



# Can 'the other' represent the country?

A historical perspective on foreign born players in national football teams, 1930-2014

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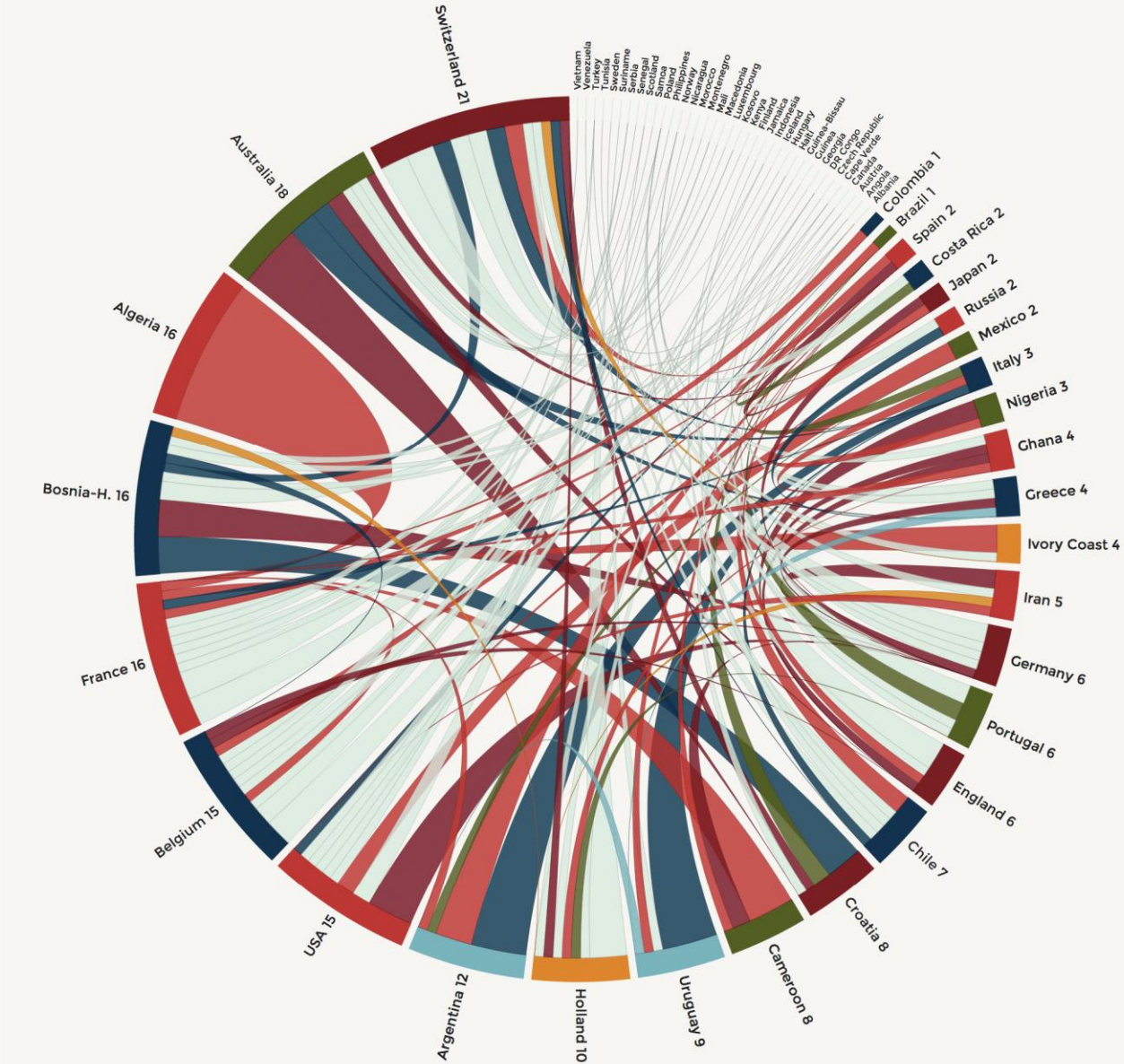
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# Club football vs. National football teams

Brazil 2014: Visualising ancestral and international connections between teams



From: [The Telegraph \(2015\)](#)  
Henry Winter and  
James Oliver  
Tom Shiel (graphic)

# French squad without migrants



Not Pictured: Eliaquin Mangala Rio Mavuba Bacary Sanga

# Foreign born football players

- Increase of foreign born football players representing national teams in FIFA World Cup  
→ A new phenomenon?
- *“How, and why, has the number of foreign born football players in FIFA World Cup changed between 1930-2014?”*
- Database on international football players
  - Historical overview on nationality changes is lacking
  - Qualified teams for FIFA World Cups 1930-2014



# Database

- 1) Setting up a database: searching data
  - Biographical data & information on parental heritage
  - Scraping data from Wikipedia
- 2) Classifying data
  - Who counts as a foreign born football player?
  - ‘Foreign born’ versus ‘(foreign) national’
- 3) Generating output
  - 10.000 cases (not all unique)
  - Relate to international migration trends



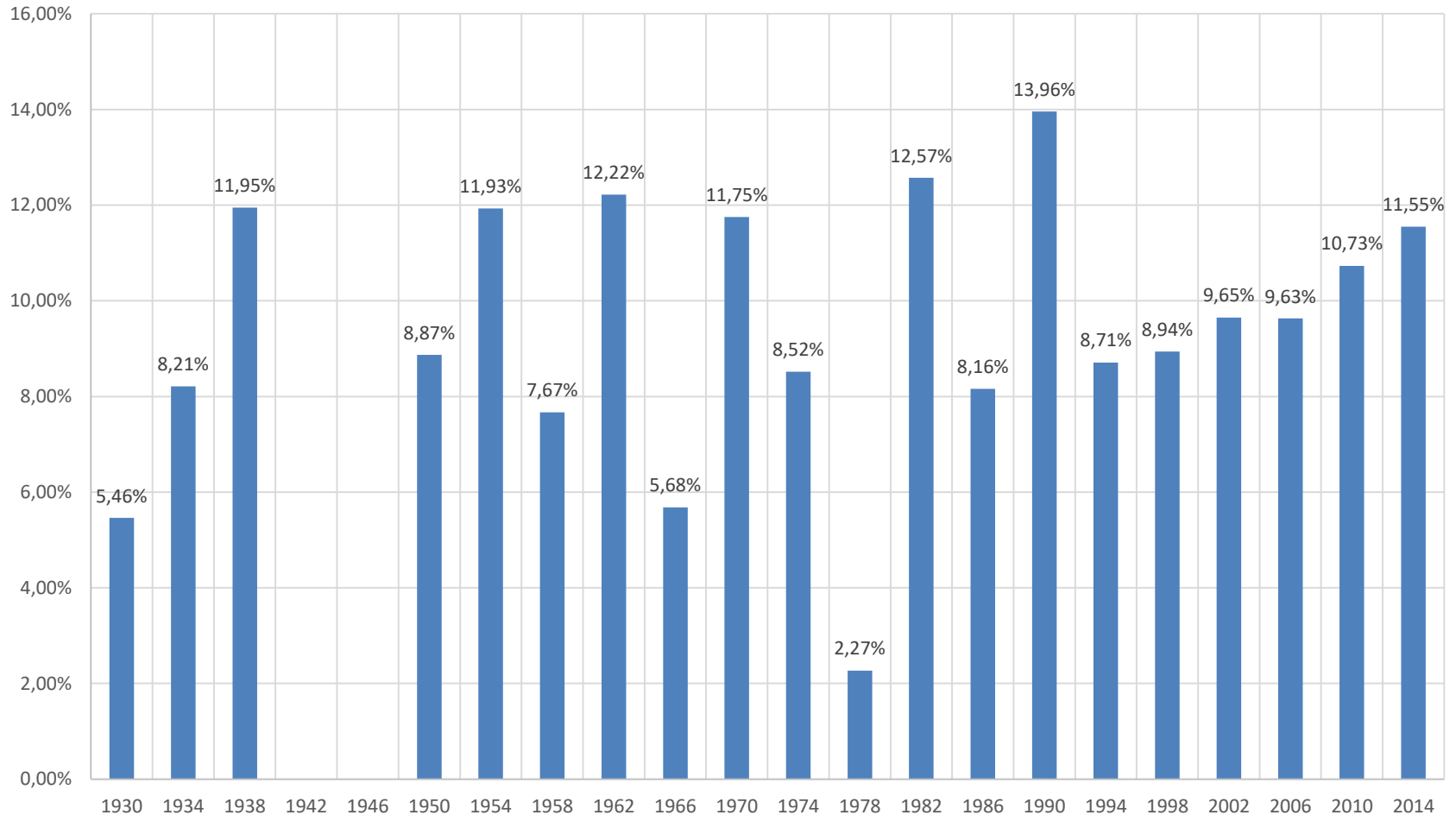
# Who counts as ‘foreign born’?

- Mostly used in international migration studies  
*“All people who have ever migrated from their country of birth to their current country of residence” (OECD, 2017)*
- Useful, but lacking (historical) context
  - Territorial changes of borders
  - Colonial relations
- Three perspectives on ‘foreign born’
  - 1) Using current state borders (anno 2014)
  - 2) Borders at the time of FIFA World Cups
  - 3) Colonial relationships related to players’ date of birth



# Perspective 1: 2014 Borders

PERCENTAGE FOREIGN-BORN FOOTBALL PLAYERS 1930-2014,  
PERSPECTIVE 1 [#CASES: 913]



# 2014: French foreign born players

## The France that Never Was

There are 25 French-born players representing other countries at this year's World Cup. That would be enough to field a full second squad for France — and have some emergency spare players to boot. Here's where those players have gone.

### Sofiane Feghouli

In Algeria's first match of the tournament, Feghouli scored the country's first World Cup goal in 28 years on a penalty kick.

Algeria: 16

Ghana: 2

Cameroon: 3

Ivory Coast: 3

Argentina: 1

### Andrew Ayew

American fans saw striker Ayew equalize against the US during its group stage match against Ghana. He plays for French club Marseille.

### Benoit Assou-Ekotto

The outspoken and controversial left back has said he's surprised his black teammates at Tottenham feel accepted by English society.

### Jean-Daniel Akpa-Akpro

A versatile defender, Akpa-Akpro has played every back-four position for Toulouse, his club team. He's been linked with English giants Arsenal this summer.

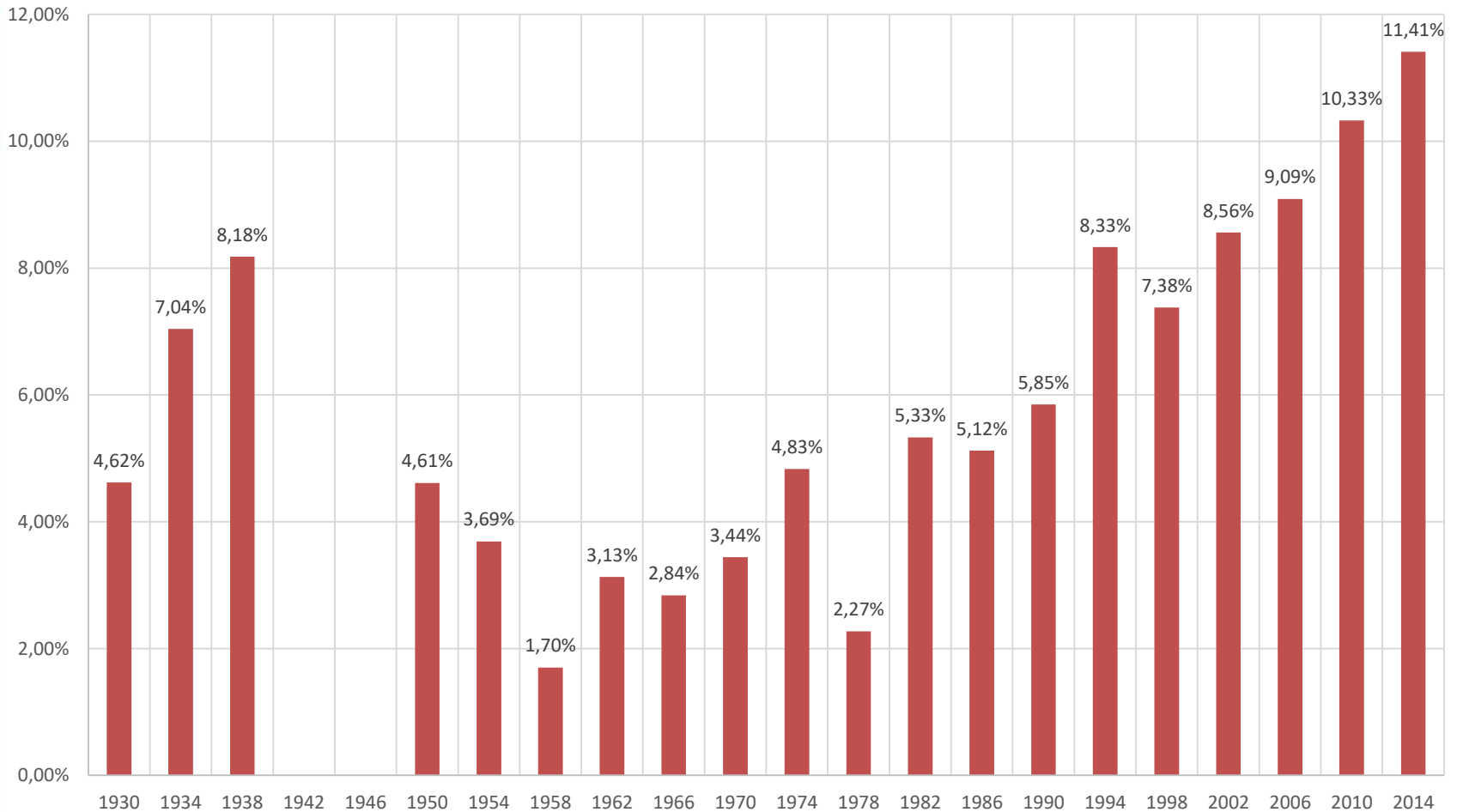
### Gonzalo Higuain

Though born in France, the ex-Real Madrid star grew up solely in Argentina. He's scored 20 times for the World Cup challengers.



# Perspective 2: Border changes

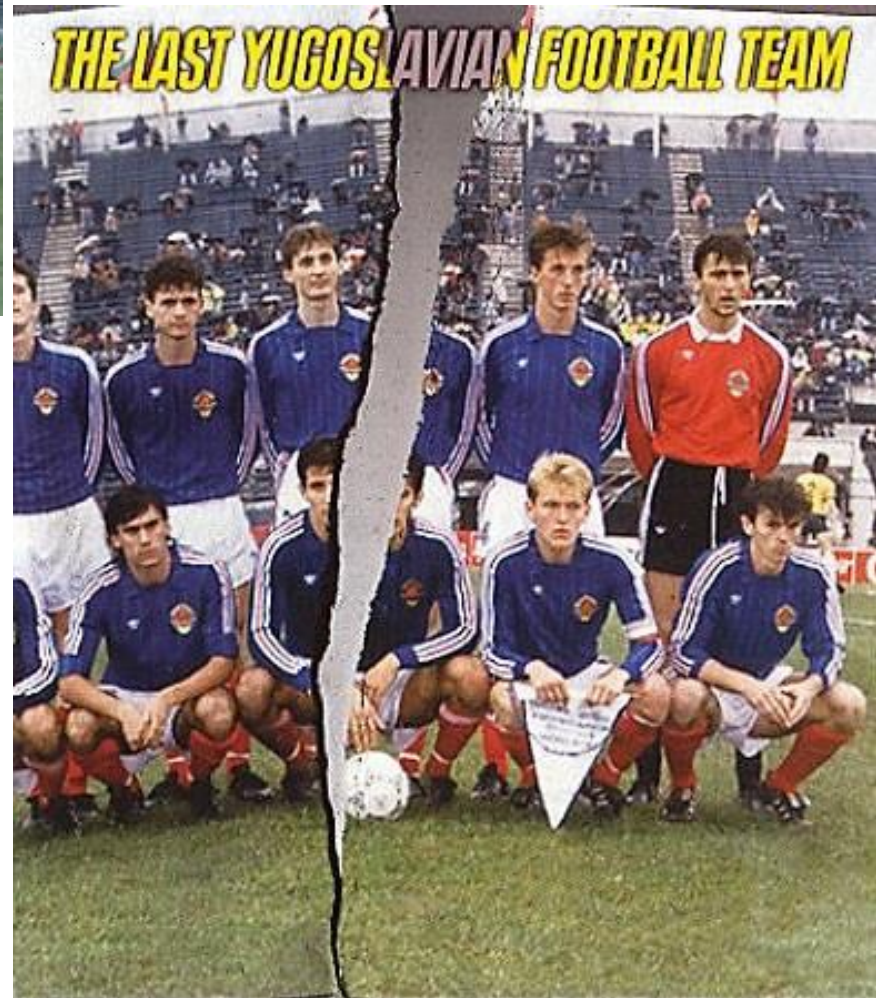
PERCENTAGE FOREIGN-BORN FOOTBALL PLAYERS 1930-2014,  
PERSPECTIVE 2 [#CASES: 623]



# Disintegrated States - Yugoslavia

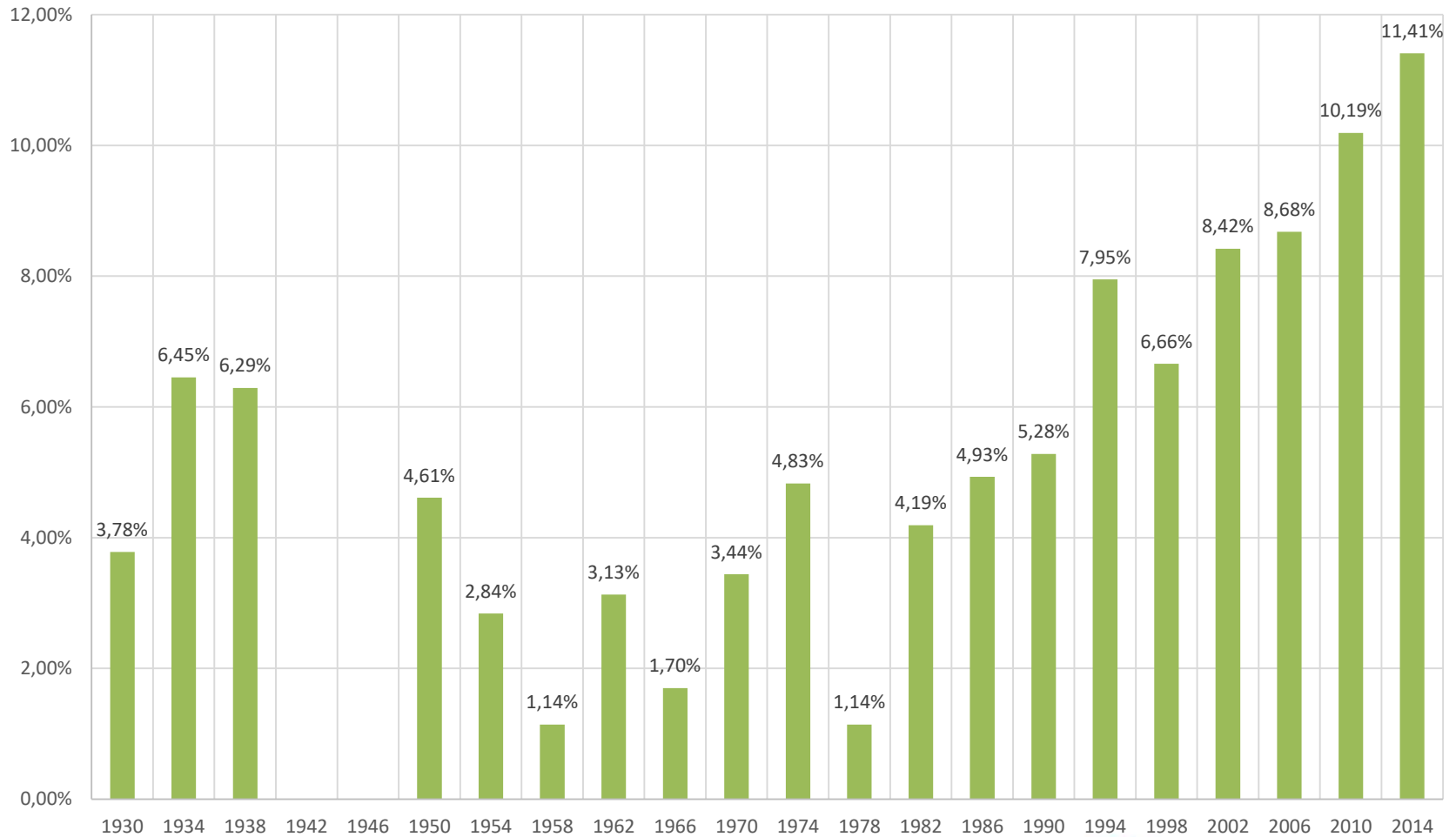


Yugoslavia: World Youth Champions 1987



# Perspective 3: Colonial Ties

PERCENTAGE FOREIGN-BORN FOOTBALL PLAYERS 1930-2014,  
PERSPECTIVE 3 [#CASES: 578]



# Foreign / Colonial Nationals

Dutch international Bep Bakhuys (1934)



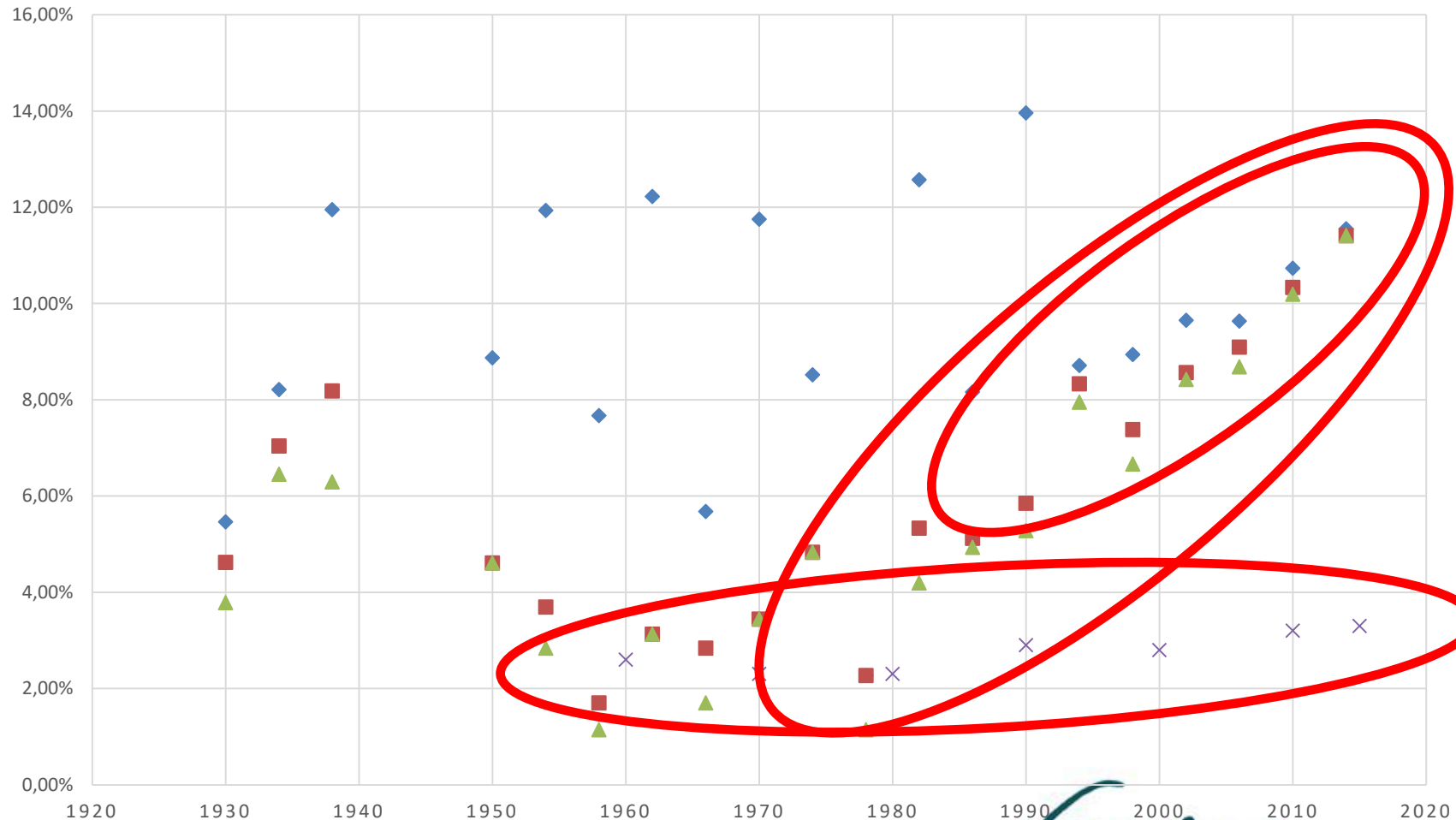
Portuguese national football team in 1966



# A quick interpretation

## PERSPECTIVES FOREIGN-BORN FOOTBALL PLAYERS AND INTERNATIONAL MIGRANTS

◆ Foreign Born P1   ■ Foreign Born P2   ▲ Foreign Born P3   × Migrants





# Thank you for your attention Questions?

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