



An analysis of Alpine Skiing 2016

## Three Phases of Project

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### ☐ Statistical Analysis

- Looked at World Cup Top 30 as juniors to establish a 25<sup>th</sup> percentile benchmark
- Looked at men vs. women, speed vs. tech, today's junior athletes
- All data as of end of 2015 season

### ☐ Thought Leader Interviews

- Interviews conducted with European coaches and officials to gain understanding of European development system
- Looked for commonalities

### ☐ World Cup Athlete Survey

- 37 question survey conducted to look at more qualitative variables and trends
- ~130 responses
- Specific analysis of WC Top 15 and Americans versus the broader group

## Overarching Findings

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- 1) Ski racing is an inherently rewarding sport.
- 2) There are many roads that lead to Rome...but not all roads lead to Rome.
- 3) Ski racing is a skill sport.
- 4) Success is found at a young age.
- 5) Parents are the biggest influencers.
- 6) Skiing is cultural to Europeans.
- 7) Volume is critical to development.
- 8) Concentration, not specialization.
- 9) Speed skiers are also very good tech skiers.
- 10) USA juniors trail competitors.

Ski racing is an inherently rewarding sport.

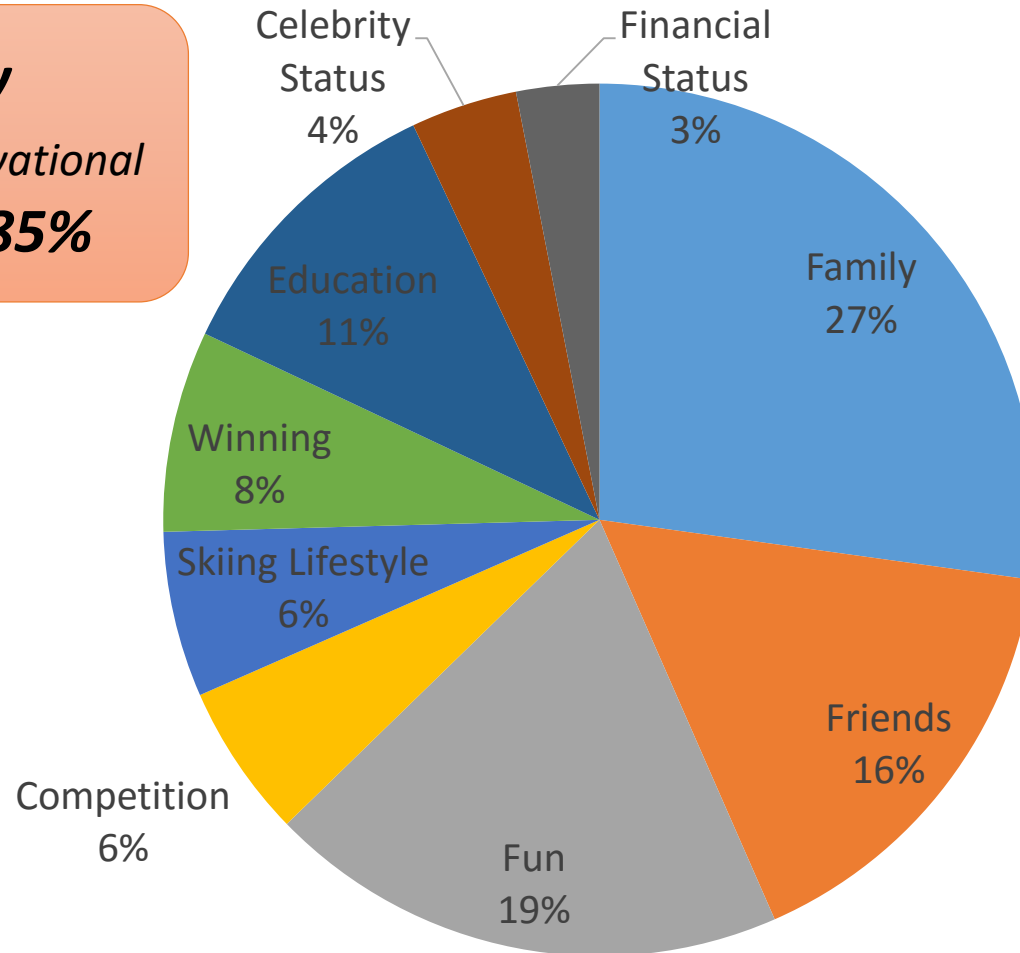
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Finding #1

What were the most important priorities in your life prior to becoming a professional?

***Inherently  
rewarding*** motivational  
factors make up **85%**

*Ski racers are  
**NOT** driven  
by winning,  
celebrity  
status,  
financial  
status...*



*Ski racers are **DRIVEN BY**  
family, friends, fun, lifestyle...*

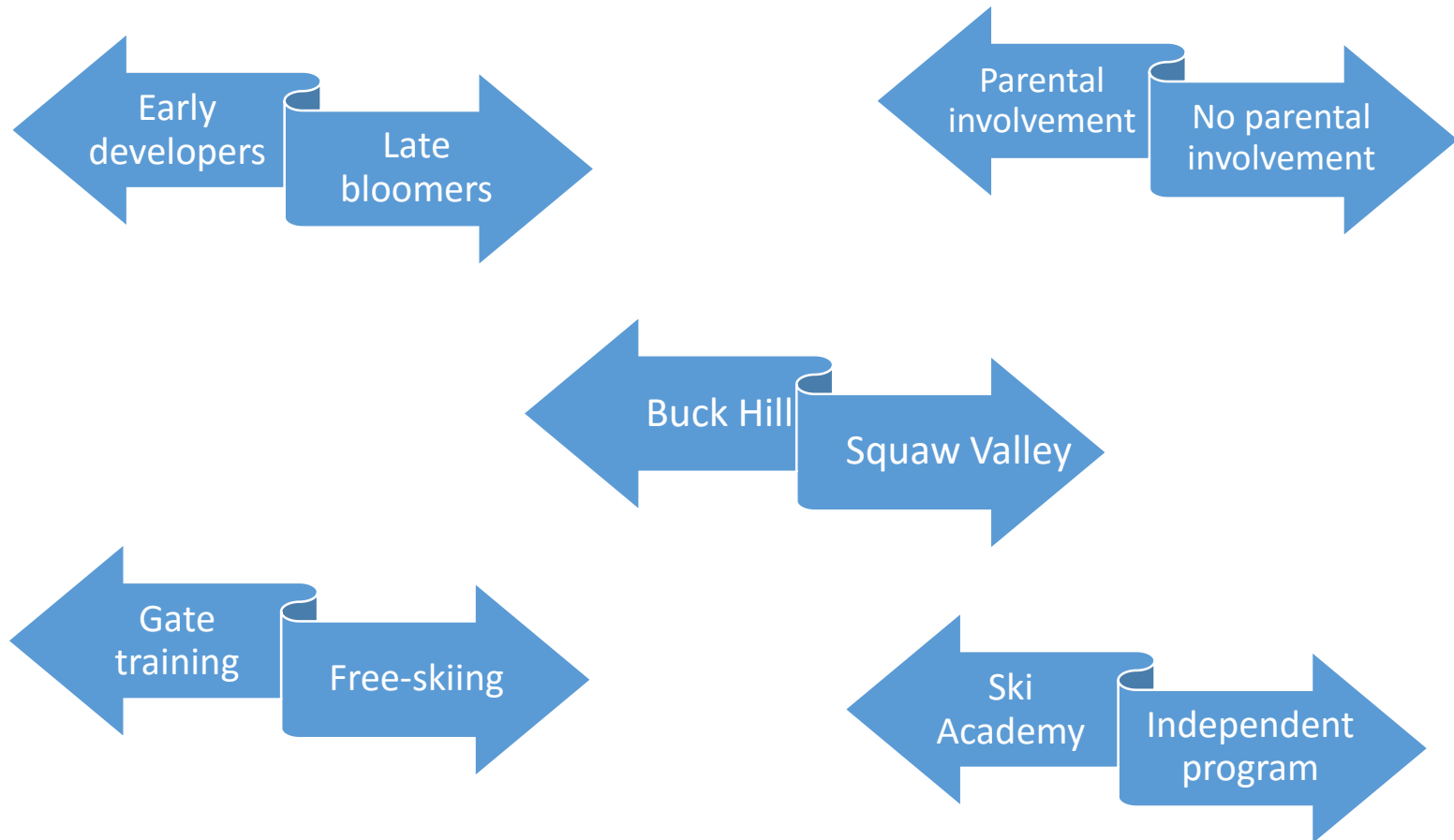
There are many roads to Rome...but not all roads lead to Rome.

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Finding #2

## There are many roads that lead to Rome...

- ❑ In ski racing, not all paths to excellence are the same
- ❑ Range of development paths among top 30 supports the individual and dynamic nature of the journey



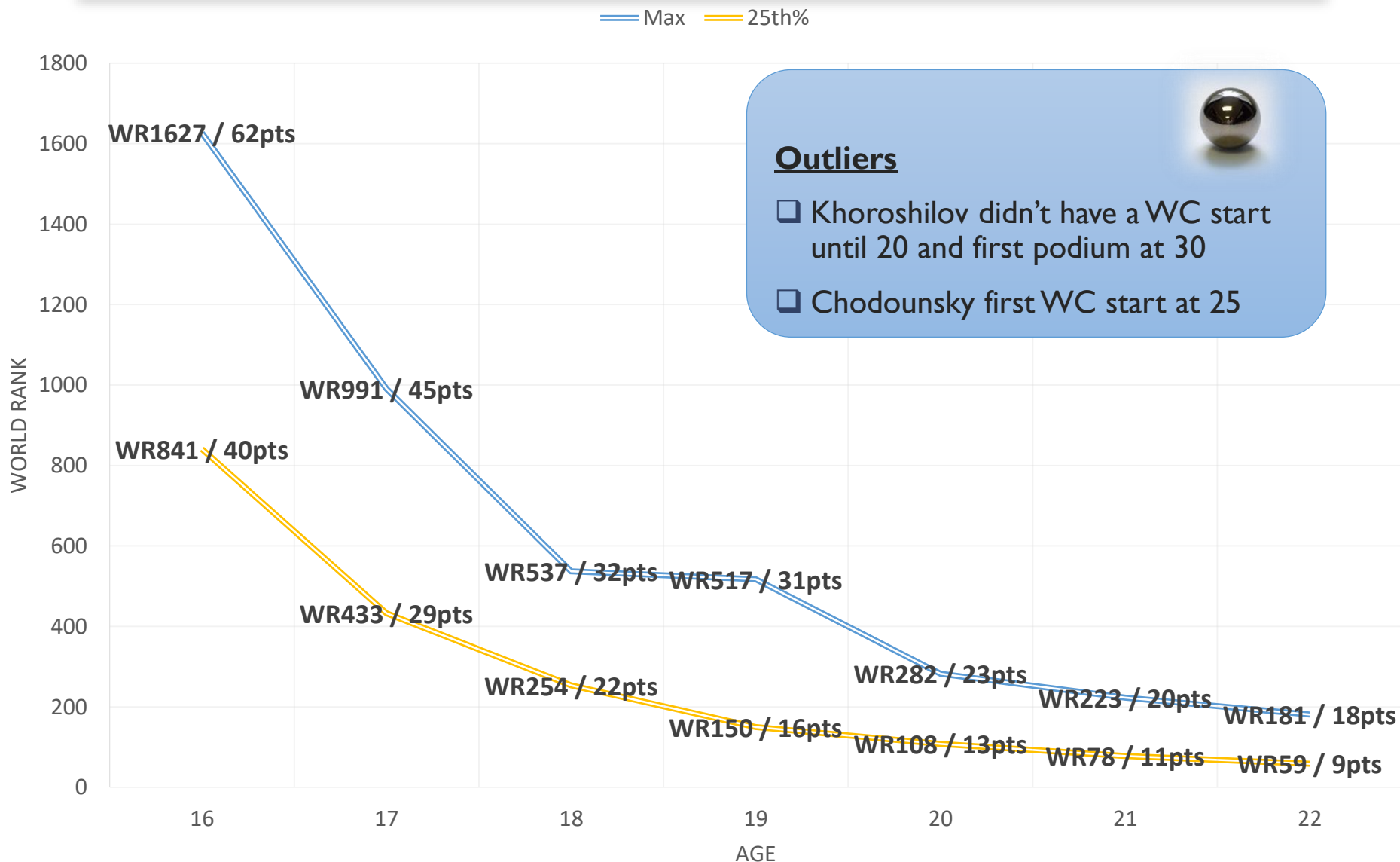
...but not all roads lead to Rome.

- ❑ Studying current World Cup Top 30 as juniors shows the paths athletes took to reach World Cup
  - There are important universal commonalities
  
- ❑ Establishing **25<sup>th</sup> percentile** benchmark includes the **top 75% of the field**
  - **22 of 30 athletes progressed within range**
  
- ❑ Progression that still yields a high probability of world cup success

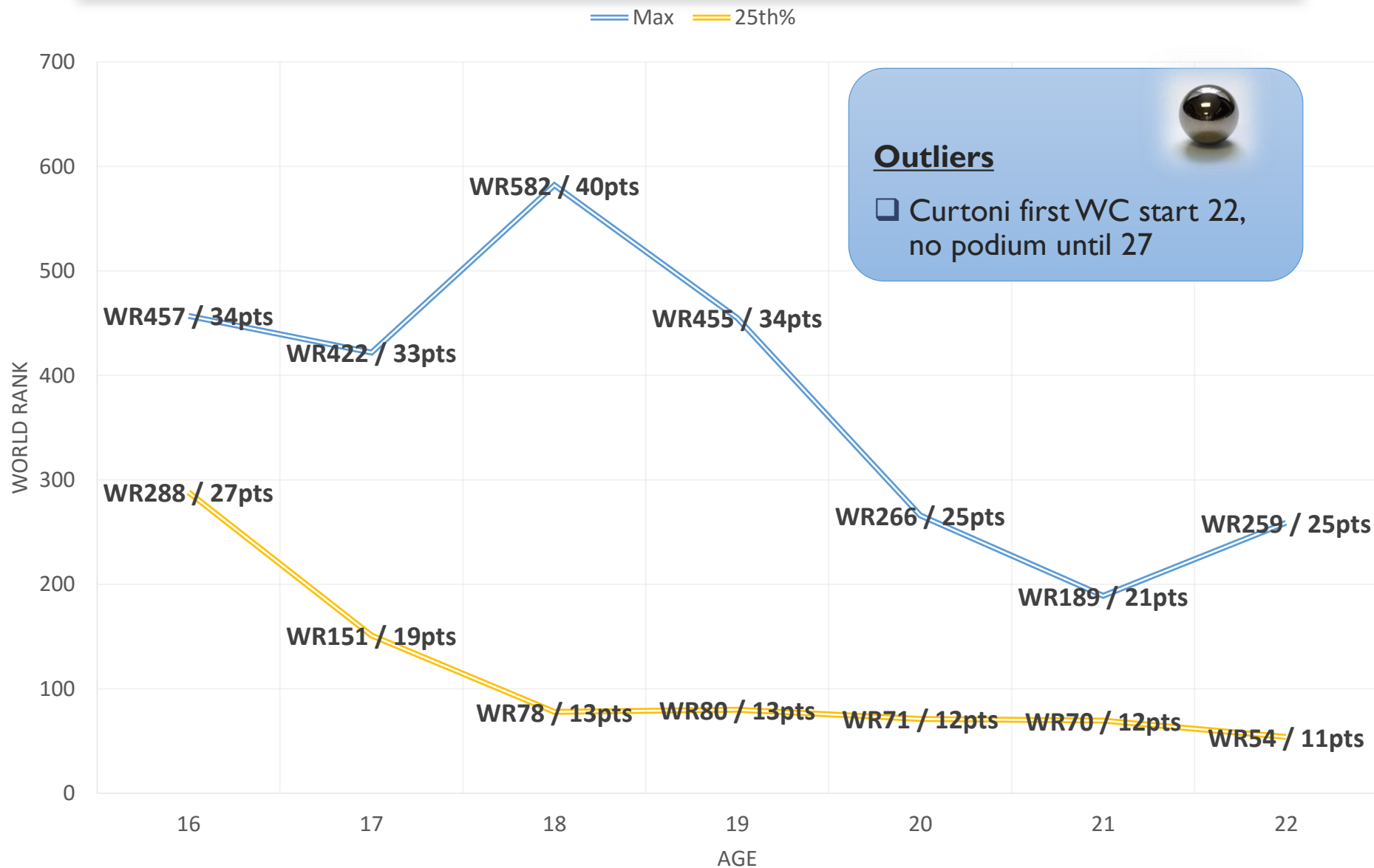




# World Cup Top 30 Men's Slalom – World Ranks as Juniors



# World Cup Top 30 Women's GS – World Ranks as Juniors



Ski racing is a skill sport.

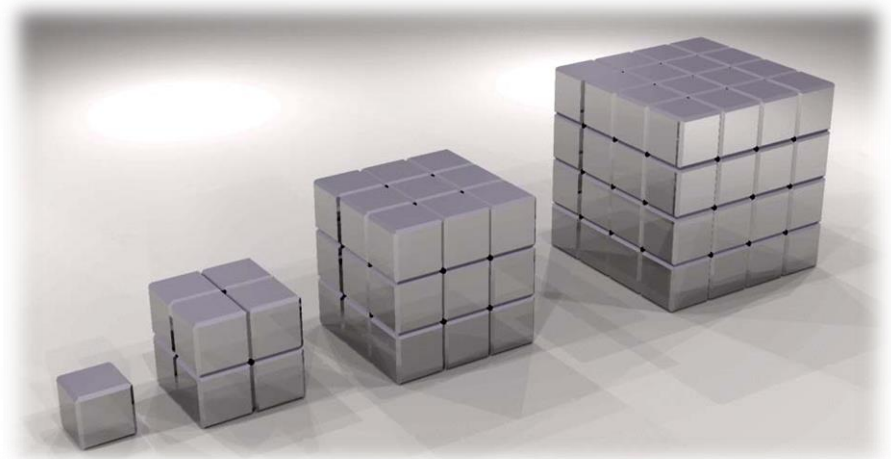
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Finding #3

## Ski racing is a skill sport.

Based on thought leader consensus:

- ☐ Requires massive volume to reach the top (adaptability, balance, agility, come from volume)
- ☐ Nurture not nature
- ☐ Unlikely to reach the top if pursued recreationally
- ☐ Requires an environment of challenge
- ☐ Variety is critical (gates, drills, free-ski, terrain, surface, etc.)
- ☐ Purposeful skiing is most beneficial
- ☐ Good coaching at young ages is critical



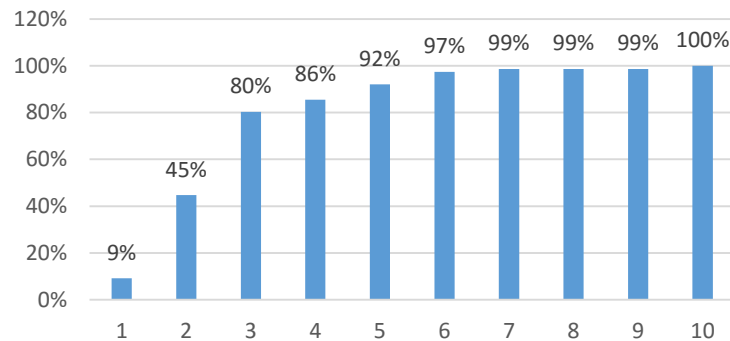
Success is found at a young age.

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Finding #7

## Age at each development milestone...

**First started skiing**

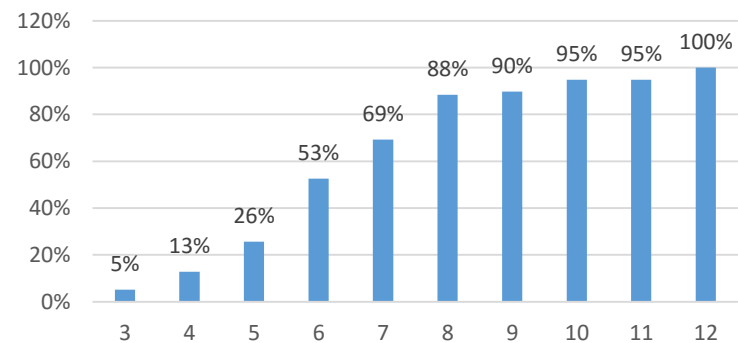


80% skiing by 3...



88% ski racing by 8...

**First started ski racing**



There are some outliers, but women tend to reach high-performance earlier than men.

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	1 <sup>st</sup> WC start	1st Points	1 <sup>st</sup> Podium
Women	18	19	22 (SG21)
Men	20	21	24 (GS23)

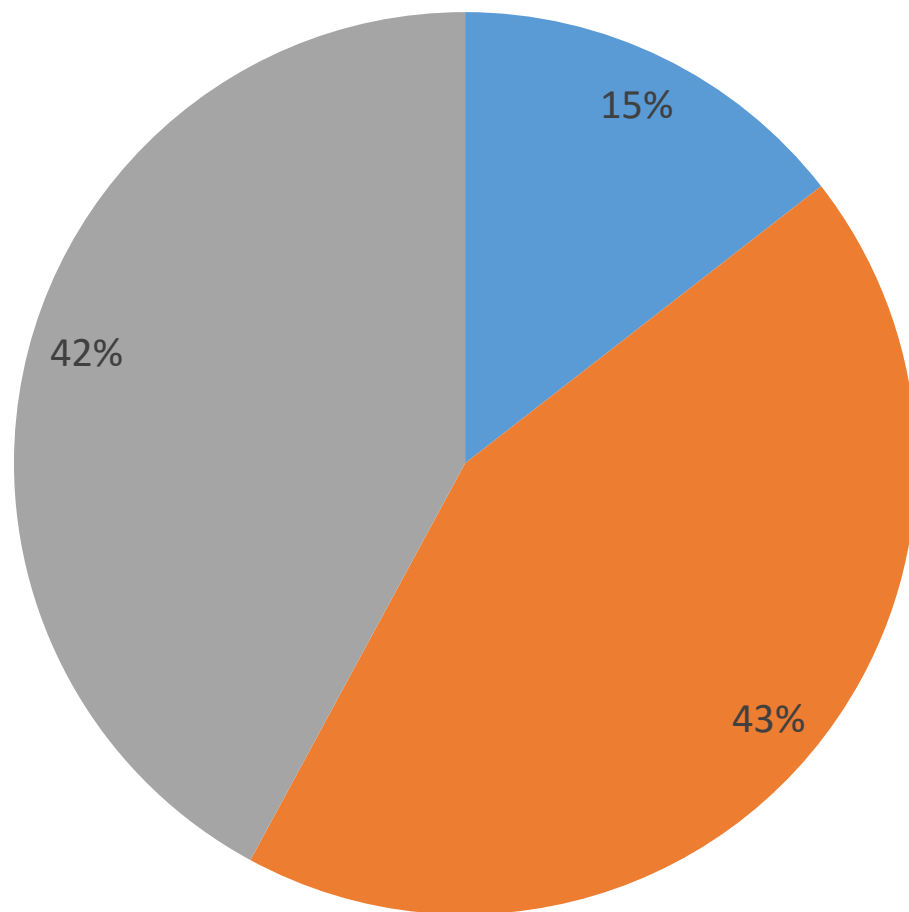
Parents are the biggest influencers.

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Finding #9



How involved were your parents when you decided to concentrate on skiing as your primary sport?



*85% of parents  
were involved  
when athletes decided to  
pursue the next level...*

- Not involved
- Moderately involved
- Extremely involved

Skiing is cultural to Europeans.

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Finding #5

## Skiing is cultural to Europeans

- ☐ Families, communities, even entire nations revolve around ski racing
- ☐ “20 Buck Hill’s in Oslo”
- ☐ Hundreds of small hills in Alps
- ☐ “If I didn’t ski I wouldn’t have had any friends.”
- ☐ Kids ski every day

***Lots of volume  
young!***



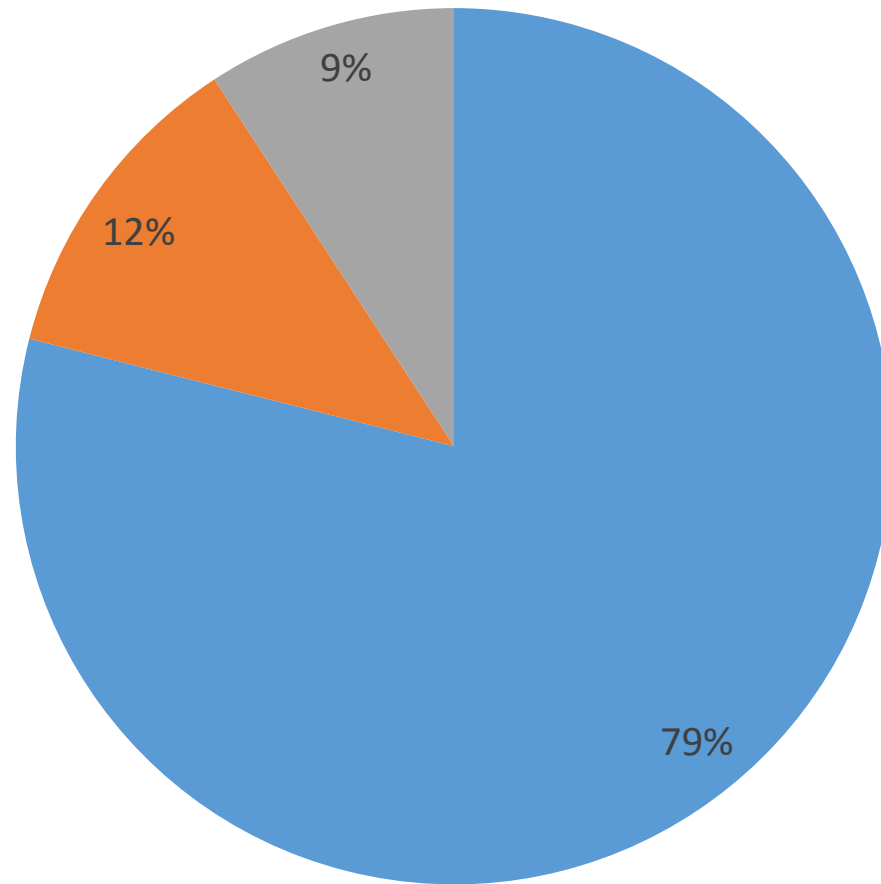
Volume is critical to development.

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Finding #8

## Growing up, how long was your drive to the mountains?

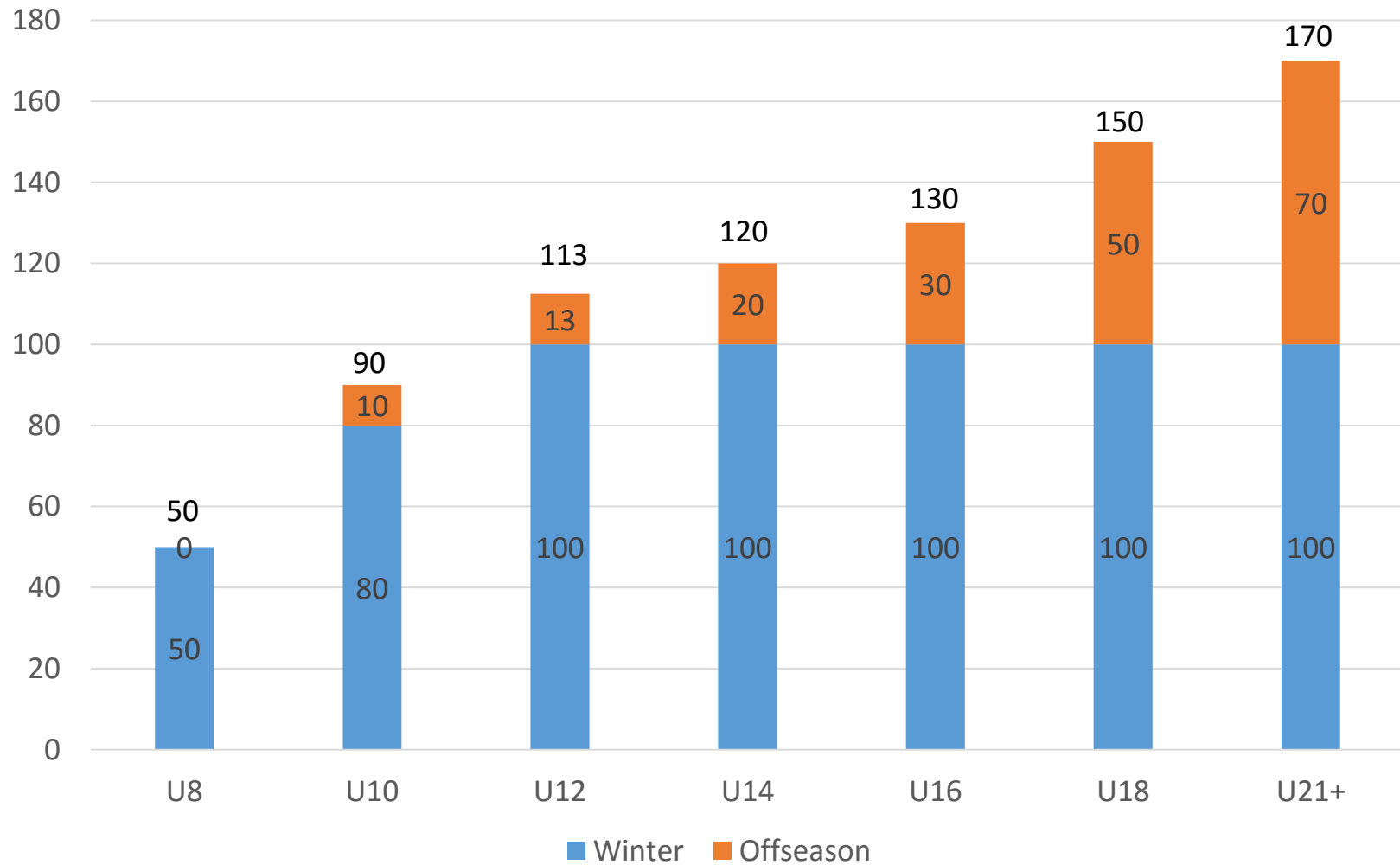
**79%** lived  
within **one**  
**hour** of  
the  
mountains.



■ <1 hour ■ 1-2 hours ■ 2+ hours

## What does volume look like?

Total On-snow Days per Year: Winter and Offseason



Concentration, not specialization.

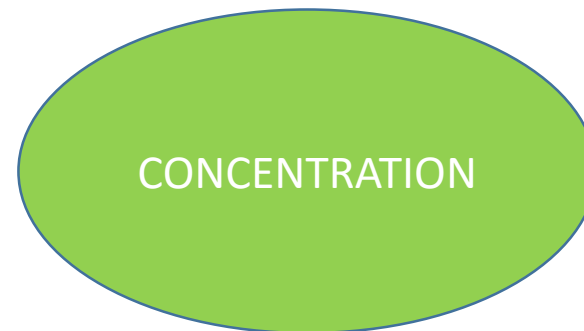
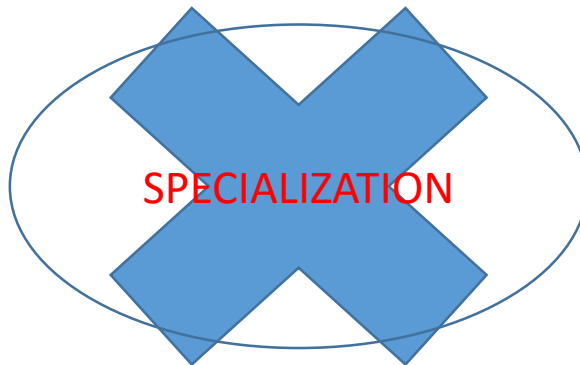
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Finding #4

## Specialization or Not?

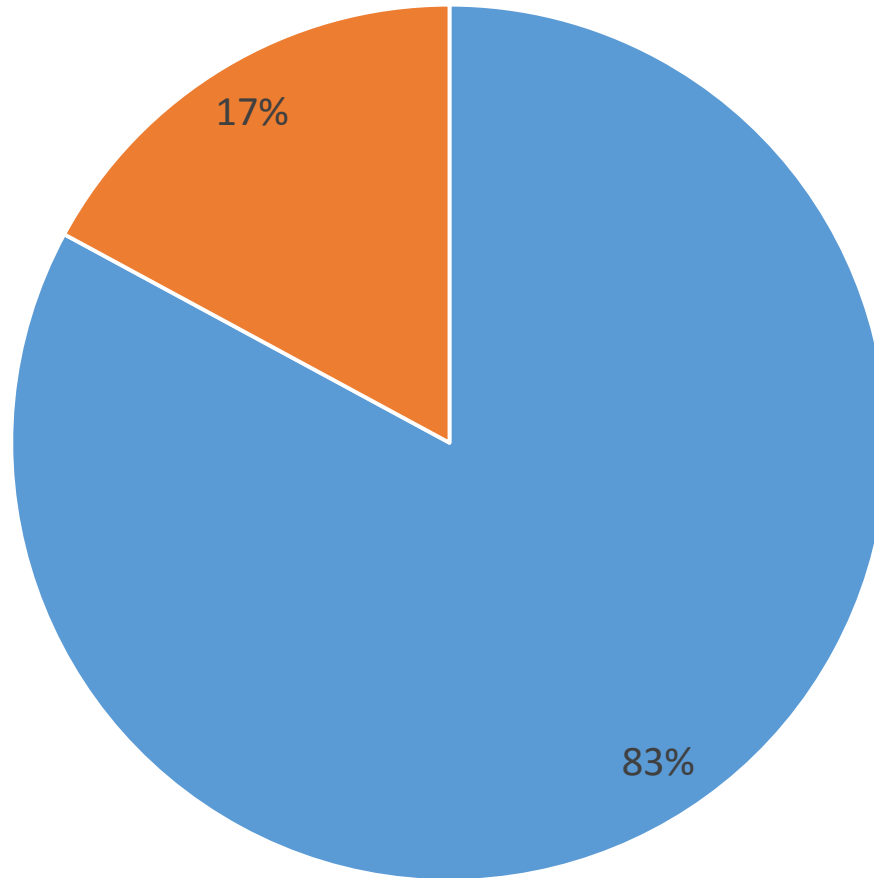
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- ☐ Wrong Question!
- ☐ Clearly high volume of ski specific training is required. More than recreational.
- ☐ Answer is to Concentrate
  - Ski when there is snow on the ground
  - Do not let other sports interfere with skiing





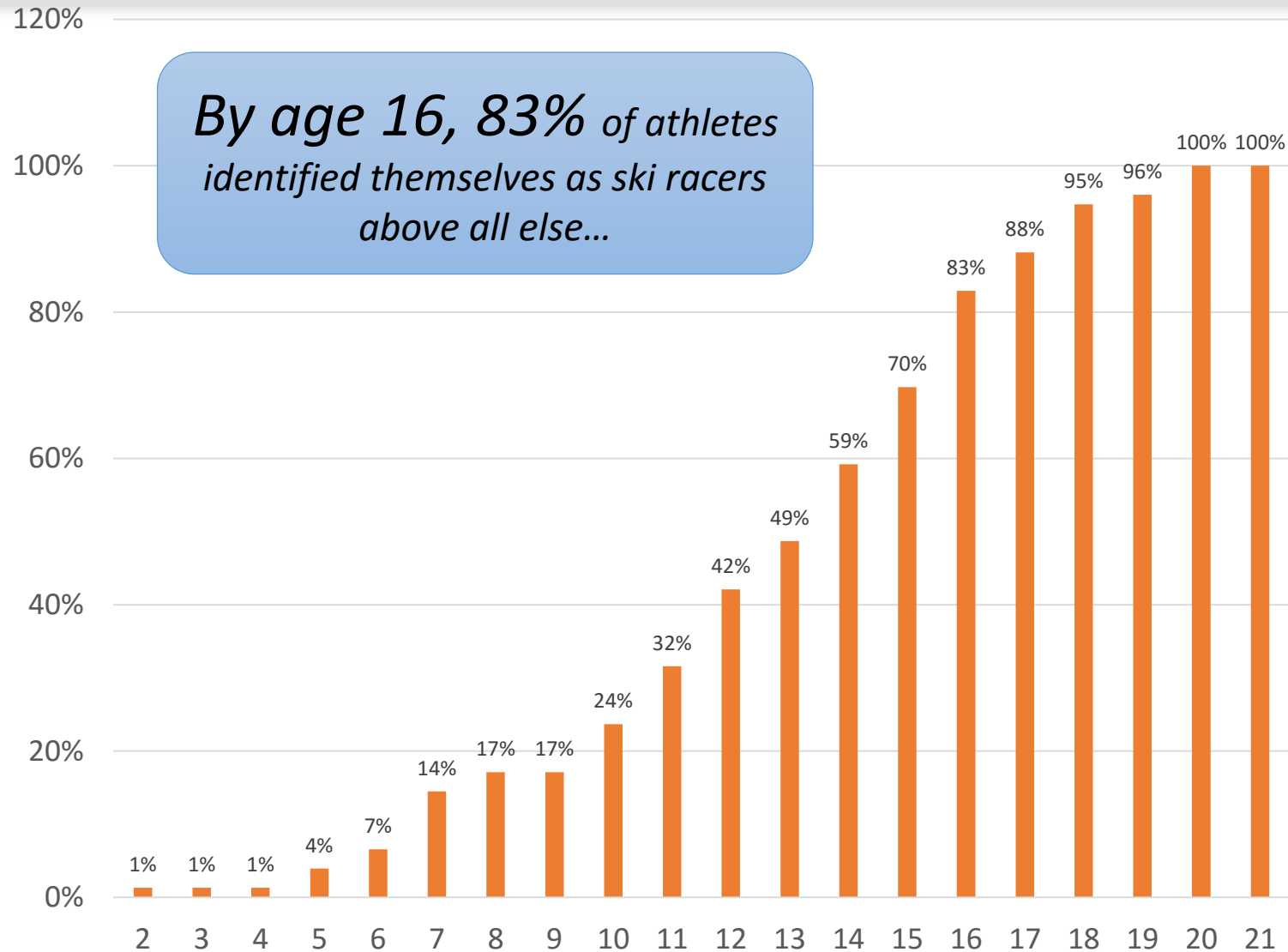
## Did your family encourage participation in other sports?



■ Yes ■ No

**83%** said their families encouraged multiple sports.

## At what age did ski racing become your primary activity?



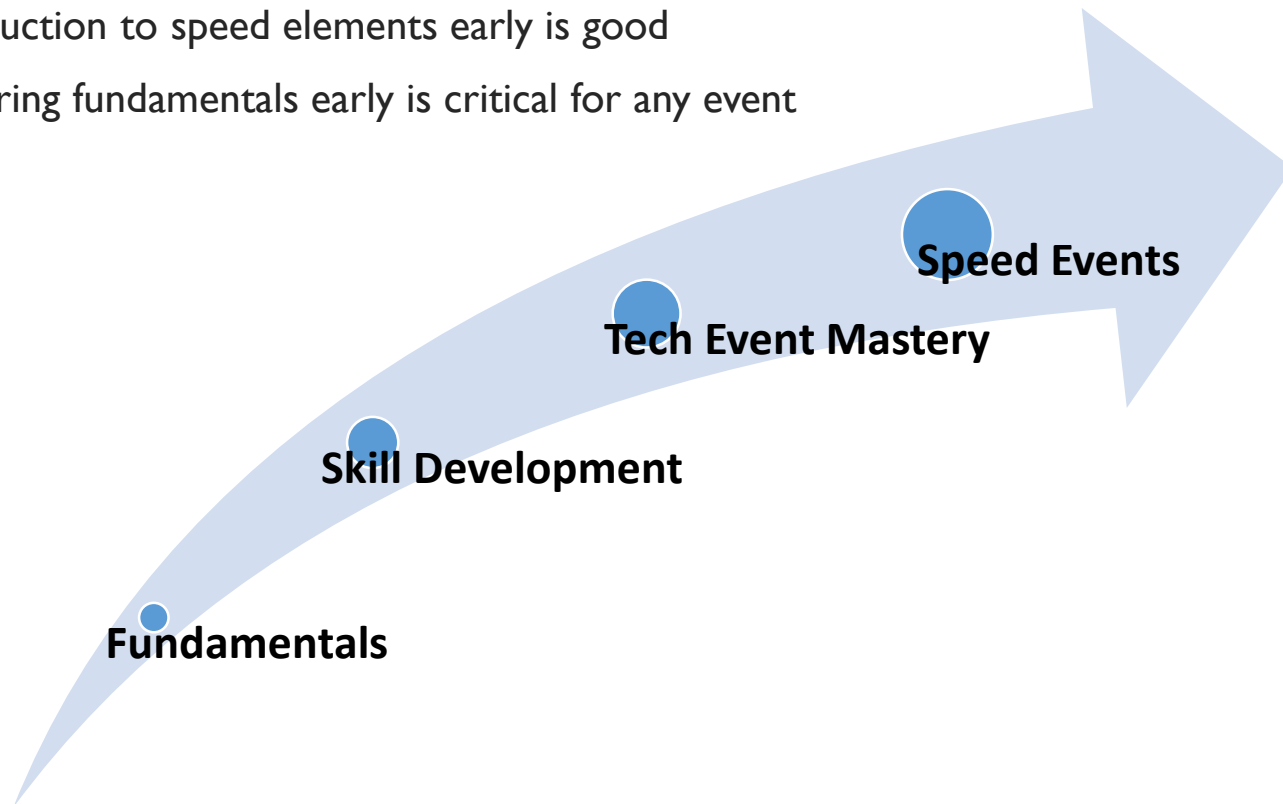
Speed skiers are good tech skiers too.

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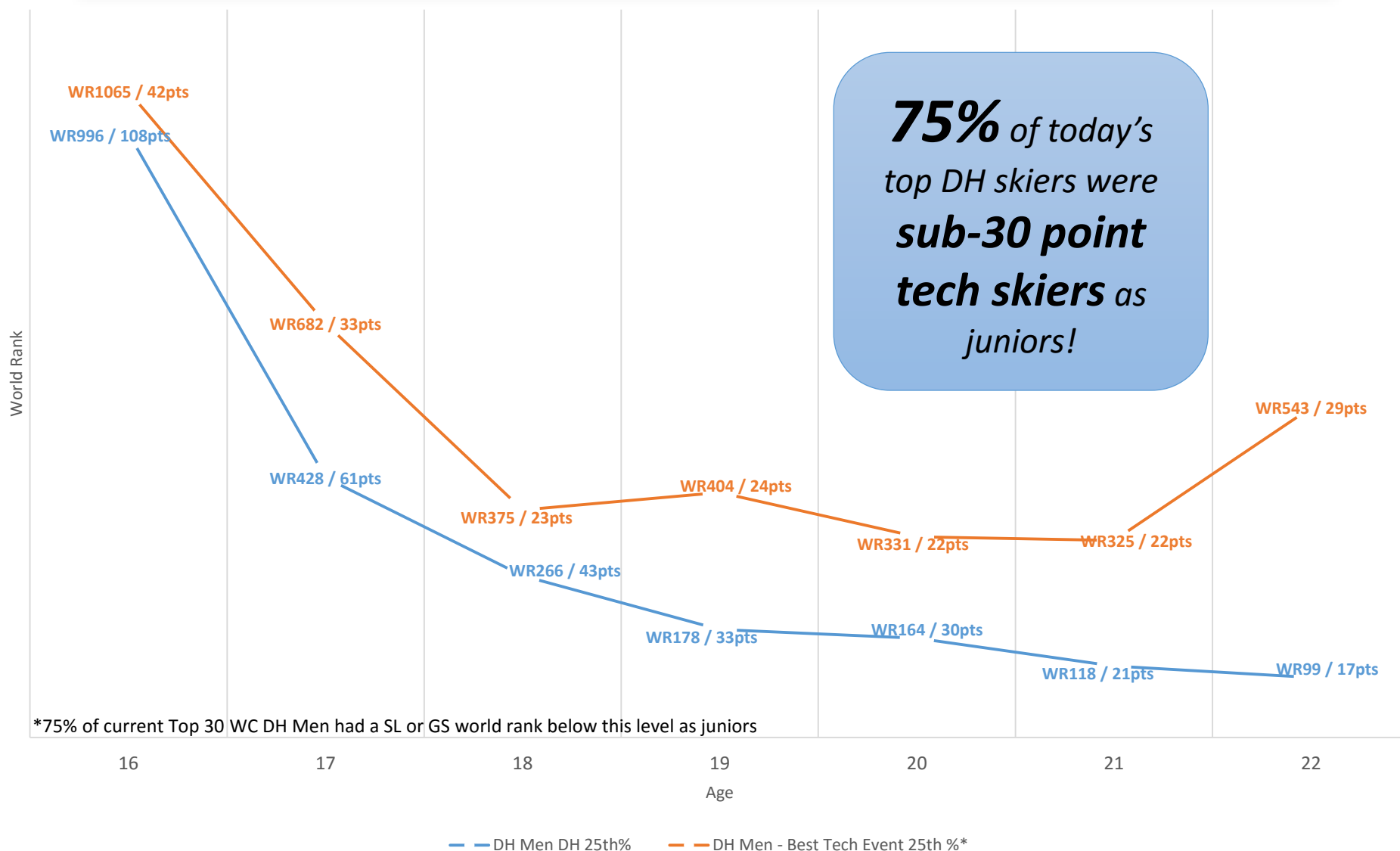
Finding #6

## Speed skiers are good tech skiers too.

- ☐ Ski racing is becoming more technical
- ☐ SL/GS skills are paramount
- ☐ Introduction to speed elements early is good
- ☐ Mastering fundamentals early is critical for any event

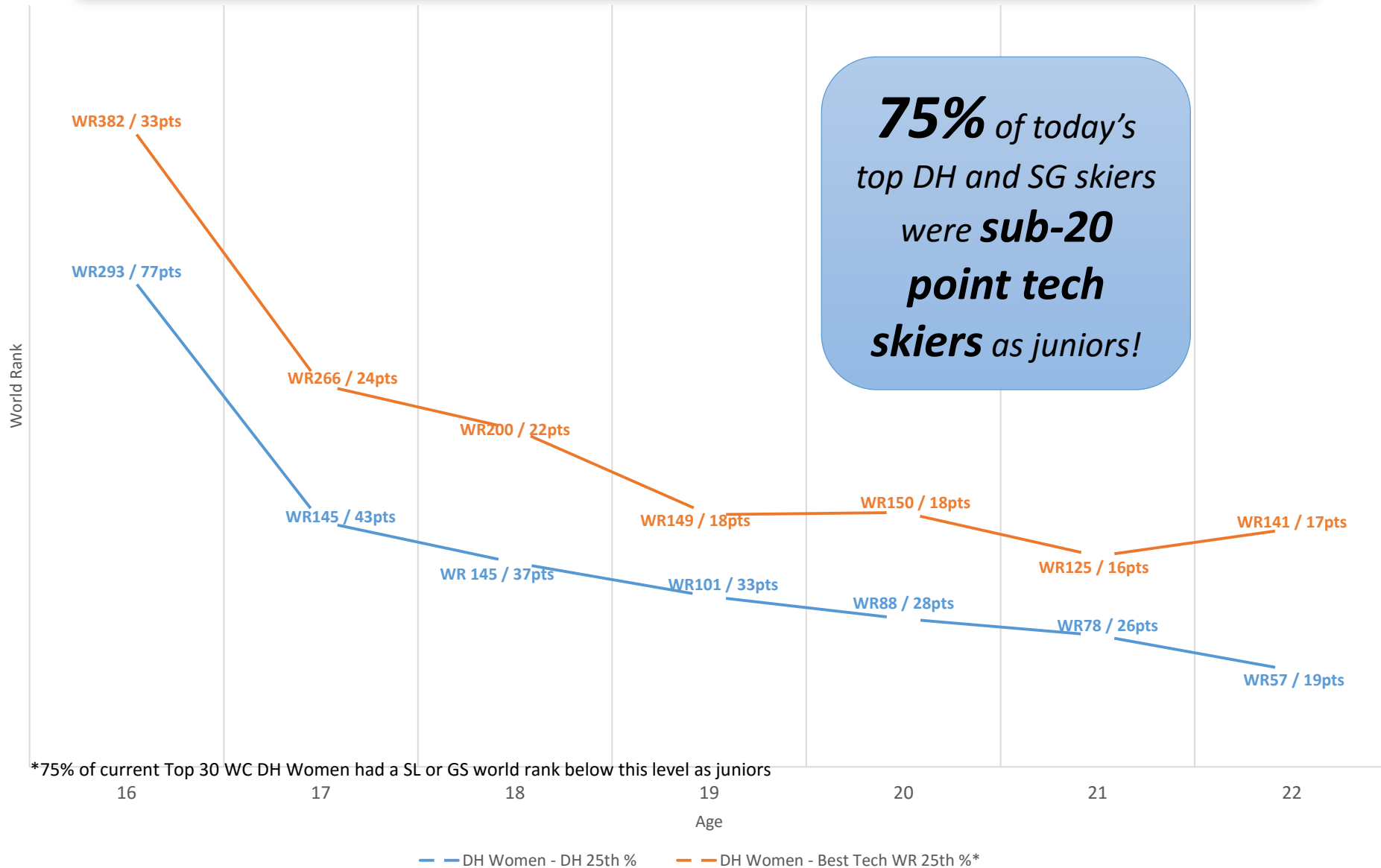


# World Cup Top 30 Downhill Men 25<sup>th</sup> Percentile World Rank with 25<sup>th</sup> Percentile Best Tech Rank as Juniors



\*2015 points are included for illustrative purposes but are not a consistent measurement over time

# World Cup Top 30 Downhill Women 25<sup>th</sup> Percentile World Rank with 25<sup>th</sup> Percentile Best Tech Rank as Juniors



\*2015 points are included for illustrative purposes but are not a consistent measurement over time

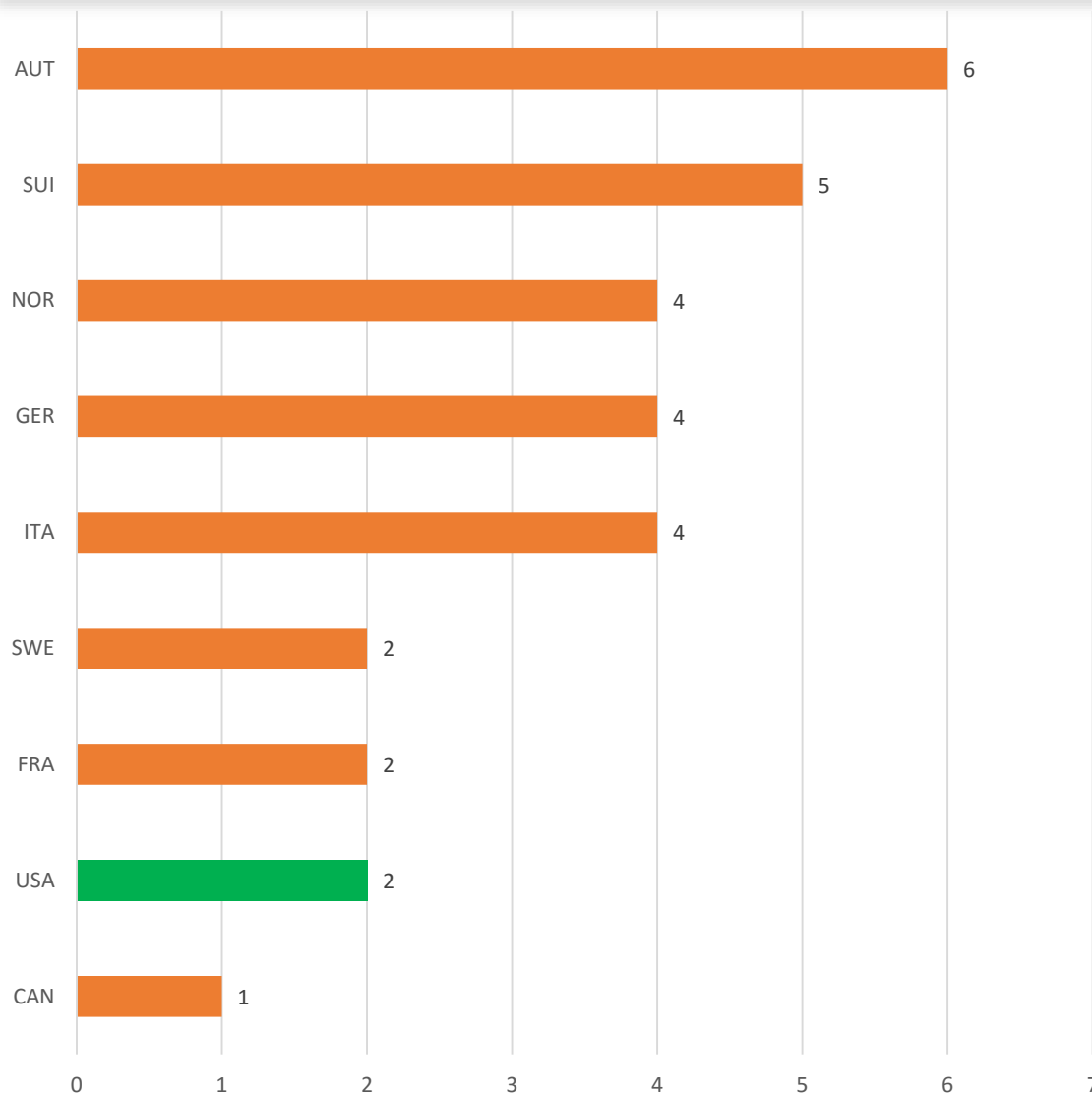
USA juniors today trail our competitors.

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Finding #10

# Men SL

## Current 16-22 Year-olds Who Meet World Cup 25<sup>th</sup> Percentile Criteria



❑ USA 8<sup>th</sup> out of major countries

❑ 45 athletes (age 16-22) worldwide meet 25<sup>th</sup> Percentile

USA:

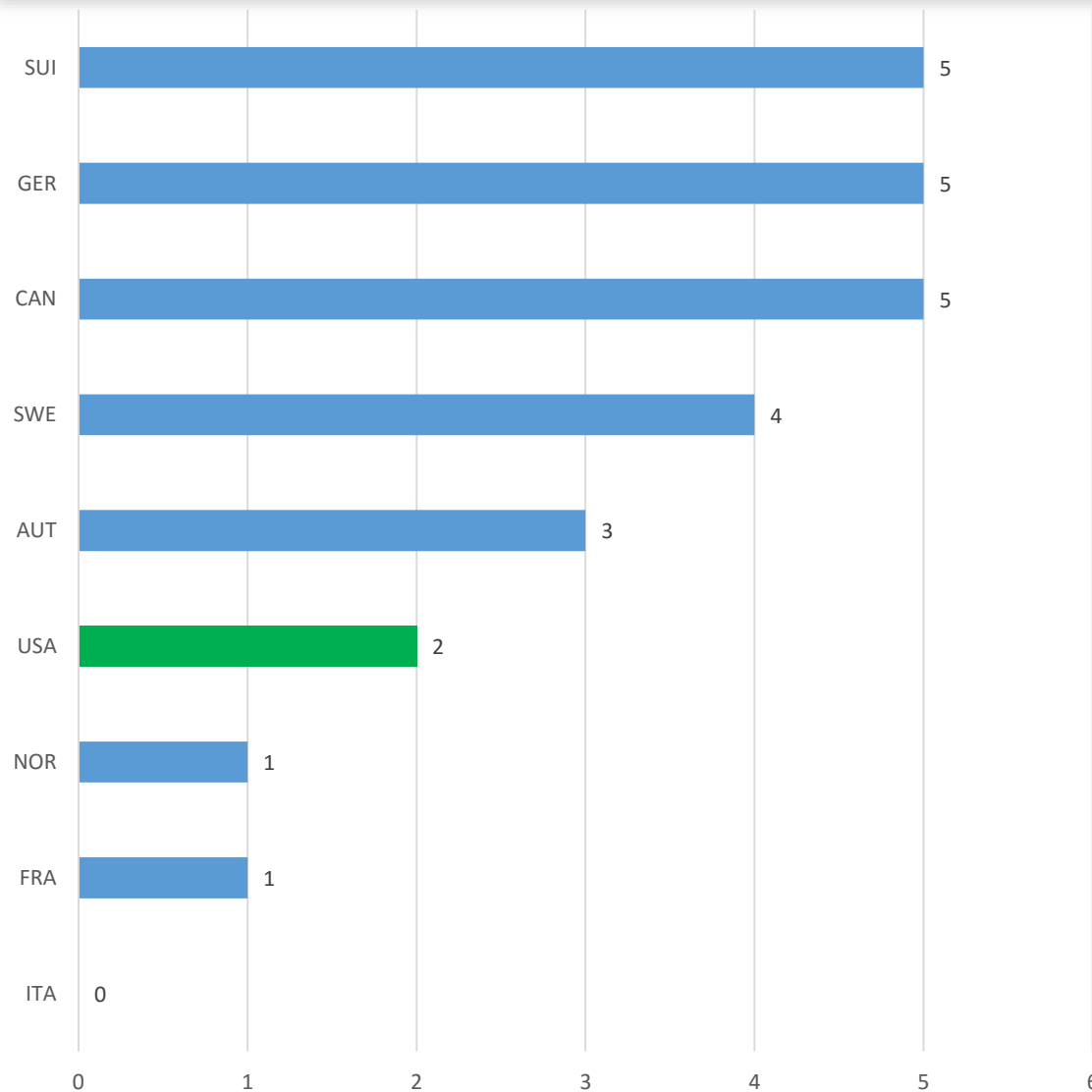
1. Garrett Driller (1996)
2. AJ Ginnis (1994)

\*based on end of 2015 season



# Women SL

## Current 16-22 Year-olds Who Meet World Cup 25<sup>th</sup> Percentile Criteria



❑ USA 6<sup>th</sup> out of major countries

❑ 29 athletes (age 16-22) worldwide meet 25<sup>th</sup> Percentile

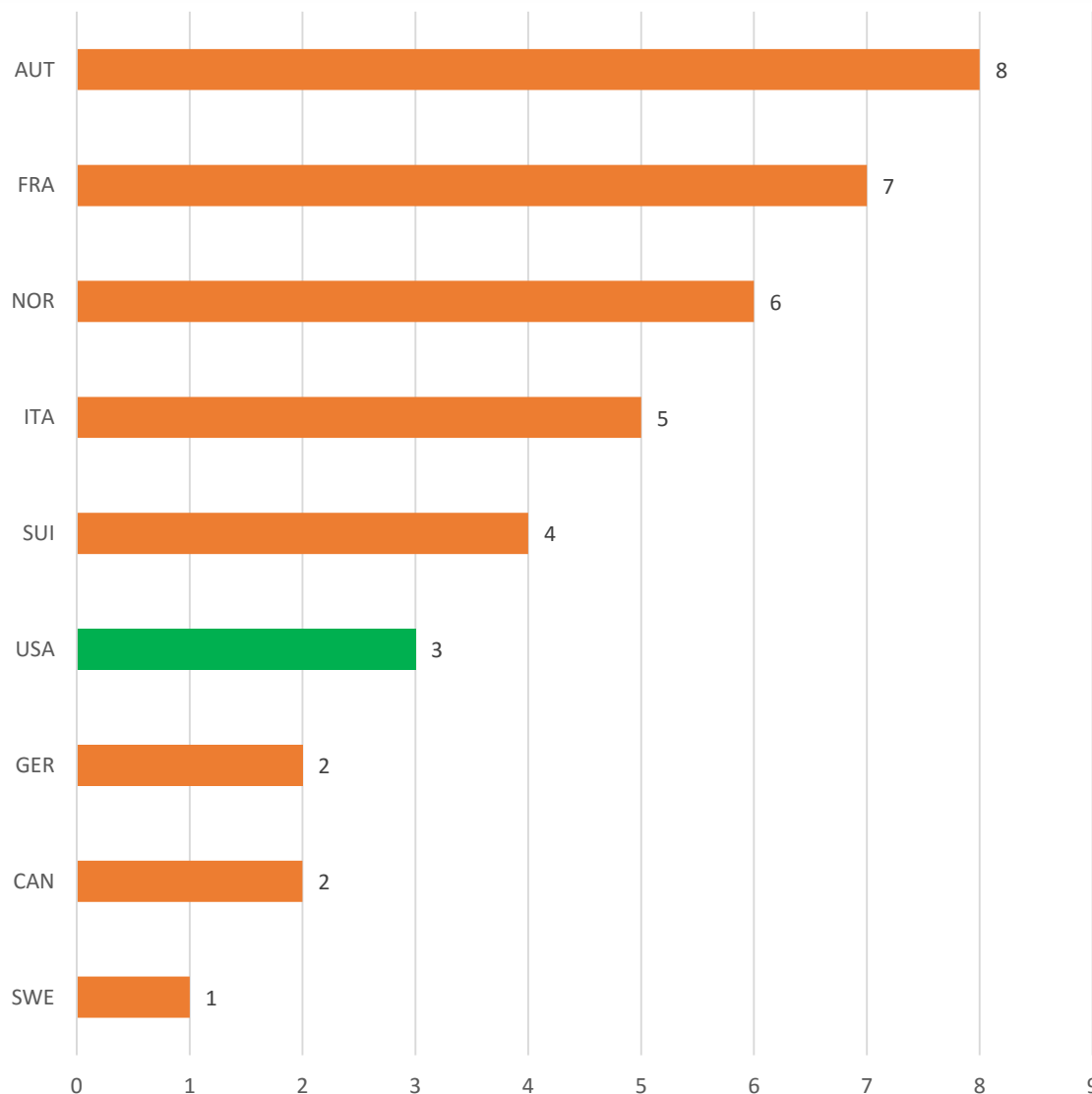
USA:

1. Mikaela Shiffrin (1995)
2. Paula Moltzan (1994)

\*based on end of 2015 season

# Men GS

## Current 16-22 Year-olds Who Meet World Cup 25<sup>th</sup> Percentile Criteria



❑ USA 7<sup>th</sup> out of major countries

❑ 56 athletes (age 16-22) worldwide meet 25<sup>th</sup> Percentile

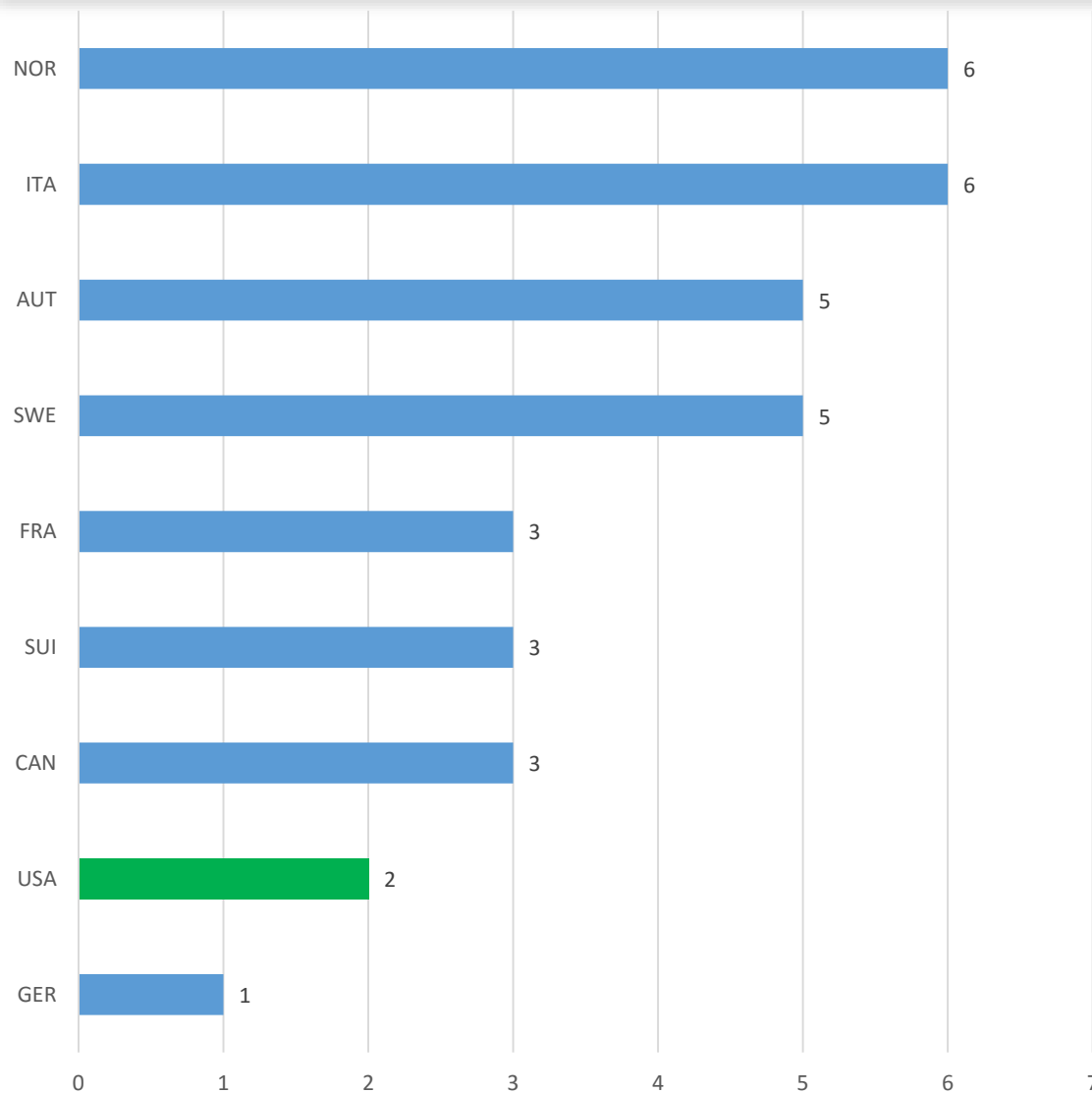
USA:

1. Kipling Weisel (1995)
2. Ryan Cochran-Siegle (1992)
3. Kieffer Christianson (1992)

\*based on end of 2015 season

# Women GS

## Current 16-22 Year-olds Who Meet World Cup 25<sup>th</sup> Percentile Criteria



❑ USA 8<sup>th</sup> out of major countries

❑ 40 athletes (age 16-22) worldwide meet 25<sup>th</sup> Percentile

From USA:

1. Nina O'Brien (1997)
2. Mikaela Shiffrin (1995)

\*based on end of 2015 season

## USA is at a disadvantage to other ski racing nations

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- ☐ Financial sacrifice is high barrier to entry/continuation
- ☐ USA is short on volume at young ages
- ☐ Skiing culture not as prevalent

## What can we do to improve?



## Financial Sacrifice is High Barrier to Entry/Continuation

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- ❑ Bad news/good news...
  - Self funding model allows for late bloomers
    - Can NCAA be a pipeline for USA?
  - Need for awareness and education
    - Is so much racing and travel really necessary?
- ❑ Programs to lower cost
  - Local spring/fall camps for off-season
  - Investment in state of the art snowmaking
  - Cultivation of alternative training sites
- ❑ Prioritization of NorAm's
  - Critical USST supports high quality, low point series.
  - Create high quality racing opportunities close to home

## USA behind on volume at young ages

### ☐ Improve access

- night skiing
- state-of-the-art snowmaking
- quick turnaround
- school collaboration
- proximity to mountains



### ☐ Structure programs around best practices:

- Focus on mastery of fundamental techniques. Disciplined practice matters most.
- Create skiing and racing opportunities as early in life as possible.
- Educate about international best practices pathway.
- High quality programs and coaching at all age groups.
- Create inclusive, yet high-performance training environments.
- Encourage other sports, but concentrate on skiing.
- Structure younger development teams to focus on tech over speed.

## Skiing culture not as prevalent in USA

- ❑ Create **micro-cultures**. Community by community.
  - Educate and engage parents
  - Importance of best practices
  - Engage media
  - Celebrate hero's
  - Engage school systems
  - Access and quality of training environments
  - Cultivate donors



## Overarching Conclusion: Ski racing is a no-lose sport.

- ☐ Pursuing ski racing at ANY level of commitment is positive.
- ☐ Inherently rewarding in and of itself
- ☐ No apologies or sacrifices needed...fun activity
- ☐ Generations of ski racing shows lifelong positive values
- ☐ Promotes personal development, maturity, confidence, accomplishment and physical well-being







Thank you for your time and to the athletes for their participation.

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