



Shoulder range of motion in competitive tennis players: systematic review and meta-analysis



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Background: To compare shoulder range of motion (ROM) in dominant vs. nondominant shoulder of competitive tennis players, and to determine whether shoulder ROM is different between younger and older players, or males and females.

Methods: A search was performed on PubMed, Embase, and Epistemonikos on December 18, 2023. This study conforms to the principles of the Cochrane Collaboration and the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-analysis guidelines. Clinical studies or case reports on shoulder ROM including external rotation (ER; shoulder at 90° of abduction) and internal rotation (IR) in competitive, elite, or professional tennis players.

Results: We found 25 eligible studies that reported on a total of 18,534 tennis players, of which 20 studies reported the ROM for the dominant and nondominant side. Comparing dominant vs. nondominant shoulders revealed that dominant shoulders had significantly smaller IR (53.0° vs. 62.6°; $P < .001$). Comparing adults vs. children revealed that adults have significantly smaller IR (44.5° vs. 57.1°; $P < .001$) and ER (95.3° vs. 110.3°; $P < .001$). Comparing females vs. males revealed no significant differences in ER (113.4° vs. 104.9°; $P = .360$) or IR (54.3° vs. 56.4°; $P = .710$).

Conclusion: IR in shoulders of tennis players is significantly smaller in dominant vs. nondominant sides (53.0° vs. 62.6°, $P < .001$), and significantly smaller in adults vs. children (44.5° vs. 57.1°, $P < .001$). These findings could be relevant in the context of physical preparation and training of tennis players, to monitor evolution of IR as a result of their sport and/or as they transition from childhood to adulthood.

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Tennis is a sport in which players need to master a range of physical demands, such as agility, lower and upper body muscle strength, and endurance to reach peak performance.^{2,10,11} Tennis also requires large shoulder range of motion (ROM), coupled with great forces to achieve high velocities.^{1,3,7,33,37}

A number of studies suggested that the forces exerted through the shoulder of a tennis player could affect its ROM, notably decrease internal rotation (IR) and increase external rotation (ER).^{5,11–13,27,29,33} Sport-specific adaptations in flexibility and

strength of the glenohumeral joint may also result in shoulder pain in tennis players, due to the unilateral and repetitive nature of tennis, biomechanically overloading the upper extremity.^{20,21} Furthermore, tennis players with a history of shoulder pain have decreased bilateral IR and total ROM,²⁶ but there might not be an association between shoulder ROM and risk of injury.³² Finally, understanding the musculoskeletal shoulder ROM could assist in the development of injury prevention programs and advance the development of conditioning and rehabilitation programs.

Many clinical studies have investigated shoulder ROM in competitive tennis players; however, to the author's knowledge, this information has not yet been synthesized in a systematic review. Therefore, the purpose of this systematic review and meta-analysis is to compare shoulder ROM in dominant vs. nondominant shoulder of competitive tennis players, and to determine whether shoulder ROM is different between younger and older players, or males and females.

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Institutional review board approval was not required for this systematic review. This study was registered with PROSPERO, registration number CRD42022349108.

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Table 1
Included studies, demographics, and instrumentation.

Author	Year	Country	Cohort					Hours played per week?		Level of experience		Instruments
			Overall	Sex		Age	BMI	Tennis	Conditioning	Practice	Level of experience	ROM type of measurement
				♂	♀	Mean ± SD		(h/week)	(h/week)	(y)		
Reporting dominant and nondominant side												
López-Vidriero Tejedor	2023	Spain	270	78	57	22.1 ± 4.9	22.7	19.4 ± 4.9			ATP/WTA ranked (<1'000)	Goniometer
KSSTA												
Tooth	2023	Belgium	24	24		<14		15-20			International Tennis Number 1-3	Goniometer
J Sports Med Phys Fitness			17	17		14-18						
			12	12		>18						
			13		13	<13						
			12		12	13-17						
			6		6	>17						
Fernandez-Fernandez	2022	Spain	13	13		14.6 ± 0.3		21.4 ± 0.8	5.8 ± 0.4	6.1 ± 2.2		Inclinometer (ISOMED inclinometer)
J Strength Cond Res			13	13		14.7 ± 0.3		20.4 ± 1.2	5.7 ± 0.5			Smartphone inclinometer app (GetMyROM)
Johansson	2022	Sweden	176	176		14.4 ± 2.0	20.2	>8			National (50) and regional (251) Professionals (ATP ranked)	Digital inclinometer (Pro 3600 SPI-Tronic)
Frontiers in Sports and Active Living			125		125	14.6 ± 2.0	20.2					Inclinometer (ISOMED inclinometer)
Ellenbecker	2020	USA	92	92		25.6 ± 3.6						Digital inclinometer (Pro 3600 SPI-Tronic)
OJSM			61	61		26.9 ± 3.9						Inclinometer (ISOMED inclinometer)
Fernandez-Fernandez	2020	Spain	12	12		14.9 ± 0.9	19.9	8-10	2	7.5 ± 1.2		Digital inclinometer (Fab. Ent. and Lafayette Instr.)
Int. J. Environ. Res. Public Health			13		13	14.5 ± 0.9	19.9					Inclinometer (ISOMED inclinometer)
Olivier	2020	Brazil	22			12.5 ± 0.9	18.9			3.6 ± 2.5		Digital inclinometer (Fab. Ent. and Lafayette Instr.)
The Int J of Sports Phys Ther												Inclinometer (ISOMED inclinometer)
Fernandez-Fernandez	2019	Spain	32	32		12.6 ± 0.2	18.1	14 ± 3.1		6.6 ± 3.2		
PLOS ONE			36	36		14.6 ± 0.3	20.9					
			32		32	12.6 ± 0.3	19.2					
			28		28	14.6 ± 0.3	20.5					
Gillet	2018	France	30	30		11.5 ± 2.0	17.2	8.6 ± 2.8	2.5 ± 1.6	6.1 ± 2.5		Goniometer
Physical Therapy in Sport			61	61		11.2 ± 1.8	17.1	8.3 ± 2.5	2.4 ± 1.7	6.2 ± 2.2		Goniometer
Nutt	2018	United Kingdom	69	122	62	11-14						Goniometer
The Int J of Sports Phys Ther			56			14-16						
			59			16-24						
Palmer	2018	USA	42	42		23.9 ± 5.8				(4.5 - 6)	NTRP	Goniometer
SPORTS HEALTH												
Williams	2018		30	18	12	20.0				14 (7-24)		Digital inclinometer (Wixey WR360)
Physical Therapy in Sport												Goniometer
Gillet	2017	France	26	26		8.7 ± 0.7	15.9	6.5 ± 2.3	1.1 ± 1.2	4.1 ± 1.1		
Journal of Athletic Training			21	21		10.3 ± 0.6	16.5	8.1 ± 2.4	1.5 ± 1.1			
			20	20		12.8 ± 1.4	17.1	9.2 ± 2.1	3.4 ± 1.8			
Moreno-perez	2015	Spain	47	47		23.2 ± 4.9	23.0			5.9 ± 3.9	[yrs of practice 16.2 ± 5.6]	Photograph (Canon IXUS75 digital camera)
Manual Therapy												Digital inclinometer (model ACU360)
Cools	2014	Sweden	24	31	28		18.9	12.3				
Journal of Athletic Training	22				20.0	15.3						
			13				24.4	15.6				
McConnell	2009	Australia	11	11		16.8 ± 1.3					Elite junior (NSWIS)	Goniometer
Clin J Sport Med			10		10	14.9 ± 0.8						Goniometer
Kovacs	2007	USA	8	8							Nationally ranked NCAA	Goniometer
Br J Sports Med											ATP ranked (1 to 93)	3D real-time motion analysis system (CMS 70P)
Schmidt-Wiethoff	2004	Germany	27	27		26.5 [19-33]				(10-22)		
Int J Sports Med												

Ellenbecker (a) Journal of Strength and Conditioning Research	2002	USA	11	11	19.2 ± 1.8			9.8 ± 2.0	Nationally ranked NCAA	Goniometer	
Ellenbecker (b) Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise	2002	USA	117	117	16.4 ± 1.6				Arizona elite junior	Goniometer	
Reporting only dominant side Le Solliec Front Sports Act Living	2023	France	22	18	4	16.0 ± 2.4	7.6 ± 2.4	4.2 ± 0.4	9.8 ± 2.2	International Tennis Number 3-4	Goniometer
Martin AJSM	2016	France	8	8	20.4 ± 2.8				International tennis number (3-4)	Goniometer	
Moore-reed The Int J of Sports Phys Ther	2016		79	79	25.0 ± 4.0				Professionals	Inclinometer	
Thomas Journal of Athletic Training	2009	USA	10	10	15.5 ± 1.1				High school (competitive)	Digital Inclinometer	
Çolak BJSM	2004		21	21	27.6 ± 0.7	4 h/day (since 12-15 years)				Biodex System 3 (Biodex Medical Systems)	

SD, standard deviation; BMI, body mass index; ATP, Association of Tennis Professionals; WTA, Women's Tennis Association; NTRP, National Tennis Rating Program; NCAA, National Collegiate Athletic Association; ROM, range of motion.

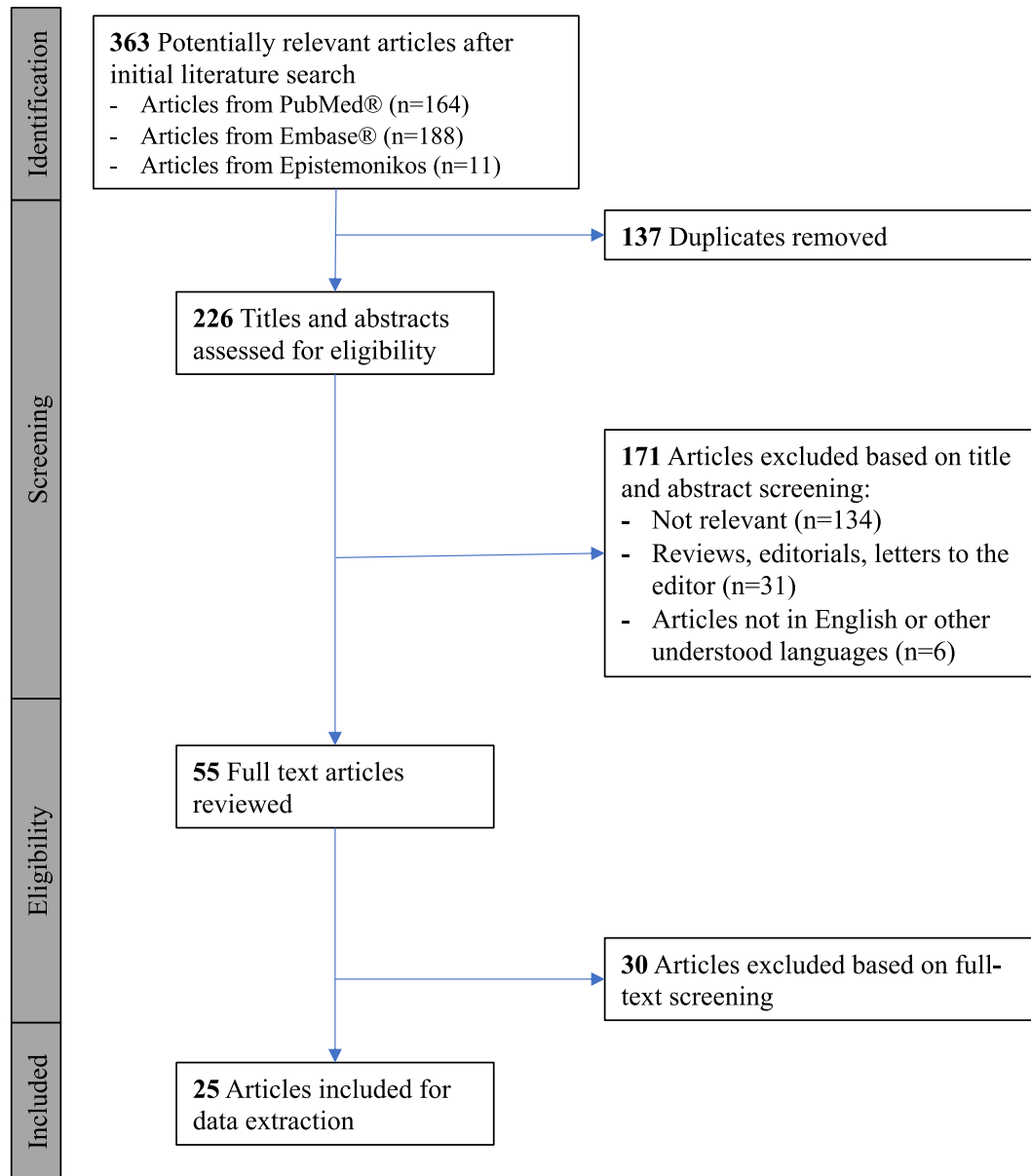


Figure 1 Flowchart.

Materials and methods

The protocol for this systematic review was submitted to the International prospective register of systematic reviews (PROSPERO) prior to commencement (registration number CRD42022349108) and conforms to the principles outlined in the handbook of the Cochrane Collaboration,¹⁴ along with the guidelines established by the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-analysis for which the required checklist was completed (see supplementary material).²³

Search strategy

The authors conducted a structured electronic literature search on December 18, 2023 using the PubMed, Embase, and

Epistemonikos databases, applying the keywords presented in [Supplementary Appendix S1](#). The search was limited to articles published between January 1, 2001 and December 18, 2023, to ensure a contemporary systematic review. After removal of duplicate records, each of 2 researchers (T.C. and E.D.) screened the titles and abstracts to determine the suitability for the review using the following predefined eligibility criteria:

Inclusion criteria

- Comparative studies or case series on shoulder ROM (external/internal rotation, forward elevation, abduction; measured using any method) in competitive, elite, or professional tennis players.

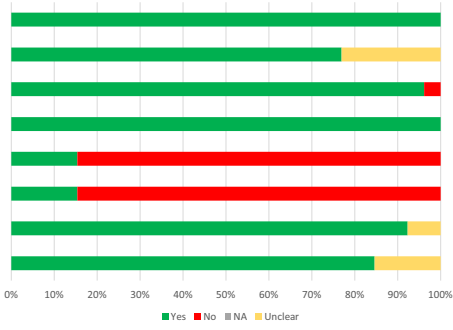
Table II
Included studies, demographics, and range of motion.

Author Journals	Year	Country	Cohort			Dominant			Nondominant				
			Overall	Sex		Age Mean ± SD	IR Mean ± SD	ER Mean ± SD	Total Mean ± SD	IR Mean ± SD	ER Mean ± SD	Total Mean ± SD	
				♂	♀								
Lopez-Vidriero Tejedor KSSTA	2023	Spain	270	78	57	22.1 ± 4.9	51 ± 18	94 ± 9	145 ± 20	68 ± 17	93 ± 8	161 ± 19	
Tooth J Sports Med Phys Fitness	2023	Belgium	24	24		<14	48 ± 8	101 ± 4		48 ± 6	97 ± 5		
			17	17		14-18	46 ± 4	98 ± 8		50 ± 6	95 ± 6		
			12	12		>18	44 ± 4	100 ± 7		46 ± 3	96 ± 9		
			13		13	<13	46 ± 6	101 ± 5		46 ± 6	98 ± 5		
			12		12	13-17	50 ± 7	100 ± 6		51 ± 9	100 ± 7		
			6		6	>17	47 ± 1	98 ± 4		46 ± 0	97 ± 8		
Fernandez-Fernandez J Strength CondRes	2020	Spain	13	13		14.6 ± 0.3	59 ± 8	146 ± 9	205 ± 11	70 ± 9	127 ± 10	198 ± 8	
			13	13		14.7 ± 0.3	58 ± 13	137 ± 11	195 ± 20	77 ± 12	137 ± 16	214 ± 21	
Johansson Frontiers in Sports and Active Living	2022	Sweden	176	176		14.4 ± 2.0	57 ± 12	98 ± 13	156 ± 17	65 ± 12	91 ± 13	157 ± 18	
			125		125	14.6 ± 2.0	62 ± 12	99 ± 13	160 ± 17	72 ± 13	94 ± 13	165 ± 17	
Ellenbecker OJSM	2020	USA	92	92		25.6 ± 3.6	37 ± 8	100 ± 8	136 ± 10	46 ± 7	94 ± 13	142 ± 8	
			61	61		26.9 ± 3.9	38 ± 8	98 ± 9	136 ± 10	46 ± 6	94 ± 9	140 ± 9	
Fernandez-Fernandez Int. J. Environ. Res. Public Health	2020	Spain	12	12		14.9 ± 0.9	56 ± 13	149 ± 12	205 ± 19	70 ± 14	136 ± 10	205 ± 18	
			13		13	14.5 ± 0.9	59 ± 10	153 ± 14	212 ± 19	68 ± 14	137 ± 14	206 ± 20	
Olivier The Int J of Sports Phys Ther	2020	Brazil	22			12.5 ± 0.9	65 ± 8	108 ± 9	172 ± 11	71 ± 9	98 ± 10	169 ± 11	
Fernandez-Fernandez PLOS ONE	2019	Spain	32	32		12.6 ± 0.2	73 ± 12	147 ± 19	220 ± 26	81 ± 11	141 ± 14	222 ± 22	
			36	36		14.6 ± 0.3	62 ± 14	136 ± 15	198 ± 23	78 ± 11	134 ± 15	212 ± 20	
			32		32	12.6 ± 0.3	67 ± 14	140 ± 18	207 ± 26	80 ± 18	140 ± 12	220 ± 24	
			28		28	14.6 ± 0.3	71 ± 11	138 ± 17	209 ± 22	81 ± 14	140 ± 15	221 ± 24	
Gillet Physical Therapy in Sport	2018	France	30	30		11.5 ± 2.0	75 ± 10	86 ± 8	162 ± 12	80 ± 8	85 ± 8	165 ± 13	
			61	61		11.2 ± 1.8	72 ± 10	83 ± 9	155 ± 15	77 ± 10	82 ± 10	159 ± 16	
Nutt The Int J of Sports Phys Ther	2018	United Kingdom	69	122	62	11-14	44 ± 11	103 ± 8	147 ± 12	47 ± 11	100 ± 7	147 ± 12	
			56			14-16	38 ± 10	107 ± 9	146 ± 12	45 ± 10	102 ± 8	148 ± 12	
			59			16-24	43 ± 13	101 ± 10	140 ± 35	52 ± 14	97 ± 10	138 ± 34	
Palmer Sports Health	2018	USA	42	42		23.9 ± 5.8	52 ± 14	97 ± 13		69 ± 10	87 ± 11		
Williams Physical Therapy in Sport	2018		30	18	12	20.0	53 ± 9	77 ± 10	130 ± 15	60 ± 10	76 ± 11	136 ± 14	
Gillet Journal of Athletic Training	2017	France	26	26		8.7 ± 0.7	78 ± 9	84 ± 9	161 ± 13	81 ± 9	83 ± 6	163 ± 13	
			21	21		10.3 ± 0.6	69 ± 9	85 ± 10	153 ± 15	76 ± 9	83 ± 11	158 ± 15	
			20	20		12.8 ± 1.4	66 ± 9	83 ± 10	149 ± 16	74 ± 11	79 ± 12	154 ± 17	
Moreno-perez Manual Therapy	2015	Spain	47	47		23.2 ± 4.9	46 ± 12	91 ± 9	136 ± 15	59 ± 12	84 ± 8	142 ± 15	
Cools Journal of Athletic Training	2014	Sweden	24	31	28		49 ± 8	104 ± 7	154 ± 9	59 ± 7	100 ± 5	160 ± 8	
			22				43 ± 11	105 ± 7	149 ± 12	58 ± 8	98 ± 8	157 ± 11	
			13				41 ± 7	102 ± 12	142 ± 11	56 ± 9	100 ± 11	155 ± 13	
McConnell Clin J Sport Med	2009	Australia	11	11		16.8 ± 1.3	42 ± 8	94 ± 10	136 ± 10	55 ± 7	91 ± 10	146 ± 15	
			10		10	14.9 ± 0.8	43 ± 7	92 ± 11	135 ± 14	58 ± 9	85 ± 7	143 ± 9	
Kovacs Br J Sports Med	2007	USA		88			36 ± 6	91 ± 7	127 ± 11	47 ± 6	87 ± 6	134 ± 9	
Schmidt-Wiethoff Int J Sports Med	2004	Germany	27	27		26.5 [19-33]	44 ± 11	89 ± 14	133 ± 15	61 ± 7	81 ± 10	142 ± 12	
Ellenbecker (a) Journal of Strength and Conditioning Research	2002	USA	11		11	19.2 ± 1.8	49 ± 10	101 ± 9	150	61 ± 8	95 ± 6	156	
Ellenbecker (b) Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise	2002	USA	117	117		16.4 ± 1.6	45 ± 14	104 ± 11	149 ± 18	56 ± 12	102 ± 11	158 ± 16	

SD, standard deviation; ER, external rotation; IR, internal rotation.

Table III
JBI checklist for analytical cross-sectional studies.

Case series	Coak et al. (2004)	Cools et al. (2014)	Ellenbecker et al. (2002a)	Ellenbecker et al. (2002b)	Ellenbecker et al. (2003)	Fernandez-Ferna et al. (2019)	Fernandez-Ferna et al. (2020)	Fernandez-Ferna et al. (2023)	Gillet et al. (2017)	Gillet et al. (2018)	Johansson et al. (2022)	Kovacs et al. (2007)	Le Sollax (2023)	Martin et al. (2016)	McConnell et al. (2009)	Moore-Reed et al. (2016)	Moreno-Perez et al. (2015)	Nutt et al. (2018)	Olivier et al. (2020)	Palmer et al. (2018)	Schmidt-Wiethoff et al. (2003)	Schmidt-Wiethoff et al. (2004)	Lopez-Vidriero Tejedor et al. (2023)	Thomas et al. (2009)	Tooth et al. (2023)	Williams et al. (2018)	
1	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
2	Y	Y	Y	U	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	U	U	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	U	U	Y	Y	Y	U	U
3	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
4	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
5	N	N	N	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N
6	N	N	N	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N
7	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	U	U	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
8	U	Y	Y	U	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	U	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	



JBI, Joanna Briggs Institute.

Exclusion criteria

- Narrative or systematic reviews, noncomparative case series, expert opinions, editorials, letters to editors, case reports, or computer simulations.
- Studies published in languages other than English, French, German, or Spanish to avoid translation errors.

Study selection

Studies that met the eligibility criteria during title and abstract screening underwent full-text screening by 2 researchers (T.C. and E.D.) and any disagreement was first discussed between the researchers, and if required, a third researcher (F.V.R.) resolved any disagreement. The reference lists of studies for full-text review were searched, and an expert (J.G.) was consulted to identify further relevant studies that may not have been captured by the database searches.

Data extraction and quality assessment

Data extraction was performed by 2 researchers (T.C. and E.D.) independently and their results were compared to ensure accuracy. Where there was disagreement in the documented value, the true value was ascertained by simultaneous review of the data in question by both researchers. The following data were extracted from the included studies; author(s), journal, year of publication, level of evidence, country where study was performed, conflicts of interest, and funding declaration. Tennis player characteristics were retrieved, including group sizes, sex, age, hours of weekly training, and level of experience. The ROM including ER (shoulder at 90° of abduction) and IR were extracted as well as the type of instrument used. Methodological quality of the eligible studies was assessed by 2 researchers (T.C. and E.D.) according to the Joanna Briggs Institute checklist, to appraise the reporting quality (10 items).²⁴ Where there was disagreement between the researchers, consensus was achieved by discussion and review.

Statistical analysis

When available in the original articles, outcomes were tabulated: continuous outcomes were reported as means, standard deviations, and ranges, while categorical outcomes were reported as proportions. Heterogeneity was evaluated by visual inspection of forest plots, and using the I² statistic and its connected χ^2 test, to provide a measure of the degree of inconsistency across studies.¹⁵ Pooled estimates of raw means and their 95% confidence interval (CI) were calculated using a random-effects model framework. Pooled estimates of proportions and their 95% CIs were calculated via Freeman-Tukey double arcsine transformation using inverse-variance weighting within a random-effects model framework. P values < .05 were considered statistically significant. Statistical analyses were performed using R version 4.1.3 (R Foundation for Statistical Computing, Vienna, Austria) using the Meta package.

Results

The systematic search returned 363 records, of which 137 were duplicates, leaving 226 for screening. A total of 171 studies were excluded by examining their titles and/or abstracts, and a further 25 studies were excluded after full-text review. This left 25 eligible studies that reported on a total of 1853 players (Table I, Fig. 1).^{4-13, 16-19,21,22,25,27-30,33-36} Of the 25 studies, 5 only reported the ROM for the dominant shoulders, while 20 studies reported the ROM for both dominant and nondominant shoulders (Table II). Of the 25 studies, 12 measured the ROM with a goniometer, 10 with an inclinometer, 1 using photographs, 1 using a motion analysis system, and 1 using a dynamometer (Table I).

Methodological quality

Quality assessment revealed that, of the 25 eligible studies, only 3 identified confounding factors (Table III). Furthermore, 6 of the included^{7,8,21,22,33,36} studies did not clearly describe the study subjects and/or setting.

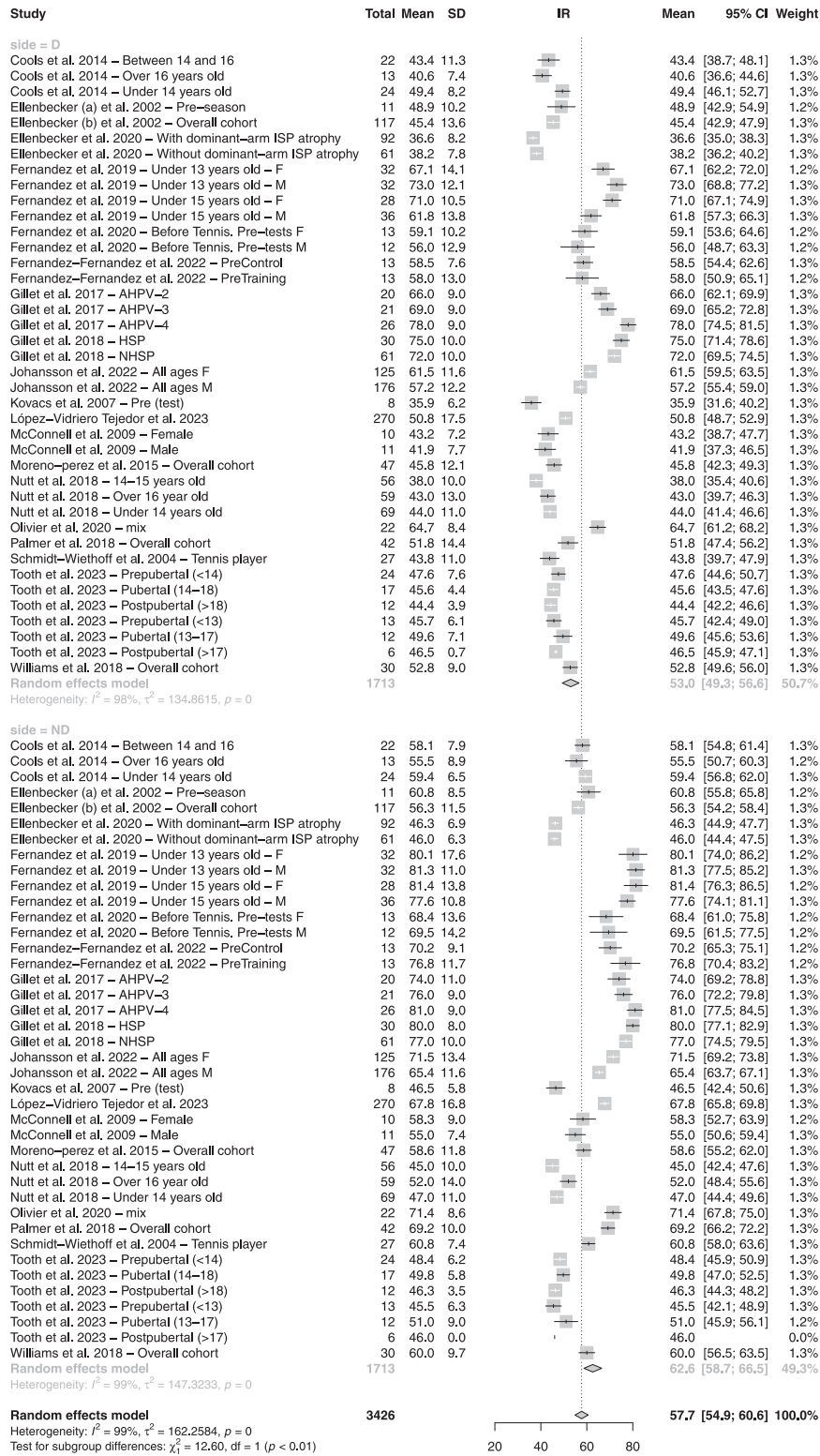


Figure 2 Forest plot comparing IR in dominant vs. nondominant side. The squares represent the mean values of the individual studies; the first and second diamonds represent the weighted means of the respective groups, and the third diamond represents the overall weighted mean, also shown using the dotted lines. SD, standard deviation; CI, confidence interval; IR, internal rotation.

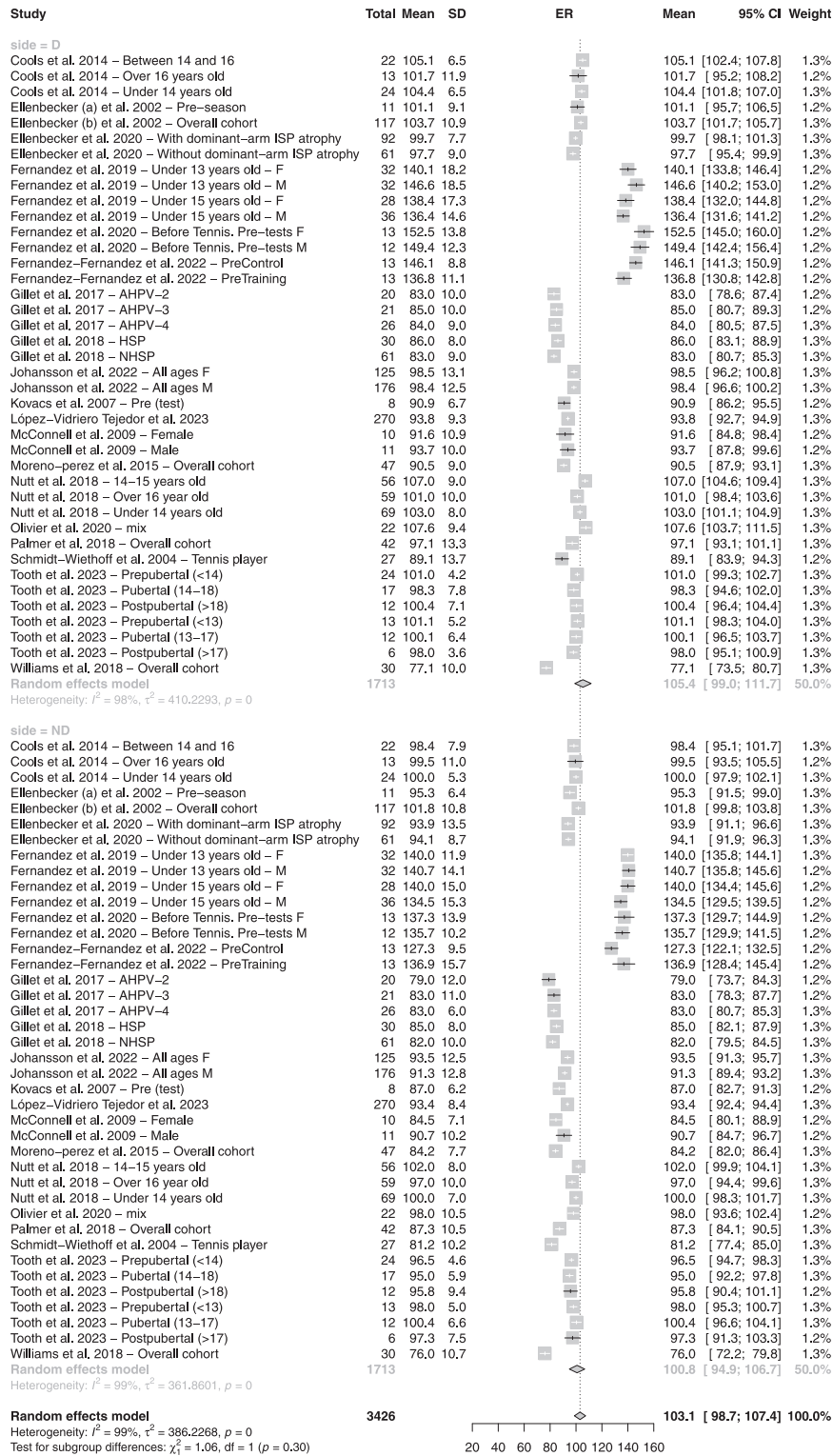


Figure 3 Forest plot comparing ER in dominant vs. nondominant side. SD, standard deviation; CI, confidence interval; ER, external rotation.

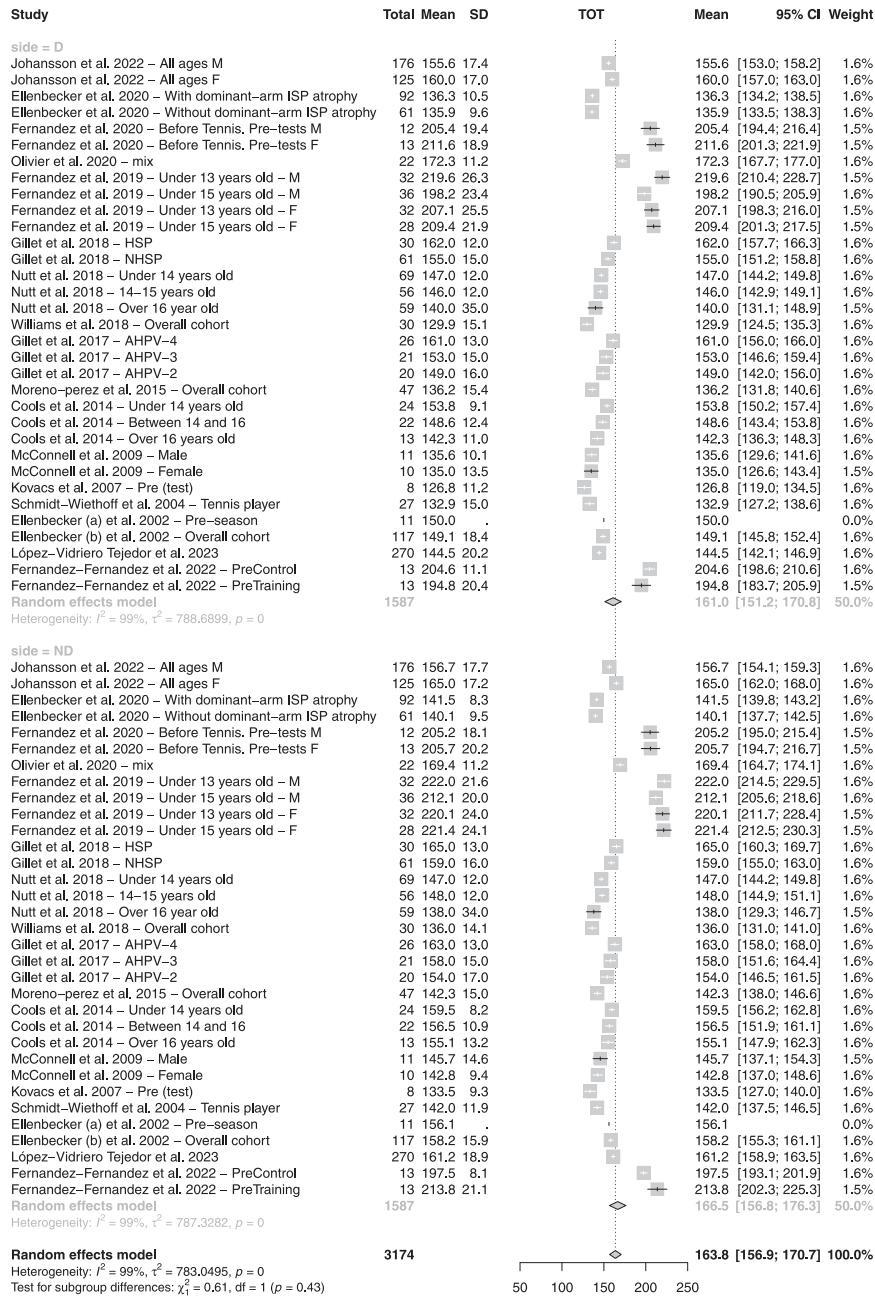


Figure 4 Forest plot comparing total ROM in dominant vs. nondominant side. SD, standard deviation; CI, confidence interval; ROM, range of motion.

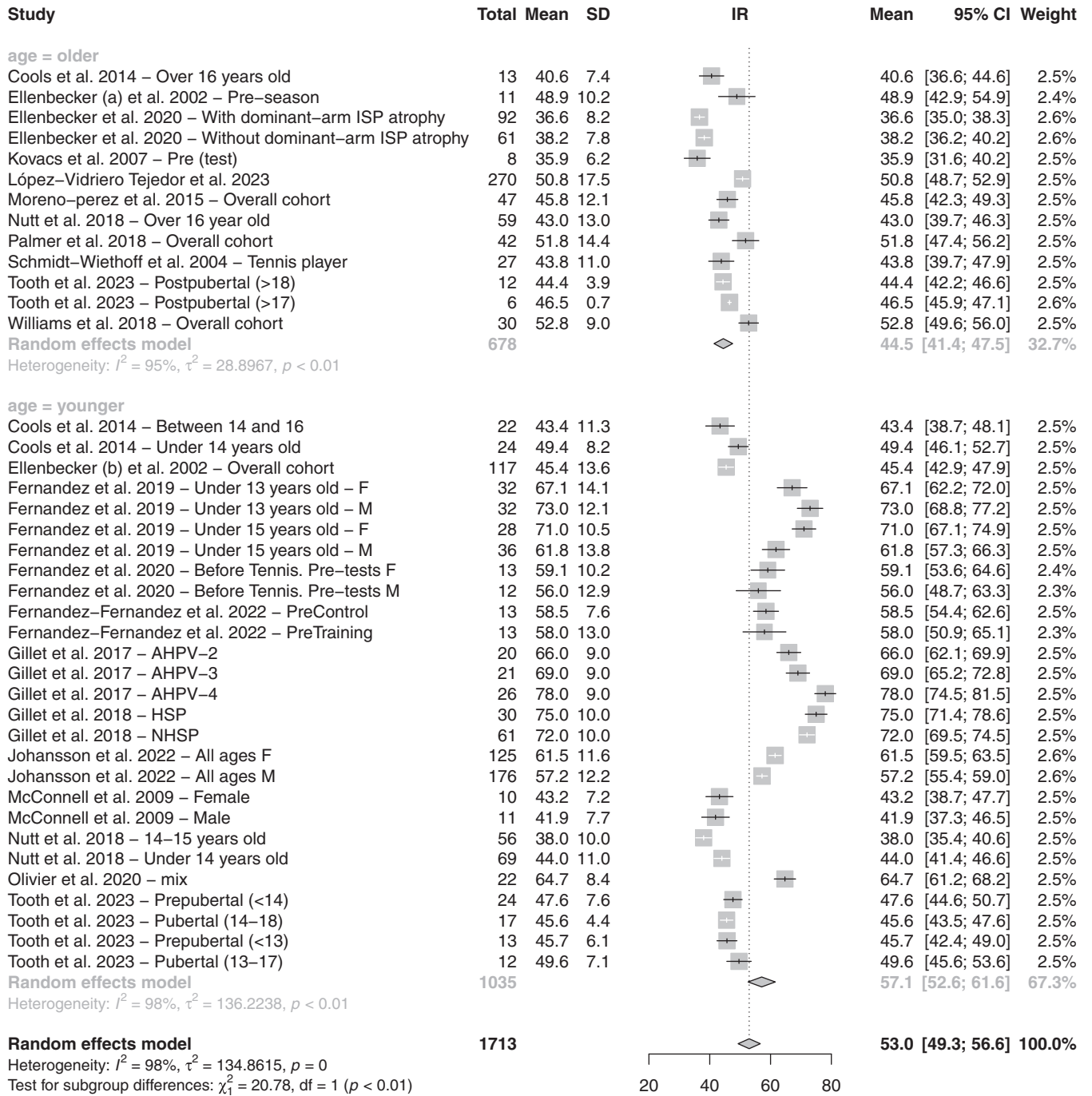


Figure 5 Forest plot comparing IR in older vs. younger tennis players. SD, standard deviation; CI, confidence interval; IR, internal rotation.

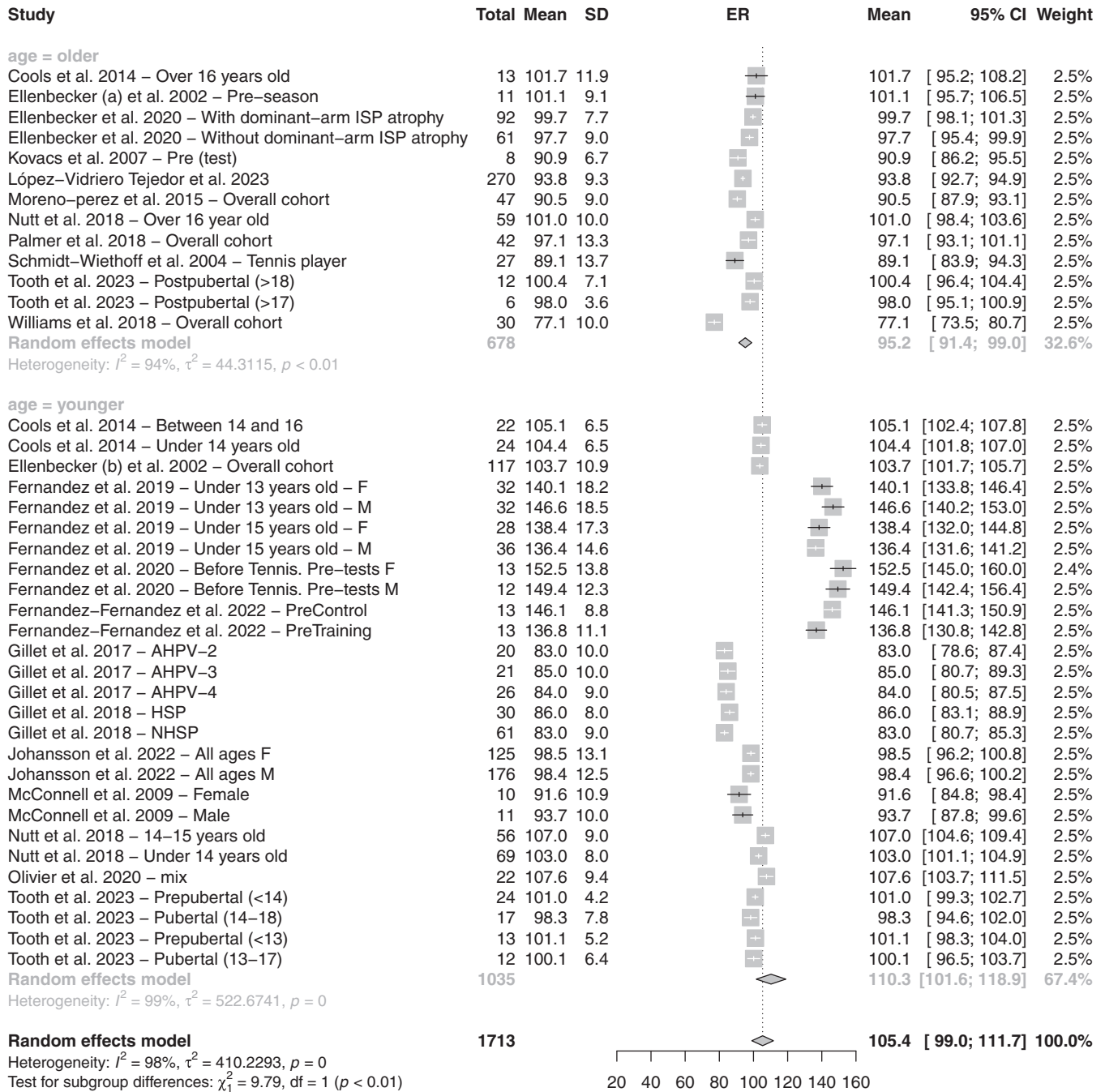


Figure 6 Forest plot comparing ER in older vs. younger tennis players. SD, standard deviation; CI, confidence interval; ER, external rotation.

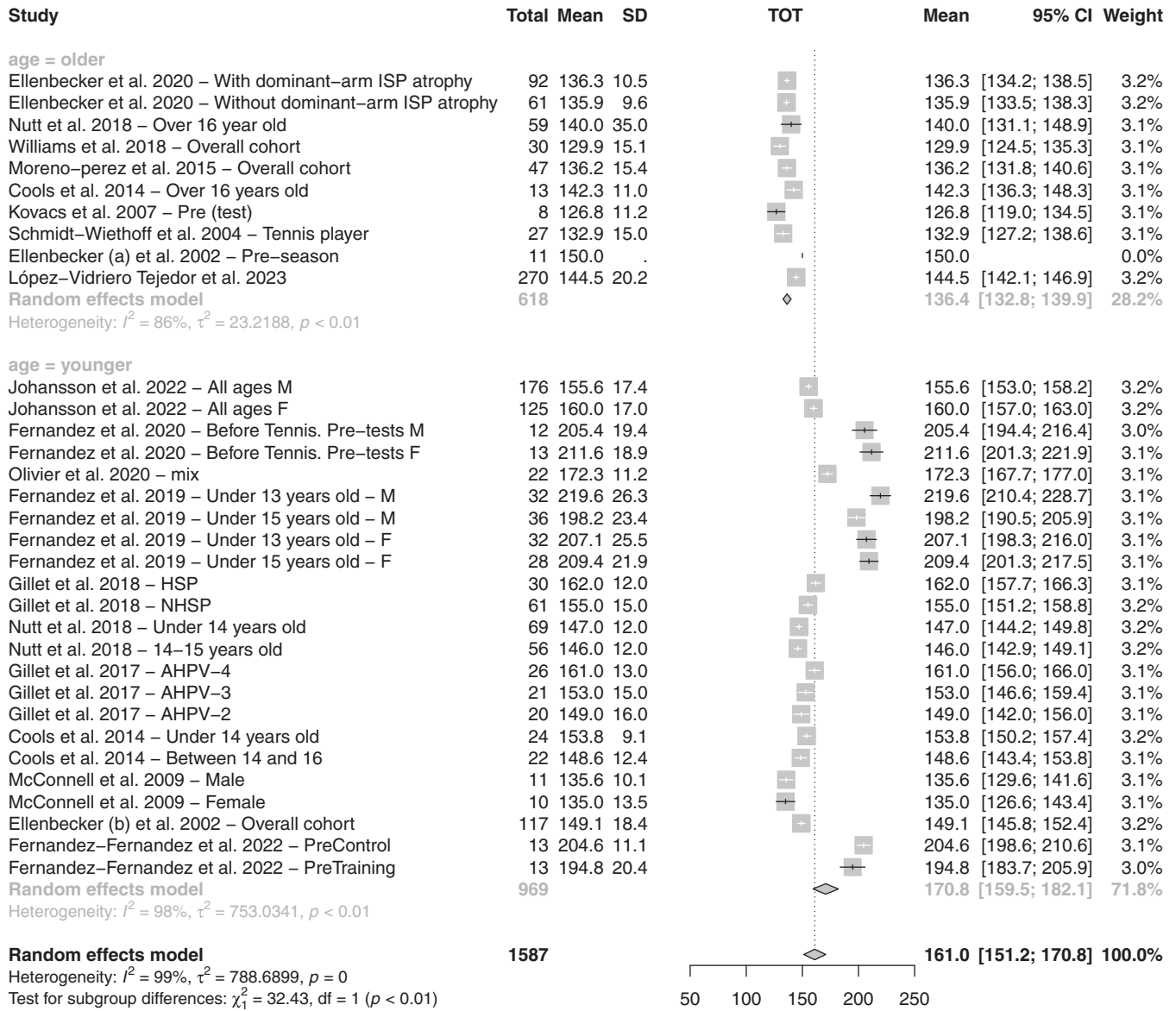


Figure 7 Forest plot comparing total ROM in older vs. younger tennis players. SD, standard deviation; CI, confidence interval; ROM, range of motion.

Dominant vs. nondominant

Comparing dominant vs. nondominant shoulders revealed that dominant shoulders had significantly smaller IR (53.0°, CI, 49.3–56.6; $I^2 = 98\%$, vs. 62.6°, CI, 58.7–66.5; $I^2 = 99\%$) (Fig. 2). However, there were no significant differences in ER (105.4°, CI, 99.0–111.7; $I^2 = 98\%$ vs. 100.8°, CI, 94.9–106.7 $I^2 = 99\%$) (Fig. 3), or total ROM (161.0°, CI, 151.2–170.8; $I^2 = 99$ vs. 166.5°, CI, 156.8–176.3; $I^2 = 99\%$) (Fig. 4).

Children vs. adults

Comparing adults vs. children revealed that adults have significantly smaller IR (44.5°, CI, 41.4–47.5; $I^2 = 95\%$ vs. 57.1°, CI, 52.6–61.6; $I^2 = 98\%$) (Fig. 5), ER (95.2°, CI, 91.4–99.0; $I^2 = 94\%$ vs. 110.3°, CI,

101.6–118.9; $I^2 = 99\%$) (Fig. 6), and total ROM (136.4°, CI, 132.8–139.9; $I^2 = 86\%$ vs. 170.8°, CI, 159.5–182.1; $I^2 = 98\%$) (Fig. 7).

Females vs. males

Comparing females vs. males revealed no significant differences in ER (113.4°, CI, 98.3–128.4; $I^2 = 98\%$ vs. 104.9°, CI, 94.6–115.2; $I^2 = 99\%$) (Fig. 8), IR (54.7°, CI, 48.1–61.4; $I^2 = 98\%$ vs. 56.3°, CI, 50.8–61.9; $I^2 = 98\%$) (Fig. 9), or total ROM (184.5°, CI, 153.8–215.2; $I^2 = 99\%$ vs. 166.7°, CI, 151.8–181.6; $I^2 = 98\%$) (Fig. 10).

Type of measurement instrumentation

Comparing type of measurement instrumentation revealed that shoulder ROM measured using a goniometer have significantly less

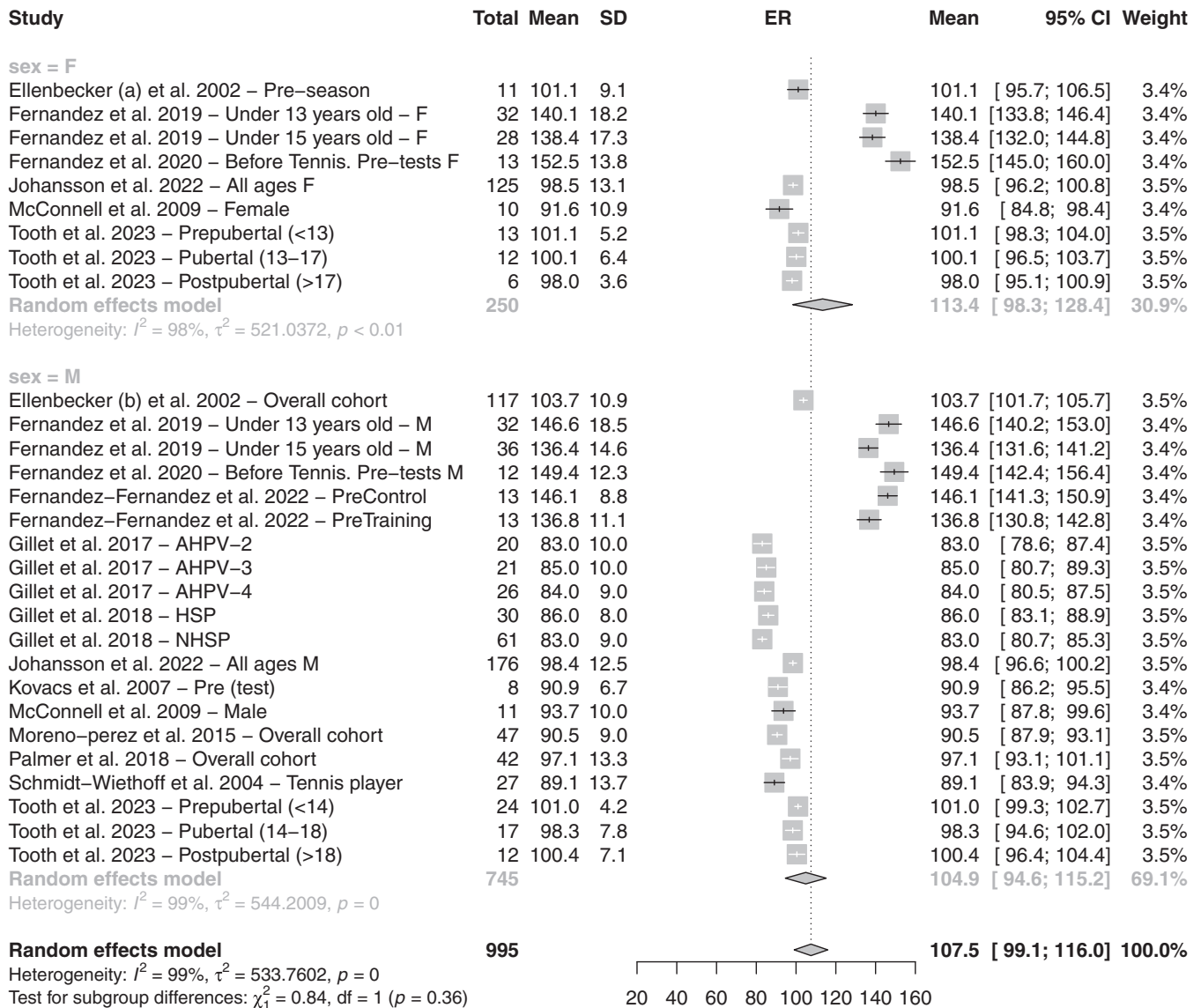


Figure 8 Forest plot comparing ER in females vs. males. SD, standard deviation; CI, confidence interval; ER, external rotation.

ER (95.5°, CI, 92.2–98.7; $I^2 = 96\%$ vs. 119.6°, CI, 108.2–131.1; $I^2 = 99\%$) (Fig. 11), IR (53.3°, CI, 47.1–59.6; $I^2 = 99\%$ vs. 62.5°, CI, 58.8–66.2; $I^2 = 89\%$) (Fig. 12), and total ROM (146.8°, CI, 141.3–152.2; $I^2 = 92\%$ vs. 175.4°, CI, 160.3–190.5; $I^2 = 99\%$) (Fig. 13).

Discussion

The most important findings of the present meta-analysis on shoulder ROM in tennis players were that, compared to the nondominant shoulders, dominant shoulders had significantly

smaller IR (53.0° vs. 62.4°, $P < .01$). Furthermore, compared to adults, children had significantly greater IR (57.0° vs. 44.4°, $P < .01$), ER (110.3° vs. 95.3°, $P < .01$), and total ROM (170.8° vs. 136.4°, $P < .01$). Moreover, there were several trends between comparative groups, but the differences were not statistically significant; compared to nondominant shoulders, dominant shoulders tended to have greater ER (105.4° vs. 100.8°, $P = .310$). Finally, compared to males, females tended to have greater ER (113.4° vs. 104.8°, $P = .360$), but comparable IR (56.4° vs. 54.4°, $P = .650$). These findings could be relevant in the context of physical preparation

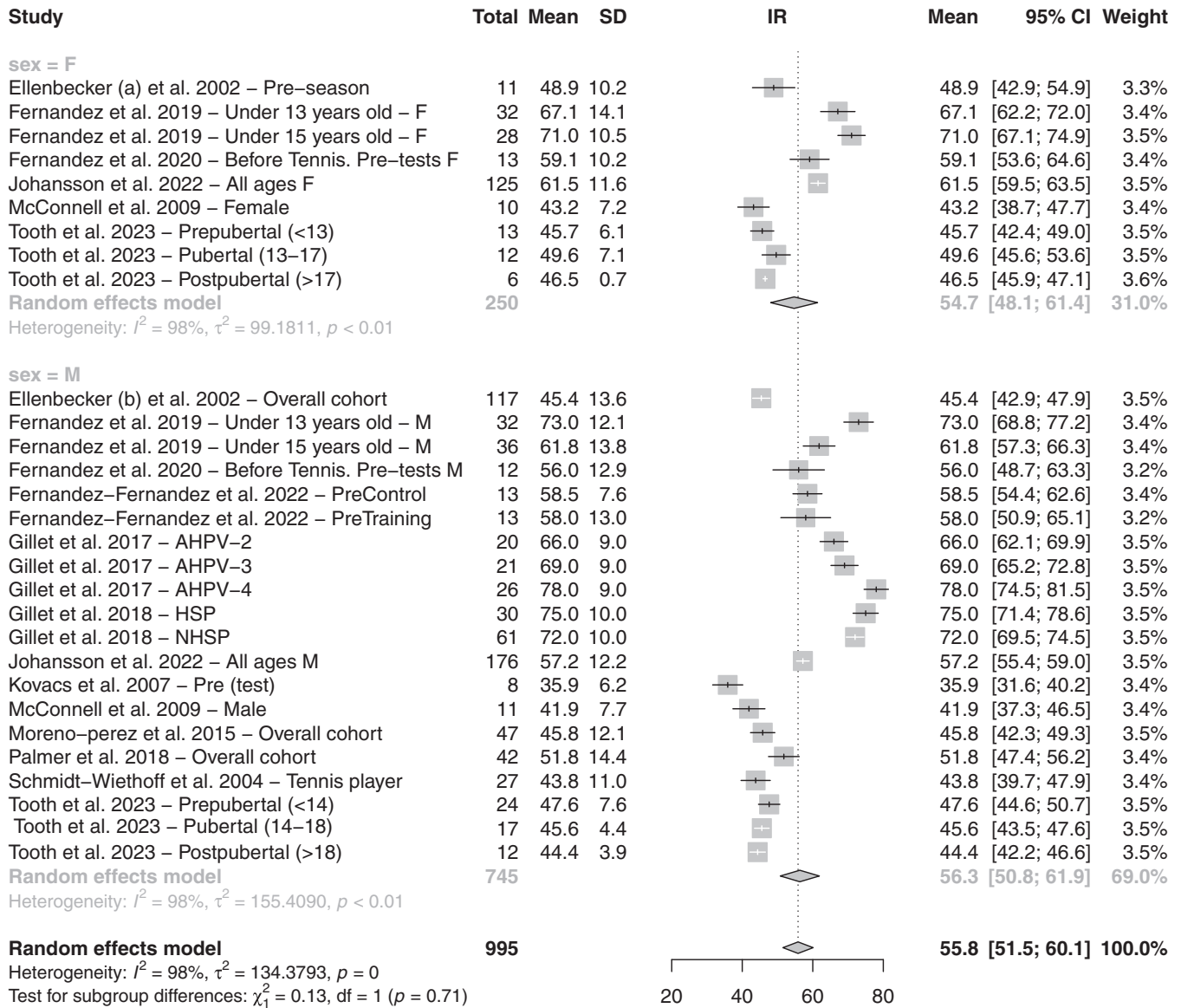


Figure 9 Forest plot comparing IR in females vs. males. SD, standard deviation; CI, confidence interval; IR, internal rotation.

and training of tennis players, to monitor evolution of IR as a result of their sport and/or as they transition from childhood to adulthood.

Several studies have found asymmetric shoulder ROM between dominant and nondominant sides for male and female players, adolescents, and professional players. Furthermore, some studies reported that dominant shoulders have a greater prevalence of early signs of tendinosis and atrophy of the infraspinatus and supraspinatus tendons, ROM deficits, and increased strength.^{6,13,16,38} However, it is believed that these are normal sport-adaptations instead of maladaptations. Studies should

investigate the source of these adaptations, and whether they are due to soft-tissue or bony changes. A recent study by Paul et al³¹ investigated the underlying mechanisms responsible for IR in baseball players, and found that there was increased humeral retroversion and posterior capsule thickness. Unfortunately, Paul et al³¹ could not determine a cause-and-effect relationship, and it is unknown whether these changes are due to baseball, or that baseball players have a greater retroversion and capsule thickness.

A clinical study by Moreno-Perez et al²⁶ found that tennis players with a history of shoulder pain have decreased bilateral shoulder IR and total ROM, but did not find side-to-side differences,

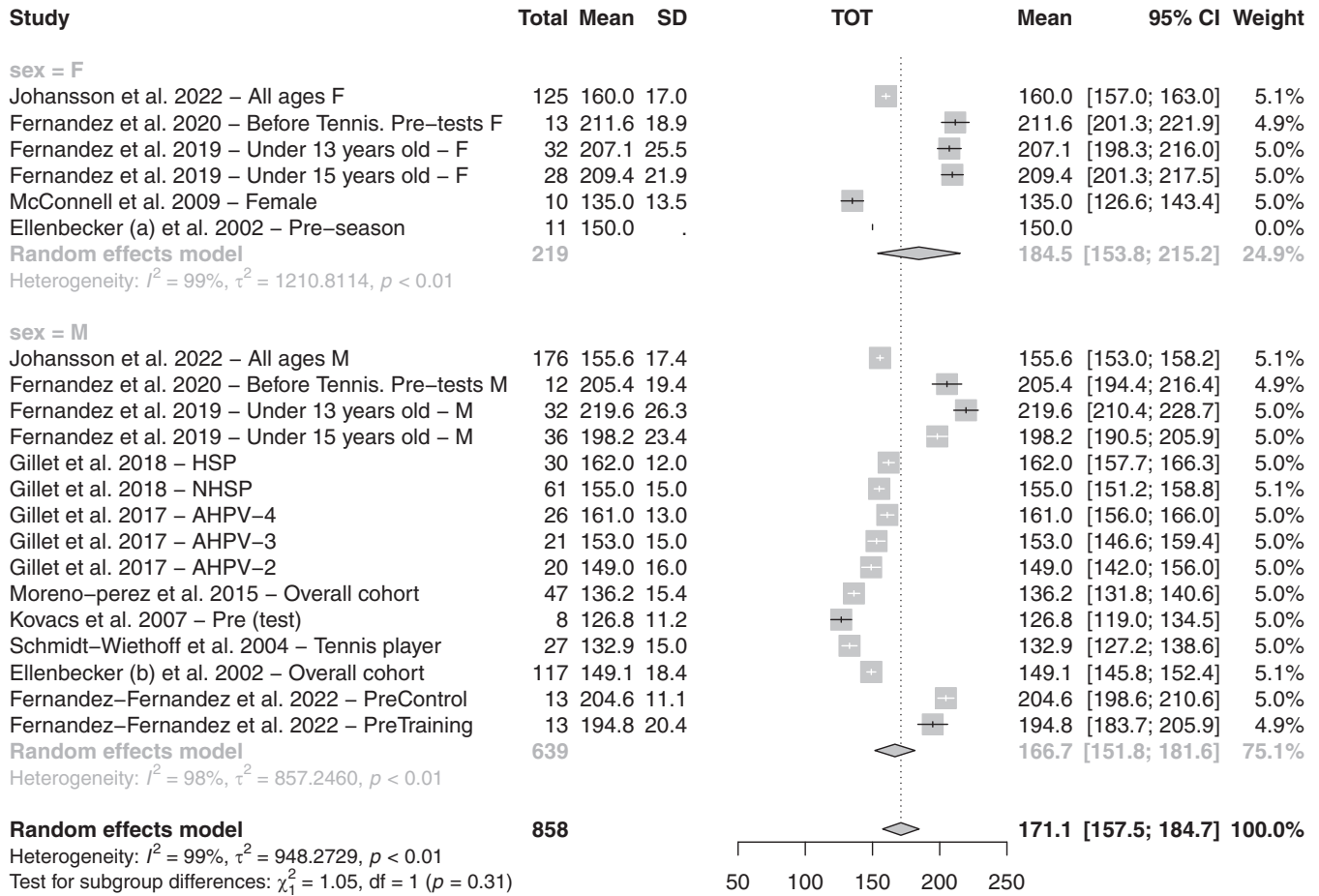


Figure 10 Forest plot comparing total ROM in females vs. males. SD, standard deviation; CI, confidence interval; ROM, range of motion.

when comparing injured to noninjured shoulders. This was further corroborated in a recent systematic review by Pozzi et al,³² which aimed to characterize whether preseason screening of shoulder ROM is associated with risks of shoulder and elbow injuries in overhead athletes. Pozzi et al³² found associations between risk of injury and preseason screening of shoulder ER in baseball pitchers and swimmers, but not in handball, softball, volleyball, or tennis players. Therefore, the reported ROM alterations may represent normal adaptations due to the greater hitting demands, and are therefore not associated with an increased risk of sustaining shoulder injuries.

The results of the present meta-analysis should be interpreted with the following limitations in mind. There was considerable heterogeneity in the age groups of the players, and the reported ROM between the included studies, which could be due to differences in measurement methods, making quantitative comparisons difficult. Furthermore, age could not be considered as a continuous variable as only means were reported in the included studies. Finally, we did not consider shoulder strength, which

might be inversely correlated with ROM and could be a confounding variable.

Conclusion

IR in shoulders of tennis players is significantly smaller in dominant vs. nondominant sides (53.0° vs. 62.4°, $P < .001$), and significantly smaller in adults vs. children (44.4° vs. 57.0°, $P < .001$). These findings could be relevant in the context of physical preparation and training of tennis players, to monitor evolution of IR as a result of their sport and/or as they transition from childhood to adulthood.

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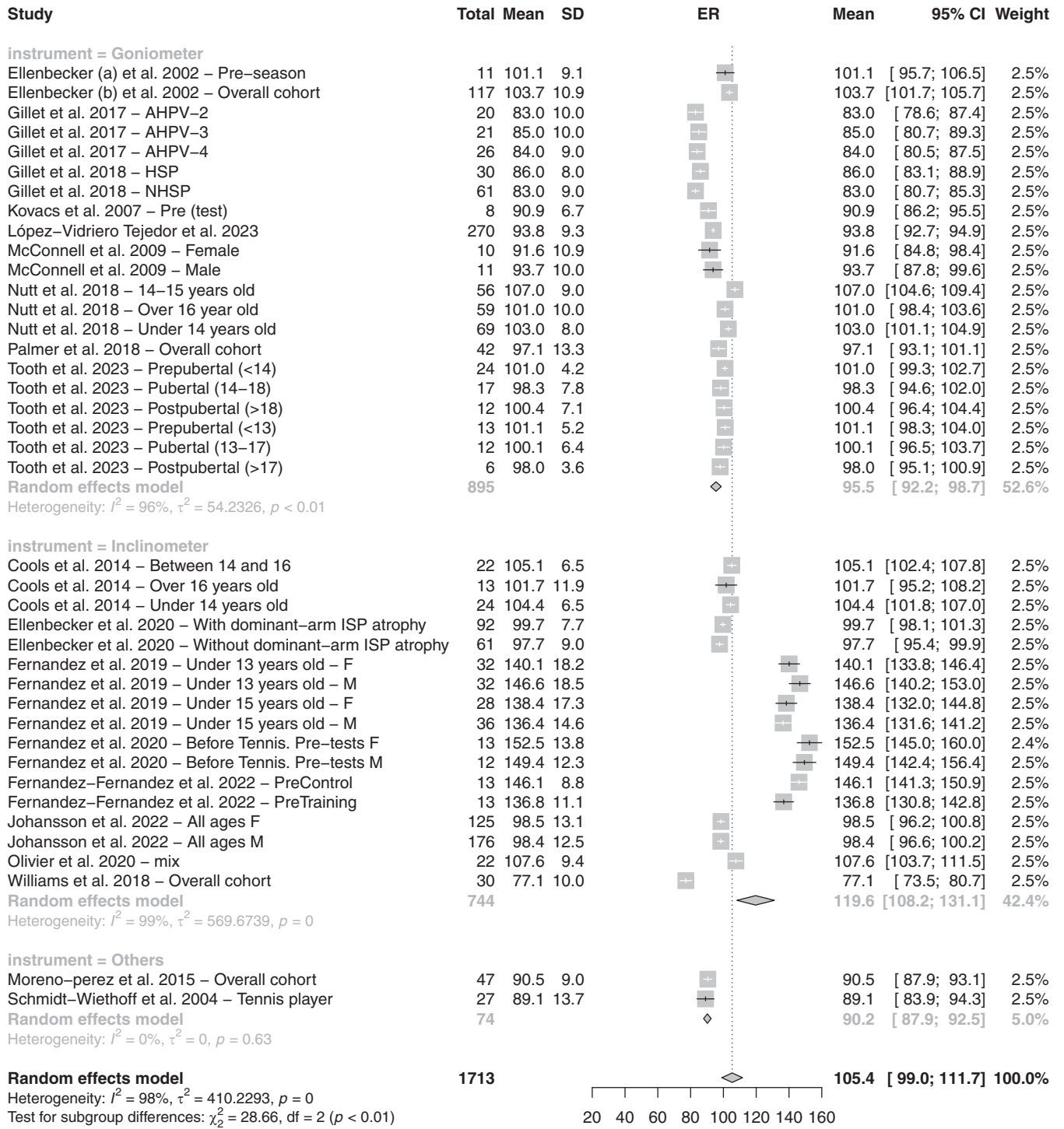


Figure 11 Forest plot comparing ER considering type of measurement. SD, standard deviation; CI, confidence interval; ER, external rotation.

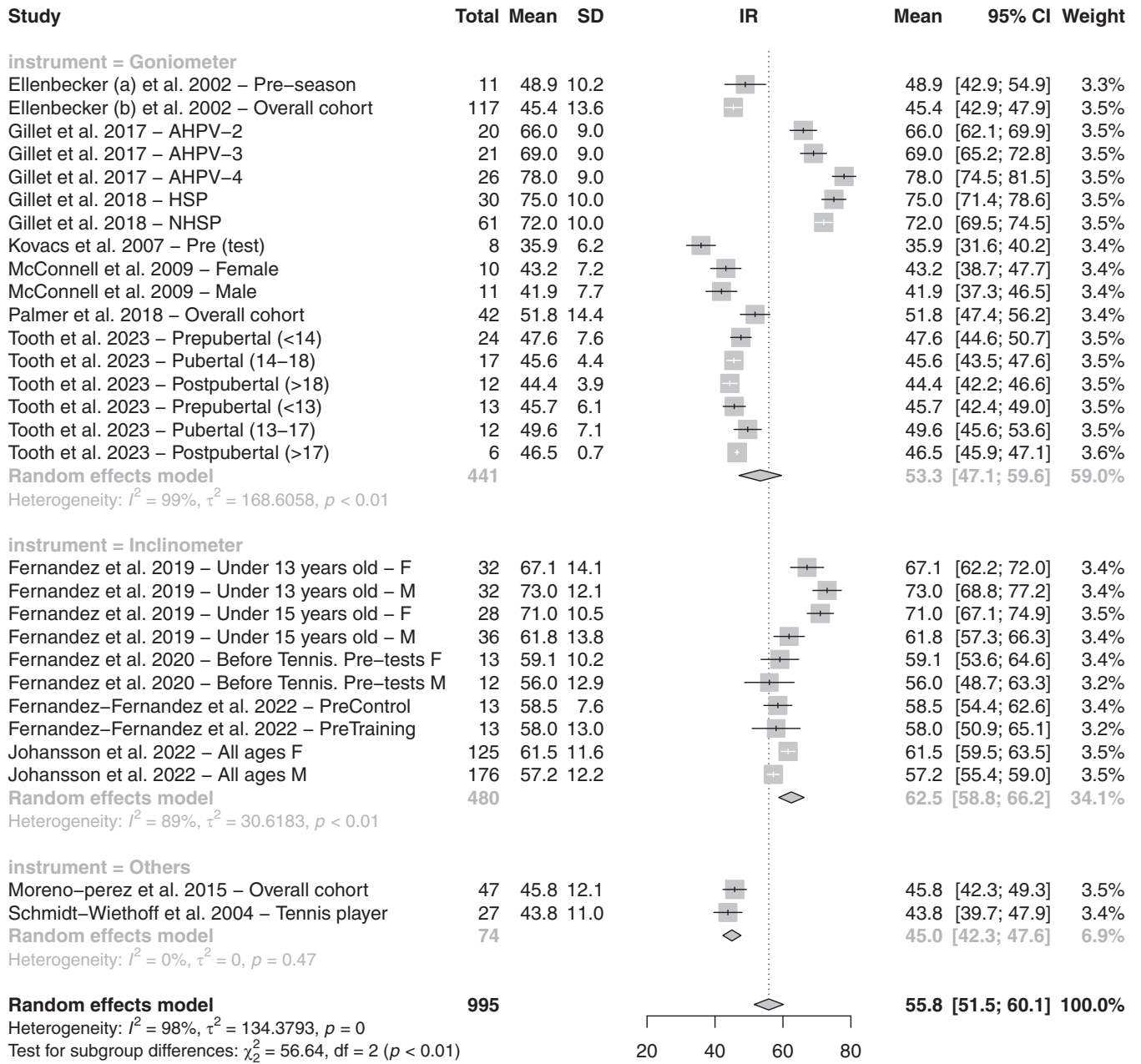


Figure 12 Forest plot comparing IR considering type of measurement. SD, standard deviation; CI, confidence interval; IR, internal rotation.

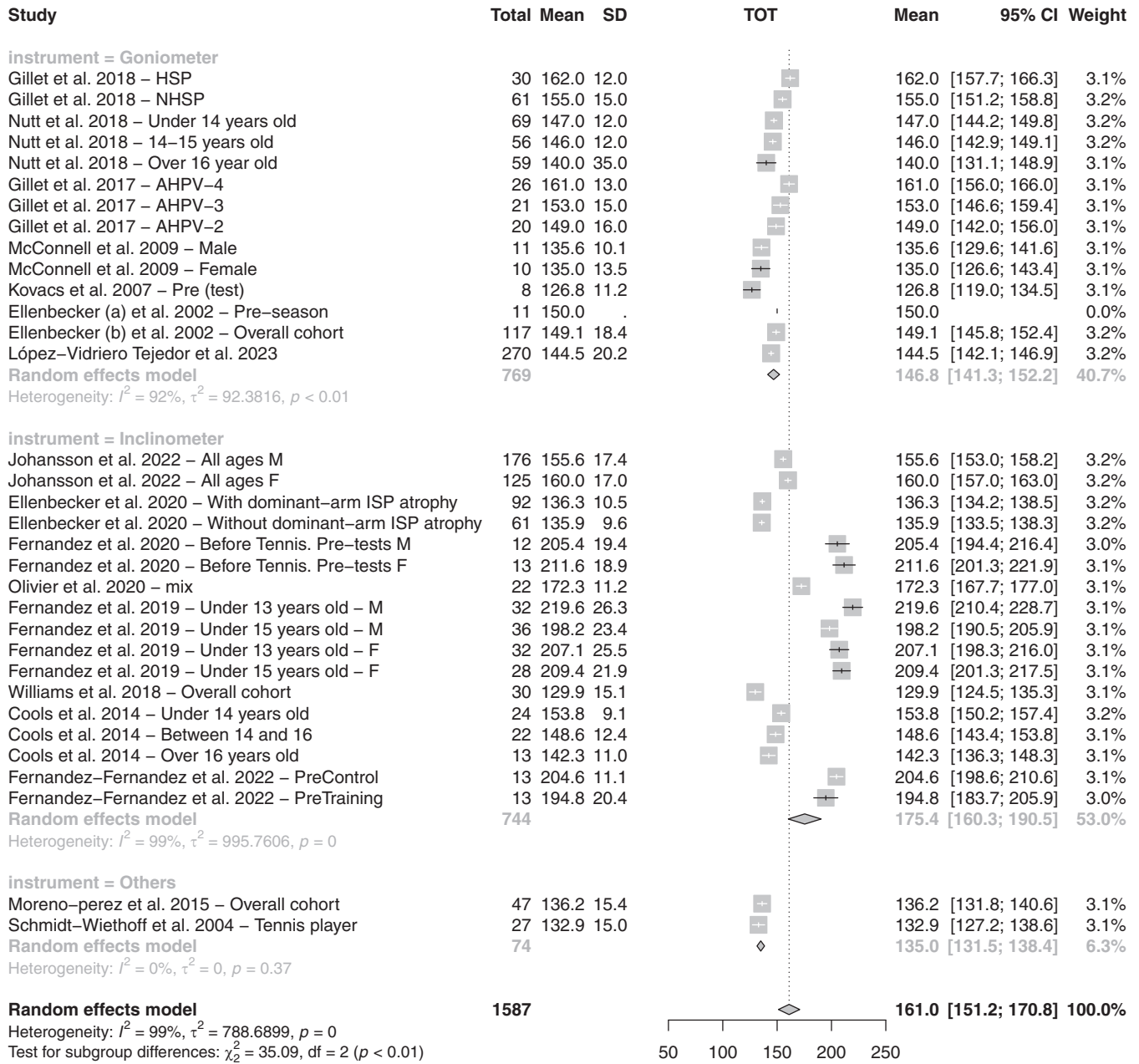


Figure 13 Forest plot comparing total ROM considering type of measurement. SD, standard deviation; CI, confidence interval; ROM, range of motion.

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Supplementary Data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jseint.2024.01.017>.

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