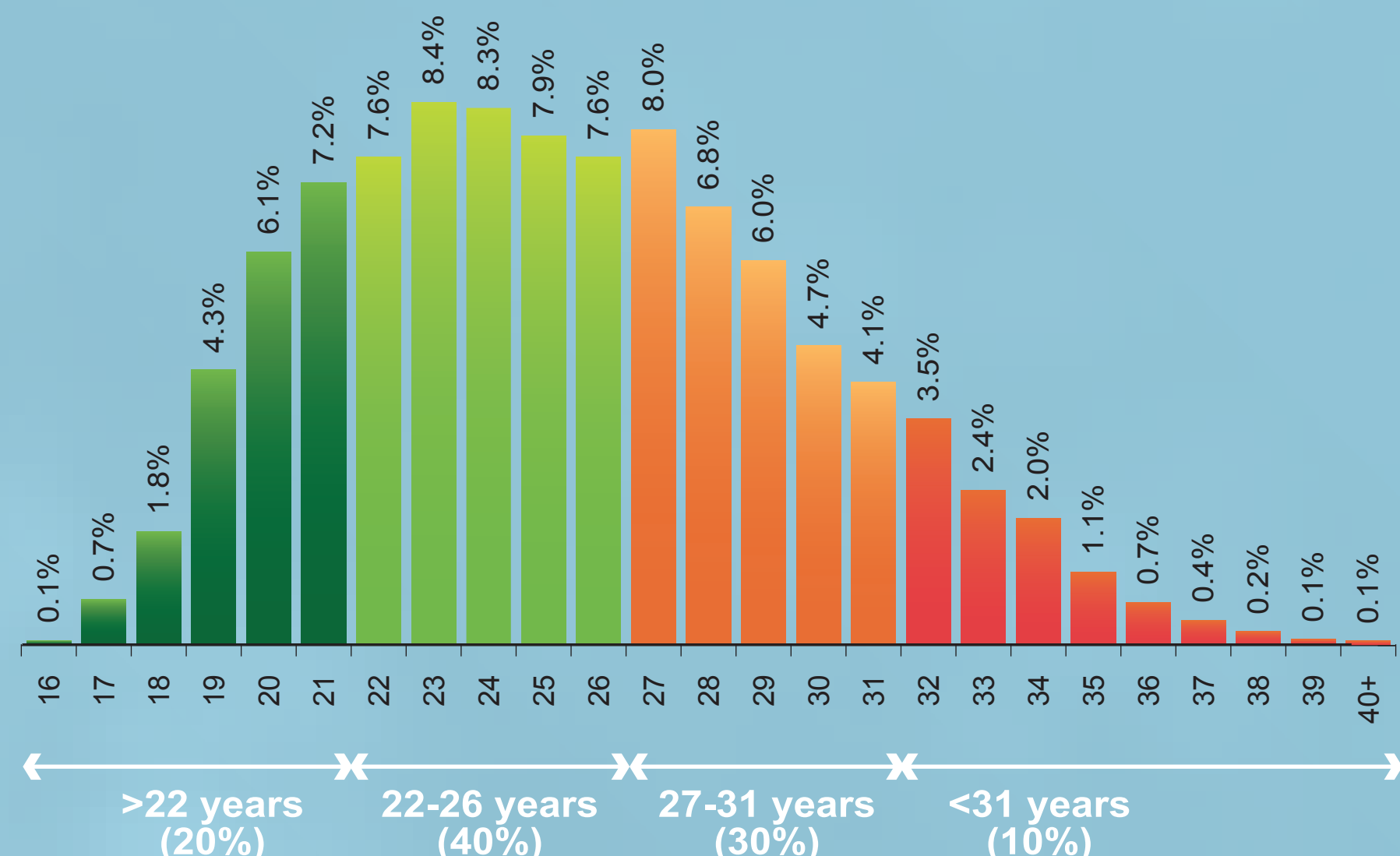
11'015 Players

Demographic Study of Footballers in Europe

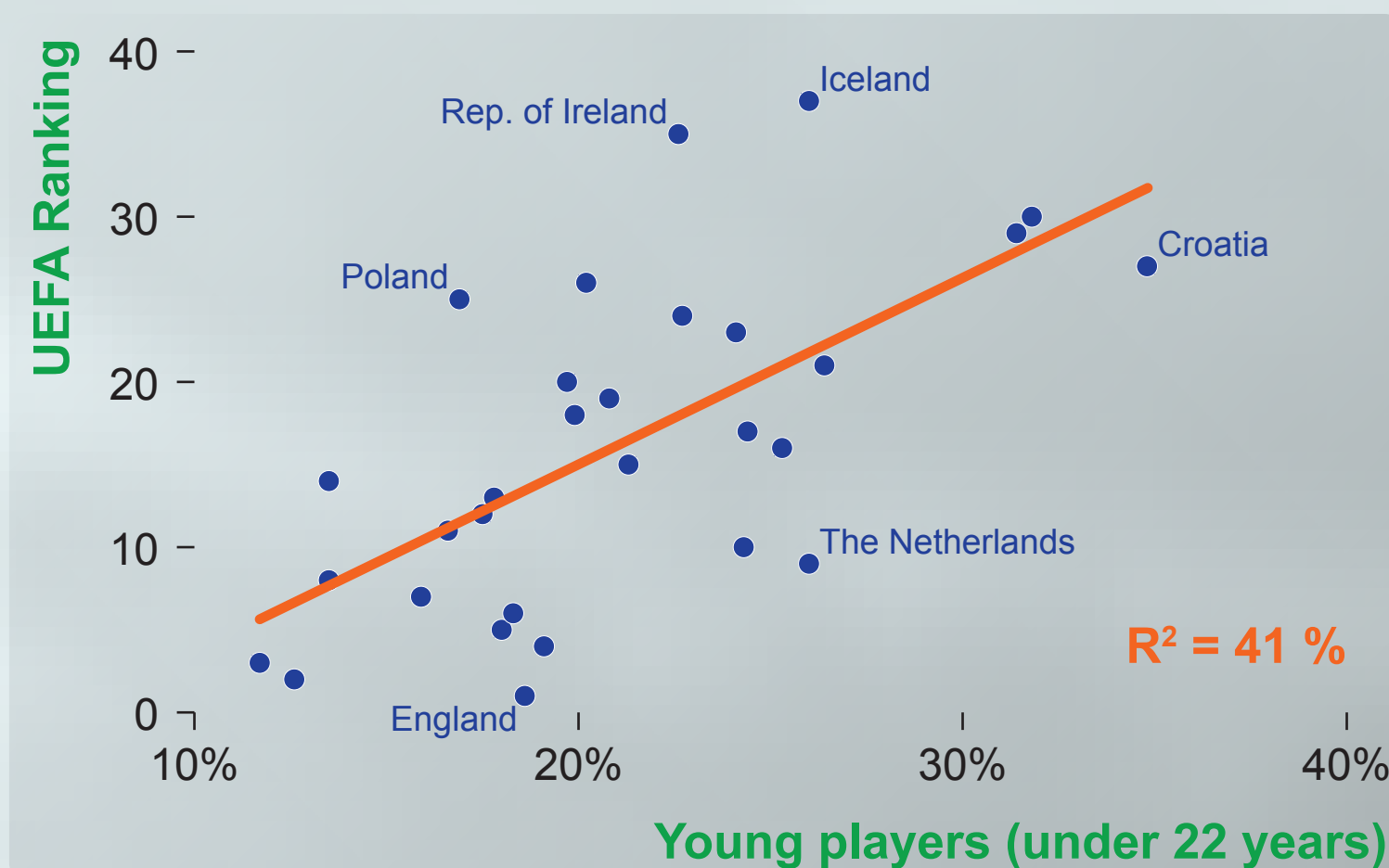
CIES, Neuchâtel, 2008

Age

European clubs employ on average, footballers of **25.5 years** of age. The most represented class of age is that of 23 year old players. Only 10% of footballers have more than 31 years of age.

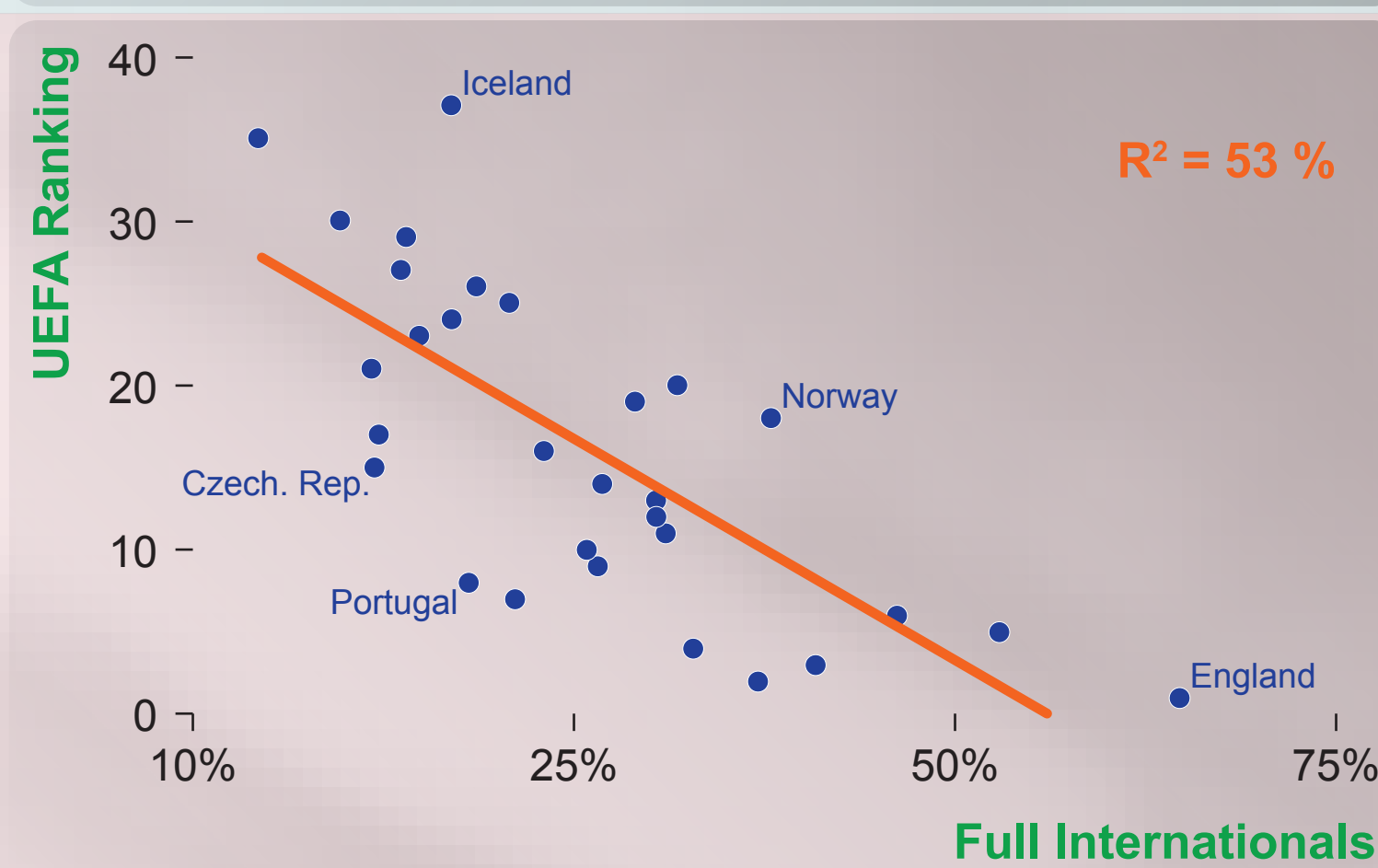


The **poorer a league**, the higher the percentage of **young players**. Less costly in terms of salary, the latter are also privileged regarding transfer options and the possibility of generating more financial profit.

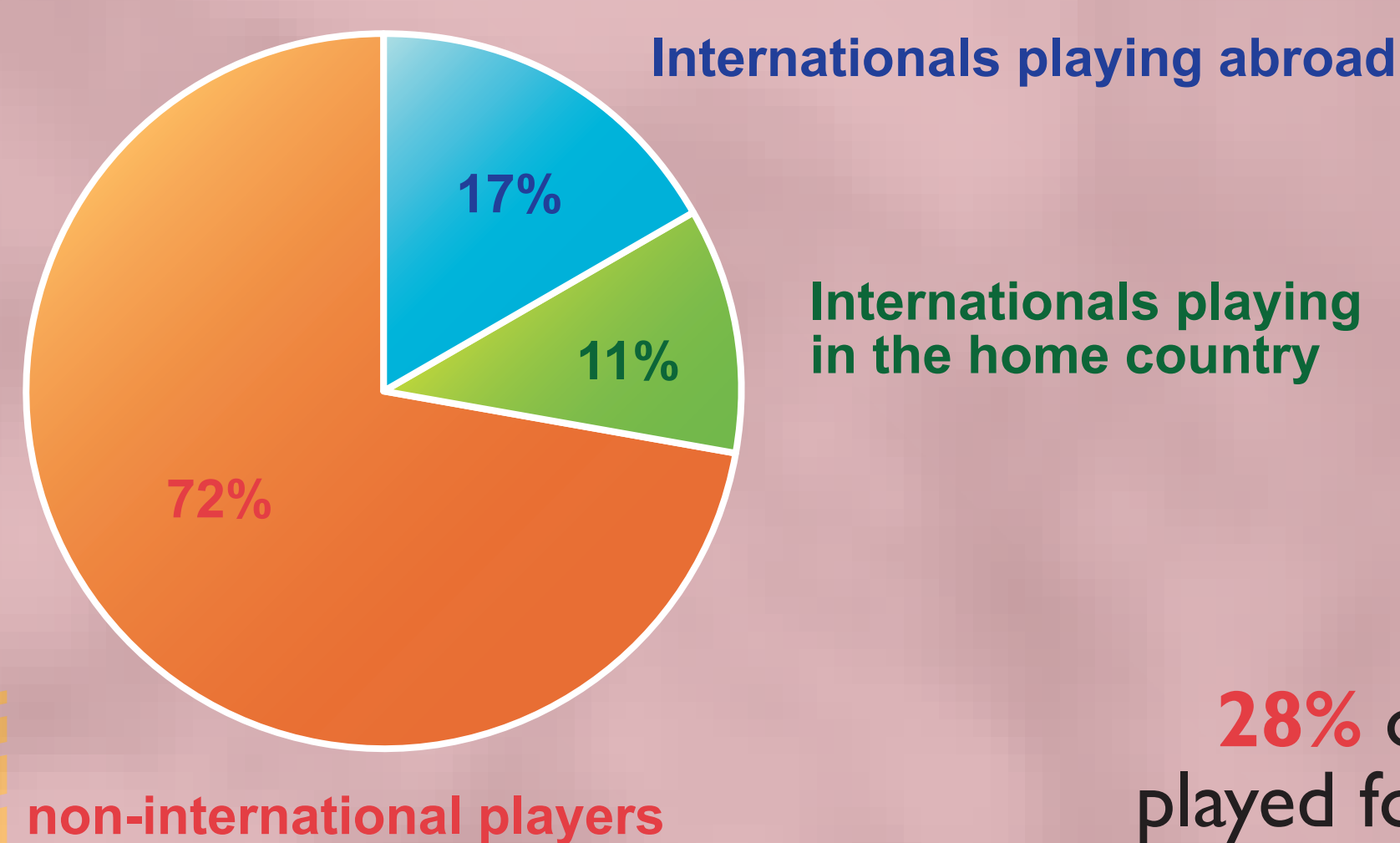


In this context, the case of **Arsenal FC** is exceptional: the squad of the London team is composed of 46% of players younger than 22 years of age.

Some of the most famous clubs, such as **Manchester United** (89%), **Milan AC** (88%) and **Inter Milano** (85%), have almost only internationals in the squad.



The employment of full international players diminishes as the level of the league decreases. The presence of **full international players** constitutes a very good criterion to explain league **hierarchies** in the European game.



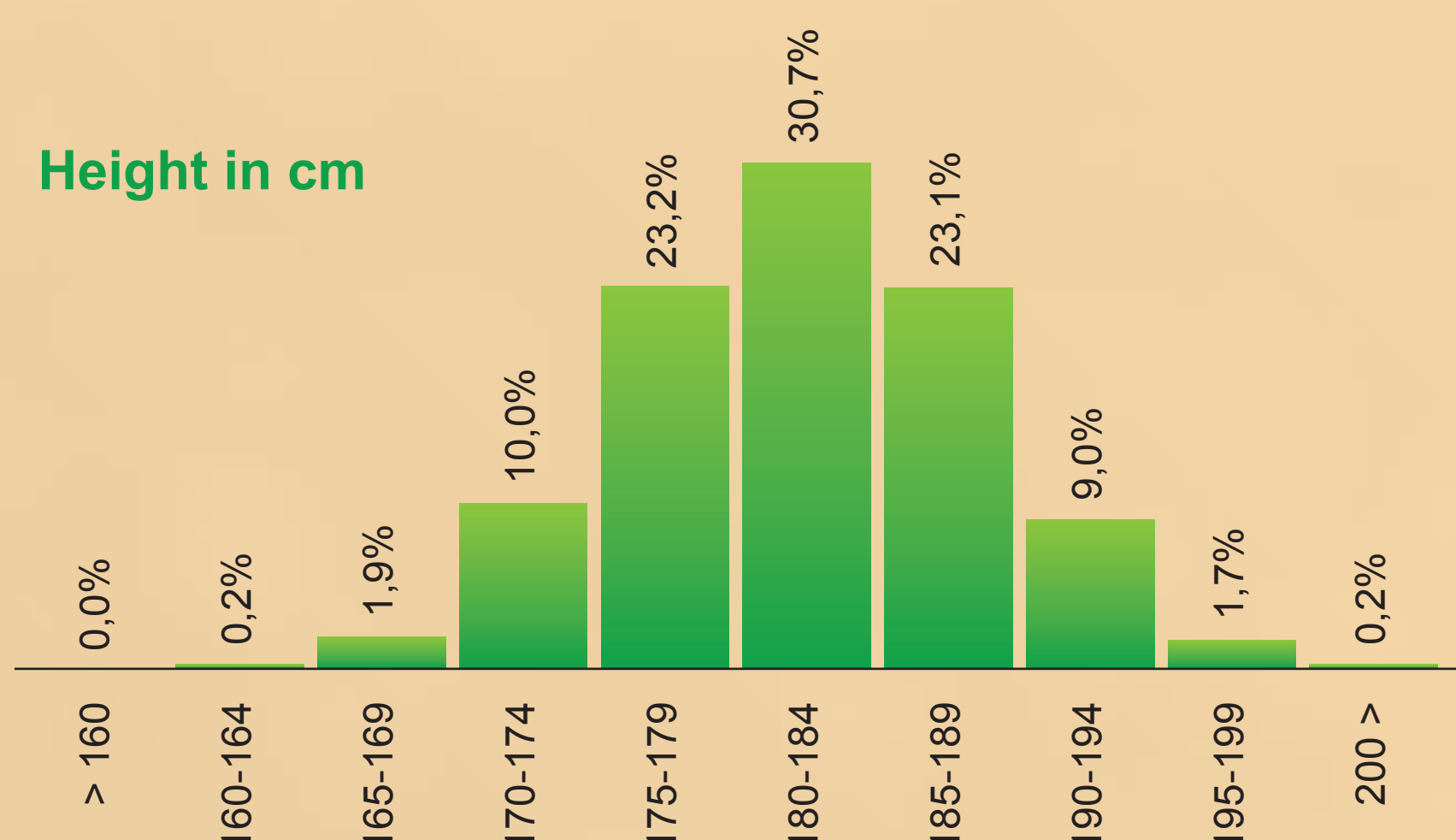
28% of the footballers have already played for a **national A-team** during their career. Internationals playing abroad are more numerous than those playing in their home country.

Full Internationals

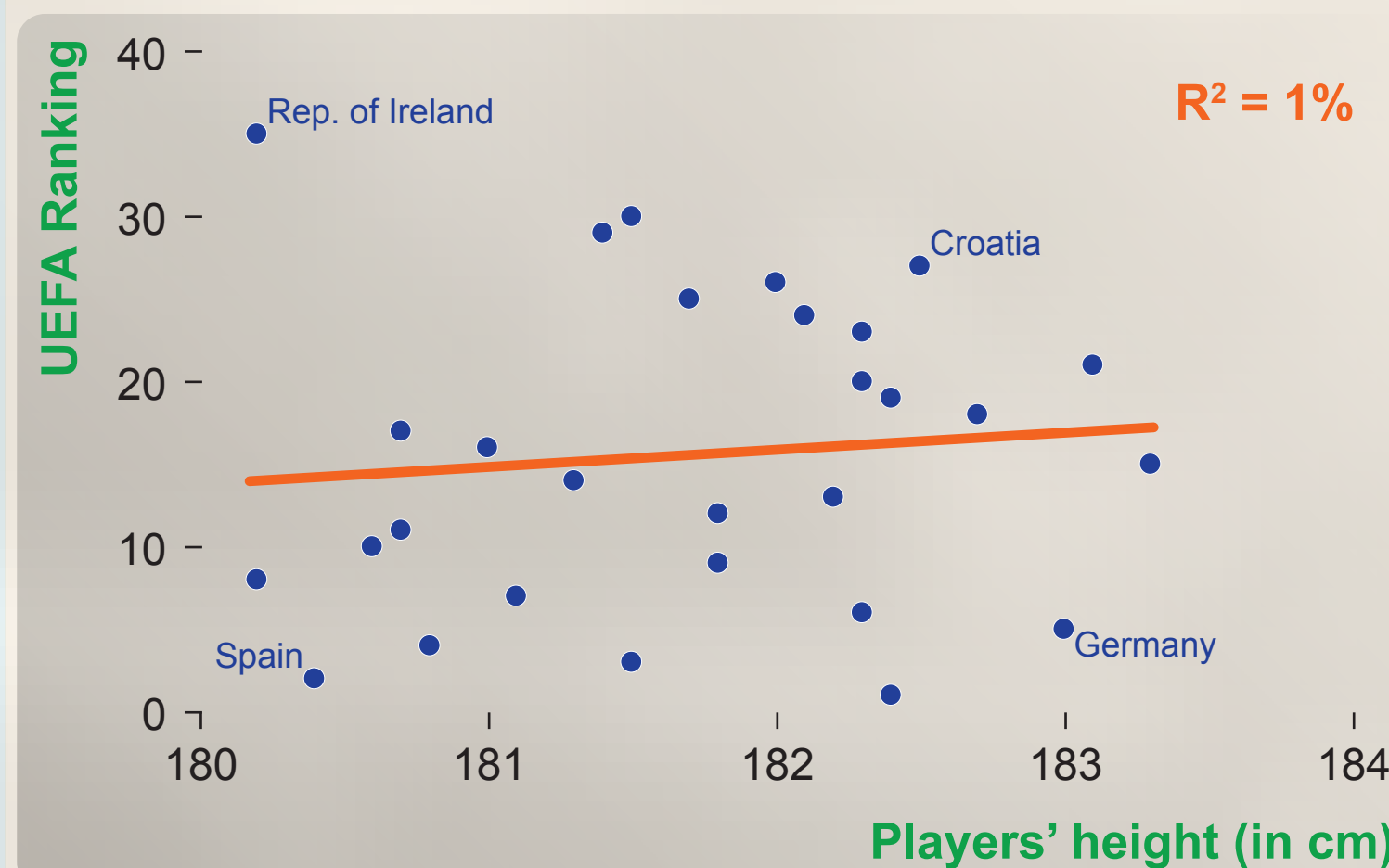
The average height of players is **181.6cm**. No league re-groups players whose average height is less than 180cm. Only 12% of footballers measure less than 175cm.

Height

Height in cm

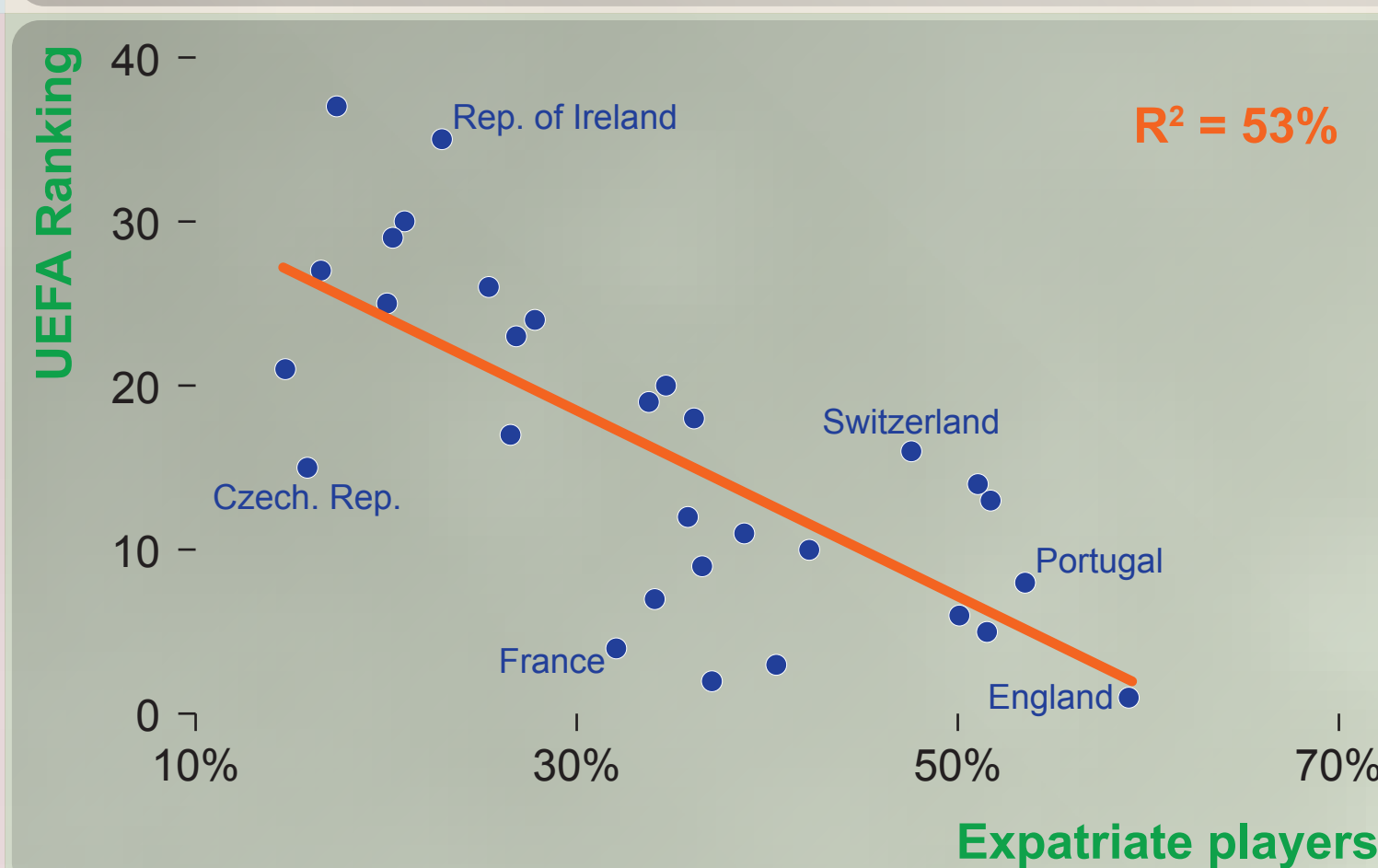


The employment of tall players does not necessarily drive to success. **No significant statistical correlation** exist between the average height of footballers and the position of leagues in the UEFA ranking.

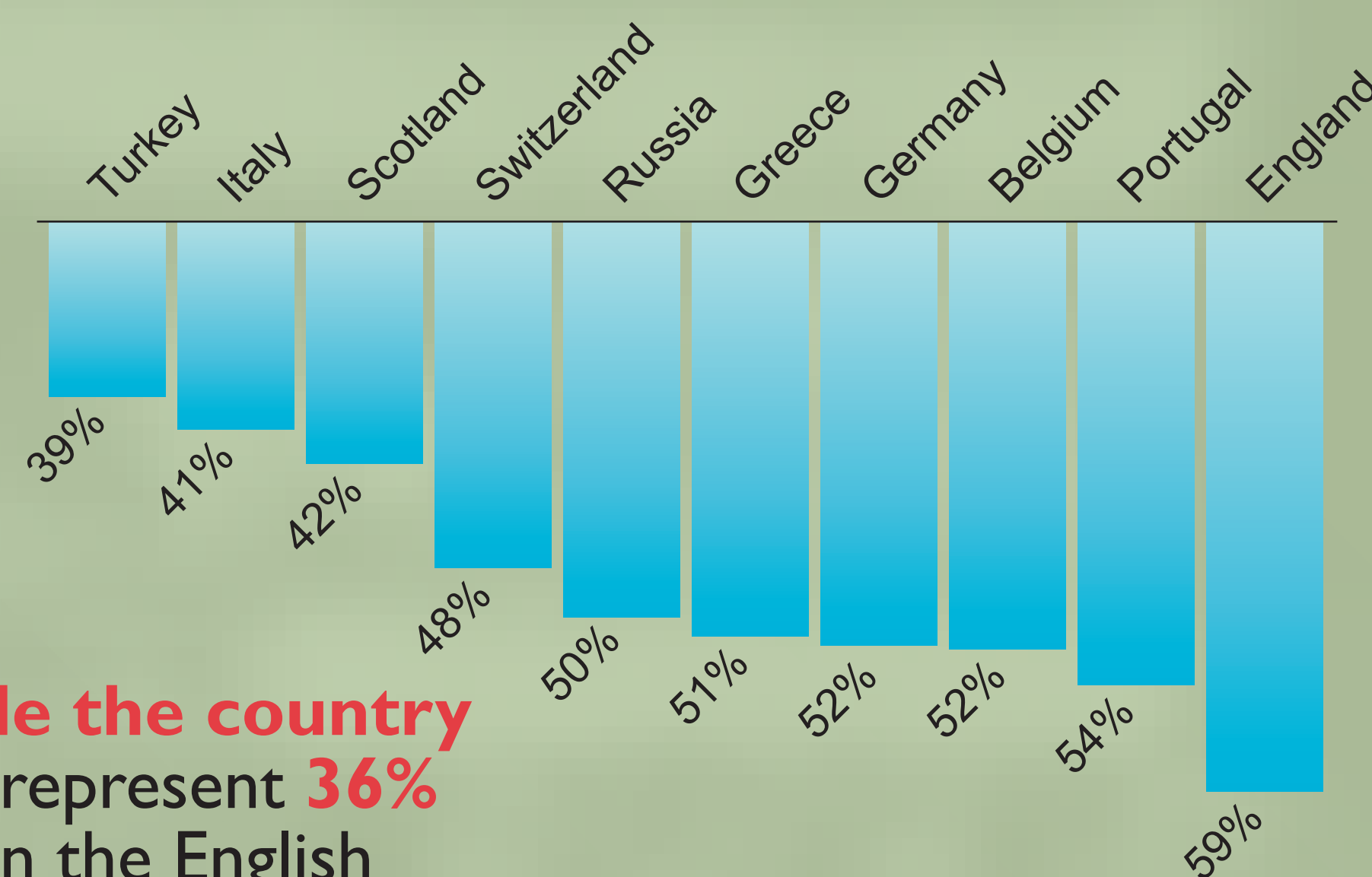


Well known for its fast and technical style, **FC Barcelona** is one of the shortest clubs in Europe. The Catalan club has 7 players measuring less than 175cm in height.

86 clubs have a squad made up of a majority of expatriate players. The most transnational team is **FC Köln**, with 16 different nationalities.



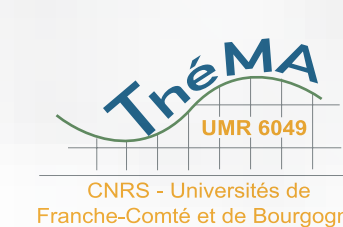
The percentage of expatriates decreases as the UEFA ranking of leagues diminishes. This shows that the level of leagues has an impact on **recruitment strategies**. The more a club is ambitious, the more it tends to sign footballers from abroad.



Footballers playing **outside the country in which they grew up** represent **36%** of all players / up to 59% in the English Premier League. Swiss clubs also employ a large number of expatriates.

Expatriate Players

The Professional Football Players Observatory (PFPO) is a research group affiliated to the International Centre for Sport Studies (University of Neuchâtel, Switzerland) and the THÉMA Laboratory (University of Franche-Comté, France). The PFPO publishes annually two reports: the "Demographic Study of Footballers in Europe" and the "Annual Review of the European Football Players Labour Market". For more information, see the PFPO website (www.eurofootplayers.org).



THE PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALL PLAYERS OBSERVATORY