

Analyze sport participation in the EU: demographic trends and Personal drivers

Introduction

This analytical report is based on the Eurobarometer 97.3 (2022) dataset and explores sport and physical activity engagement across European countries. The study investigates demographic trends, personal motivations for participation, and key barriers preventing involvement in physical activity. By combining behavioral data with sociodemographic indicators, we aim to identify specific population segments with varying levels of sport engagement across the European Union.

Business Objective

This project can be used by developers of sports apps and related products to identify their optimal target audience and optimize their offerings accordingly. This includes discovering:

- Which demographic groups are most and least engaged in sport and physical activity;
- What motivates these groups to be active;
- What prevents others from participating;
- How these insights vary by age, gender, and country.

By answering these questions, developers can better segment the EU market and design features, messaging, and value propositions that resonate with the real needs and habits of different population groups.

Hypotheses

Target Audience Profile (Demographics)

Hypothesis 1: Young respondents (aged 15–24) are more likely to engage in physical activity regularly than older respondents (aged 65+).

Hypothesis 2: Young respondents (aged 15–24) are more likely to engage in physical activity regularly than older respondents (aged 65+).

Hypothesis 3: Men are more likely than women to engage in sport across the EU.

Hypothesis 4: Men report higher levels of overall physical activity than women across the EU.

Hypothesis 5: The Netherlands has the highest levels of physical activity among EU countries.

Hypothesis 6: The Netherlands has the highest levels of physical participation among EU countries.

Hypothesis 7: Most respondents who engage in sport do so three times per week.

Motivations to Participate

Hypothesis 8: The most common reason for engaging in sport is to improve health and fitness, across all demographic groups.

Hypothesis 9: Men are more likely to engage in sport to improve physical performance.

Hypothesis 10: Women are more likely to engage in sport for fitness-related reasons than for other motivations.

Hypothesis 11: Younger respondents (aged 15–24) are more motivated by fun and social interaction than other reasons.

Barriers to Participation

Hypothesis 12: Lack of motivation is the most frequently cited barrier across all age groups.

Hypothesis 13: Lack of time is the most frequently cited barrier among working-age adults (aged 25–54).

Hypothesis 14: Older adults (aged 55+) are more likely to mention health problems or age as reasons for not participating.

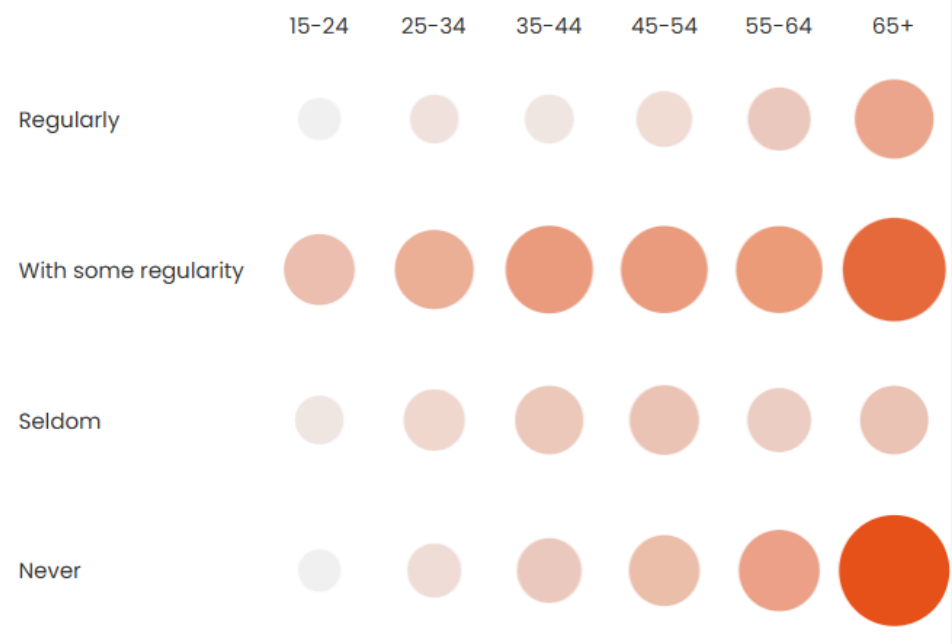
Hypotheses

Target Audience Profile (Demographics)

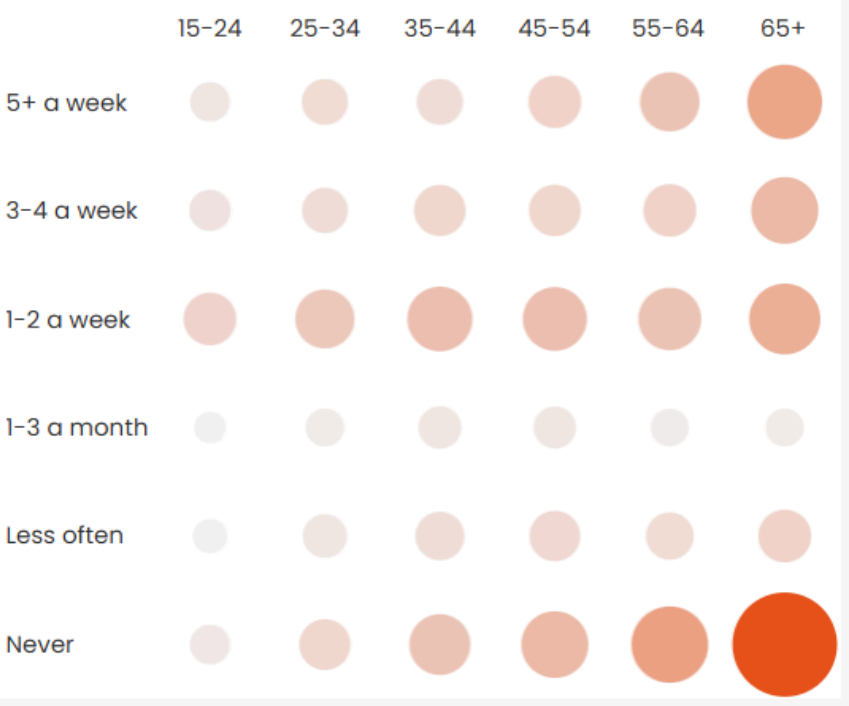
Hypothesis 1: Young respondents (aged 15–24) are more likely to engage in physical activity regularly than older respondents (aged 65+).

Diagrams from Dashboard

Age vs Phys. activity: all time(recode)



Age vs Phys. activity: all time



Data Analysis

Young people (15-24) who do phys regularly: 16.04%

Young people (15-24) who do phys with some regularity: 46.11%

Total young people (15-24) who do phys: 62.15%

Old people (65+) who do phys regularly: 7.86%

Old people (65+) who do phys with some regularity: 19.81%

Total old people (65+) who do phys: 27.67%

Summary

Young respondents engage in physical activity:

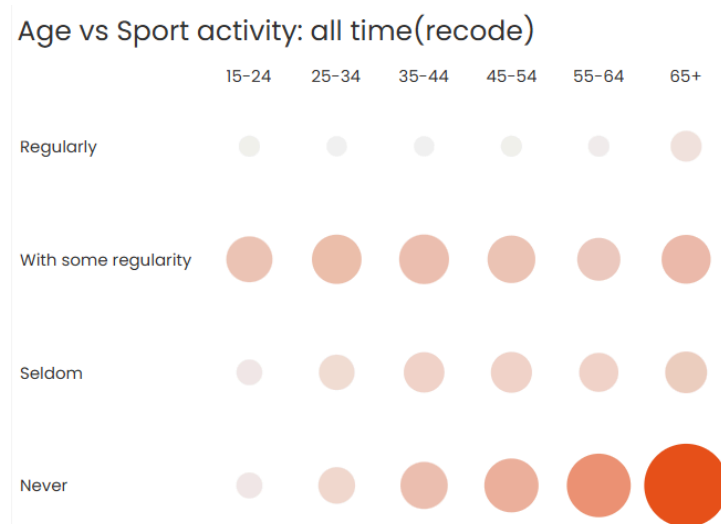
- **8.18%** more regularly,
- **26.3%** more with some regularity,
- **34.48%** more in total,
compared to older respondents.

Conclusion

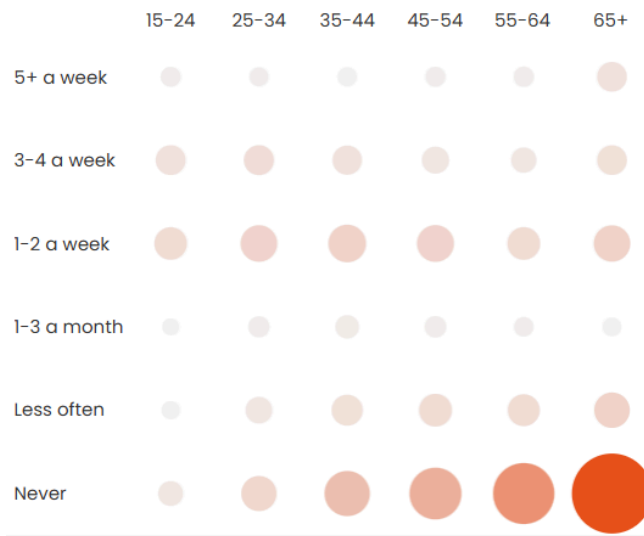
The hypothesis is **supported** — young people (aged 15–24) are significantly more likely to engage in physical activity than older adults (65+).

Hypothesis 2: Young respondents (aged 15–24) are more likely to engage in sport activity regularly than older respondents (aged 65+).

Diagrams from Dashboard



Age vs Sport activity: all time



Data Analysis

Young people (15-24) who do sport regularly: 11.24%

Young people (15-24) who do sport with some regularity: 54.57%

Total young people (15-24) who do sport: 65.81%

Old people (65+) who do sport regularly: 7.86%

Old people (65+) who do sport with some regularity: 19.81%

Total old people (65+) who do sport: 27.67%

Summary

Compared to older respondents, young people engage in sport:

- **3.38%** more **regularly**,
- **34.76%** more **with some regularity**,
- **38.14%** more **in total**.

Conclusion

The hypothesis is **partially supported** — while the difference in *regular* sport participation is relatively small, the gap in *overall* and *some regularity* participation is significant. Young respondents are clearly more engaged in sport activities than older ones.

Hypothesis 3: Men report higher levels of overall physical activity than women across the EU.

Diagrams from Dashboard

Man

Total with regular or
higher phys. activity

6 848

55,5%

Women

Total with regular or
higher phys. activity

7 204

50,7%

Summary

The proportion of men reporting regular or higher physical activity is **4.8%** higher than that of women.

Conclusion:

The hypothesis is **supported** — men demonstrate a moderately higher level of overall physical activity compared to women across the EU.

Hypothesis 4: Men report higher levels of overall physical activity than women across the EU.

Diagrams from Dashboard

Man

Total with regular or higher
sport activity

5 152

41,8%

Women

Total with regular or higher
sport activity

5 014

35,3%

Summary:

Men engage in sport activity **6.5%** more than women.

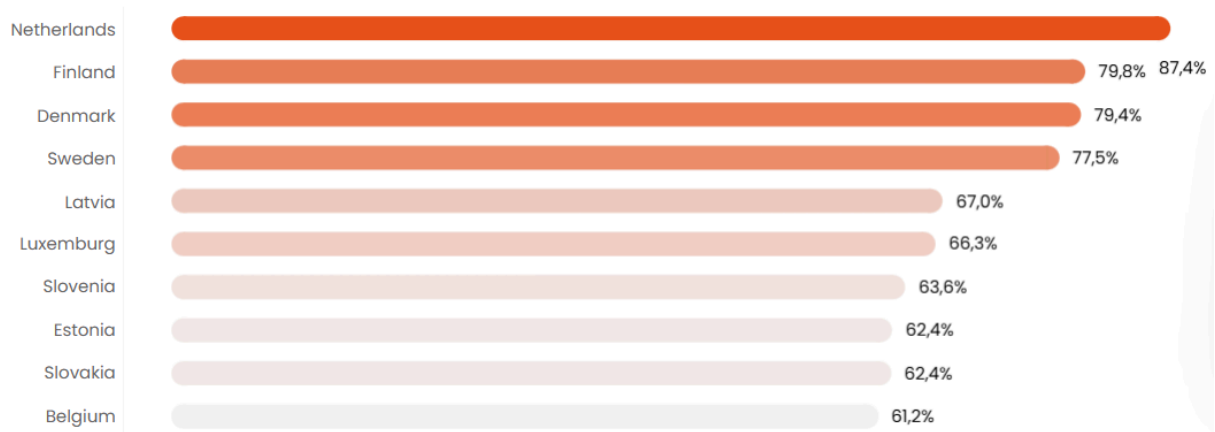
Conclusion:

The hypothesis is **supported** — men report significantly higher levels of regular or frequent sport activity compared to women in the EU.

Hypothesis 5: The Netherlands has the highest levels of physical participation among EU countries.

Diagrams from Dashboard

Top 10 countries by regular or higher physic activity



Summary:

The top three countries by sport participation are:

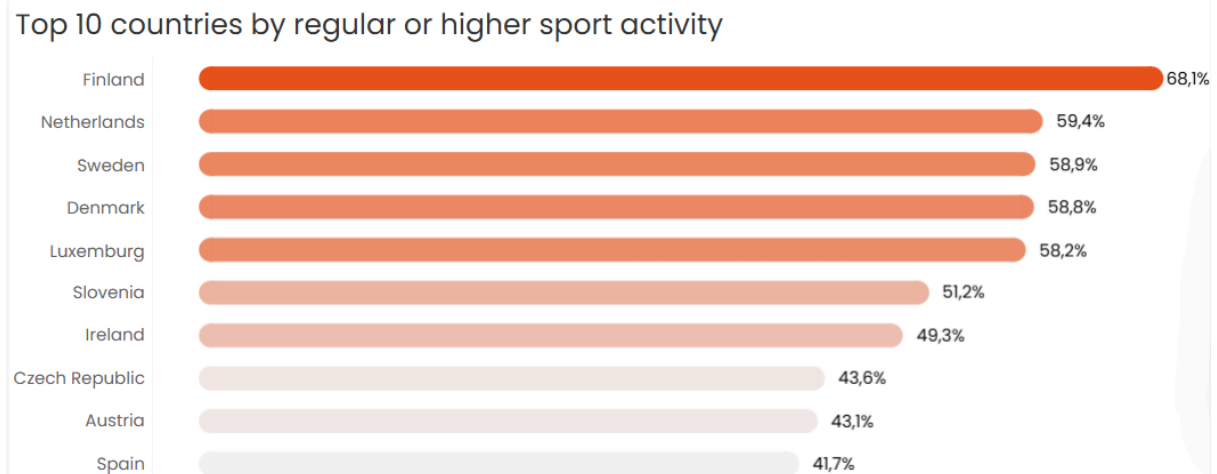
- **The Netherlands – 87.4%**
- **Finland – 79.8%**
- **Denmark – 79.4%**

Conclusion:

The hypothesis is **supported** — The Netherlands has the highest level of sport participation among EU countries, followed by Finland and Denmark.

Hypothesis 6: The Netherlands has the highest levels of sport participation among EU countries.

Diagrams from Dashboard



Summary

Top countries by **sport participation**:

- **Finland – 68.1%**
- **Netherlands – 59.4%**
- **Sweden – 58.9%**
- **Denmark – 58.8%**

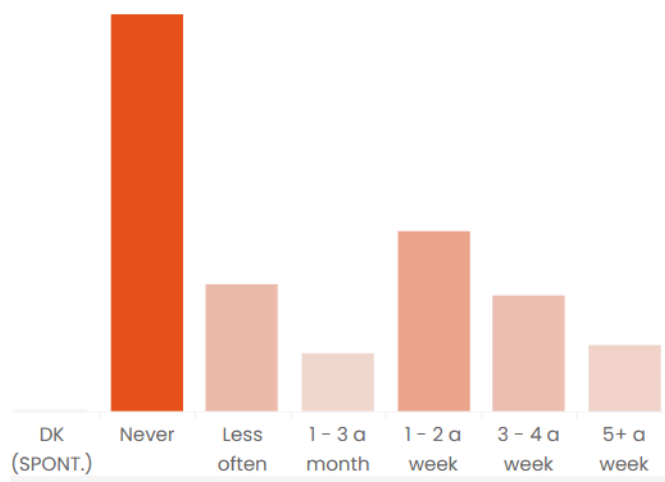
Conclusion

The hypothesis is **not supported** – while the Netherlands ranks among the top countries, **Finland** has the highest level of sport participation. Therefore, the hypothesis is **partially disproved**.

Hypothesis 7: Most respondents who engage in sport do so three times per week.

Diagrams from Dashboard

Distribution of Sport activity freq



Data Analysis

```
SPORT ACTIVITY FREQ
Never                42.0
1 to 2 times a week  19.0
Less often           13.4
3 to 4 a week        12.2
5 or > a week        7.1
1 to 3 times a month 6.2
DK (SPONT.)          0.1
Name: proportion, dtype: float64
```

Summary

The most common frequency of sport engagement among respondents is **1–2 times per week**, not exactly three times. Although **3–4 times per week** follows, it is still less frequent.

Conclusion:

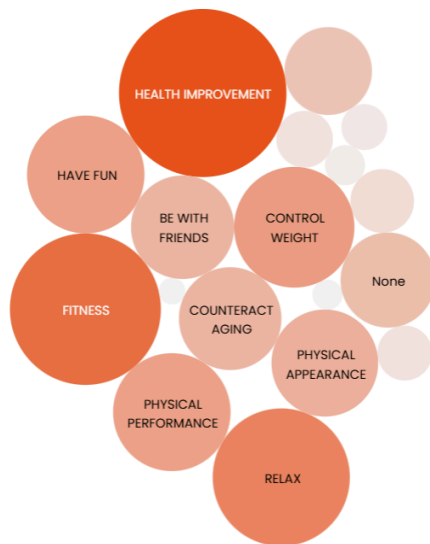
The hypothesis is **not supported** – the majority of respondents do not report doing sport specifically three times per week. Instead, **1–2 times per week** is the most common pattern.

Motivations to Participate

Hypothesis 8: The most common reason for engaging in sport is to improve health and fitness, across all demographic groups.

Diagrams from Dashboard

Distribution of motivation



Data Analysis

```
sport activity reason
HEALTH IMPROVEMENT    15.9
FITNESS                12.9
RELAX                  10.7
CONTROL WEIGHT         8.2
PHYSICAL PERFORMANCE  7.8
HAVE FUN               7.8
PHYSICAL APPEARANCE   6.5
BE WITH FRIENDS        6.0
COUNTERACT AGING       6.0
None                   5.1
SELF-ESTEEM            4.3
NEW SKILLS              2.3
MAKE ACQUAINTANCES    1.8
SPIRIT OF COMPETITION 1.7
SOCIAL INTEGRATION     1.2
MEET OTHER CULTURES    0.9
OTHER (SPONT)          0.5
DK (SPONT)             0.4
Name: proportion, dtype: float64
```

Summary:

The most frequently cited reasons for engaging in sport are to **improve health** and **maintain fitness**, consistently across all demographic categories.

Conclusion:

The hypothesis is **supported** — health and fitness are the primary motivations for sport participation among respondents, regardless of age or gender.

Hypothesis 9: Men are more likely to engage in sport to improve physical performance.

Diagrams from Dashboard

Distribution of motivation



Data Analysis

sport activity reason		
HEALTH IMPROVEMENT		15.4
FITNESS		13.1
RELAX		10.4
PHYSICAL PERFORMANCE		8.5
HAVE FUN		8.1
CONTROL WEIGHT		7.6
BE WITH FRIENDS		6.5
PHYSICAL APPEARANCE		6.1
COUNTERACT AGING		5.6
SELF-ESTEEM		4.4
None		4.3
NEW SKILLS		2.5
SPIRIT OF COMPETITION		2.4
MAKE ACQUAINTANCES		1.9
SOCIAL INTEGRATION		1.4
MEET OTHER CULTURES		1.0
OTHER (SPONT)		0.5
DK (SPONT)		0.4
Name: proportion, dtype: float64		

Summary:

Among male respondents, the most common motivations for engaging in sport are **health improvement** and **physical fitness**. These categories are closely associated with **physical performance enhancement**.

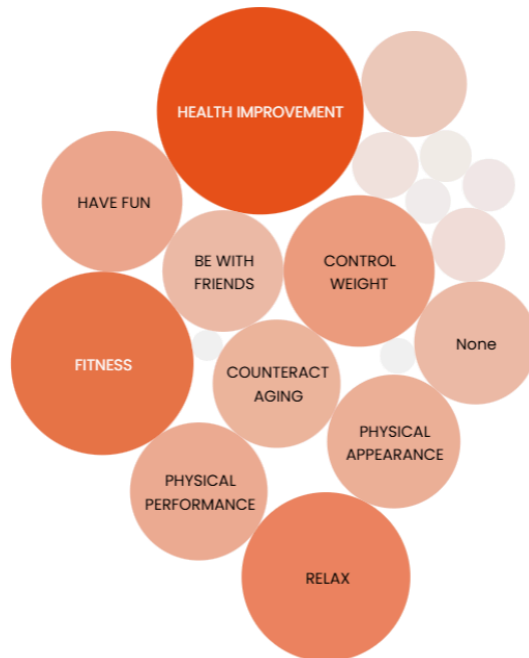
Conclusion:

The hypothesis is **supported** – men primarily engage in sport to improve their physical performance, as reflected by high rates of health- and fitness-related motivations.

Hypothesis 10: Women are more likely to engage in sport for fitness-related reasons than for other motivations.

Diagrams from Dashboard

Distribution of motivation



Data Analysis

sport activity reason	
HEALTH IMPROVEMENT	16.4
FITNESS	12.8
RELAX	10.9
CONTROL WEIGHT	8.8
HAVE FUN	7.6
PHYSICAL PERFORMANCE	7.3
PHYSICAL APPEARANCE	6.8
COUNTERACT AGING	6.3
None	5.8
BE WITH FRIENDS	5.6
SELF-ESTEEM	4.3
NEW SKILLS	2.1
MAKE ACQUAINTANCES	1.7
SPIRIT OF COMPETITION	1.0
SOCIAL INTEGRATION	1.0
MEET OTHER CULTURES	0.8
OTHER (SPONT)	0.5
DK (SPONT)	0.4
Name: proportion, dtype: float64	

Summary:

Among female respondents, the top reasons for engaging in sport are clearly **health improvement** and **fitness**.

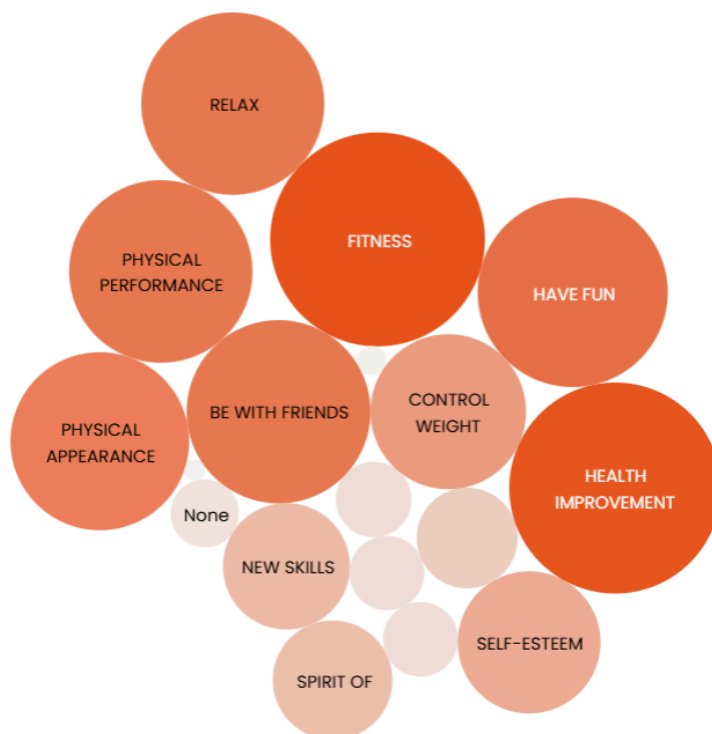
Conclusion:

The hypothesis is **supported** – fitness-related reasons are the dominant motivation for women participating in sport, ahead of all other factors.

Hypothesis 11: Younger respondents (aged 15–24) are more motivated by fun and social interaction than other reasons.

Diagrams from Dashboard

Distribution of motivation



Data Analysis

sport activity reason	
FITNESS	12.5
HEALTH IMPROVEMENT	12.2
HAVE FUN	9.8
BE WITH FRIENDS	9.2
PHYSICAL PERFORMANCE	9.1
RELAX	9.1
PHYSICAL APPEARANCE	8.7
CONTROL WEIGHT	6.6
SELF-ESTEEM	5.5
NEW SKILLS	4.4
SPIRIT OF COMPETITION	3.9
MAKE ACQUAINTANCES	2.8
COUNTERACT AGING	1.5
SOCIAL INTEGRATION	1.5
MEET OTHER CULTURES	1.5
None	1.3
DK (SPONT)	0.2
OTHER (SPONT)	0.1
Name: proportion, dtype: float64	

Summary:

Among young respondents, **fitness** and **health improvement** are the top motivations for engaging in sport, not fun or social reasons.

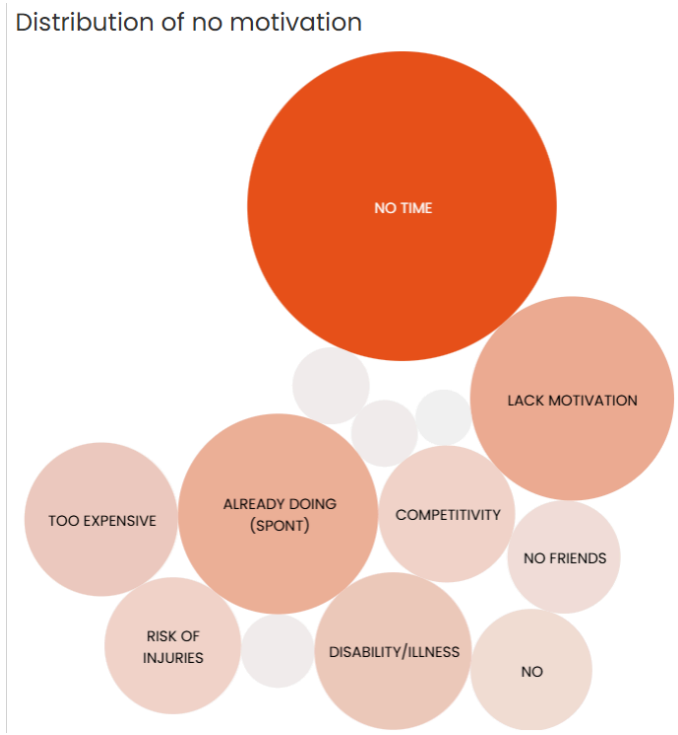
Conclusion:

The hypothesis is **not supported** — younger respondents are primarily motivated by fitness and health, rather than fun or social interaction.

Barriers to Participation

Hypothesis 12: Lack of motivation is the most frequently cited barrier across all age groups.

Diagrams from Dashboard



Data Analysis

no sport activity reason	
NO TIME	30.9
LACK MOTIVATION	13.4
ALREADY DOING (SPONT)	13.0
DISABILITY/ILLNESS	8.0
TOO EXPENSIVE	7.6
COMPETITIVITY	6.0
RISK OF INJURIES	6.0
NO INFRASTRUCTURE	4.8
NO FRIENDS	4.1
NO OPPORTUNITY W SAME GENDER	1.9
OTHER (SPONT)	1.7
DK (SPONT)	1.4
FEEL DISCRIMINATED	1.0
Name: proportion, dtype: float64	

Summary:

Although "lack of motivation" is a relevant barrier, "**lack of time**" is more frequently reported across nearly all age groups.

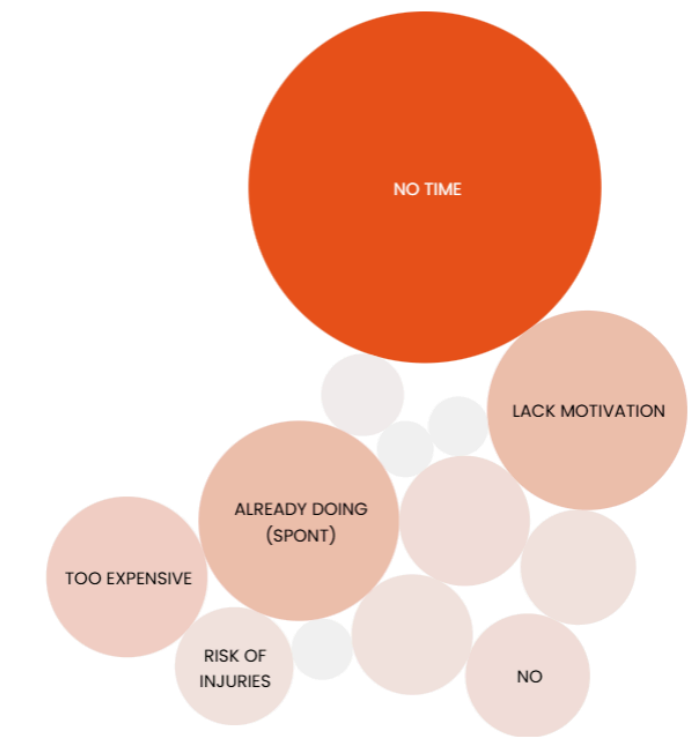
Conclusion:

The hypothesis is **not supported** — **lack of time** is the top barrier to sport participation, not lack of motivation.

Hypothesis 13: Lack of time is the most frequently cited barrier among working-age adults (aged 25–54).

Diagrams from Dashboard

Distribution of no motivation



Summary:

The data confirms that **lack of time** is the most frequently reported barrier among respondents aged **25–54**.

Conclusion:

The hypothesis is **supported** — time constraints are the primary reason preventing sport participation among working-age adults.

Hypothesis 14: Older adults (aged 55+) are more likely to mention health problems or age as reasons for not participating.

Diagrams from Dashboard

Distribution of no motivation



Data Analysis

```
no sport activity reason
NO TIME                19.0
DISABILITY/ILLNESS     15.3
LACK MOTIVATION        15.1
ALREADY DOING (SPONT)  11.9
RISK OF INJURIES       9.3
COMPETITIVITY          7.9
TOO EXPENSIVE          6.2
NO INFRASTRUCTURE      4.6
NO FRIENDS             3.6
OTHER (SPONT)          2.6
DK (SPONT)            2.1
NO OPPORTUNITY W SAME GENDER 1.8
FEEL DISCRIMINATED    0.6
Name: proportion, dtype: float64
```

Summary:

While **lack of time** remains the most cited barrier even among older adults, its share is **lower** than among younger respondents. At the same time, **health-related reasons and age limitations** appear **more frequently** in this age group.

Conclusion:

The hypothesis is **partially supported** – health and age are **not the most common** barriers, but they are **significantly more frequent** among older adults compared to younger groups.

Final Summary

Age differences:

65.8% of young people (15–24) engage in sport, compared to only 27.7% of older adults (65+)

Gender differences:

41.8% of men vs. 35.3% of women participate in sport regularly or with some regularity.

Country comparison:

Finland leads in sport participation (68.1%), followed by the Netherlands (59.4%) and Sweden (58.9%).

The Netherlands leads in overall physical activity (87.4%), ahead of Finland (79.8%) and Denmark (79.4%).

Motivations:

Top reasons for engaging in sport: health improvement (15.9%) and fitness (12.9%), consistent across age and gender.

Barriers:

Lack of time is the most cited barrier overall and among working-age adults (25–54).

Older adults (55+) report health problems and age as secondary but significant barriers.

Recommendations:

Focus on young adults (15–34) and working-age groups as core active segments. Design features tailored to health, fitness, and time-efficient workouts. Consider gender-specific messaging: performance-focused for men, wellness and balance for women. For older users: promote gentle physical activity, rehabilitative movement, and motivation support.

Among EU countries, Finland and the Netherlands represent the most attractive markets for sports-related products and services.