

Informal caregivers in 12 European countries and Korea: a cross-national comparison

Soong-nang Jang, RN, MPH, PhD

Assistant professor,

Department of Nursing, College of Medicine, Chung-Ang University

sjang@cau.ac.kr

Informal caregivers

- **Major source of care** for disabled persons in almost all countries
- **Diminishing resources** available for caregiving over the countries
- **Large cross-national variations**
 - But few studies have examined the prevalence of informal care and characteristics of caregivers



“Informal caregiver = woman”

- Is an established fact (Sundström, 1994)
- Caring Aging parents in East Asia: traditionally the responsibility of daughters-in-law
(Campbell & Ikegami, 2000; Yoon & Ryu, 2005).



孝婦嘗 “Best Filial duty award winners : Daughters-in-law”

Determinants of state reliance on female informal care

a) Traditional culture

- e.g. Confucian system of elder care in East Asia

b) Women's empowerment and economic autonomy

- As more women enter the labour force, the less likely they are to be involved in informal care-giving



GDP and caregiving

- **Per capita GDP** could be expected to be **lower** in countries where there is a **higher proportion of women involved in informal care**
 - Being at home looking after dependent elders instead of being in the paid workforce

“So, when a man marries his parent’s care-giver, the national GDP goes down”



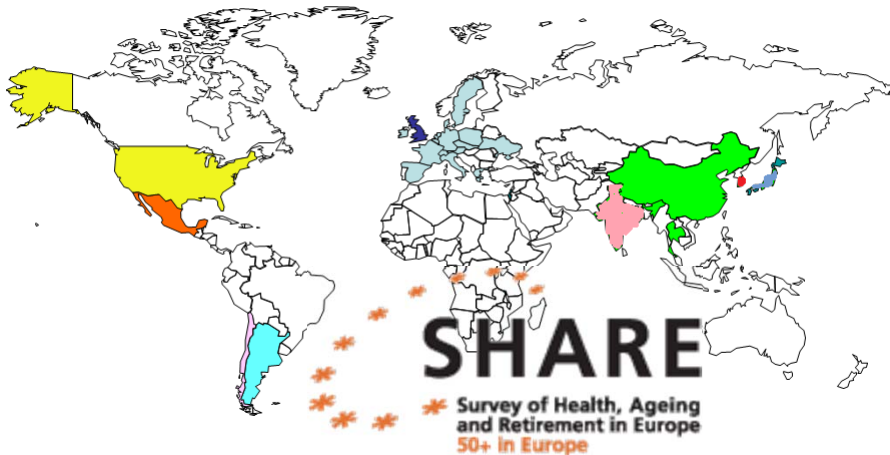
Fertility and caregiving

- A low fertility rate (such as occurs in Korea)
 - **Over the long term:** worsens the aged dependency ratio
 - **In the short term:** higher informal care-giving burden drives down the fertility rate
 - **Where fertility rates are below population replacement levels show also **low** women's labour force participation.**
(e.g., Japan & Korea)

Purpose

- To provide a **cross-national comparative perspective on informal care-giving** in 13 countries, using both micro-level data and ecological data
- To examine **macro-level societal characteristics** associated with **higher national reliance on female informal care-giving**

Data – individual



(2004/2005) Households with at least one person **aged 50 or older**. The weighted average response rate among the 12 countries participating in the SHARE in 2004/2005 was 61.8%, and the within-household response rate was 86.0%. The un-weighted total of eligible individuals was **22,777 persons in 15,537 households**



(2006) Focused on **Koreans aged 45 and older living in households** selected according to multistage stratified probability sampling. A total of **10,254 individuals** completed interviews conducted by a trained interviewer. The household response rate was 70.7%

Final sample: the population of informal caregivers aged 50 years old or older (N=8,528), total population in 13 countries aged 50 years old or older (total of 35,799 persons)

Data – national

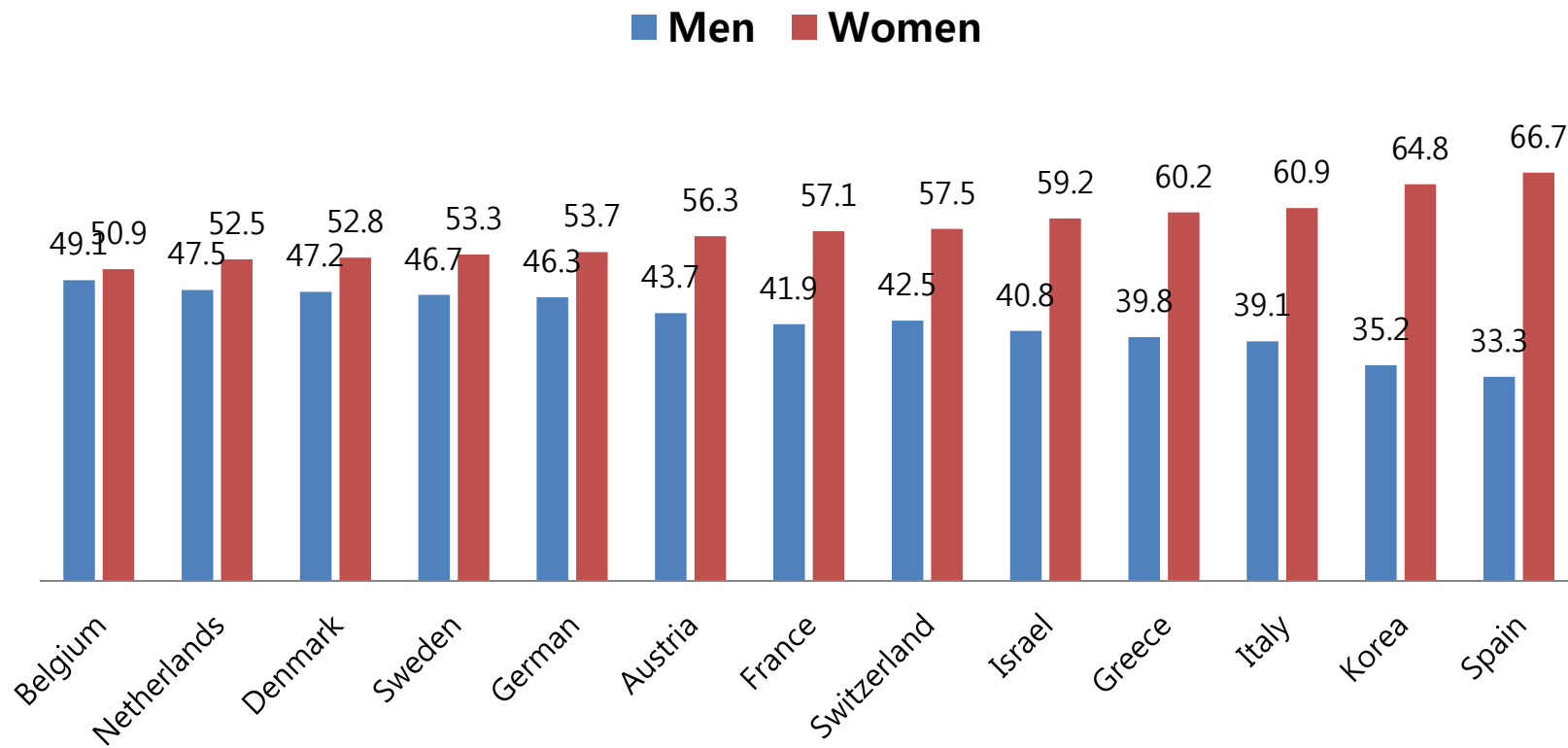
- Data were drawn from OECD statistics (2006) (<http://stats.oecd.org>)
 - Proportion of the elderly in long-term care facilities
 - Women's participation rate in the labour force
 - The proportions of female legislatives or managerial level workers
 - Total fertility rate
 - Life expectancy in men and women
 - Proportion of elderly in the total population
 - GDP per capita

Analysis

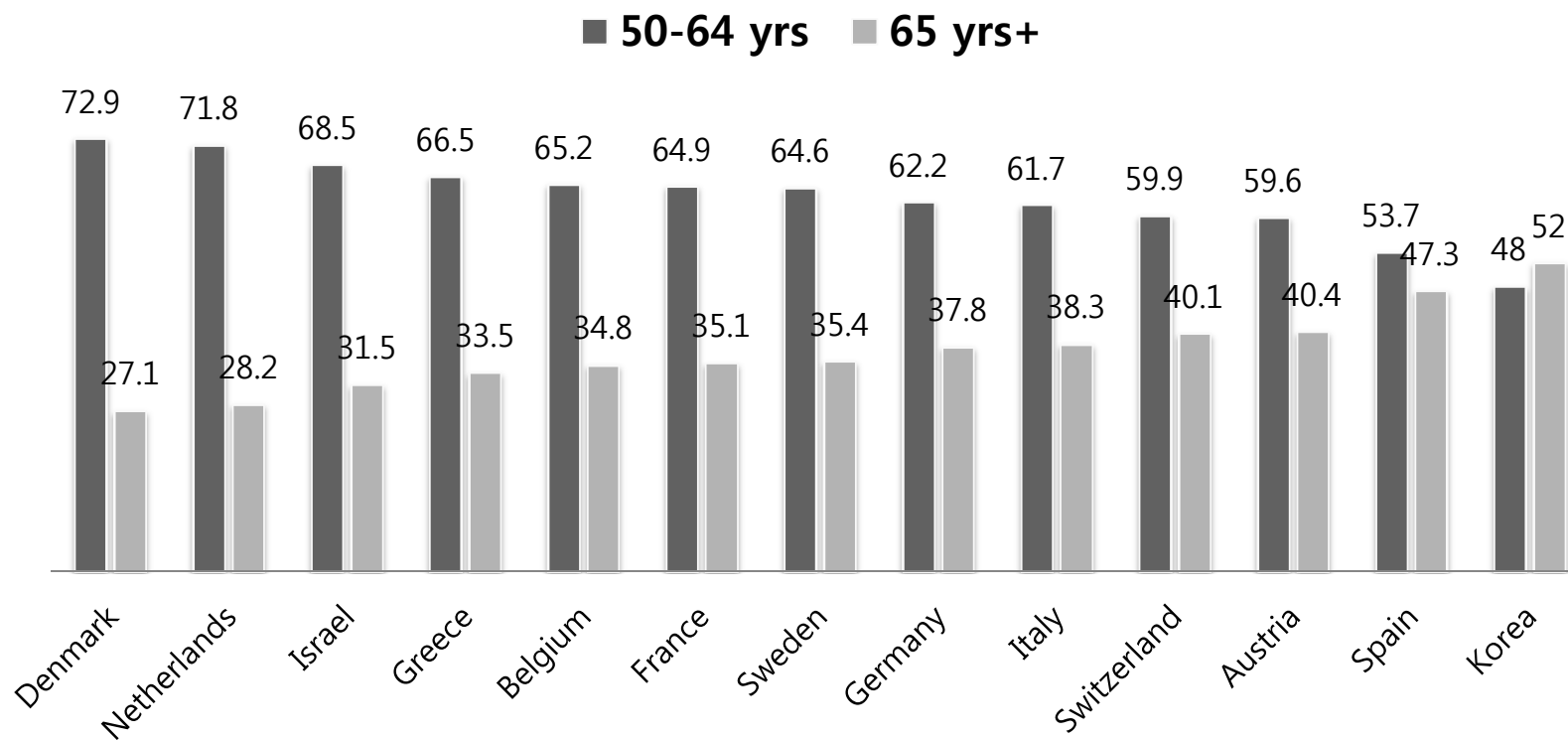
- **A descriptive cross-national comparative profile** of the prevalence and characteristics of informal caregivers in twelve European countries
- **Logistic regression: factors for being informal caregivers** in each country
- **Correlation between the size of female informal care-giving sector** and
 - 1) total fertility rate
 - 2) women's labour force participation
 - 3) per capita GDP
 - 4) % aged individuals,
 - 5) % of the elderly in long term care facilities

Results

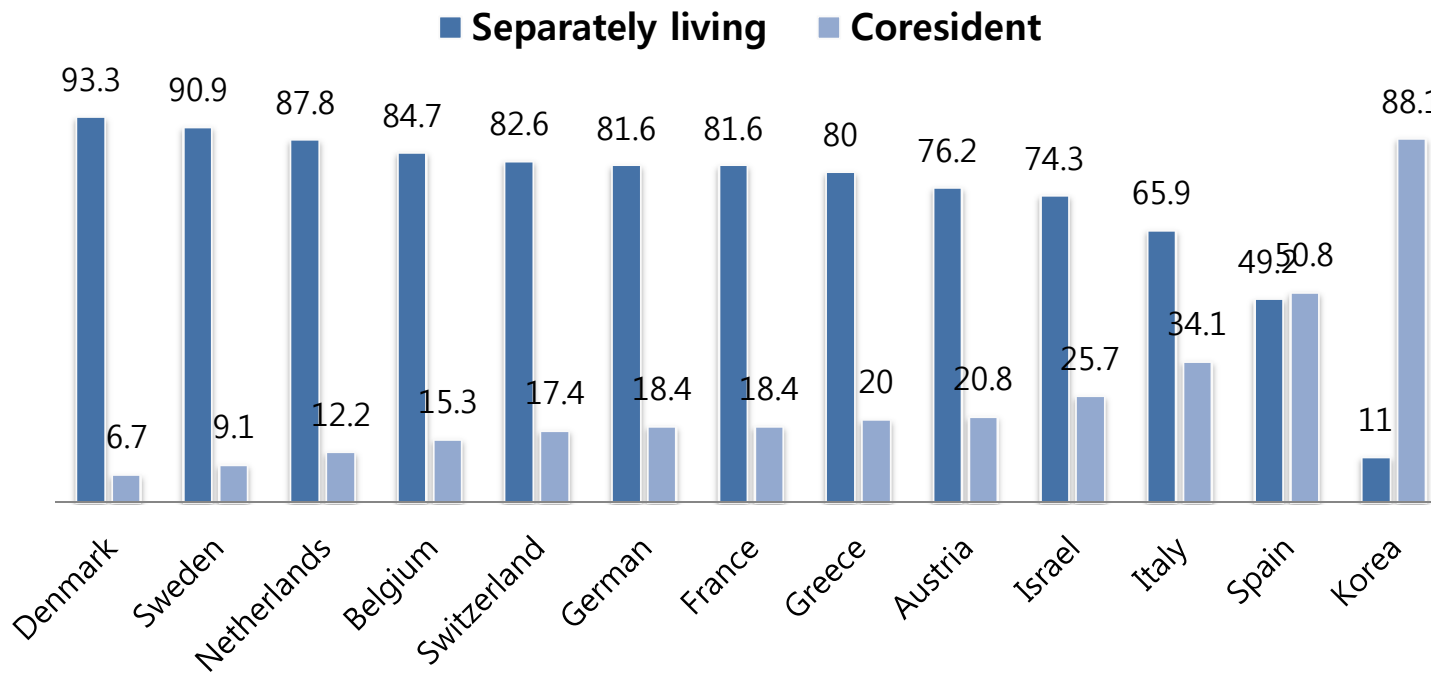
Gender distribution of informal caregivers



Age group distribution of informal caregivers

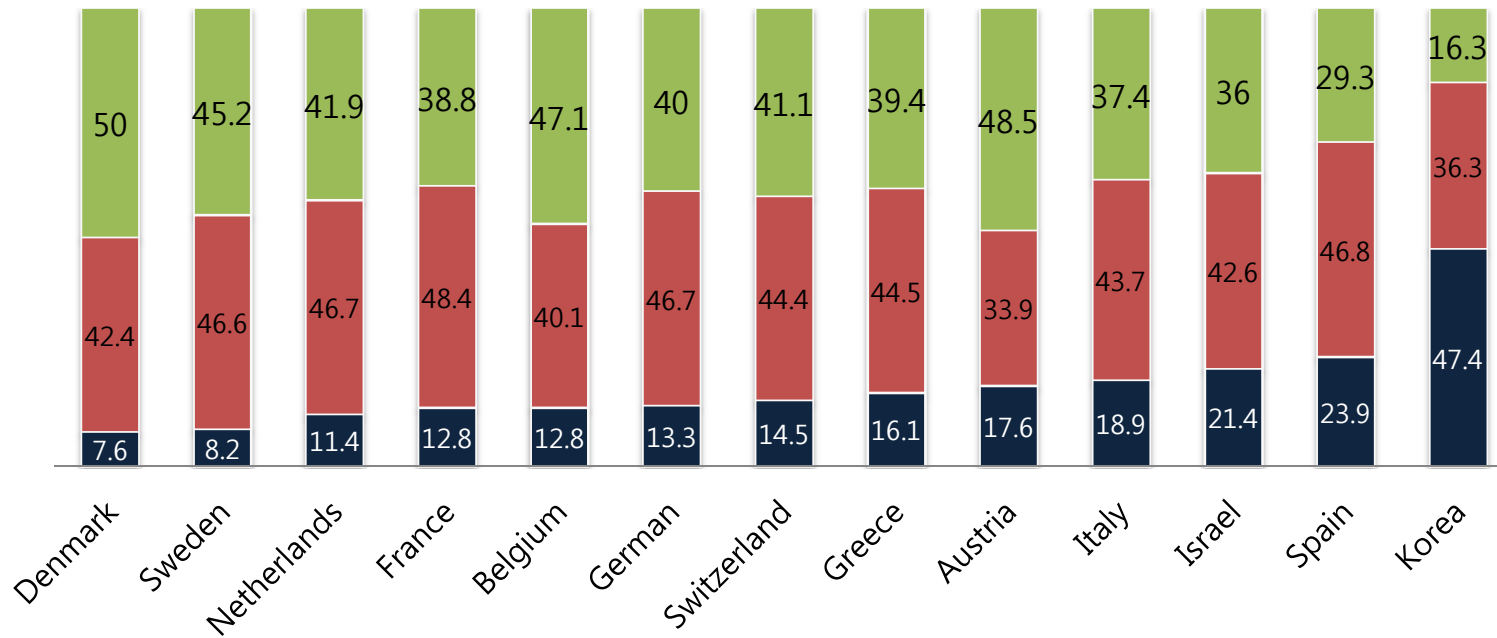


Living arrangement with caregivers and care recipients

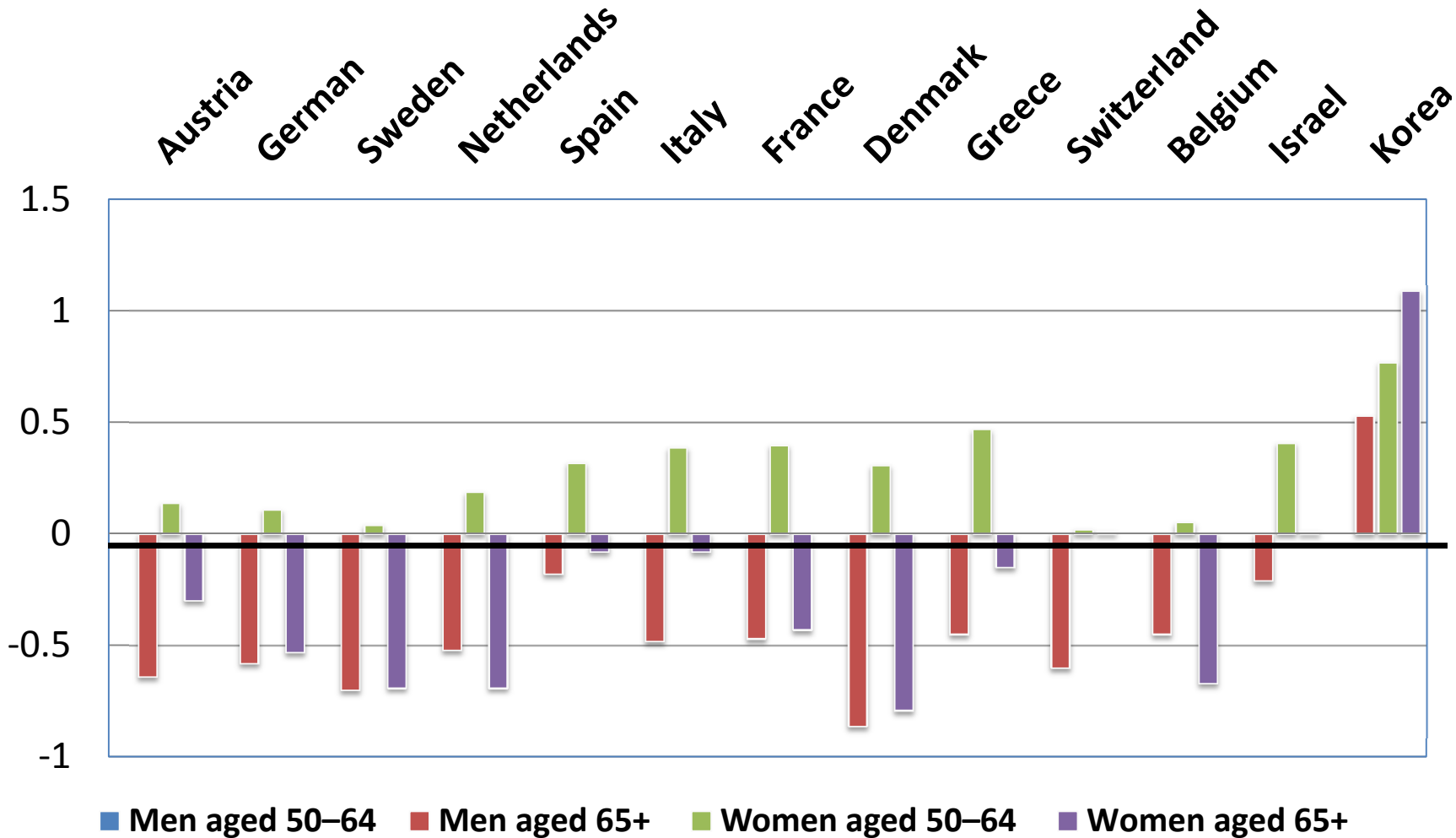


Relationship with recipients (%)

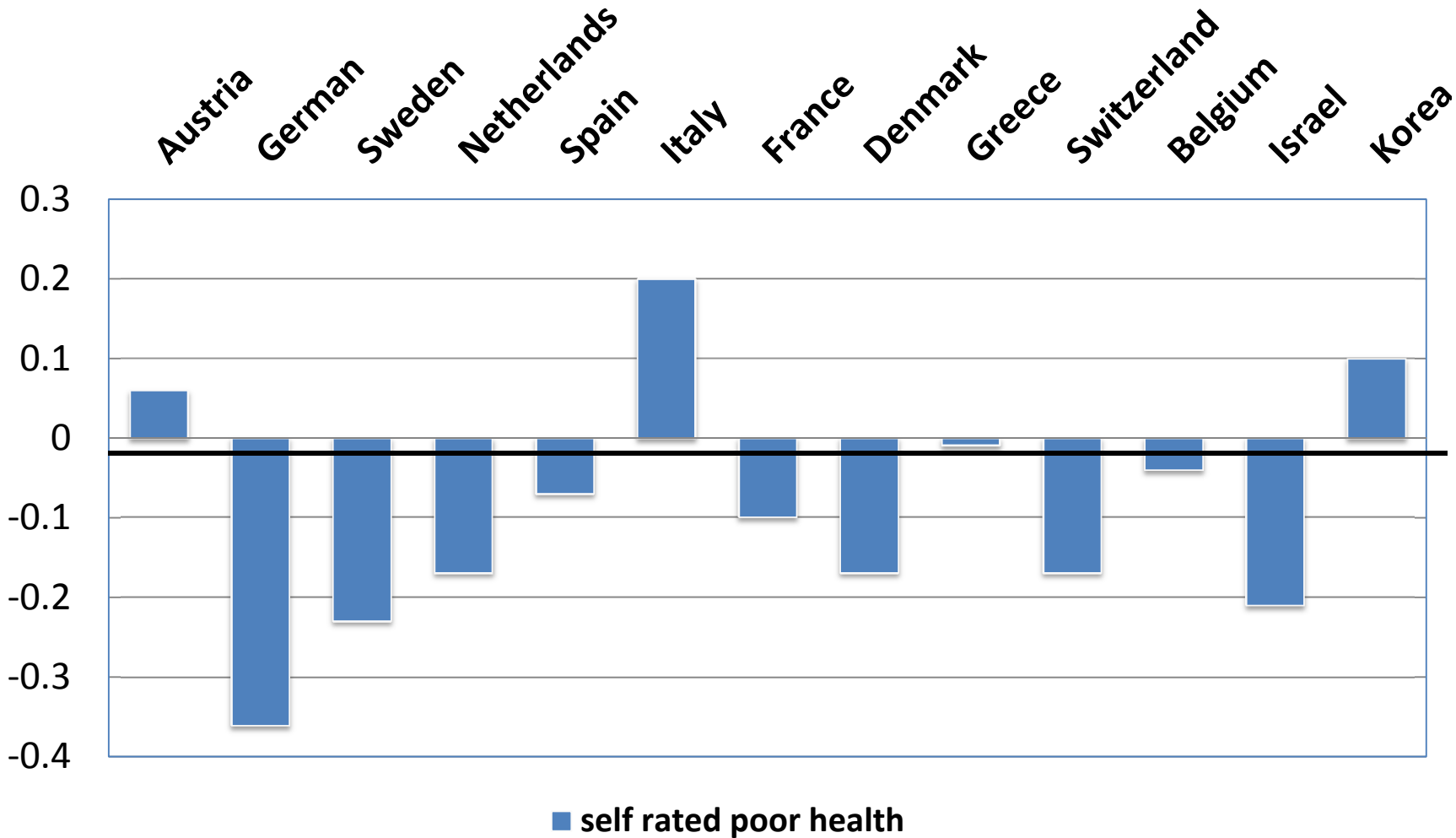
■ Spouse ■ Children ■ Other relatives



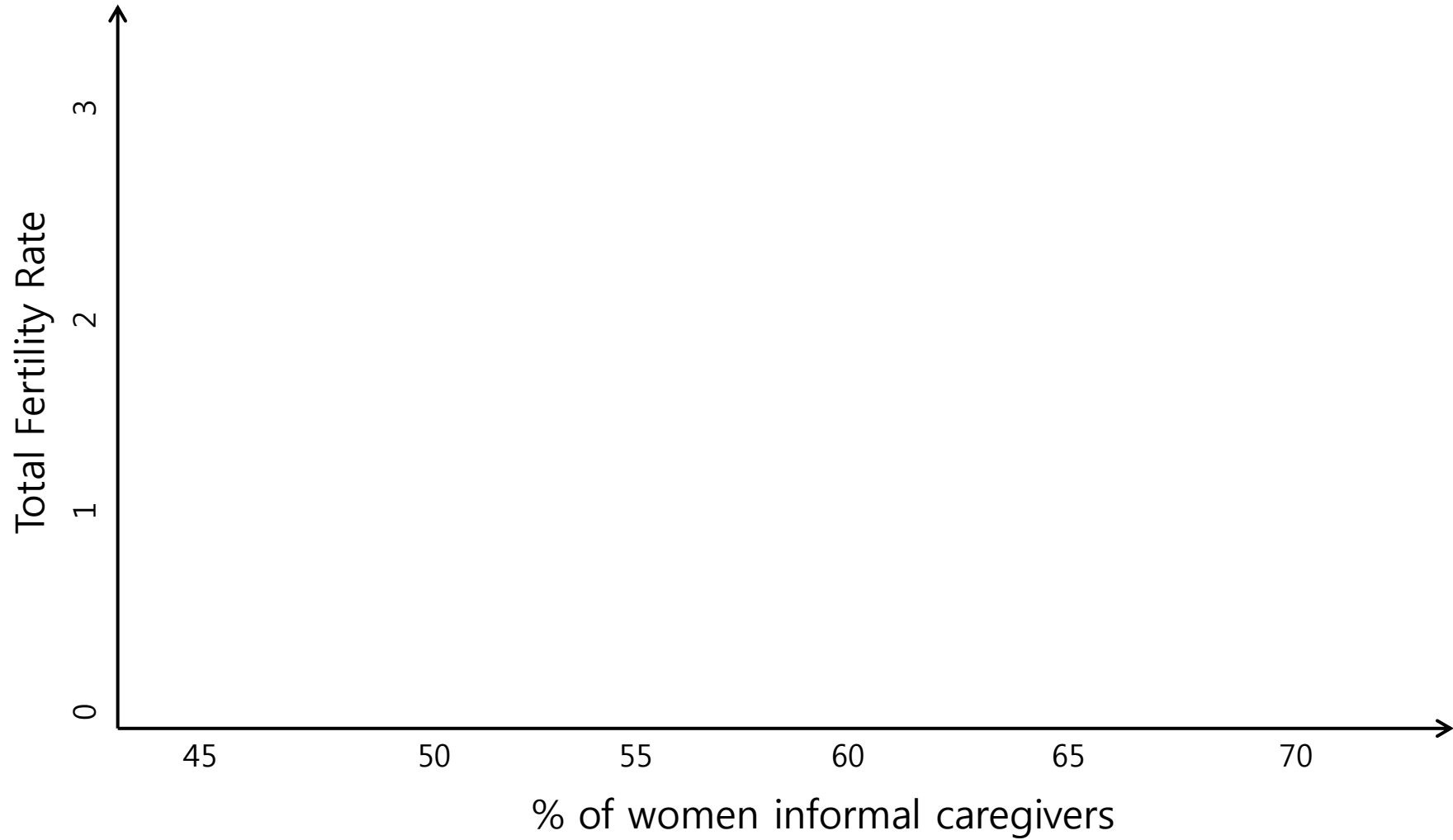
Logistic regression coefficients for being familial informal caregivers



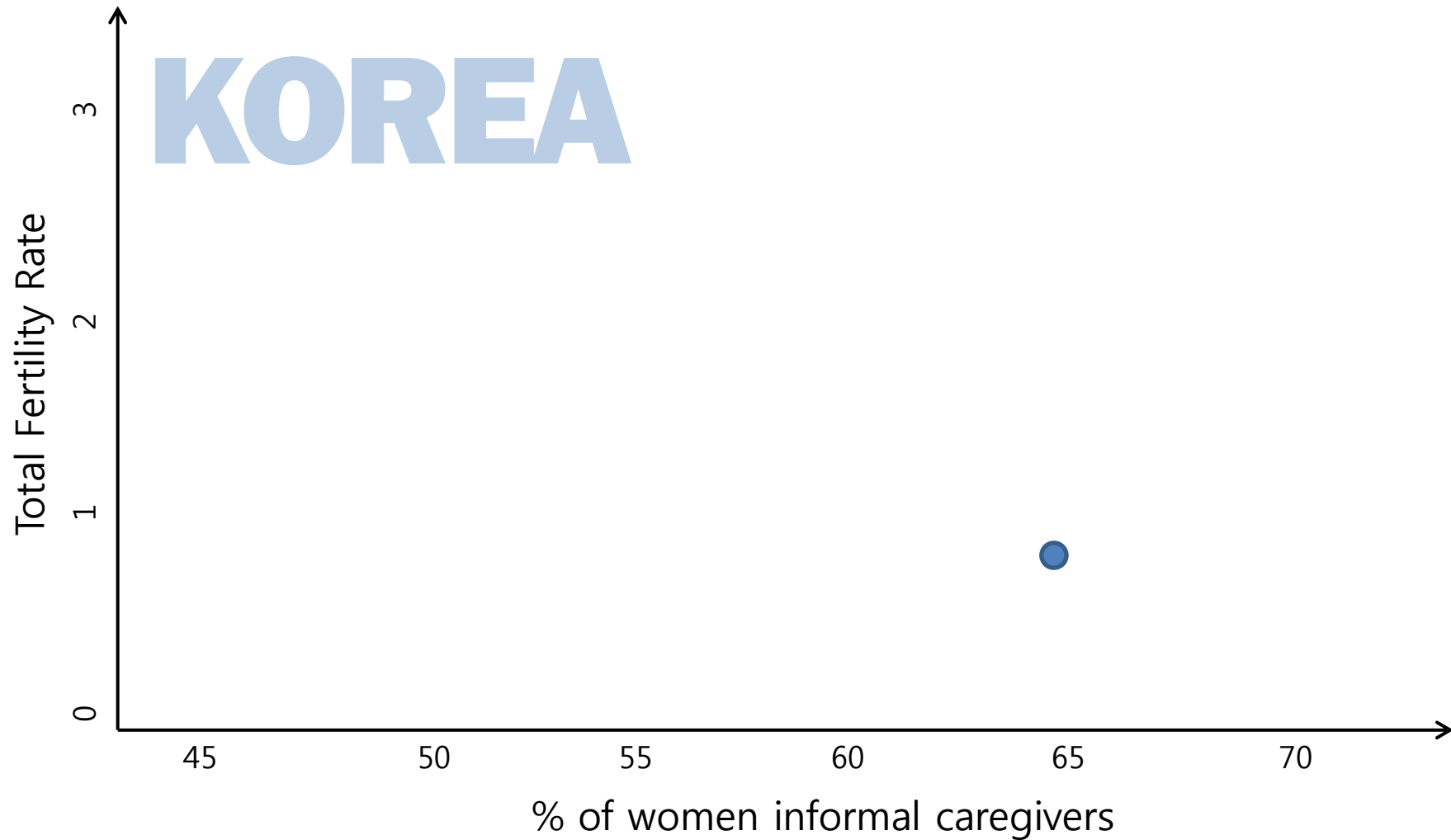
Logistic regression coefficients for being familial informal caregivers



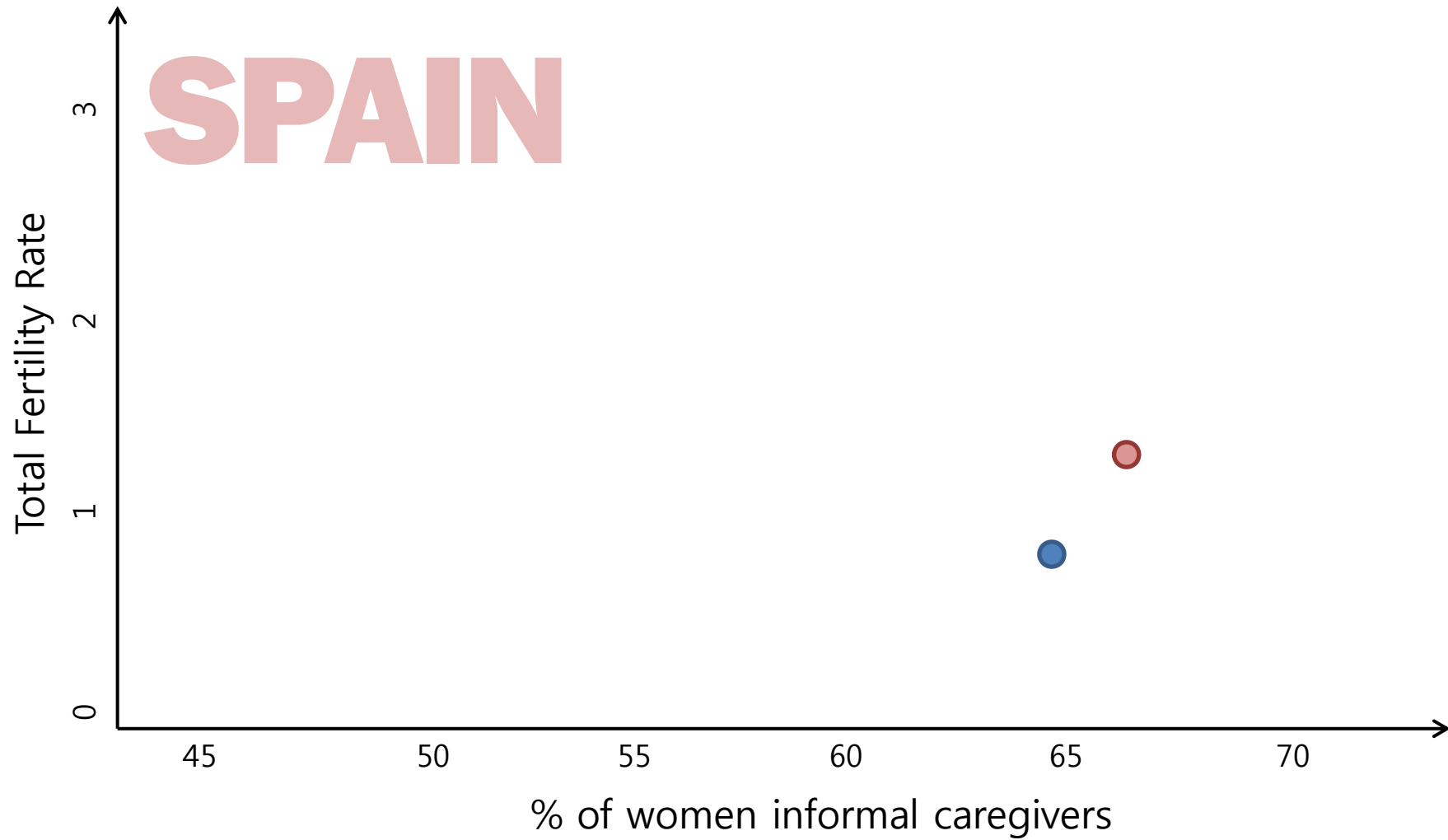
Total Fertility Rate & % of female informal caregivers



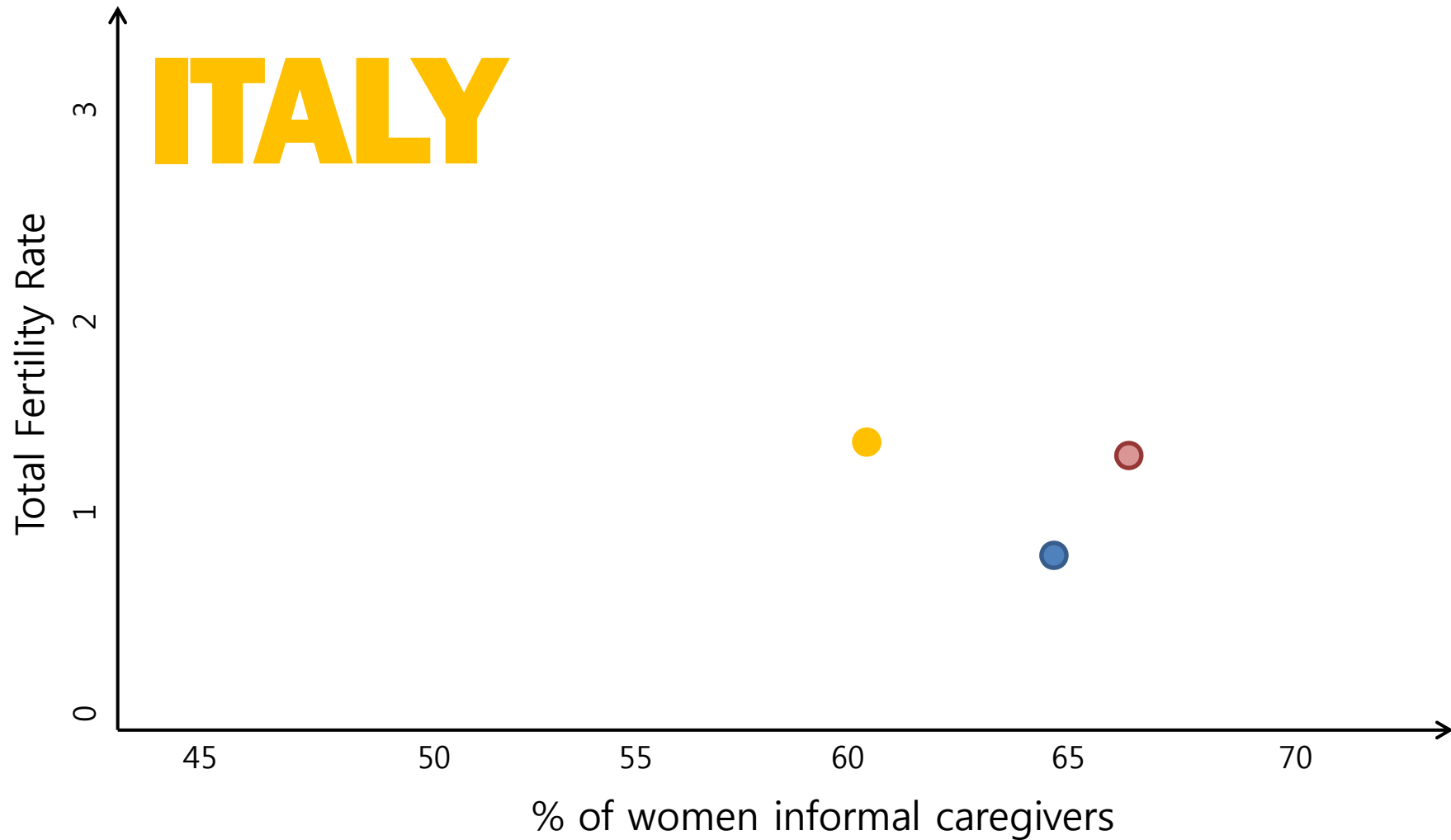
Total Fertility Rate & % of female informal caregivers



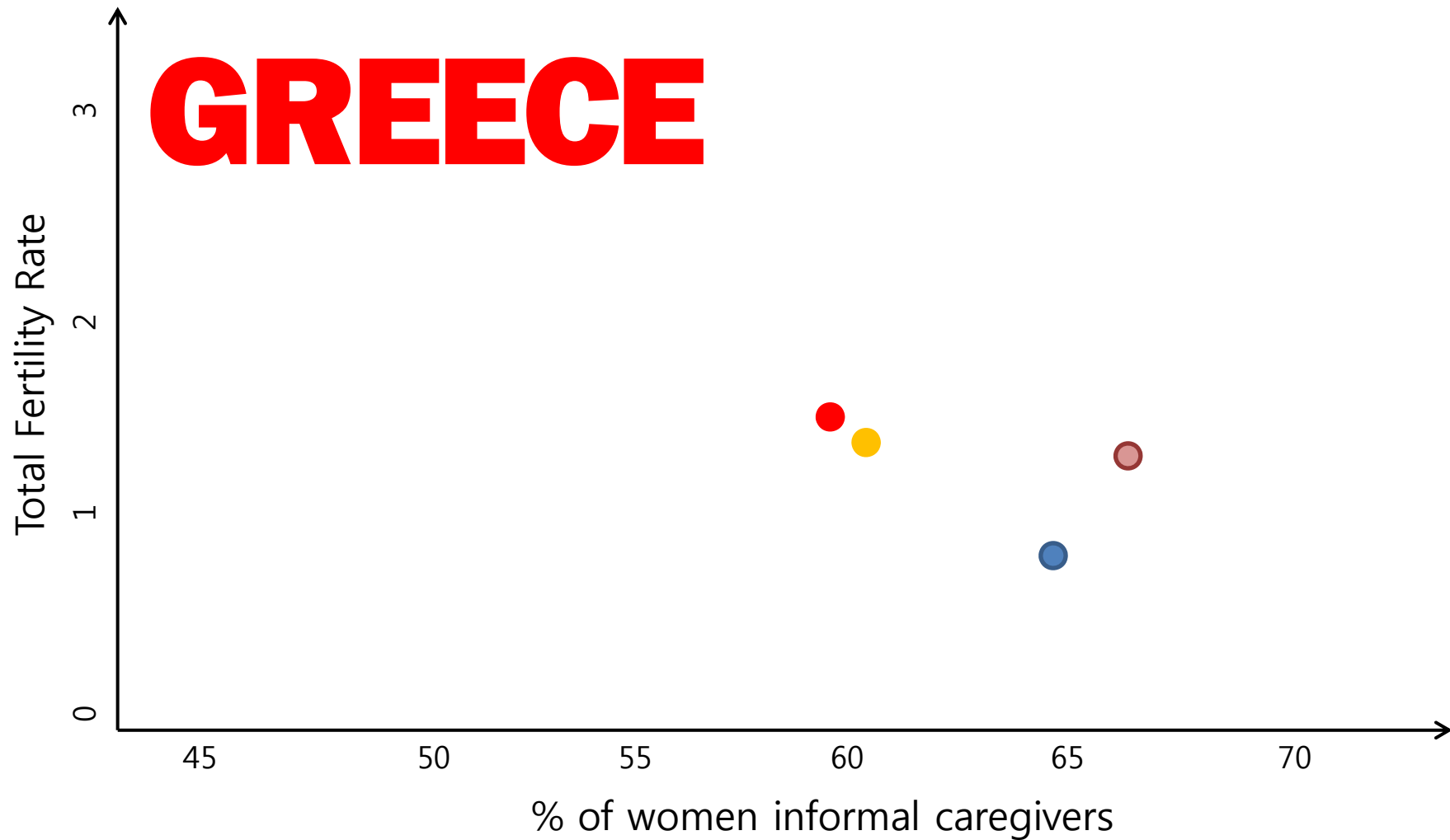
Total Fertility Rate & % of female informal caregivers



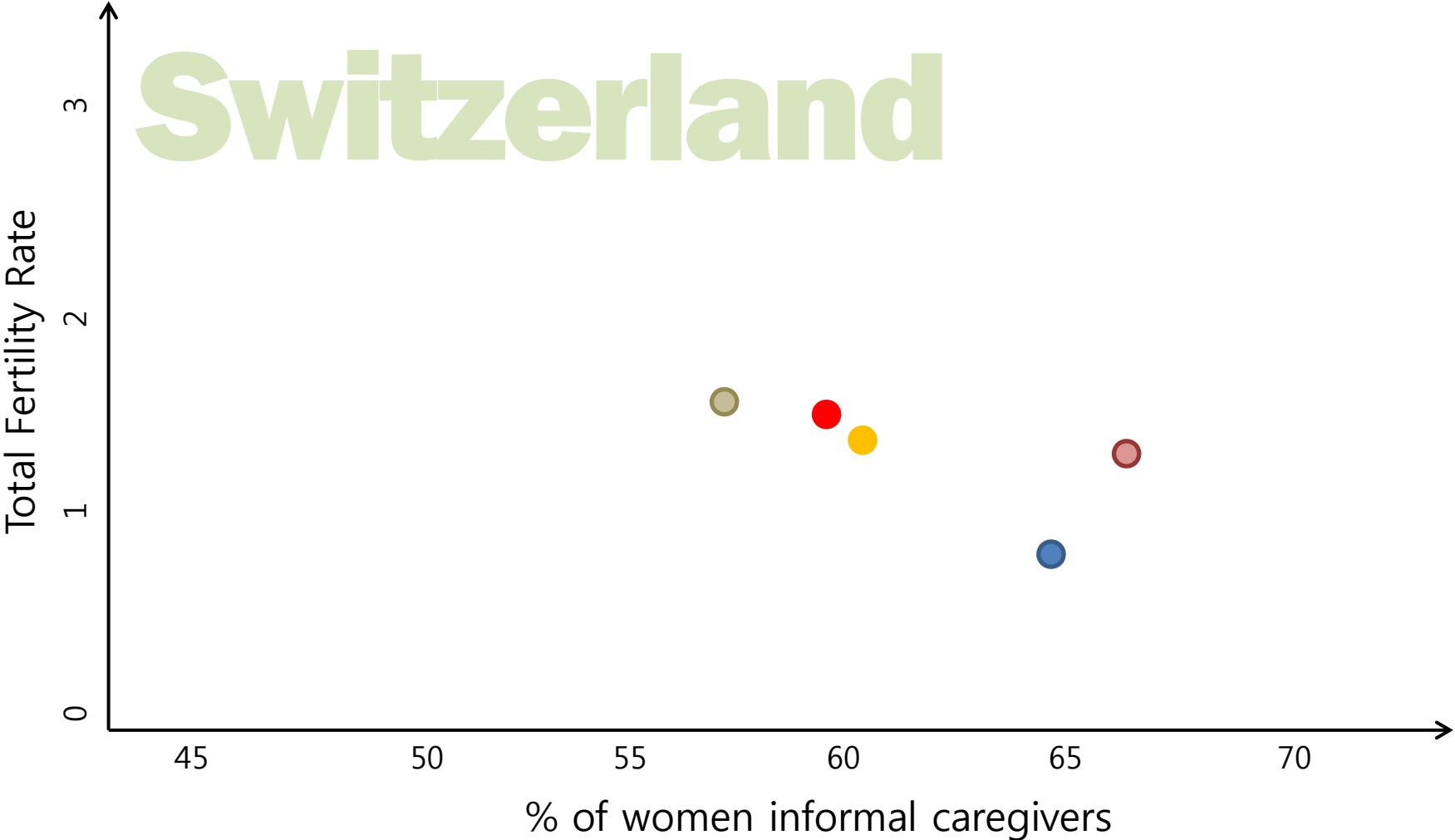
Total Fertility Rate & % of female informal caregivers



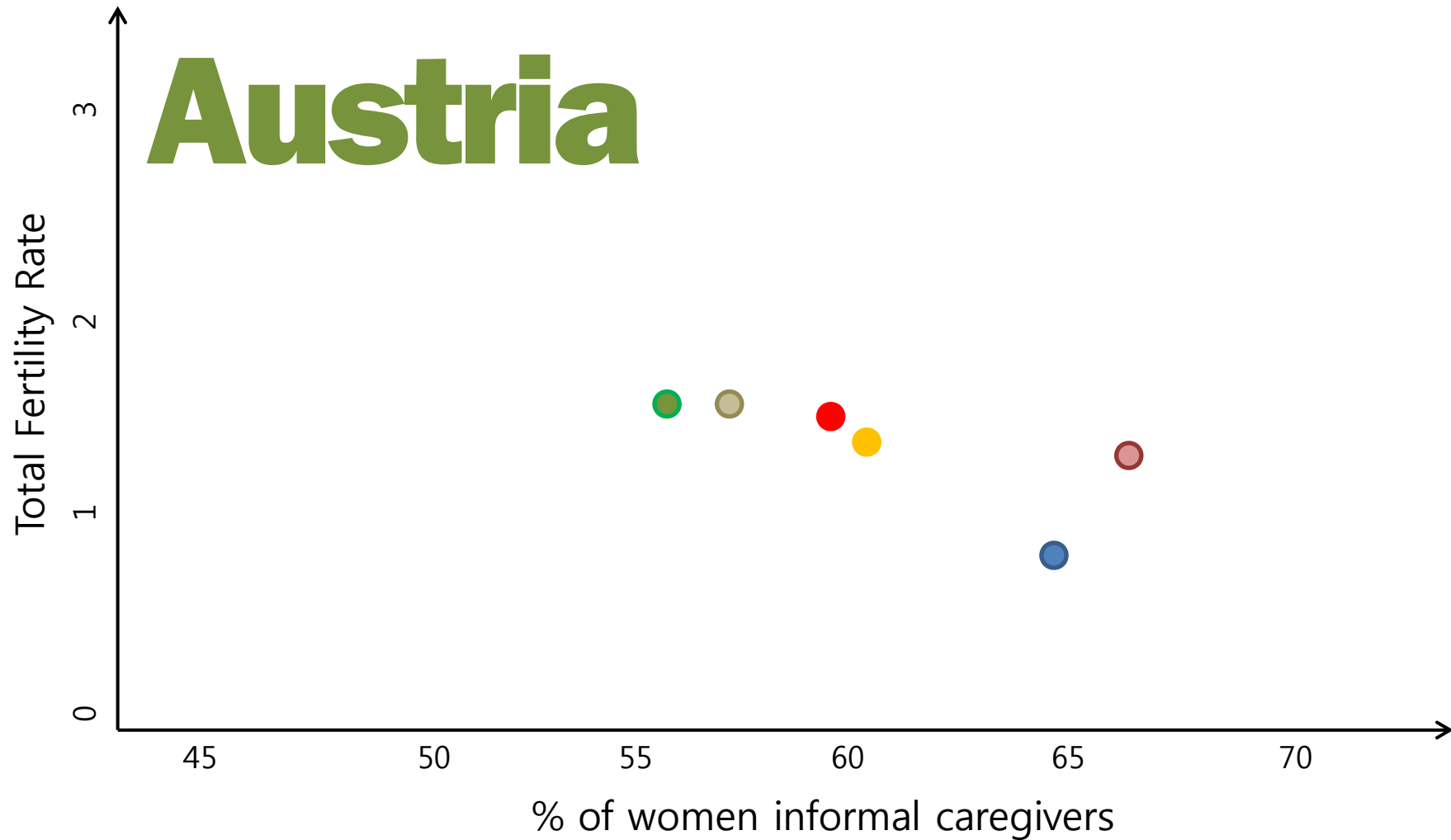
Total Fertility Rate & % of female informal caregivers



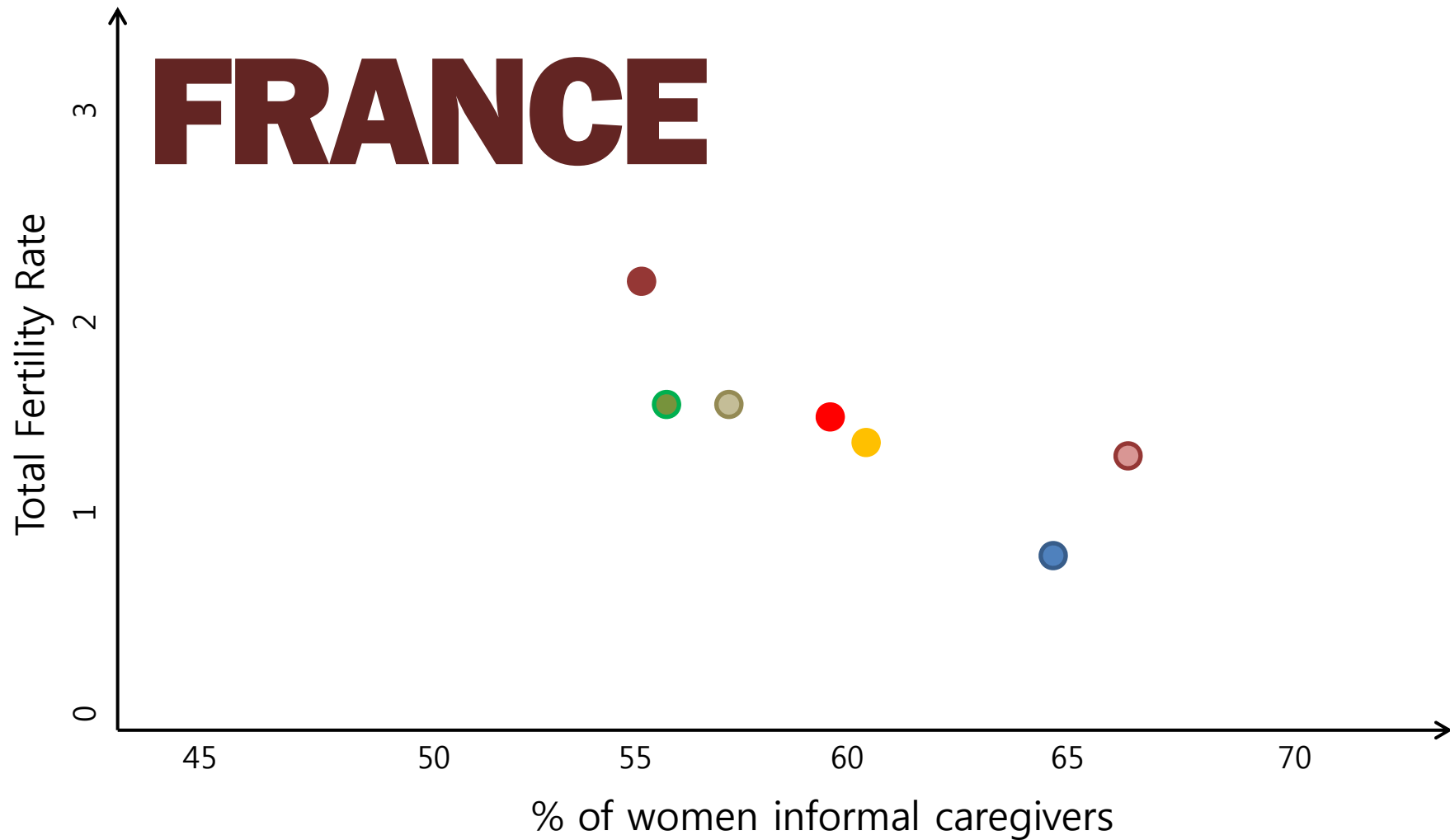
Total Fertility Rate & % of female informal caregivers



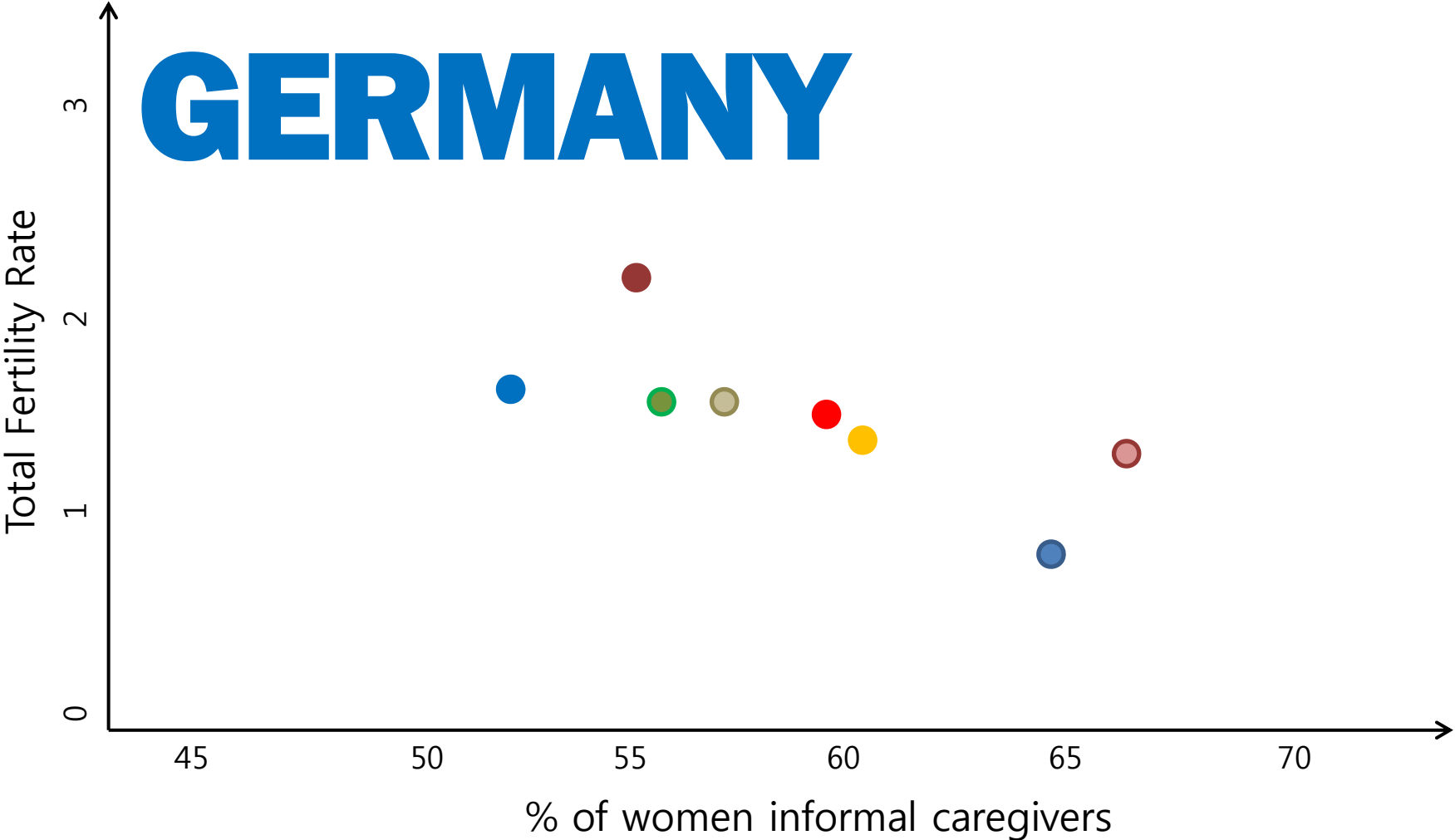
Total Fertility Rate & % of female informal caregivers



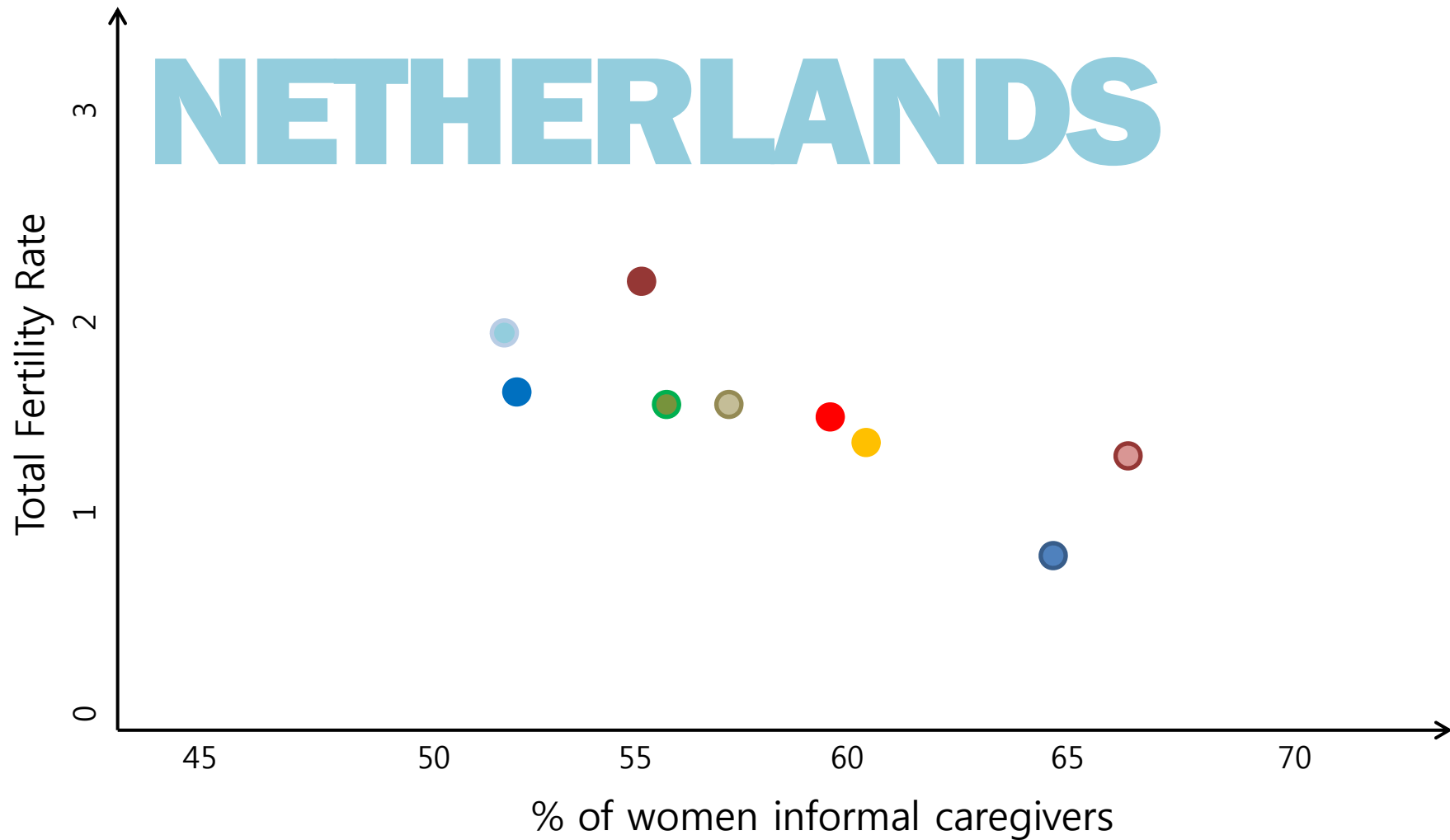
Total Fertility Rate & % of female informal caregivers



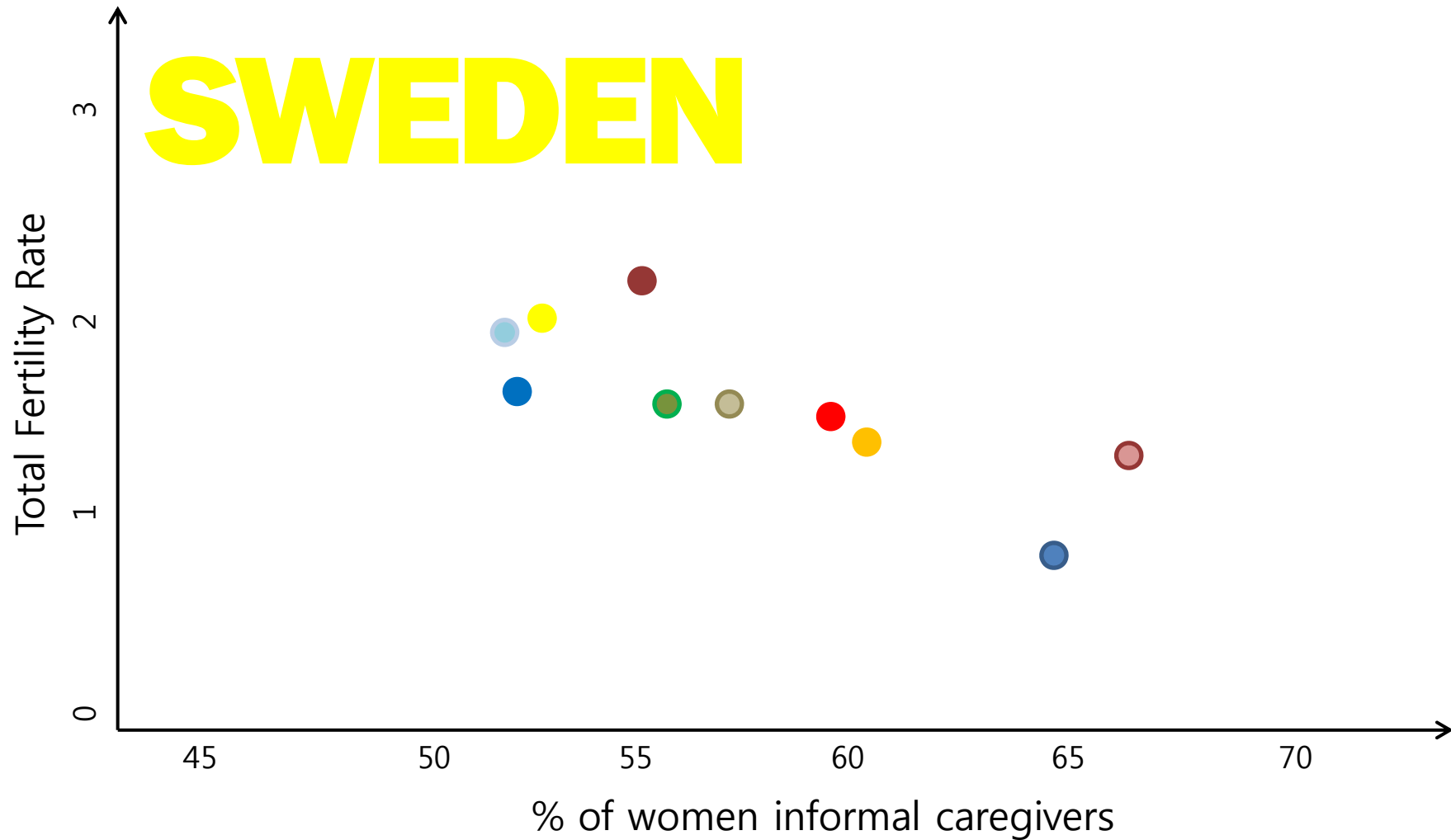
Total Fertility Rate & % of female informal caregivers



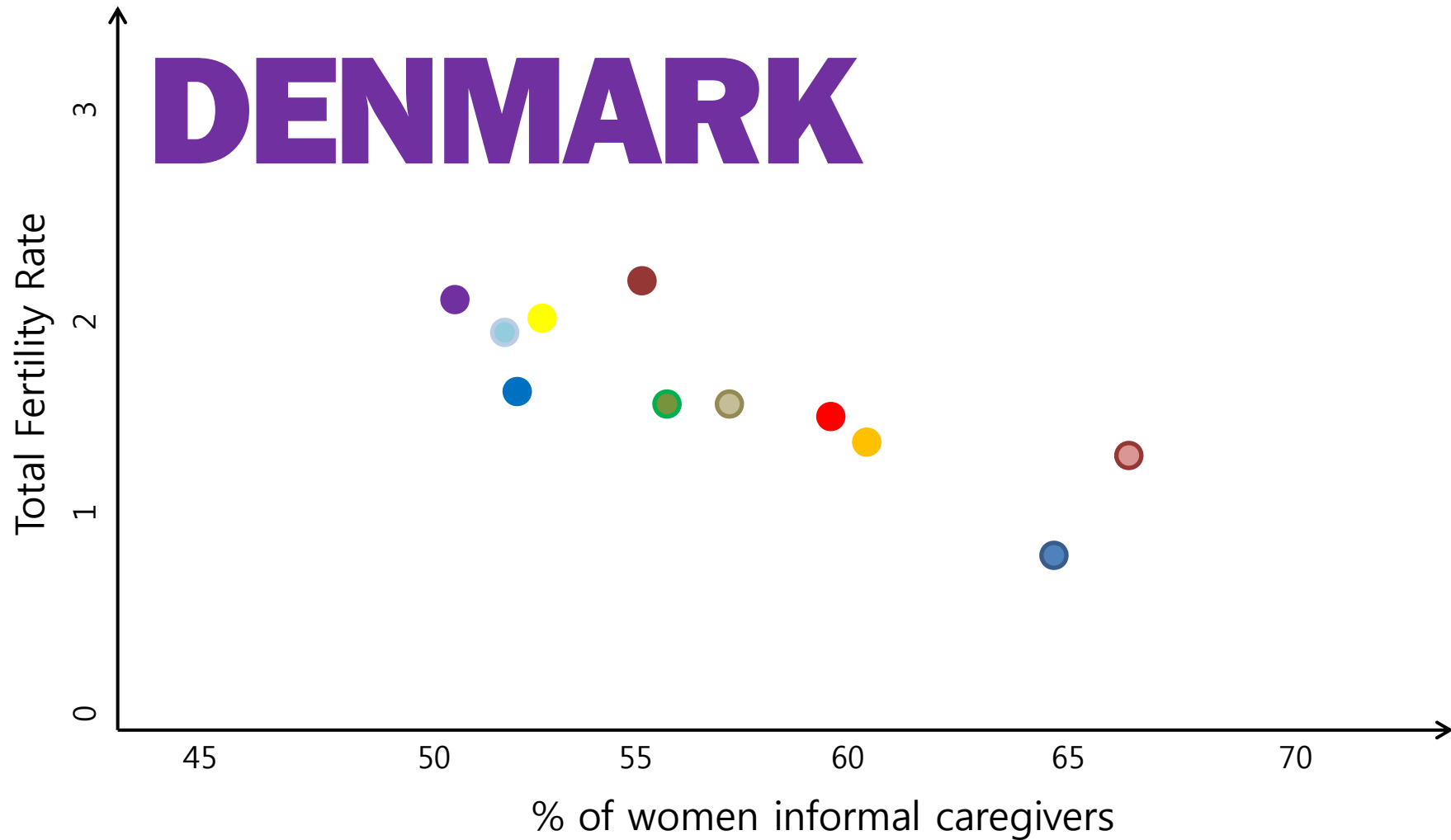
Total Fertility Rate & % of female informal caregivers



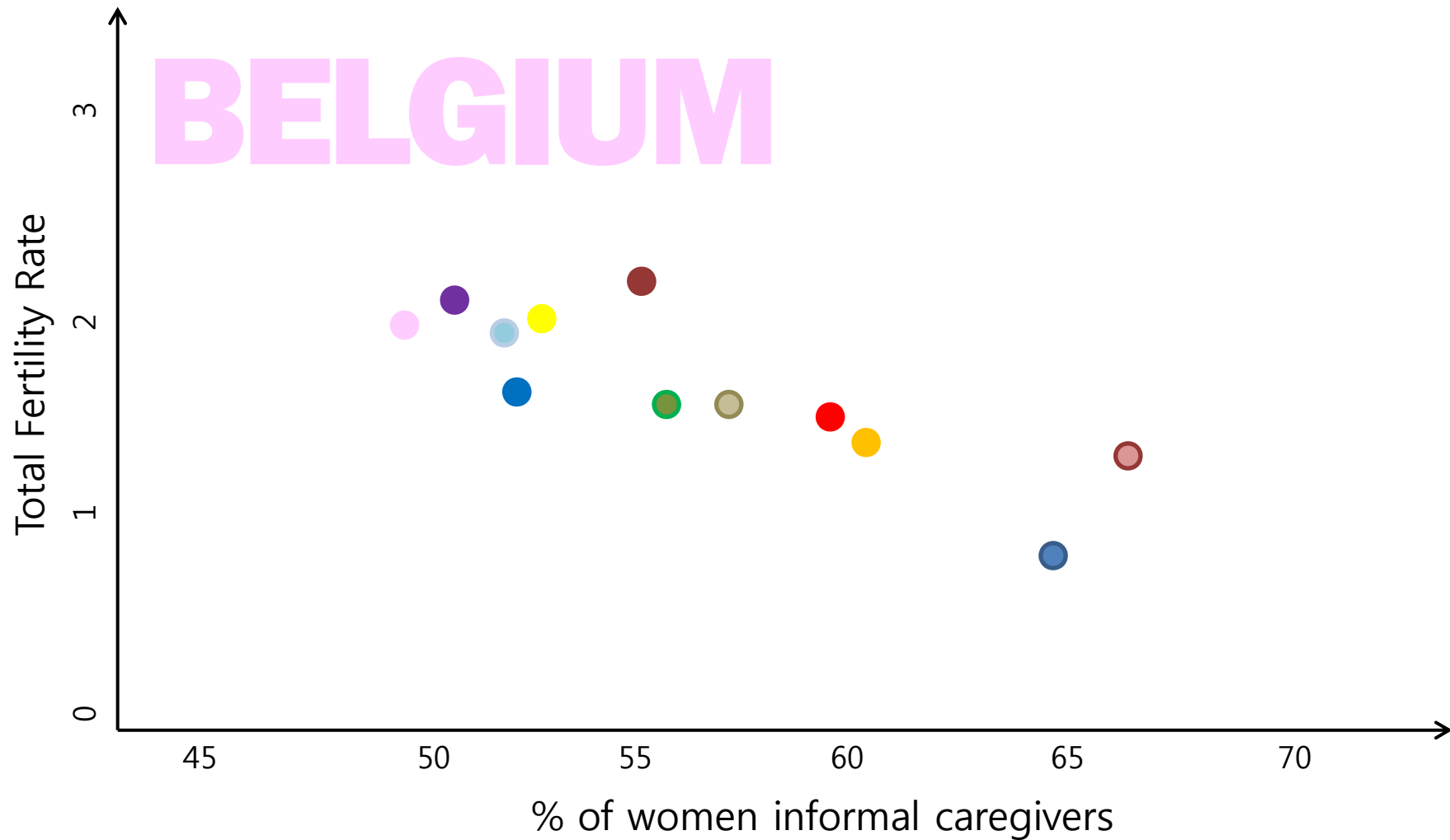
Total Fertility Rate & % of female informal caregivers



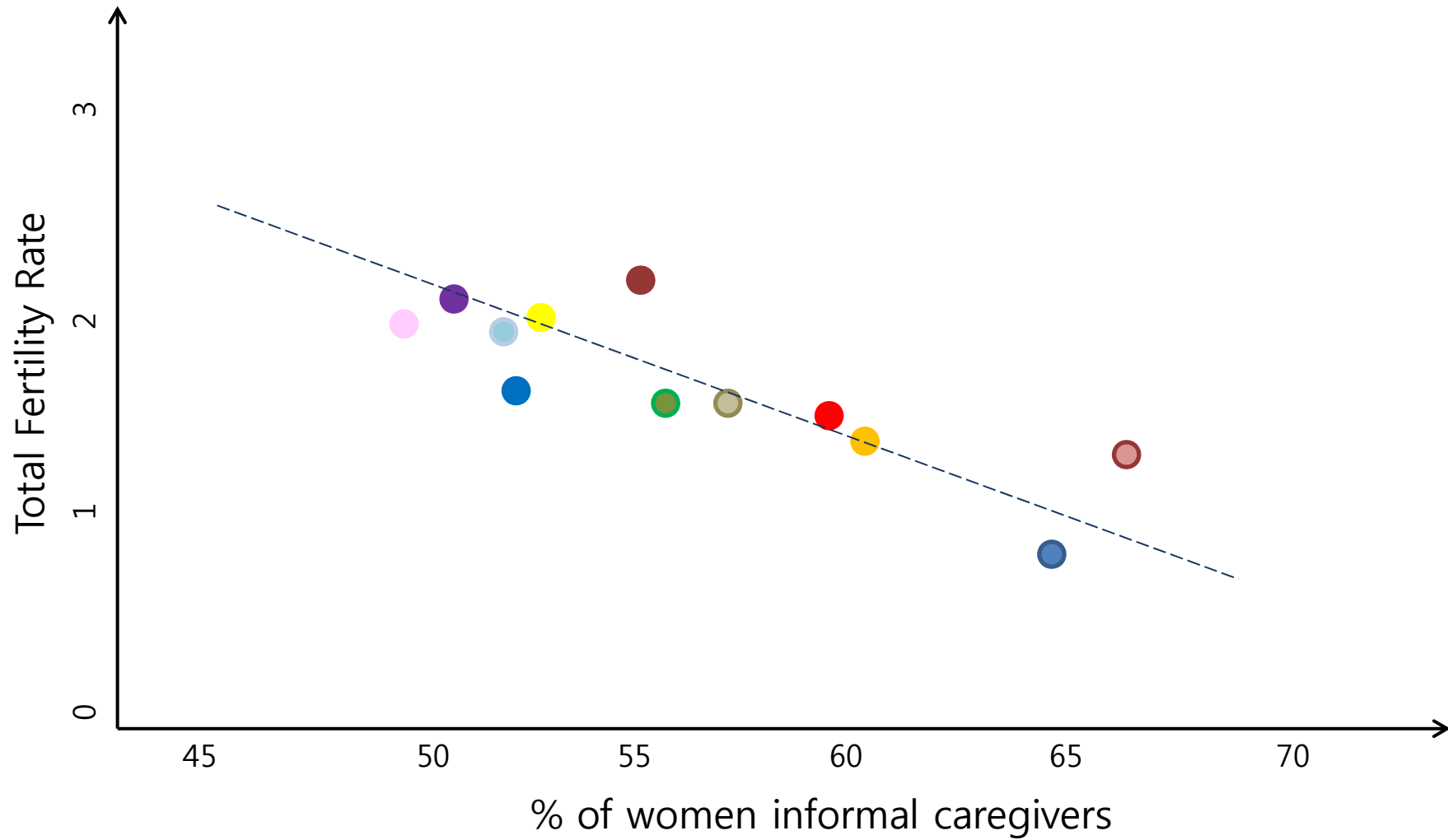
Total Fertility Rate & % of female informal caregivers



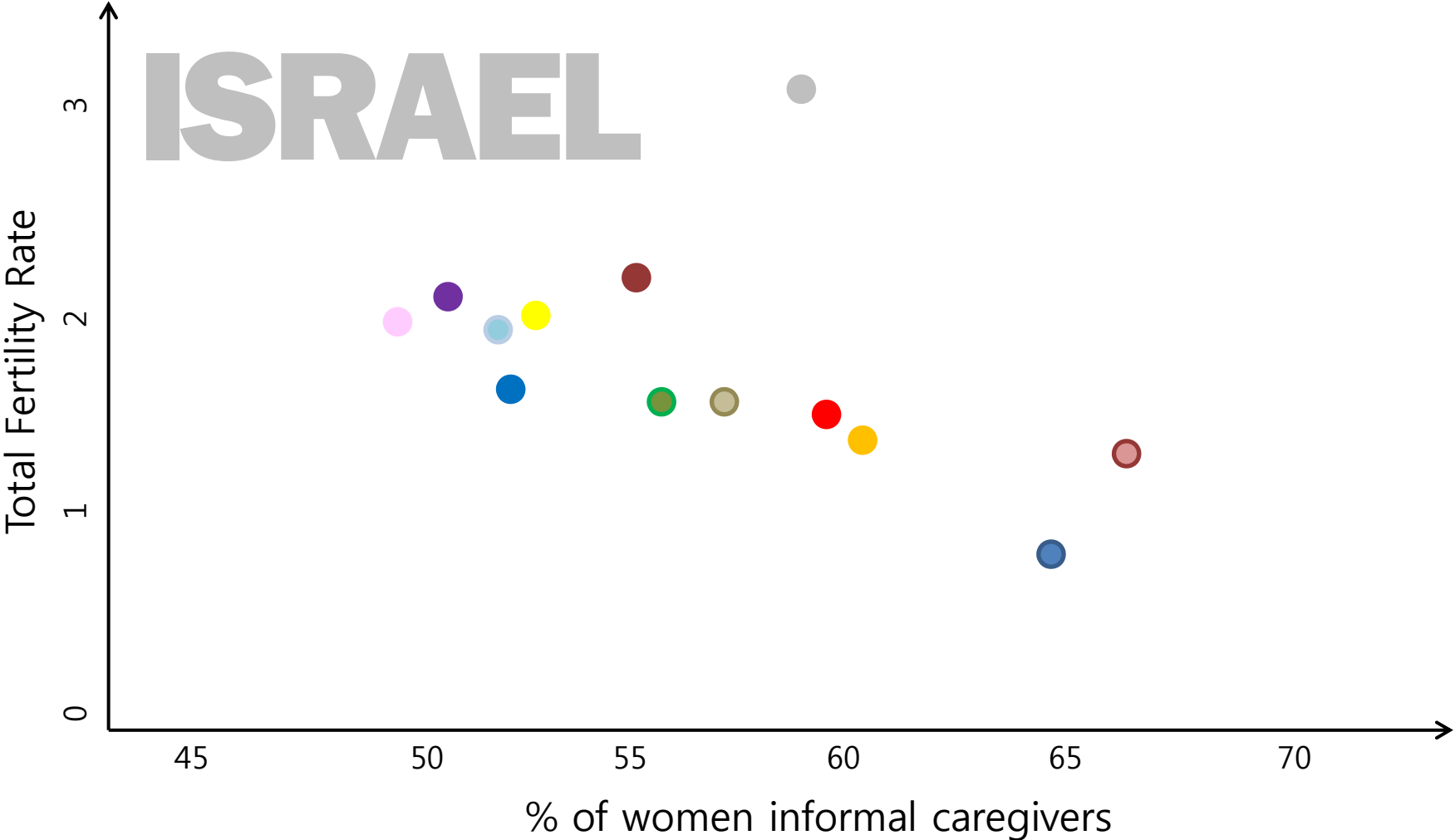
Total Fertility Rate & % of female informal caregivers



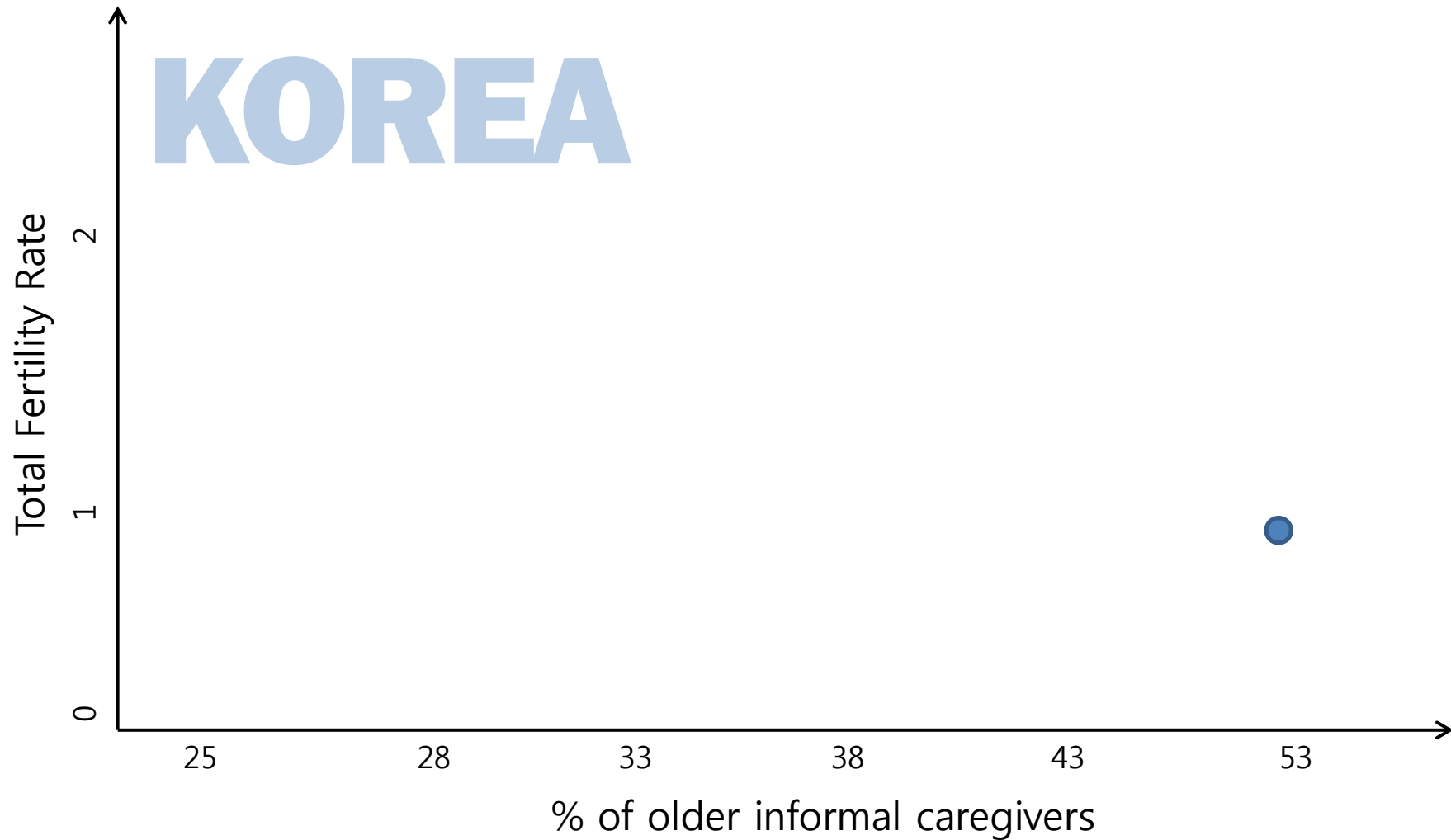
Total Fertility Rate & % of female informal caregivers



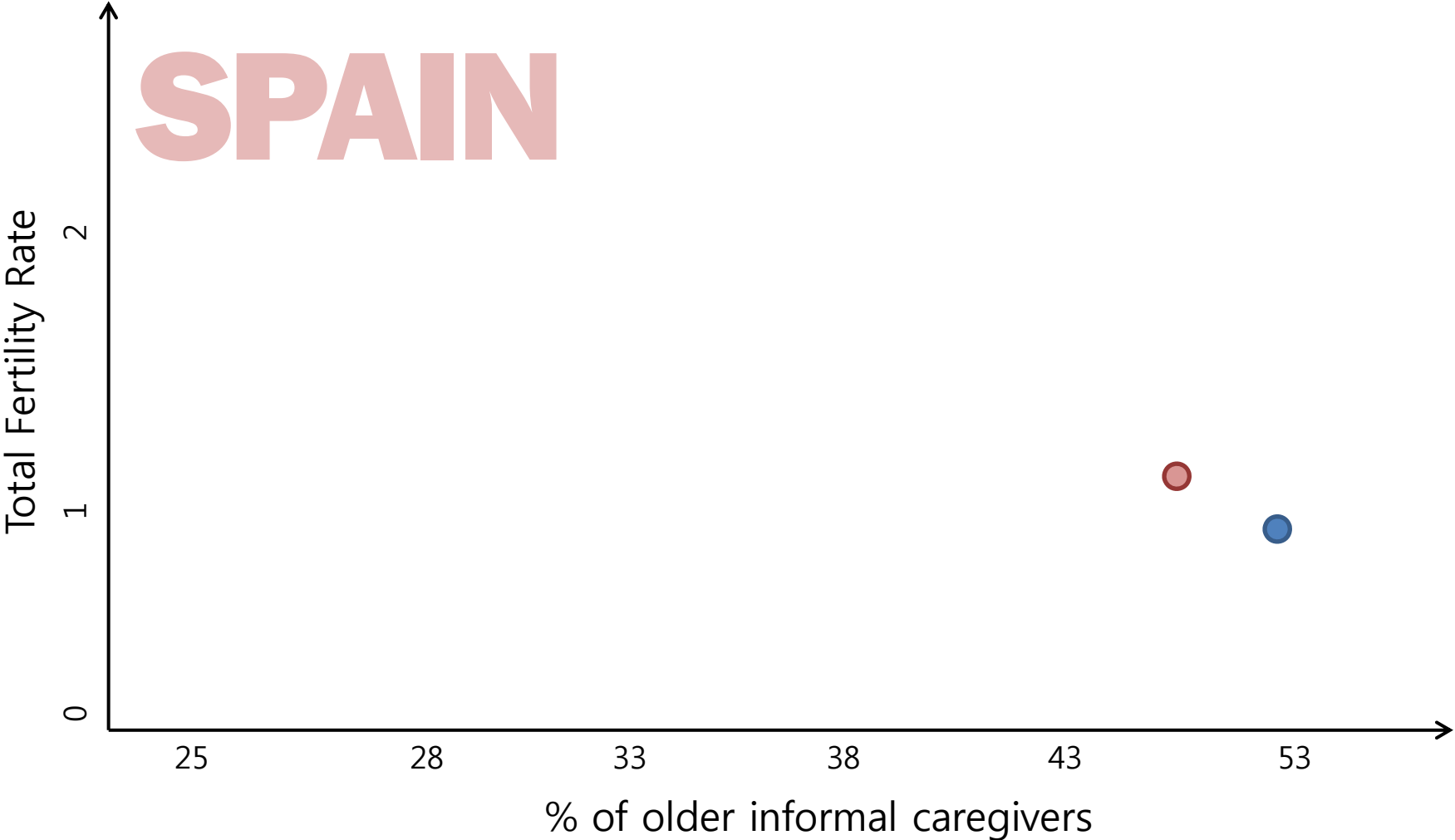
Total Fertility Rate & % of female informal caregivers



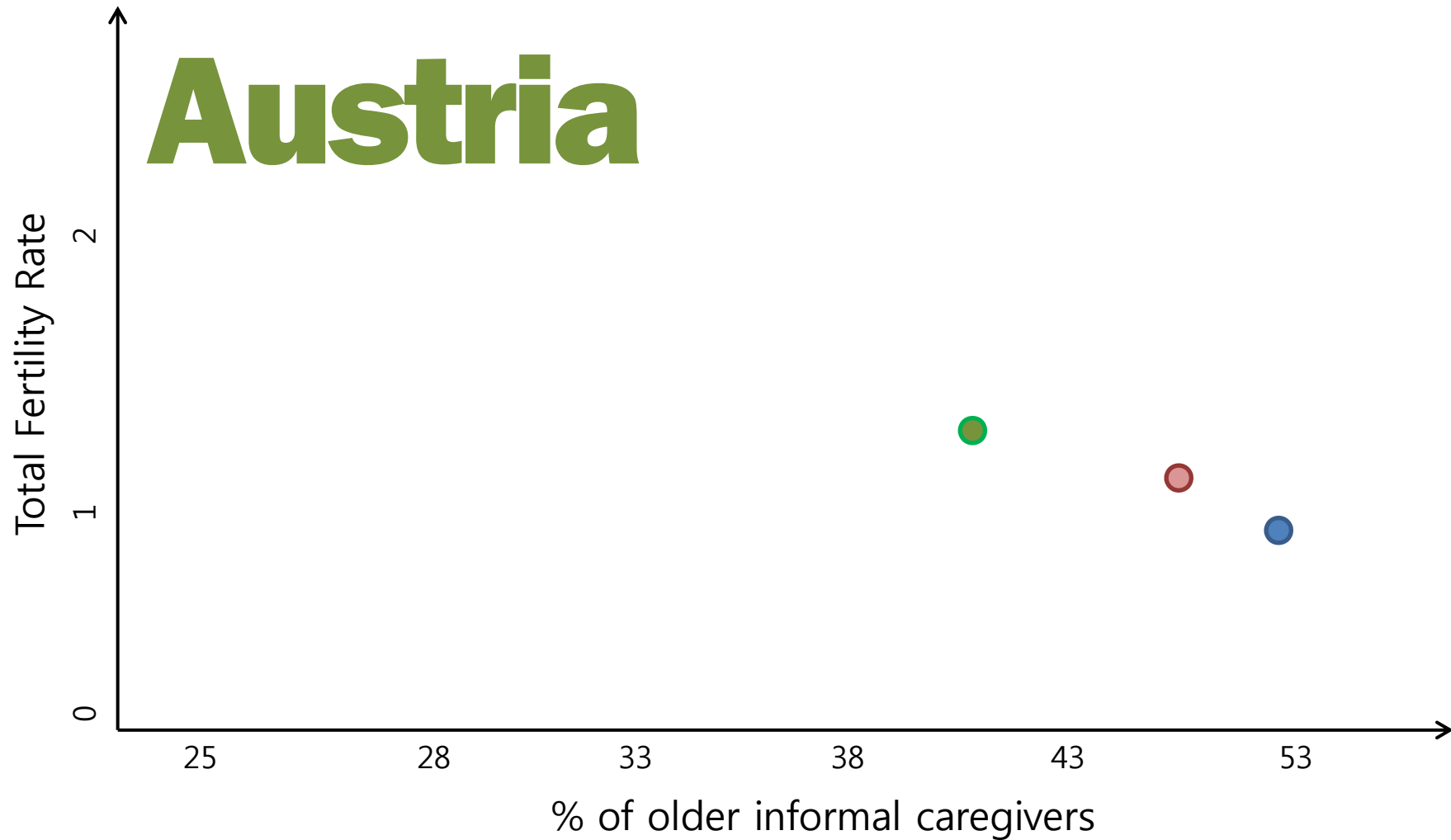
Total Fertility Rate & % of older informal caregivers



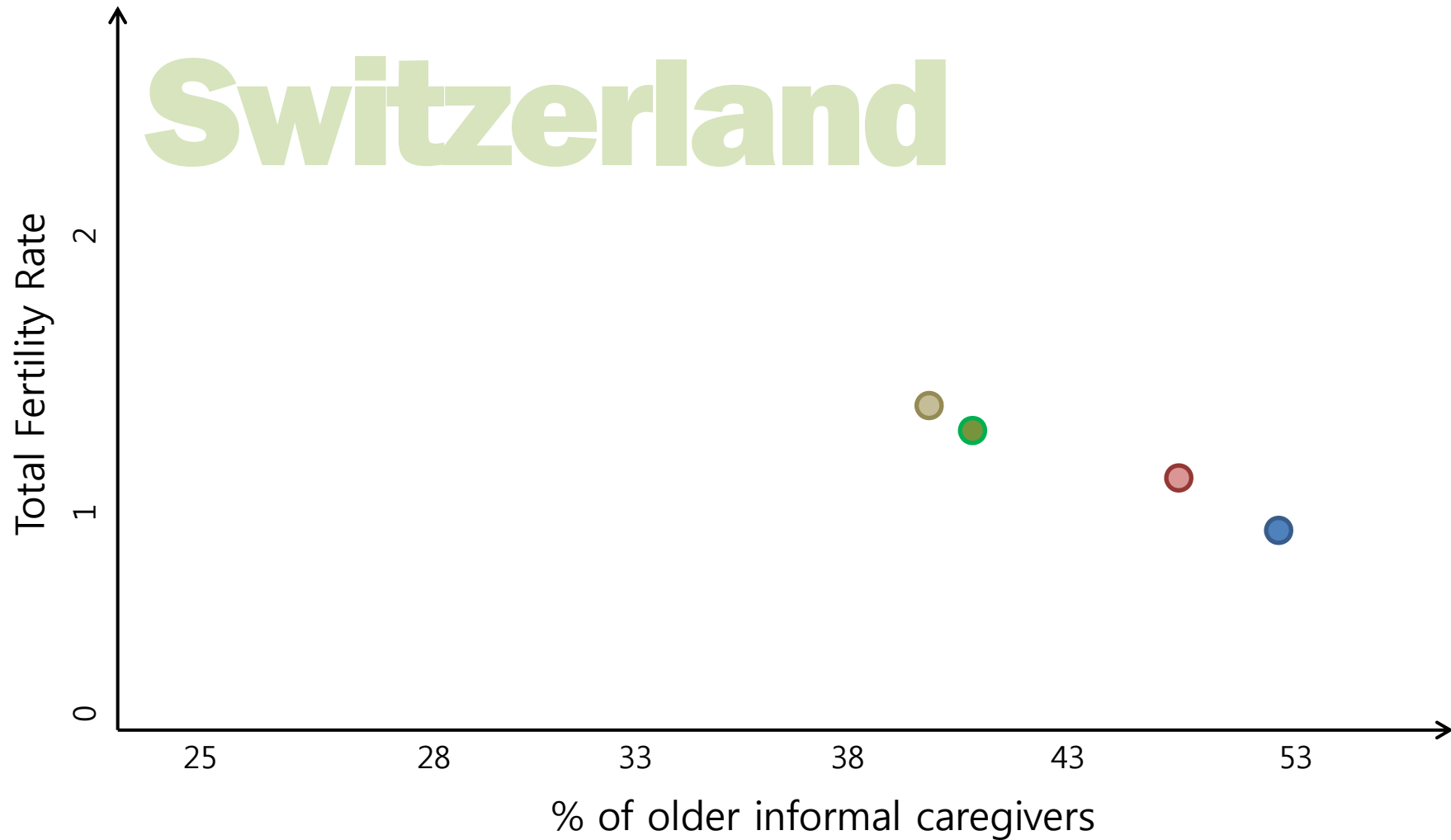
Total Fertility Rate & % of older informal caregivers



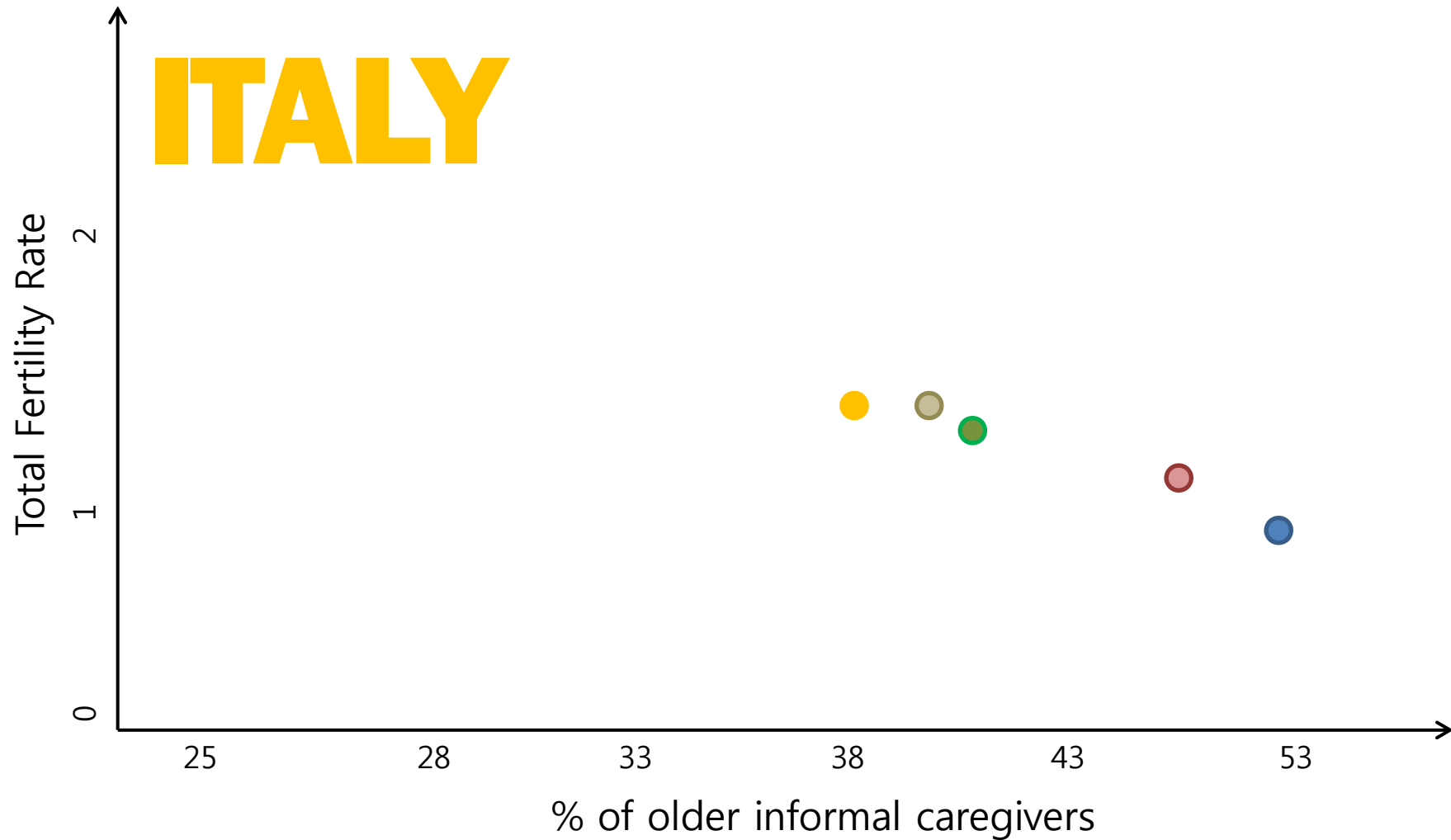
Total Fertility Rate & % of older informal caregivers



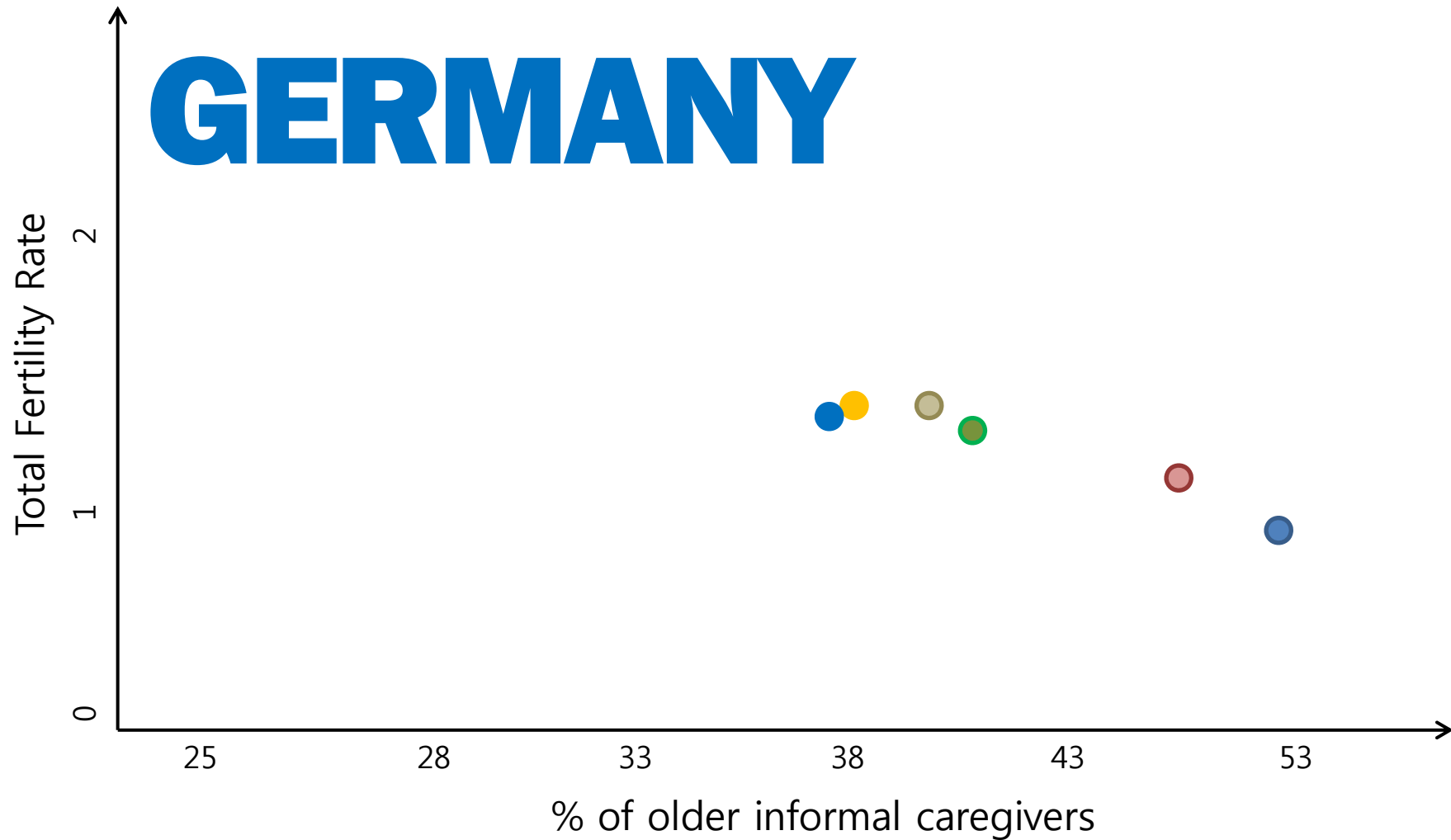
Total Fertility Rate & % of older informal caregivers



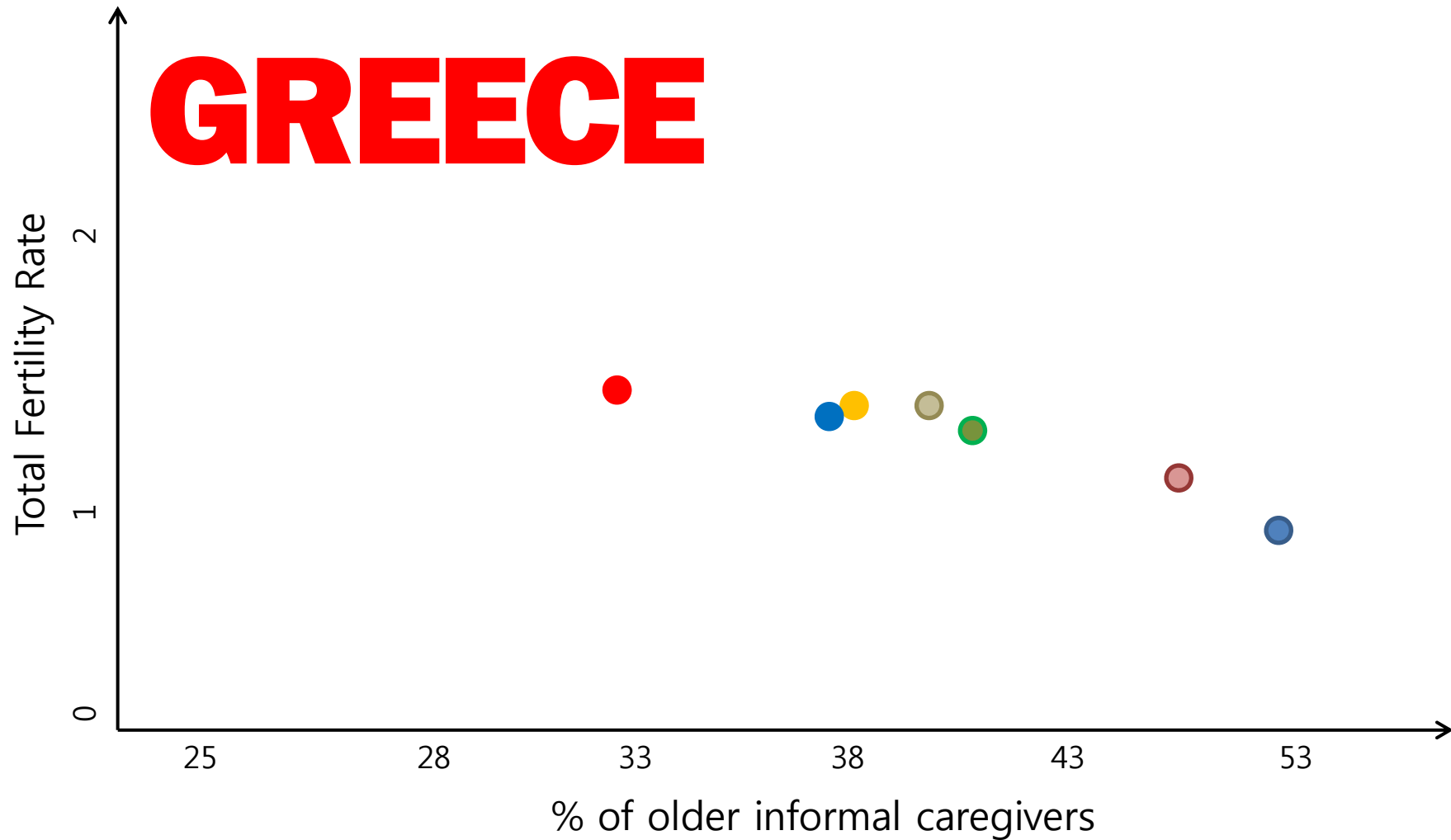
Total Fertility Rate & % of older informal caregivers



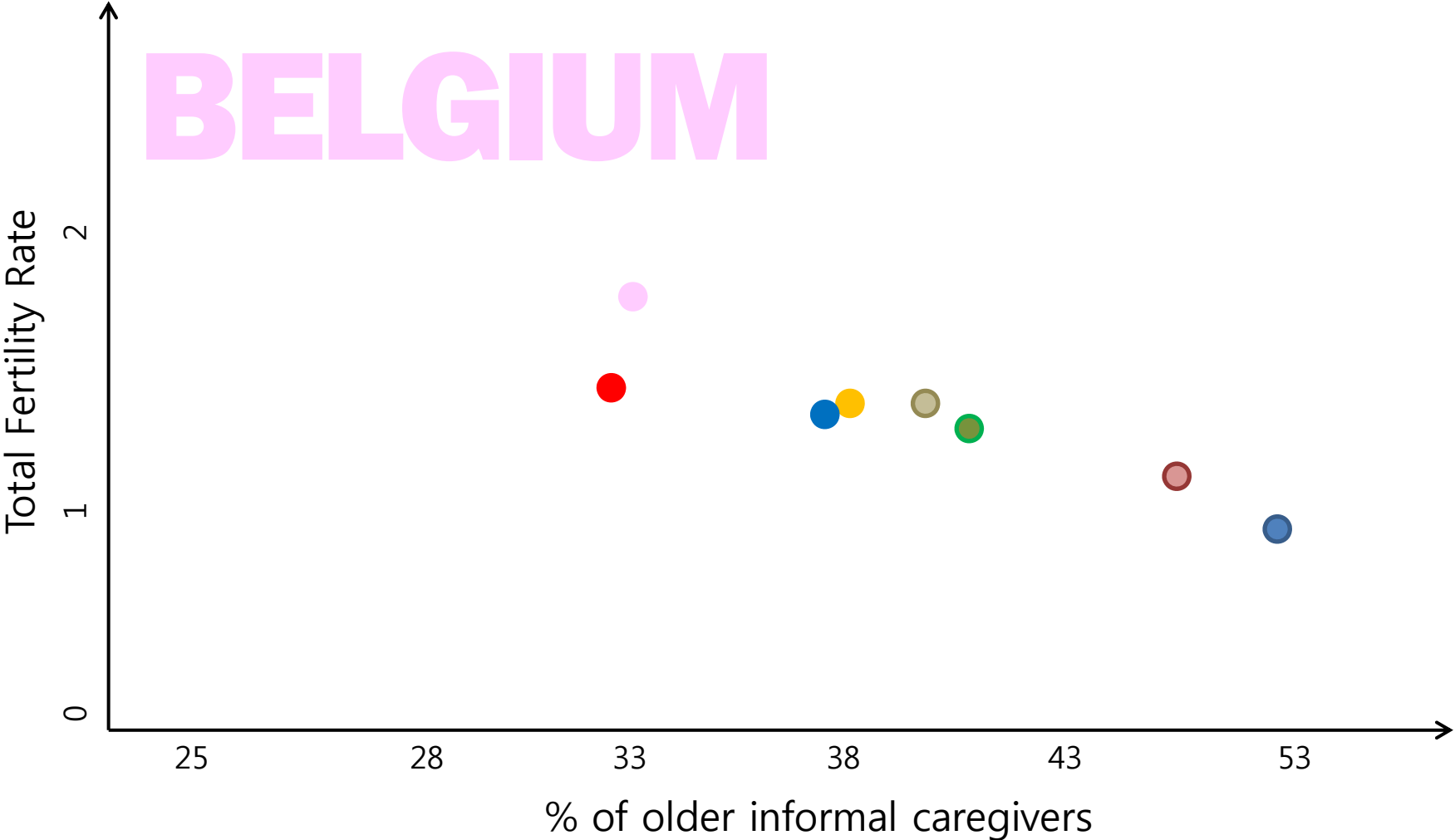
Total Fertility Rate & % of older informal caregivers



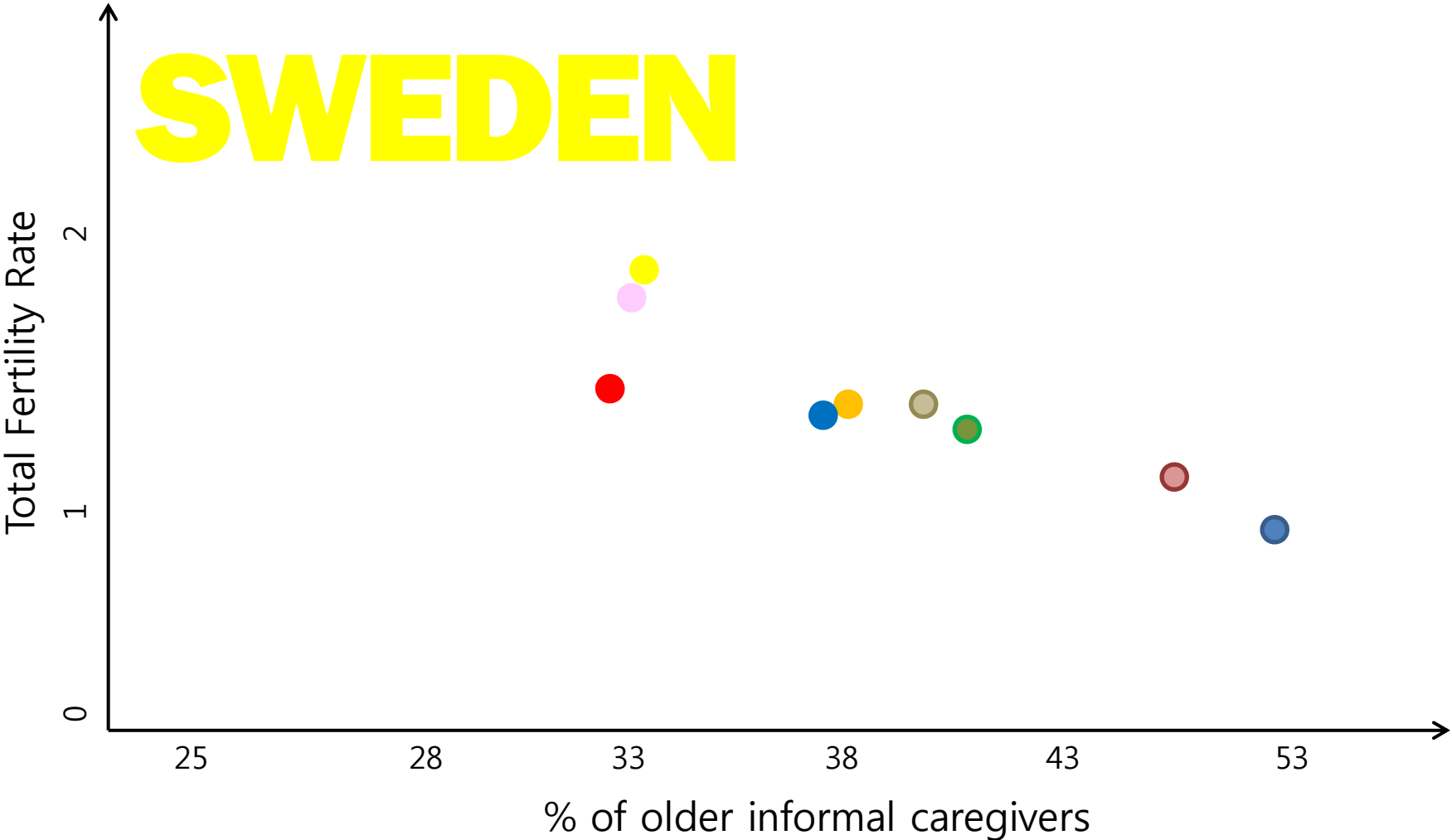
Total Fertility Rate & % of older informal caregivers



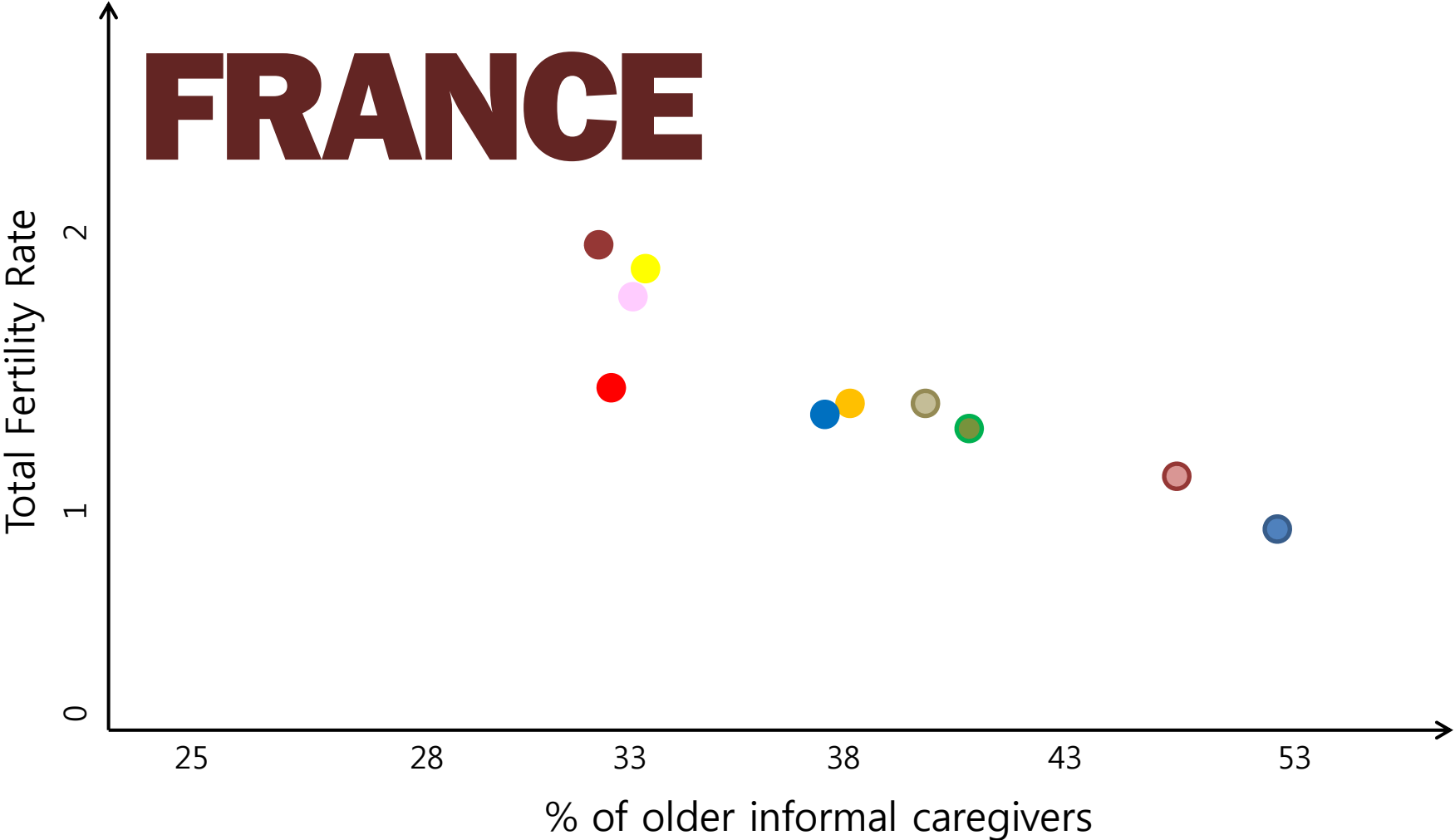
Total Fertility Rate & % of older informal caregivers



Total Fertility Rate & % of older informal caregivers

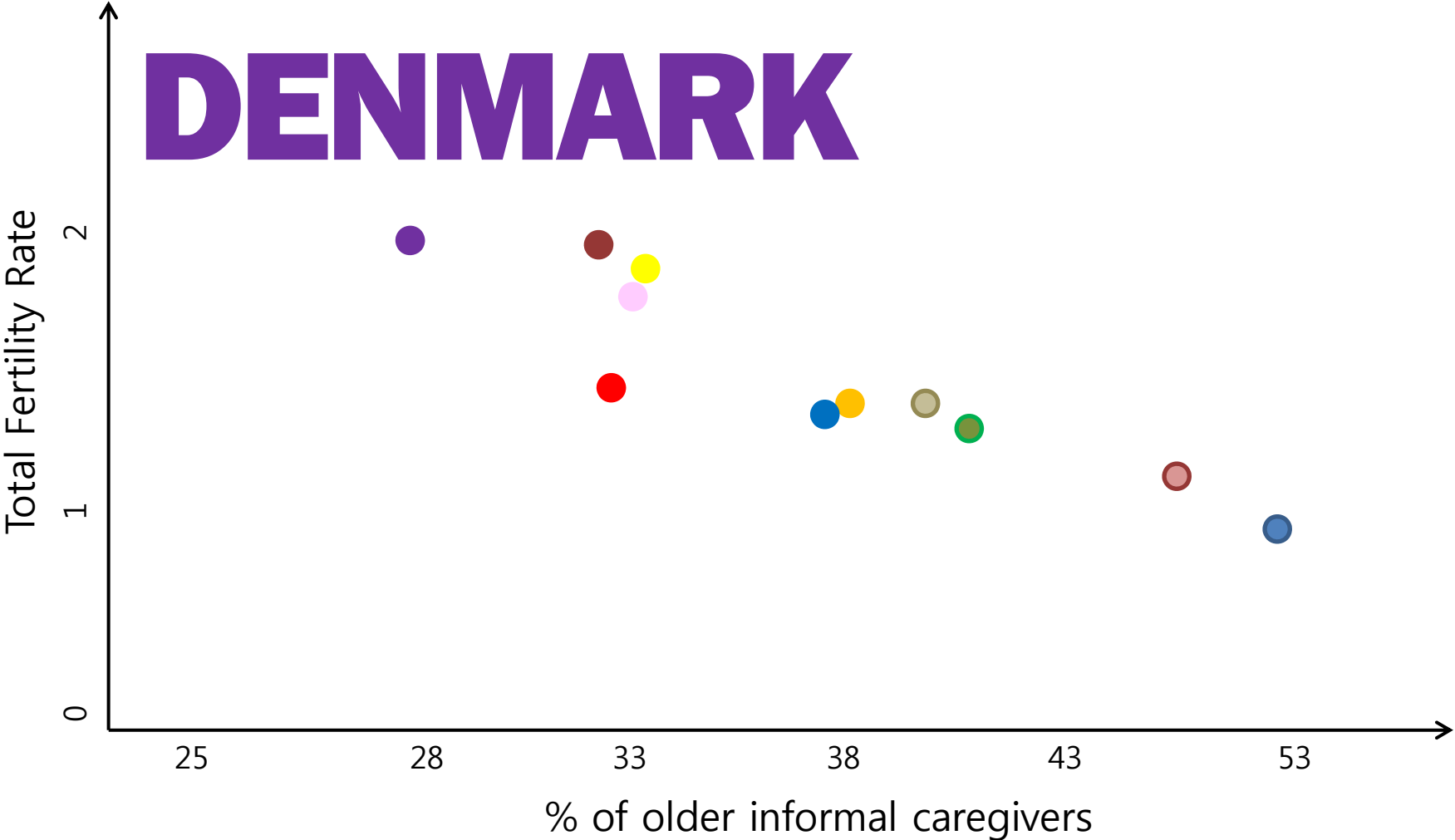


Total Fertility Rate & % of older informal caregivers



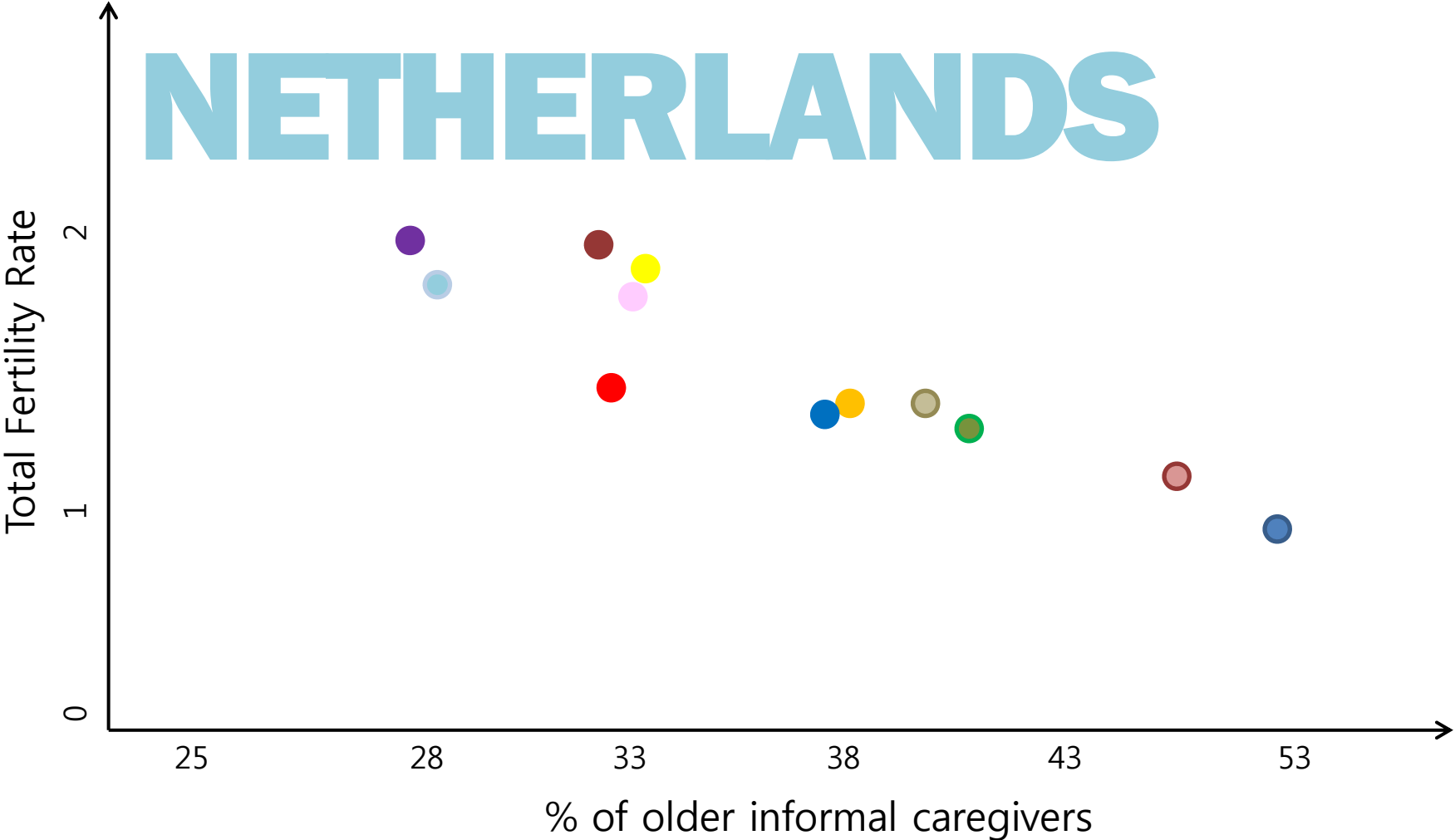
Total Fertility Rate & % of older informal caregivers

DENMARK

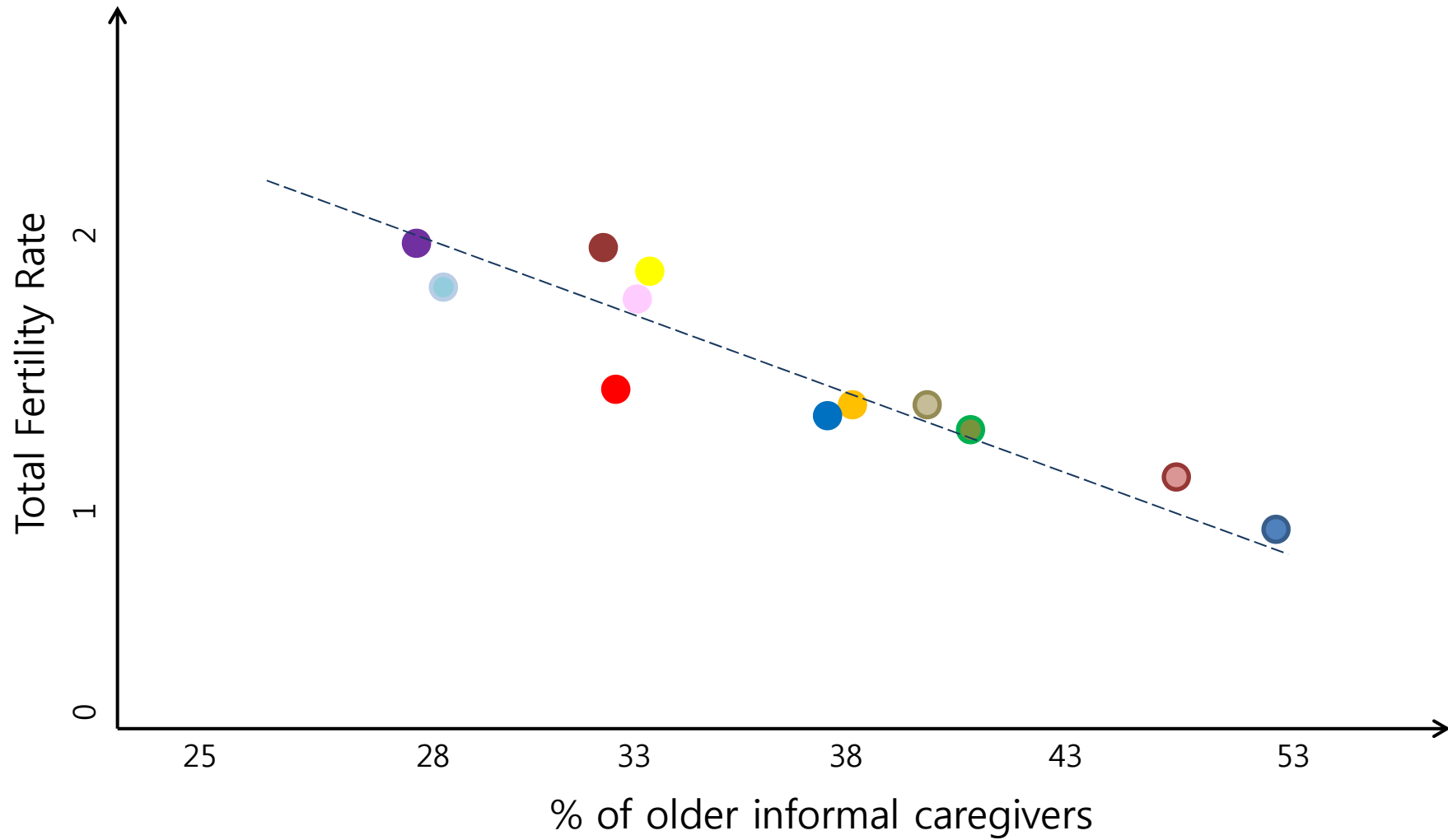


Total Fertility Rate & % of older informal caregivers

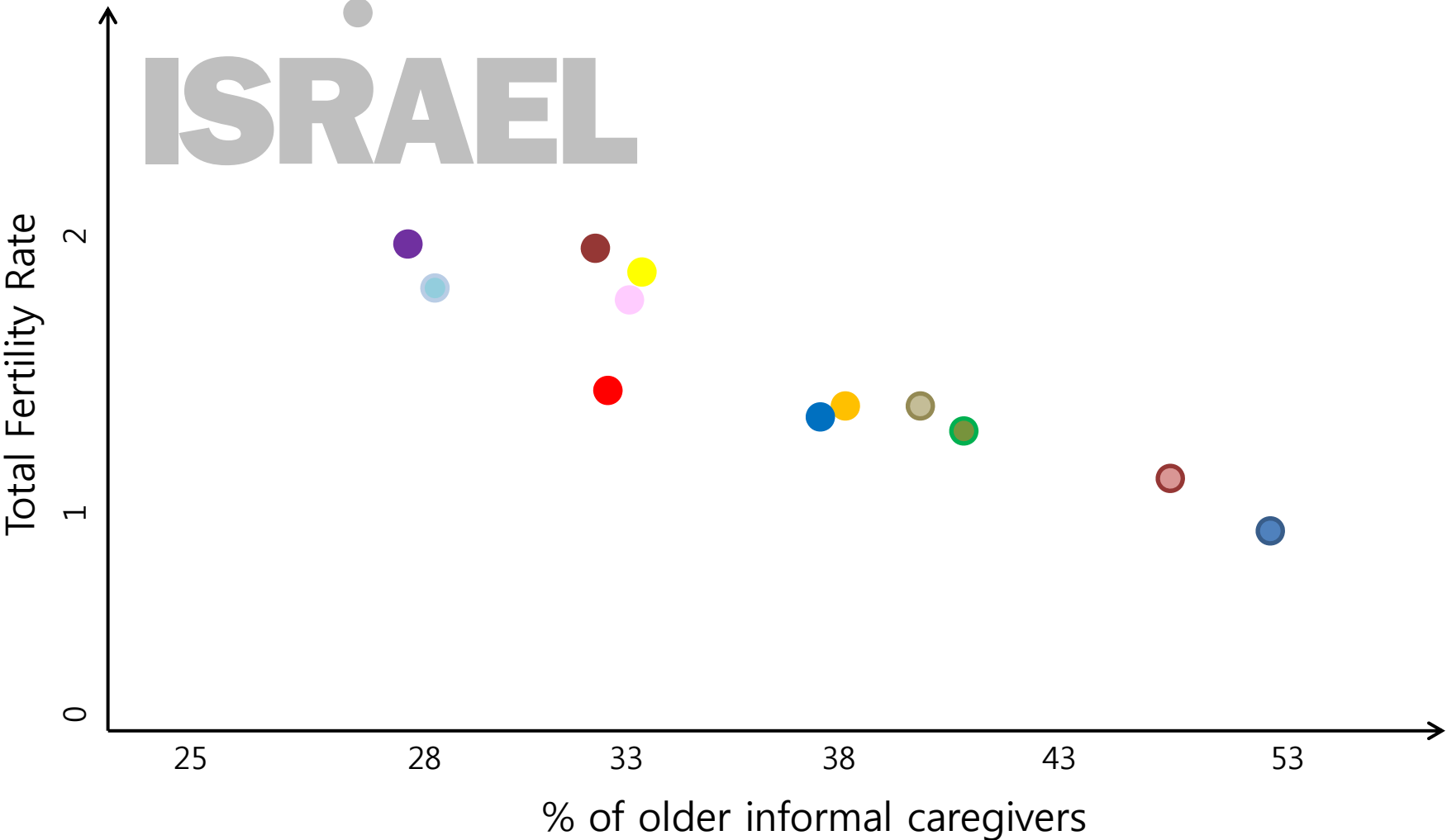
NETHERLANDS



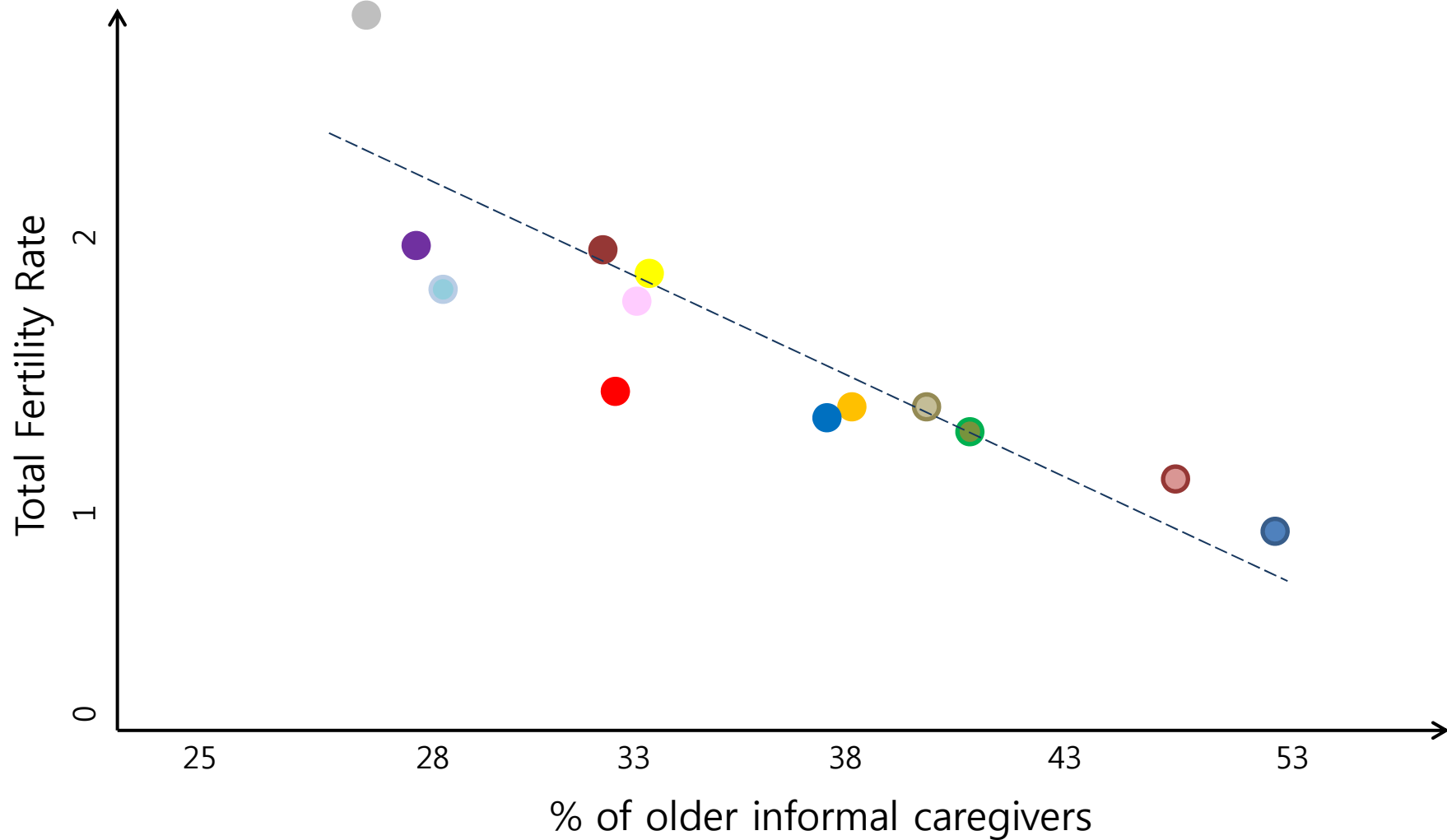
Total Fertility Rate & % of older informal caregivers



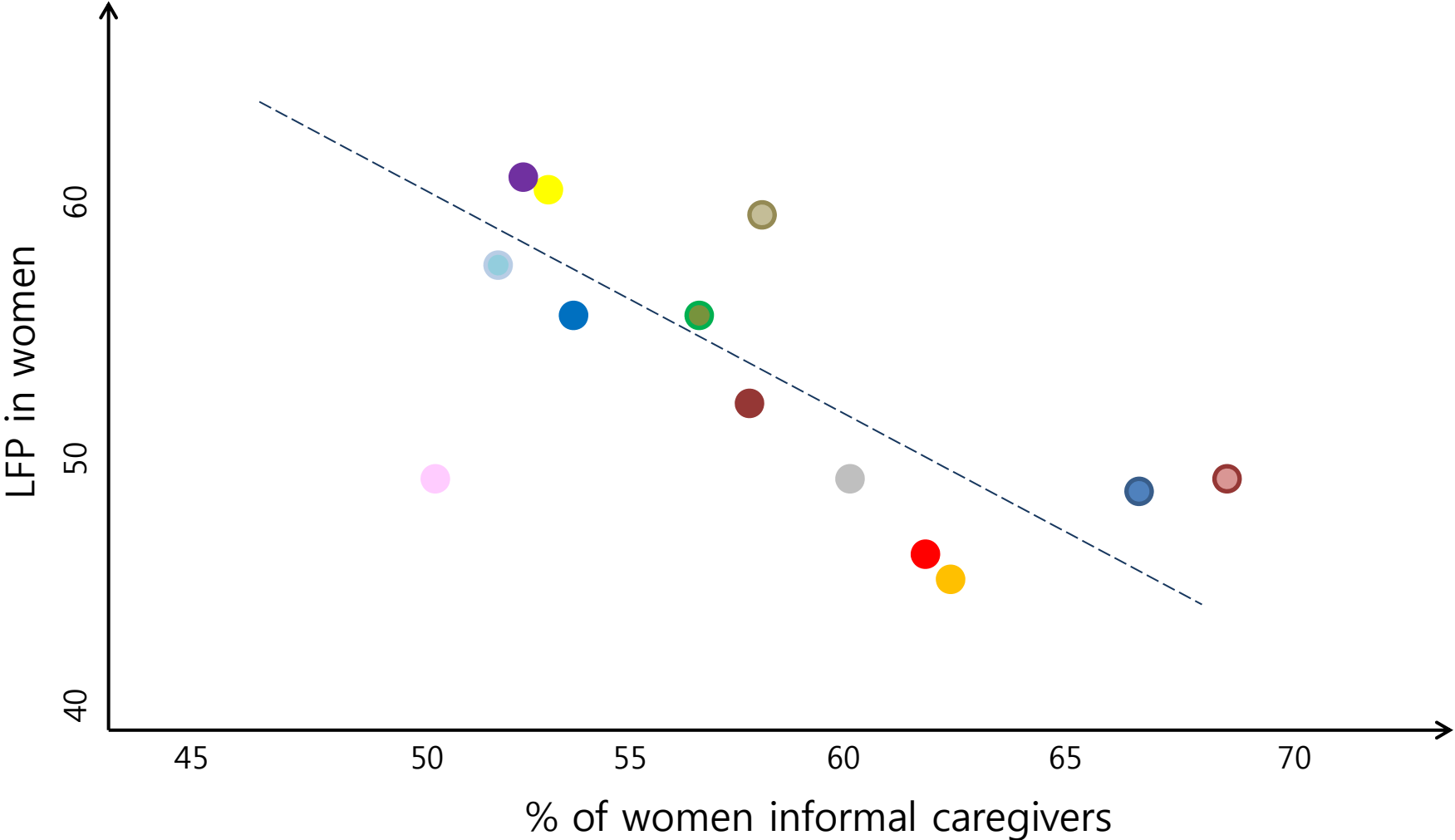
Total Fertility Rate & % of older informal caregivers



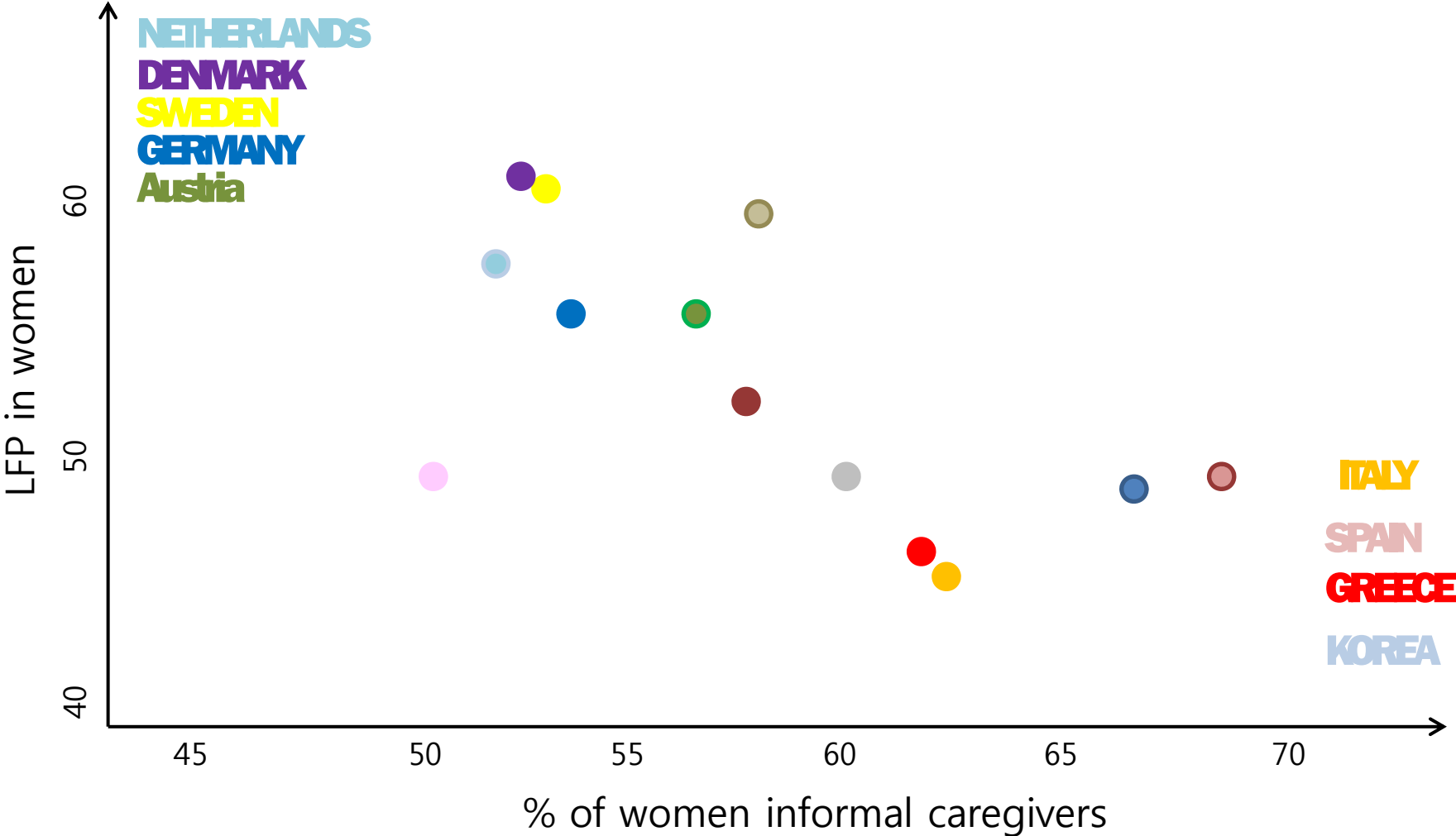
Total Fertility Rate & % of older informal caregivers



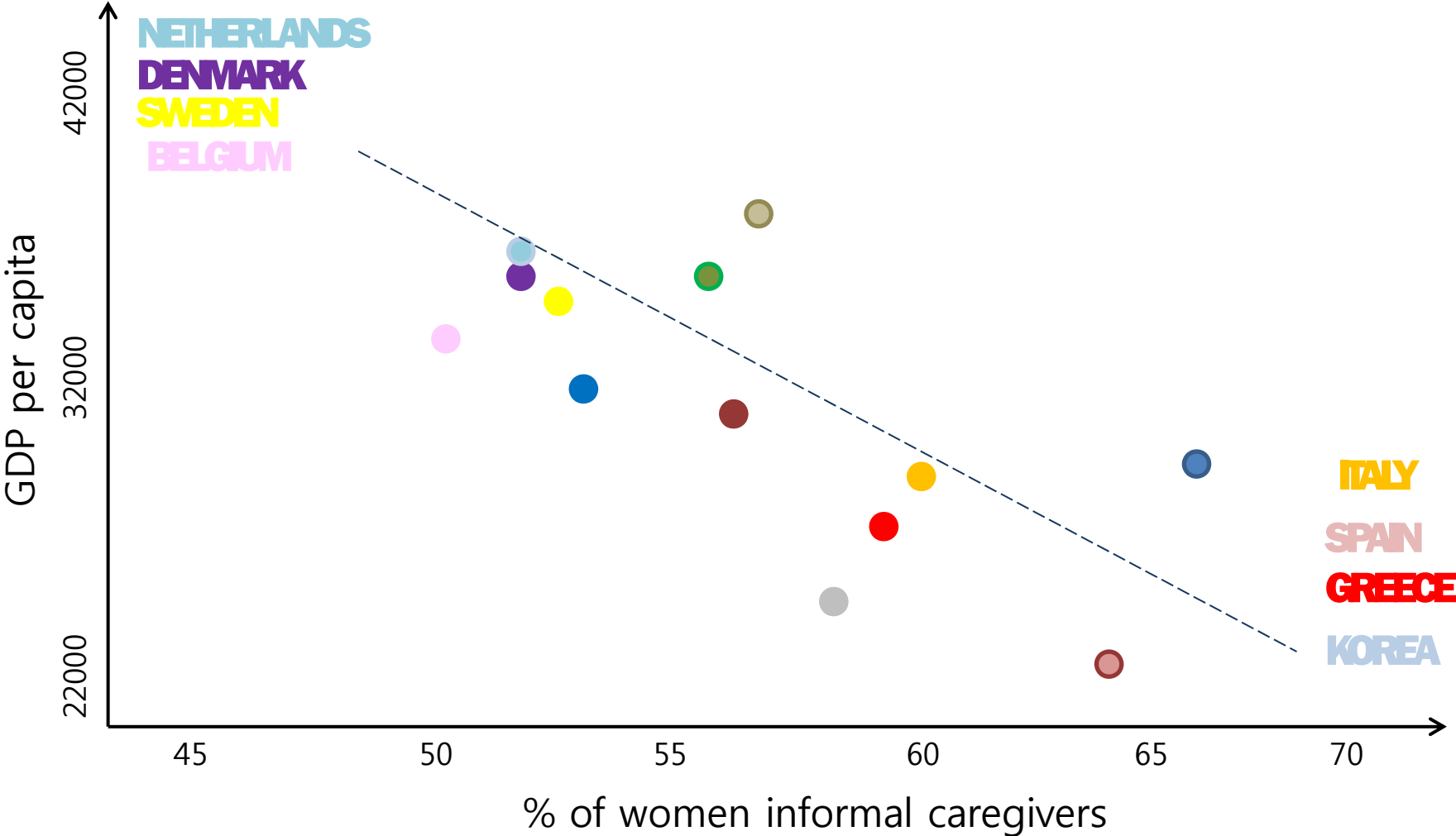
LFP in women & % of women informal caregivers



LFP in women & % of women informal caregivers



GDP per capita & % of women informal caregivers



Summary

- Most caregivers were married and over half were women.
- Korean caregivers: be older and married to care recipients
- Korea and some Southern European countries (Spain and Italy): high percentages of women, homemakers, co-residents, and spouses
- Lower female labour force participation: associated with higher proportions of women caregivers
- A higher proportion of women caregivers: associated with lower national GDP per capita.

Conclusion

Gender difference in the allocation of the informal caregiving role

- Strongest in traditional Confucian societies (such as **Korea**); followed by Mediterranean societies with strong familial orientation (**Greece, Spain, Italy**);
- followed by Western European countries with a Christian Democratic tradition (**Germany, Austria**);
- and weakest in Nordic countries with a strong welfare state, and strong state provision of formal care-giving support (e.g. **Denmark, Sweden**).

Support for informal caregivers

- Education, training, counseling and support
- Respite care (Australia, Germany, UK, USA):
- Regulation of business: paid leave(Sweden, Denmark, Netherlands), unpaid leave(US) (Sundstrom, 1994)
- Tax benefits/ payments to informal caregivers : tax benefit(US), care allowance(UK) (Twigg, 1996), direct cash payment(Netherland),indirect cash payment(Germany) (Tilly & Wiener, 2000)
- Pension benefit for caregivers (Germany, UK, Denmark, Sweden)

Traditional culture

(e.g. Confucian system of elder care in East Asia)

- Includes **systems of patriarchy and strict division of gender roles** where women stay home and are assigned to domestic roles including the care-giver
- If the **norm of informal care-giving burden** by women results in **lower fertility**, it could lead to a **vicious cycle further worsening the dependency ratio in the future**, implying even greater care-giving burden.

Acknowledgement

Co-authored with

Dr. Mauricio Avendano (Erasmus MC, SHARE)

Dr. Ichiro Kawachi (Harvard School of Public Health)