



# Special Eurobarometer 472

## Summary

### Sport and physical activity

Fieldwork

December 2017

Publication

March 2018

Survey requested by the European Commission,  
Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture  
and co-ordinated by the Directorate-General for Communication

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The interpretations and opinions contained in it are solely those of the authors.

Special Eurobarometer 472 – Wave EB88.4 – TNS opinion & social



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(DG COMM "Media Monitoring, Media Analysis and Eurobarometer" Unit)

Project number	2018.1461
Project title	Special Eurobarometer 472 - Sport and physical activity Executive Summary
Linguistic version	EN PDF
Catalogue number	NC-01-18-171-EN-N
ISBN	978-92-79-80243-0 doi:10.2766/599562
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## INTRODUCTION

This document presents the results of the Special Eurobarometer public opinion survey on sport and physical activity in the 28 EU Member States. This follows three previous Eurobarometer surveys on sport and physical activity, conducted in 2002, 2009 and 2013.

In 2007, the White Paper on Sport was issued by the European Commission as the first policy document addressing sport on behalf of the European Union. The Lisbon Treaty, in force since December 2009, introduced a specific article, namely Article 165 TFEU, which gave the EU a new supporting competence for sport. This article entails provisions for promoting European sporting issues and calls for EU action to develop the European dimension in sport.

In 2011, the Commission adopted a Communication entitled "Developing the European Dimension in Sport" providing for specific actions regarding the societal role of sport, the economic dimension of sport and the organisation of sport. Based on this Communication, the Council adopted a Resolution on an EU Work Plan for Sport 2011-2014, which further strengthened European cooperation on sport by setting priorities for EU-level work engaging the Member States and the Commission. To implement the Work Plan, work at the expert level inter alia focused on providing input to the questionnaire of the present Special Eurobarometer survey. In 2012, the Council adopted conclusions on promoting health-enhancing physical activity and on strengthening the evidence-base for sport policymaking, both calling on the Commission to issue regular surveys on sport and physical activity.

Following a proposal from the Commission, financial support for sport is now included in the form of a specific chapter in Erasmus+, the EU programme for education, training, youth and sport for the period 2014-2020.

A new EU Work Plan for Sport came into force in July 2017. It sets out the key topics that EU Member States and the Commission should prioritise up to 2020:

- Integrity of sport will focus on good governance, safeguarding minors, fighting match-fixing, doping and corruption;
- The economic dimension, focusing on innovation in sport, and the links between sport and the digital single market;
- Sport and society, focusing on social inclusion, coaches, media, environment, health, education and sport diplomacy.

This Special Eurobarometer survey will contribute to providing some of the data to support the developing policy framework for promoting sport and physical activity, as described above. Moreover, it will allow policymakers, researchers and other interested parties to deliver trend analysis on various matters compared to previous years.

This survey was carried out by TNS Political & Social network in the 28 EU Member States between 2 and 11 December 2017. Some 28,031 EU citizens from different social and demographic categories were interviewed face-to-face at home and in their native language, on behalf of the Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture. The methodology used is that of the Standard Eurobarometer surveys carried out by the Directorate-General for Communication ("Media Monitoring, Media Analysis and Eurobarometer analysis" Unit)<sup>1</sup>. It is the same for all countries and territories covered in the survey.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion>

## MAIN FINDINGS

### ***Nearly half of Europeans never exercise or play sport, and the proportion has increased gradually in recent years***

- Two in five Europeans (40%) exercise or play sport at least once a week, including 7% who do so regularly (at least five times per week). However, almost half of respondents (46%) never exercise or play sport.
- Levels of participation have not changed substantially since 2013. However, the proportion of those who never exercise or play sport has increased from 42% to 46%, and this is a continuation of a gradual trend since 2009.
- Less than half of respondents (44%) do some form of other physical activity (such as cycling, dancing or gardening) at least once a week, while 35% never do this kind of activity at all (increasing from 30% in 2013).
- Overall, in the EU, men exercise, play sport or engage in other physical activity more than women. This disparity is particularly marked in the 15-24 age group, with young men tending to exercise or play sport on a regular basis considerably more than young women. The amount of regular activity that people do tends to decrease with age.
- Engagement in sport and physical activity is also less prevalent among people with lower levels of education and among those with financial difficulties.
- The proportion of people who exercise or play sport regularly or with some regularity is highest in Finland (69%), Sweden (67%) and Denmark (63%). Respondents are least likely to exercise or play sport in Bulgaria, Greece and Portugal (in each of these countries, 68% never exercise or play sport).
- There are several countries where respondents are now much less likely to engage in sport than in 2013: Croatia, Latvia, Austria and Estonia. Levels of engagement have increased in Malta, Bulgaria and Cyprus.

### ***In a given week, more than half of Europeans do not do any vigorous physical activity, and around half do not engage in moderate physical activity***

- When asked about their levels of physical activity within a week, more than half of all respondents (58%) did not do any vigorous activity (+4pp since 2013) and 47% did not do any moderate physical activity (+3pp).

### ***15% of Europeans do not walk for 10 minutes at a time at all in a weekly period, while 12% sit for more than 8.5 hours per day***

- Most EU citizens (61%) say they walked for at least ten minutes at a time on four or more of the last seven days. However, 15% did not walk for at least 10 minutes at a time on any day within a week. These figures are similar to those seen in 2013.
- On a usual day, around two thirds of respondents (69%) spend between 2.5 and 8.5 hours sitting, while 12% sit for more than 8.5 hours and 16% for no more than 2.5 hours.

***Formal sport settings are less popular than informal settings such as parks or outdoors, the home or the journey between home and work or school***

- Sport or physical activity takes place in a wide range of locations, most commonly in parks and outdoors (40%), at home (32%) or on the journey between home and school, work or shops (23%).
- These findings are in line with those seen in 2013, although there has been an increase in the proportion engaging in sport or physical activity at a sport centre (12%, +4pp), while the proportion doing so at home has decreased (32%, -4pp).
- In 17 countries, the most common setting for sport or physical activity is the park or outdoors; this is highest among respondents in Finland (67%). The home is the most popular setting among respondents in nine countries, mostly in Eastern Europe.
- Three in ten EU citizens say that they are members of a club where they participate in sport or recreational physical activities, specifically a sport club (12%), a health or fitness centre (11%), a socio-cultural club (3%) or another type of club (7%).

***The main motivations for participation in sport or physical activity are improved health and fitness. Lack of time is the principal barrier.***

- The most common reasons for engaging in sport or physical activity are to improve health (54%) and to improve fitness (47%). Other popular reasons include relaxing (38%), having fun (30%) and improving physical performance (28%).
- A lack of time is by far the main reason given for not practising sport more regularly (40%).

***Most Europeans think that there are opportunities available locally to be physically active, but many do not think their local authority does enough***

- Three quarters of respondents (74%) agree that in their local area there are many opportunities to be physically active. A similar proportion of them (73%) think that their local sport clubs and other providers offer such opportunities.
- There are mixed views as to whether local authorities do enough to provide their citizens with opportunities to be physically active: 39% of respondents think that they do not do enough, while 49% think they do. Figures are similar to those seen in 2013.
- Views on opportunities for physical activities are most positive in the Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden and Germany, and are least positive in Bulgaria, Romania, Croatia and Italy.

***6% of respondents engage in voluntary work that supports sport activities***

- Overall, 6% of EU citizens say that they engage in voluntary work that supports sport activities. There was little change compared with 2013 (-1pp).
- Respondents in the Netherlands, Sweden (both 19%) and Denmark (18%) are most likely to engage in voluntary work.
- People who volunteer in sport do a range of different activities, most commonly organising or helping to run a sporting event (33%), followed by coaching or training (27%).

## I. FREQUENCY AND LEVELS OF ENGAGEMENT IN SPORT AND OTHER PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

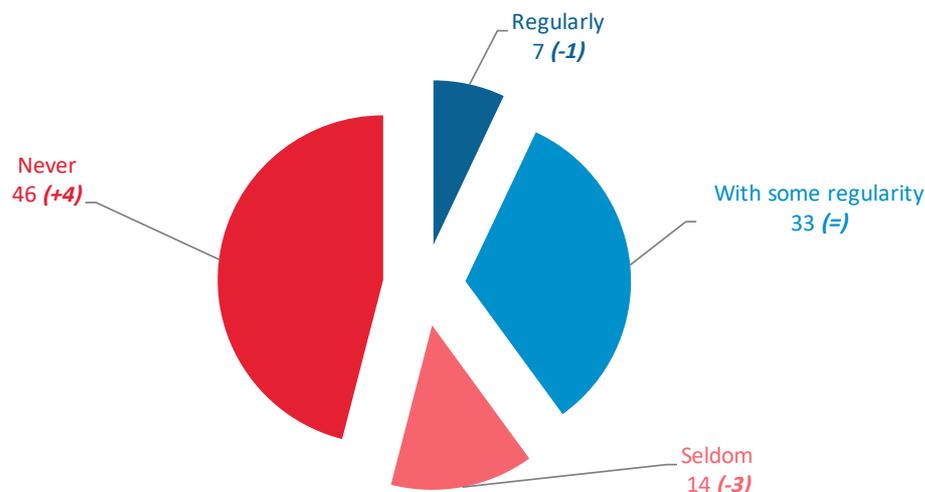
### 1. Frequency

#### a. Exercising or playing sport

##### i. Findings for the EU as a whole

The proportion of Europeans that never exercise or play sport continues to increase. Almost half of Europeans (46%) say that they never exercise or play sport, while 14% only do so seldom<sup>2</sup>. Conversely, 40% of them exercise or play sport with at least some regularity, including 7% who exercise or play sport regularly<sup>3</sup>. Compared to 2013, the proportion of those who never exercise or play sport has increased (+4 percentage points, from 42% to 46%), while the proportion that does so seldom has decreased (from 17% to 14%). This continues the longer-term trend since 2009, when 39% said that they never exercised or played sport.

QB1 How often do you exercise or play sport?  
(% - EU)



(Dec. 2017 - Nov.-Dec. 2013)

Base: All respondents (N=28,031)

##### ii. Findings by individual countries

There have been some large changes since 2013 in the proportions of people in different countries that never exercise or play sport. The largest increases can be seen in Croatia (+27pp), Latvia (+17pp), Austria (+13pp) and Estonia (+12pp).

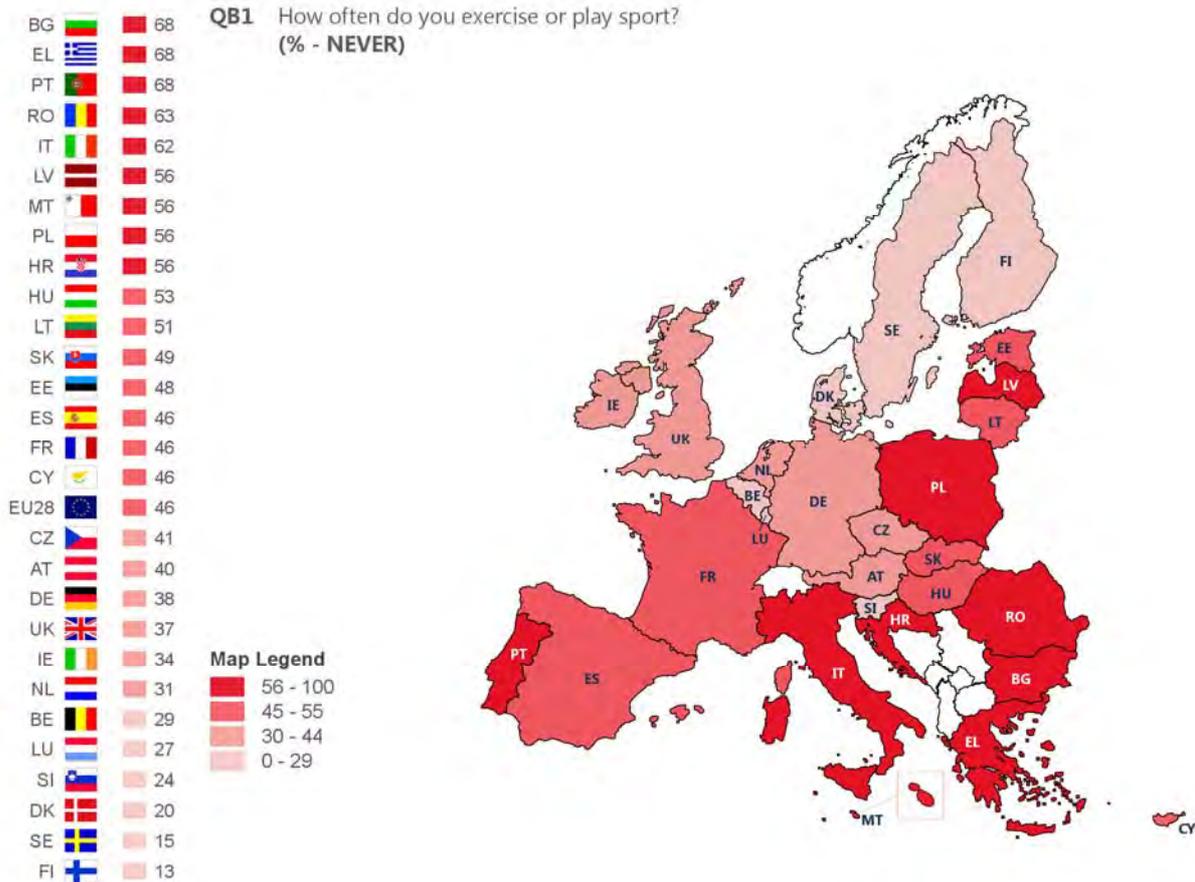
There are only six countries that have seen a decrease in the proportion that never exercises or plays sport. The largest decreases are found in Malta (-19pp), Bulgaria (-10pp) and Cyprus (-8pp).

<sup>2</sup> QB1 How often do you exercise or play sport? By "exercise", we mean any form of physical activity which you do in a sport context or sport-related setting, such as swimming, training in a fitness centre or sport club, running in the park.

<sup>3</sup> "Regularly" means the respondent exercises at least 5 times a week; "with some regularity" means 1 to 4 times a week; and "seldom" means 3 times a month or less often.

In total, there are 11 countries in which more than half of respondents never exercise or play sport. Respondents in Bulgaria, Greece and Portugal (all 68%) are the most likely to never exercise or play sport, followed by respondents in Romania (63%) and Italy (62%).

In the Nordic countries, only small proportions of respondents never exercise or play sport: Finland (13%), Sweden (15%) and Denmark (20%).



Base: All respondents (N=28,031)

**iii. Findings by socio-demographic groups**

An analysis of the socio-demographic data reveals strong differences, in line with the 2013 survey:

- Men are more likely than women to exercise or play sport: 44% of men do so with at least some regularity, compared with 36% of women; conversely, 40% of men never exercise or play sport, compared with 52% of women.
- The frequency of exercise or sport tends to decrease with age. A majority of 15-24 year-olds (62%) exercise or play sport regularly or with some regularity; this falls to 46% in the 25-39 age group, 39% for 40-54 year-olds and 30% for the 55+ age group.
- The difference between men and women is strongest in the younger age groups: just 15% of men aged 15-24 never exercise or play sport, compared with 33% of women in the same age group.
- A link also appears between education and the frequency of exercise or sport done. The majority of people who left the education system by the age of 15 or earlier (73%) say they never exercise or play sport; this falls to 52% of those who ended education at 16-19; and 31% of those who finished education at the age of 20 or over.

- People in some socio-professional categories are also more likely to exercise or play sport: 26% of managers never exercise or play sport, compared with 37% in other white-collar jobs, 36% of self-employed people and 49% of manual workers. A high proportion of housepersons (67%) never exercises or play sport.
- There are differences in relation to the respondent's financial position: the majority of those who have difficulties paying bills never exercise or play sport (66% of those who have difficulties most of the time, and 55% of those who have difficulties from time to time).

**QB1** How often do you exercise or play sport?  
(% - EU)

	Regularly	With some regularity	Seldom	Never	Don't know
EU28	7	33	14	46	0
 Gender					
Men	8	36	16	40	0
Women	7	29	12	52	0
 Age					
15-24	9	53	14	24	0
25-39	6	40	19	35	0
40-54	7	32	17	44	0
55 +	8	22	9	61	0
 Gender and Age					
Men 15-24	12	59	14	15	0
Men 25-39	6	45	21	28	0
Men 40-54	6	35	20	39	0
Men 55+	8	22	12	58	0
Women 15-24	6	47	14	33	0
Women 25-39	4	36	17	42	1
Women 40-54	7	29	14	50	0
Women 55+	7	21	8	64	0
 Education (End of)					
15-	6	14	7	73	0
16-19	6	27	15	52	0
20+	9	43	17	31	0
Still studying	10	63	11	16	0
 Socio-professional category					
Self-employed	7	39	18	36	0
Managers	7	46	20	26	1
Other white collars	4	40	19	37	0
Manual workers	6	29	16	49	0
House persons	5	18	10	67	0
Unemployed	10	26	14	49	1
Retired	8	20	9	63	0
Students	10	63	11	16	0
 Difficulties paying bills					
Most of the time	4	19	11	66	0
From time to time	5	24	15	55	1
Almost never/ Never	8	37	14	41	0

Base: All respondents (N=28,031)

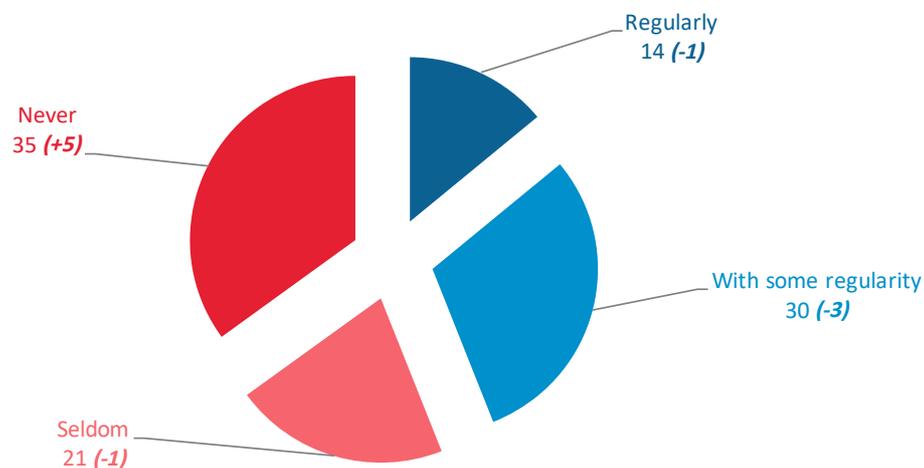
## b. Engaging in other physical activities

### i. Findings for the EU as a whole

Less than half of respondents engage in other physical activities, such as cycling, dancing or gardening. Respondents are now less likely to engage in other physical activity than they were in 2013. The proportion that never does this kind of activity has increased (+5pp), while the proportion that does so with some regularity has decreased (-3pp).

When asked about their engagement in other physical activity (such as cycling, dancing or gardening), 14% of EU citizens say they do this kind of activity regularly, while 30% do so with some regularity. However, the majority of respondents do this kind of activity seldom (21%) or never (35%)<sup>4</sup>.

**QB2** And how often do you engage in other physical activity such as cycling from one place to another, dancing, gardening, etc.?  
(% - EU)



(Dec. 2017 - Nov.-Dec. 2013)

Base: All respondents (N=28,031)

### ii. Findings by individual countries

Looking at individual countries, a clear general geographical pattern appears: the proportion of those who never engage in other physical activities tends to be higher in countries in Southern Europe than in Northern Europe.

The proportion of people who engage in other physical activities regularly (at least five times a week) is the highest in the Netherlands (45%), and is also at a high level in Denmark and Sweden (both 30%).

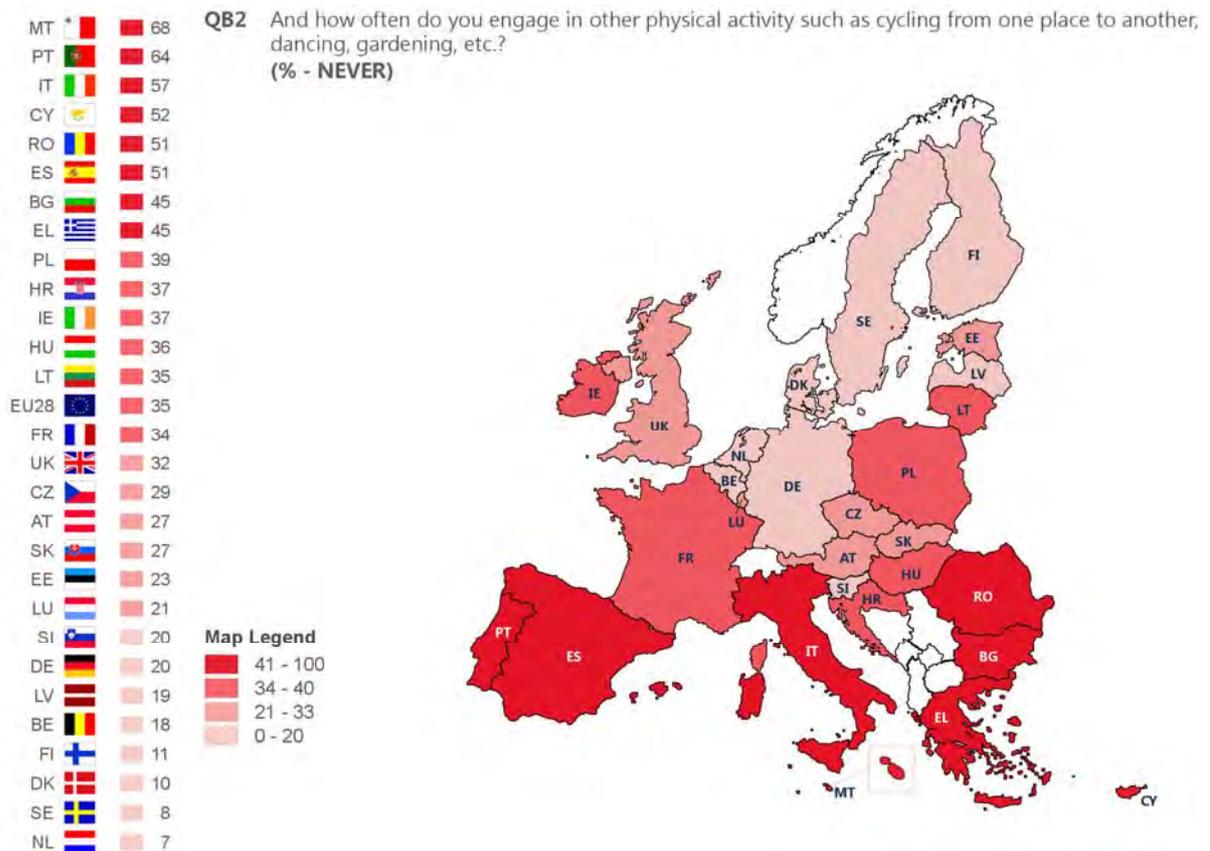
By contrast, in a number of countries less than one in ten respondents regularly engage in other physical activities, with the lowest proportions found in Malta, Italy and Portugal (all 5%).

In six countries, more than half of respondents never engage in other physical activities: Malta (68%), Portugal (64%), Italy (57%), Cyprus (52%), Romania and Spain (both 51%). The proportion of those who never engage in this kind of activity is lowest in the Netherlands (7%), Sweden (8%), Denmark (10%) and Finland (11%).

<sup>4</sup> "Regularly" means the respondent engages in other physical activity at least 5 times a week; "with some regularity" means 1 to 4 times a week; and "seldom" means 3 times a month or less often.

With regards to the evolution of this tendency since 2013, there has been an increase in most countries in the proportion of people who never engage in other physical activities, most notably in Croatia (+20pp), Romania (+15pp), Austria (+12pp), Malta (+11pp) and the Czech Republic (+10pp).

There are only four countries where there has been a decrease in the proportion of those who never engage in this kind of activity: Bulgaria (-6pp), Cyprus (-5pp), Greece (-4pp) and Belgium (-2pp).



Base: All respondents (N=28,031)

**iii. Findings by socio-demographic groups**

As with exercising or playing sport, strong differences can be observed between socio-demographic groups when looking at other physical activities:

- Men are more likely than women to engage in other physical activities: 31% of men never take part in this kind of activity, compared with 40% of women.
- Older people are less likely to engage in other physical activities: people aged 55 or over are more likely to say that they never engage in any other physical activity (45%, falling to 33% of 40-54 year olds, 29% of 25-39s, and 25% of 15-24 year olds).
- More than half (57%) of people who finished education by the age of 15 say they never engage in other physical activities. This falls to 37% of those who ended education at 16-19; and 24% of those who finished education at the age of 20 or over.
- Those with financial difficulties are less likely to engage in other physical activities. The proportion that never does this kind of activity is 49% among those who have difficulties paying bills most of the time, and 45% among those who have difficulties from time to time, compared with 31% of those who never or almost never have difficulties.

- Engagement in other physical activities varies depending on subjective urbanisation: respondents who live in a rural village are more likely to engage in other physical activities (32% say they never do so), compared with those living in a large town (41%).
- There is a strong link between exercise and sport: among those who never exercise or play sport, the majority (62%) also say that they never participate in other physical activities.

**QB2** And how often do you engage in other physical activity such as cycling from one place to another, dancing, gardening, etc.?  
(% - EU)

	Regularly	With some regularity	Seldom	Never	Don't know
EU28	14	30	21	35	0
 Gender					
Men	15	32	22	31	0
Women	13	28	19	40	0
 Age					
15-24	17	34	23	25	1
25-39	12	32	26	29	1
40-54	13	31	23	33	0
55 +	14	26	15	45	0
 Education (End of)					
15-	10	20	13	57	0
16-19	12	28	22	37	1
20+	16	38	22	24	0
Still studying	19	36	23	21	1
 Difficulties paying bills					
Most of the time	12	21	17	49	1
From time to time	10	23	22	45	0
Almost never/ Never	15	34	20	31	0
 Subjective urbanisation					
Rural village	15	33	19	32	1
Small/ mid size town	14	29	22	35	0
Large town	11	27	20	41	1
<b>Exercise or play sport</b>					
Regularly	46	26	10	17	1
With some regularity	13	54	20	13	0
Seldom	11	26	53	10	0
Never	10	15	13	62	0

Base: All respondents (N=28,031)

## 2. Levels of engagement

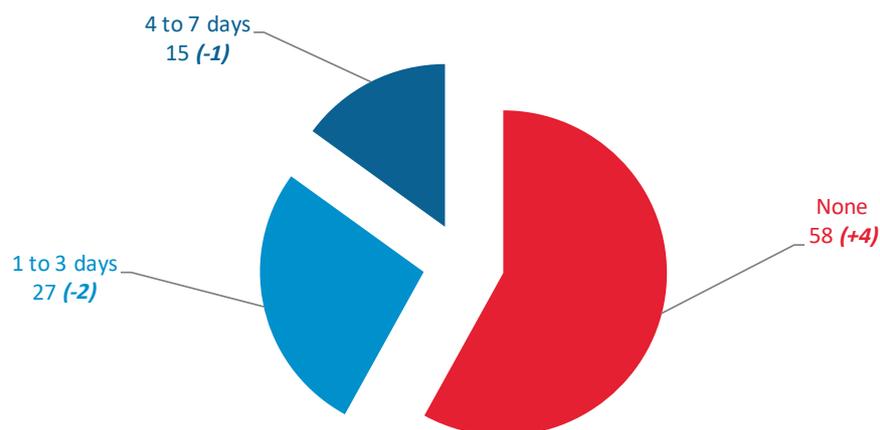
### a. Vigorous physical activity

#### i. Findings for the EU as a whole

When asked on how many days they engage in vigorous physical activity, 15% of respondents say they did vigorous physical activity on at least four of the previous seven days, while 27% did so on one to three days. However, the majority (58%) of all respondents did not do any vigorous physical activity in the previous week.

The proportion that did no vigorous activity has increased by 4 pp since 2013. In parallel, there has been a decrease in the proportion of respondents who did vigorous physical activity (-3 pp) in the previous week.

**QB3a** In the last 7 days, on how many days did you do vigorous physical activity like lifting heavy things, digging, aerobics or fast cycling?  
(% - EU)



(Dec. 2017 - Nov.-Dec. 2013)

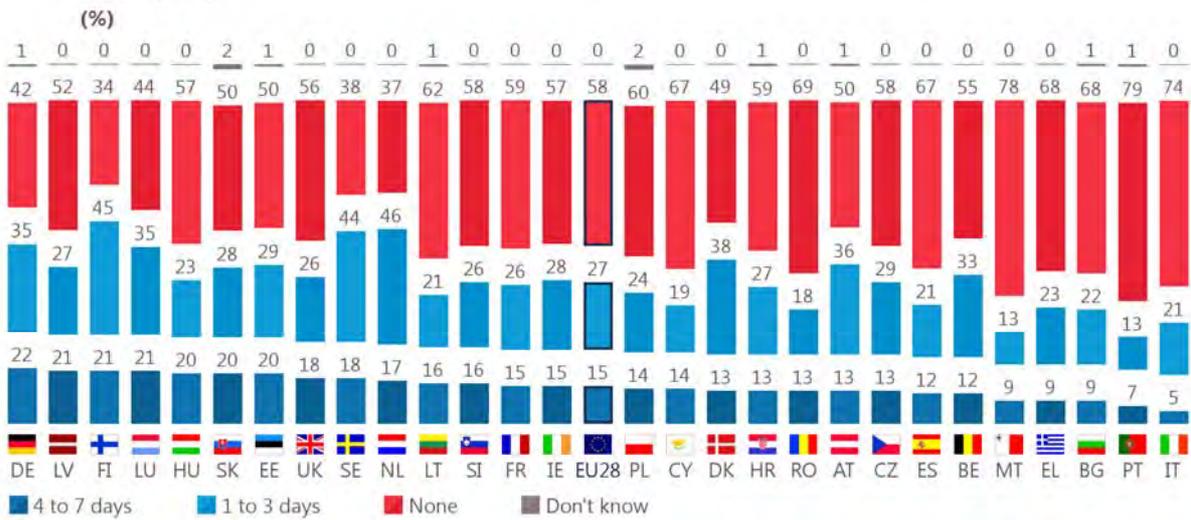
Base: All respondents (N=28,031)

#### ii. Findings by individual countries

Findings in many individual countries are similar to the EU28 figures. However, respondents are more likely to have done vigorous physical activity on at least four of the previous seven days in Germany (22%), Latvia, Finland and Luxembourg (all 21%). Respondents are most likely to have done vigorous physical activity on at least one day in Finland (66%), the Netherlands (63%) and Sweden (62%).

Respondents are least likely to have done any vigorous physical activity in Portugal (79% did none in the previous week), Malta (78%) and Italy (74%). The proportion that did vigorous physical activity on at least four of the last seven days is the lowest in Italy (5%), Portugal (7%), Bulgaria, Greece and Malta (all 9%).

**QB3a** In the last 7 days, on how many days did you do vigorous physical activity like lifting heavy things, digging, aerobics or fast cycling?



Base: All respondents (N=28,031)

**iii. Findings by socio-demographic groups**

The differences between socio-demographic groups include:

- Men are more likely than women to do vigorous physical activity: 18% of men did so on at least four of the previous seven days, compared with 11% of women. The proportion who did no vigorous physical activity is 51% for men and 65% for women.
- Older people are less likely to do vigorous physical activity: people aged 55 or over are more likely to say that they did no vigorous physical activity (71%, falling to 56% of 40-54 year olds, 47% of 25-39s, and 42% of 15-24 year olds).
- The difference between men and women is most pronounced in the 15-24 age group: 53% of women in this age group did no vigorous activity, compared with 31% of men.
- Around half (48%) of those who finished education at the age of 20 or over did no vigorous physical activity in the previous week. This was higher among those who ended education at 16-19 (60%), and higher still among people who finished education by the age of 15 (77%).
- Students (23%) are more likely than respondents from other socio-professional groups to do vigorous physical activity on four to seven days in the last week. Looking at the occupational groups, those in manual occupations (22%) are more likely to have done vigorous physical activity on at least four of the last seven days. This may suggest that, for some respondents, the activities may be work-related.

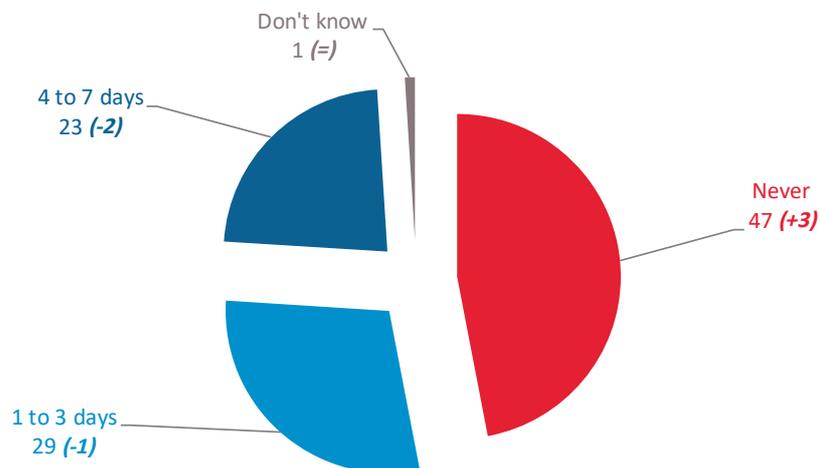
## b. Moderate physical activity

### i. Findings for the EU as a whole

Respondents were asked on how many days they engage in moderate physical activity. Just under one in four respondents (23%) say they did moderate physical activity on at least four of the previous seven days, while 29% did so on one to three days. However, almost half (47%) did not do any moderate physical activity in the previous week.

The results show a slight decline in the frequency of moderate physical activity since 2013. The proportion of those who did no moderate physical activity at all in the last week increased by 3 pp, while there was a corresponding decrease in the proportions that did moderate physical activity (-3 pp).

**QB4a** In the last 7 days, on how many days did you do moderate physical activity like carrying light loads, cycling at normal pace or doubles tennis? Please do not include walking.  
(% - EU)



(Dec. 2017 - Nov.-Dec. 2013)

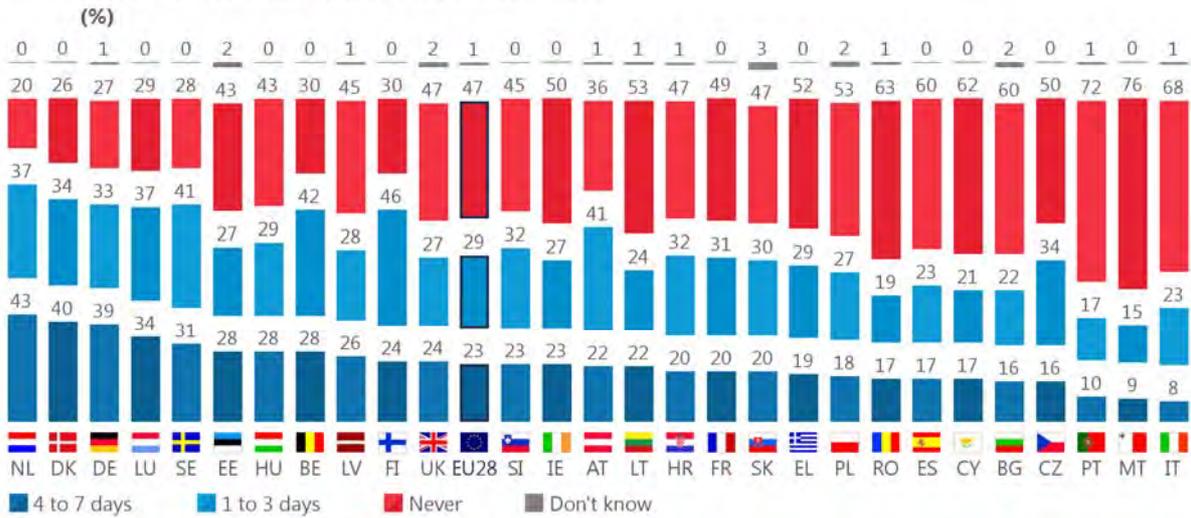
Base: All respondents (N=28,031)

### ii. Findings by individual countries

Looking at country level, respondents are most likely to do moderate physical activity on at least four of the previous seven days in the Netherlands (43%), Denmark (40%) and Germany (39%).

Respondents in Italy (8%), Malta (9%) and Portugal (10%) are the least likely to have done moderate physical activity on at least four of the last seven days. Furthermore respondents in Malta (76%), Portugal (72%) and Italy (68%) are also the most likely to say that they did no moderate physical activity at all.

**QB4a** In the last 7 days, on how many days did you do moderate physical activity like carrying light loads, cycling at normal pace or doubles tennis? Please do not include walking.



Base: All respondents (N=28,031)

**iii. Findings by socio-demographic groups**

Differences by socio-demographic groups include:

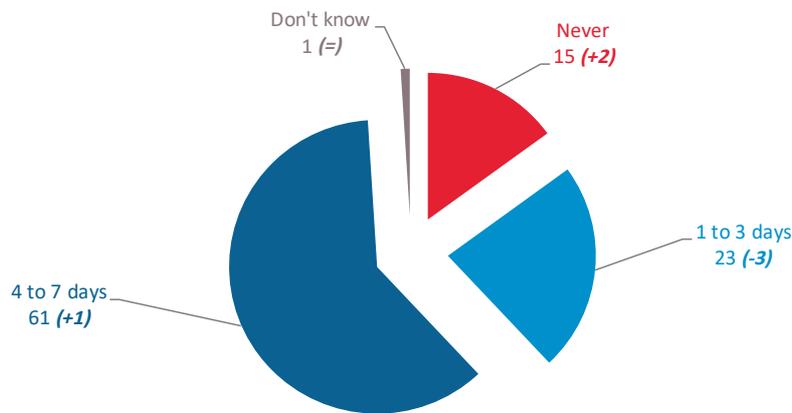
- Men are more likely than women to do moderate physical activity: 42% of men did no moderate physical activity in the previous seven days, compared with 52% of women.
- Older people are less likely to do moderate physical activity: people aged 55 or over are more likely to say that they did no moderate physical activity in the previous seven days (56%, falling to 46% of 40-54 year olds, 41% of 25-39 year olds, and 35% in 15-24 age group).
- The difference between men and women is most pronounced in the 15-24 age group: 43% of women in this age group did no moderate activity, compared with 26% of men.
- There is a link between education and moderate physical activity. While 66% of people who left the education system by the age of 15 say they did no moderate physical activity in the previous week, this falls to 50% of those who ended education at 16-19, and 37% of those who finished education at the age of 20 or over.
- Those with financial difficulties are less likely to engage in moderate physical activity. The proportion that never does this kind of activity is 61% among those who have difficulties paying bills most of the time, and 56% among those who have difficulties from time to time, compared with 43% of those who never or almost never have difficulties.
- There is a difference by type of urbanisation: respondents who live in a rural village are more likely to engage in moderate physical activity (43% say they never do so), compared with those living in a large town (52%).

### c. Walking

#### i. Findings for the EU as a whole

Respondents were asked how many days they walked for at least ten minutes at a time in the previous seven days. Around six out of ten (61%, +1 pp) say they walked for at least ten minutes at a time on four or more days in the previous week, while 23% (-3 pp) say they walked for this amount of time on one to three days. However, around one in seven EU citizens (15%, +2 pp) say they did not walk for ten minutes at a time on any day during the previous week.

QB5a In the last 7 days, on how many days did you walk for at least 10 minutes at a time? (% - EU)



(Dec. 2017 - Nov.-Dec. 2013)

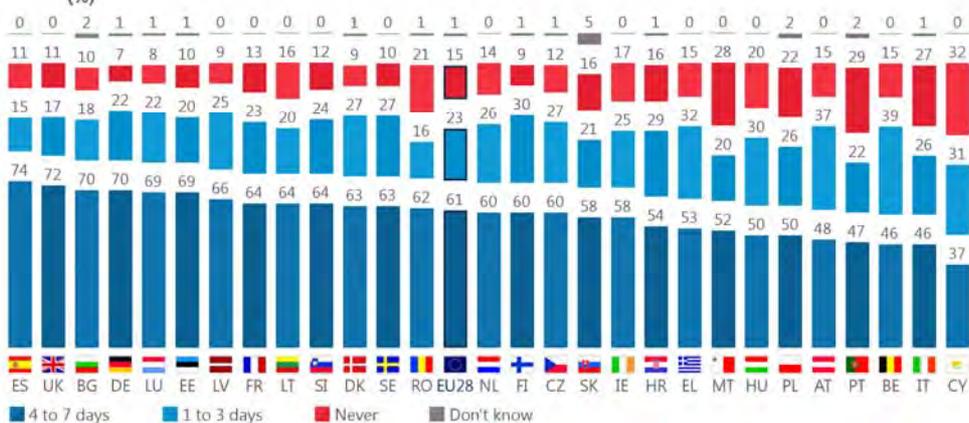
Base: All respondents (N=28,031)

#### ii. Findings by individual countries

The countries where people are most likely to walk for ten minutes or more on at least four days per week are Spain (74%), the UK (72%), Bulgaria, Germany (both 70%), Luxembourg and Estonia (both 69%).

By contrast, there are five countries where less than half of respondents have walked for ten minutes or more on at least four days: Cyprus (37%), Italy, Belgium (both 46%), Portugal (47%) and Austria (48%).

QB5a In the last 7 days, on how many days did you walk for at least 10 minutes at a time? (%)



Base: All respondents (N=28,031)

### iii. Findings by socio-demographic groups

Socio-demographic differences include:

- Younger people are more likely to walk for ten minutes or more. The proportion that does this on at least four days per week ranges from 70% of 15-24 year olds to 57% of those aged 55+. The proportion that did not walk for ten minutes or more at all is 8% among 15-24s, rising to 19% among the 55+ age group.
- There are no significant differences by gender.
- People who left the education system by the age of 15 are less likely to walk for ten minutes or more at a time: 23% did not do this at all in the previous week, compared with 15% of those who ended education at 16-19, and 10% of those who finished education at the age of 20 or over.
- There is a link between walking and exercising or playing sport. Respondents who exercise or play sport regularly are more likely to walk for ten minutes or more at least four days a week (84%). At the other extreme, those who do not exercise or play sport at all are less likely to walk for ten minutes or more at a time (24% did not do so at all in the previous week).

**QB5a** In the last 7 days, on how many days did you walk for at least 10 minutes at a time? (DO NOT SHOW SCREEN - DO NOT READ OUT)  
(% - EU)

	Never	1 to 3 days	4 to 7 days	Don't know	Average
EU28	15	23	61	1	4.4
 Gender					
Men	15	24	60	1	4.3
Women	15	22	62	1	4.4
 Age					
15-24	8	21	70	1	4.9
25-39	11	22	66	1	4.7
40-54	15	24	60	1	4.3
55 +	19	23	57	1	4.0
 Education (End of)					
15-	23	21	56	0	3.9
16-19	15	24	60	1	4.3
20+	10	23	66	1	4.7
Still studying	8	19	72	1	4.9
<b>Exercise or play sport</b>					
Regularly	5	10	84	1	5.7
With some regularity	6	27	67	0	4.7
Seldom	11	31	58	0	4.2
Never	24	19	56	1	3.9

Base: All respondents (N=28,031)

## d. Sitting

### i. Findings for the EU as a whole

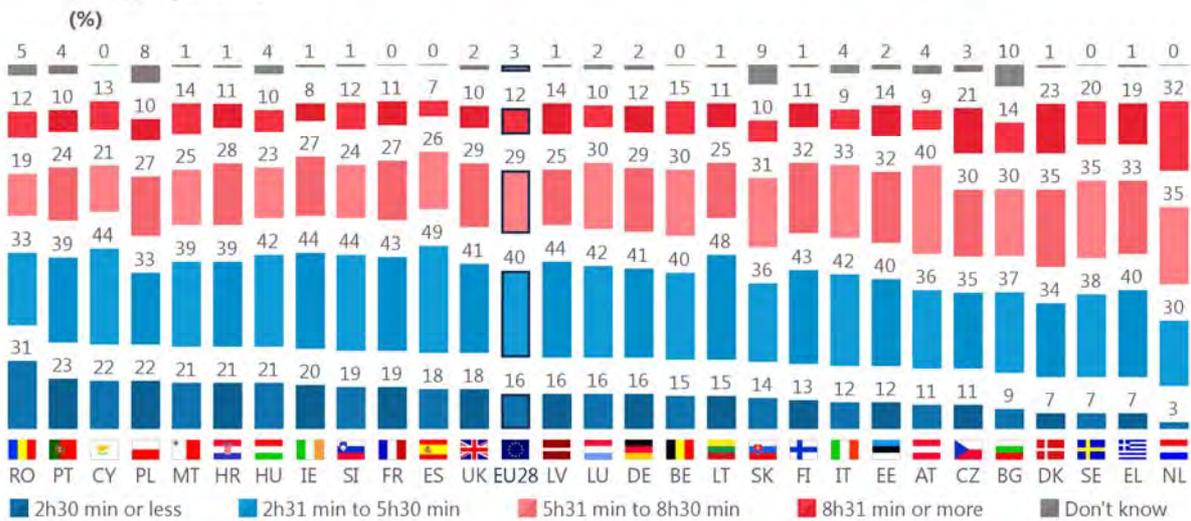
When asked about the amount of time they spend sitting on a usual day, around one in eight respondents (12%) say they sit for more than 8 hours and 30 minutes, while 29% spend between 5 hours 31 minutes and 8 hours 30 minutes sitting (+3 pp). Two in five (40%) sit for between 2 hours 31 minutes and 5 hours 30 minutes (-3 pp), while one in six (16%) only sit for 2 hours 30 minutes or less.

### ii. Findings by individual countries

Looking at country level, respondents are more likely to spend 2 hours 30 minutes or less sitting down in Romania (31%), followed by those in Portugal (23%), Cyprus and Poland (both 22%).

At the other end of the scale, respondents are more likely to spend more than 8 hours 30 minutes per day sitting down in the Netherlands (32%), Denmark (23%), the Czech Republic (21%), Sweden (20%) and Greece (19%).

QB6 How much time do you spend sitting on a usual day? This may include time spent at a desk, visiting friends, studying or watching television.



Base: All respondents (N=28,031)

It is notable that in some of the countries where respondents spend a long time sitting down, the proportion of citizens who exercise or play sport on a regular basis tends to be high (e.g. Denmark, the Netherlands and Sweden). By contrast, some countries have high proportions of respondents who never or seldom exercise or play sport, despite seeing low average times for sitting down (e.g. Portugal and Romania).

### iii. Findings by socio-demographic groups

Variations by socio-demographic characteristics include:

- Respondents in the middle age bands tend to spend less time sitting down: 20% of those aged 25-39 and 19% of those aged 40-54 spend 2 hours 30 minutes or less sitting down on a usual day, compared with 12% of 15-24 year olds and 14% of those aged 55 or over. Those aged 15-24 are most likely to sit for more than 5 hours 30 minutes (51% compared with 38-41% in the older age groups).

- People in white collar occupations tend to spend more time sitting down. The proportion that spends more than 8 hours 30 minutes per day sitting down is 17% among managers and 19% among other white collar workers. The proportion is also relatively high among students (17%).
- People who never walk for more than ten minutes at a time are more likely to spend more than 8 hours 30 minutes per day sitting down (20% vs 10% of those who walked 4 to 7 times in the last week).
- For the EU as a whole, however, there is a slight tendency for people who exercise or play sport to spend less time sitting. For example, 6% of those who exercise or play sport regularly spend more than 8.5 hours per day sitting, compared with 13% of those who do not exercise or play sport at all.

**QB6** How much time do you spend sitting on a usual day? This may include time spent at a desk, visiting friends, studying or watching television.  
(% - EU)

	2h30 min or less	2h31 min to 5h30 min	5h31 min to 8h30 min	8h31 min or more	Don't know
EU28	16	40	29	12	3
 Age					
15-24	12	35	37	14	2
25-39	20	40	28	10	2
40-54	19	40	27	11	3
55 +	14	42	29	12	3
 Socio-professional category					
Self-employed	19	44	25	9	3
Managers	13	33	35	17	2
Other white collars	11	30	38	19	2
Manual workers	27	48	18	4	3
House persons	25	45	21	7	2
Unemployed	15	45	27	9	4
Retired	12	43	29	13	3
Students	8	30	43	17	2
<b>Walked at least 10 min in a week</b>					
1-3 days	17	38	30	12	3
4-7 days	16	44	29	10	1
Never	16	31	28	20	5

Base: All respondents (N=28,031)

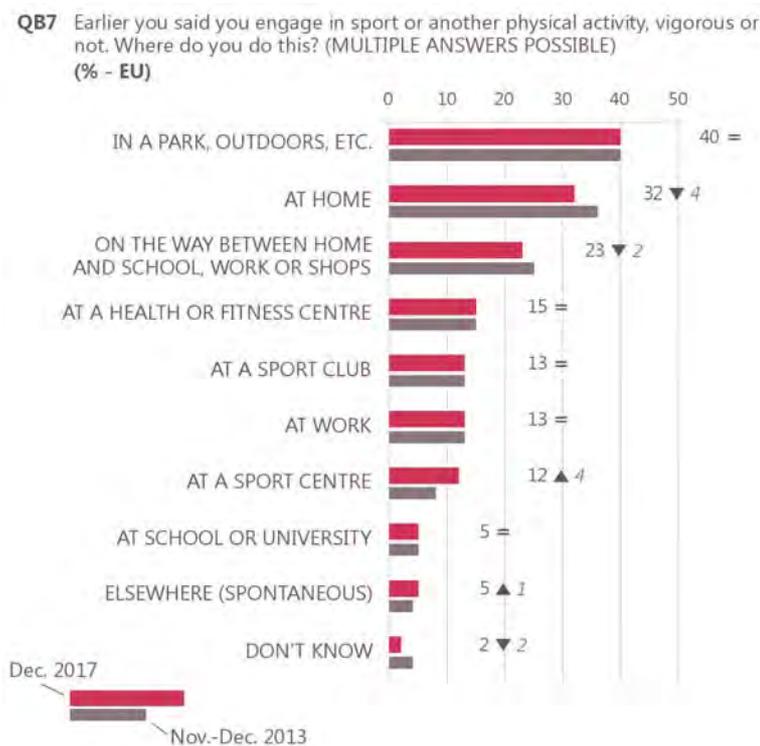
## II. WHERE CITIZENS ENGAGE IN SPORT AND OTHER PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

### 1. Different settings

#### i. Findings for the EU as a whole

Among respondents who exercise, play sport or engage in other physical activities, most of their activities take place in informal settings, such as parks and outdoors (40% of respondents engage in sport or physical activity there), at home (32%) or on the journey between home and school, work, or shops (23%).

These findings are similar to those seen in the 2013 survey, although there has been an increase in the proportion engaging in sport or a physical activity at a sport centre (+4 pp), while the proportion doing so at home has decreased (-4 pp).



Base: Respondents who exercise, play sport or engage in other physical activity (N= 19,982)

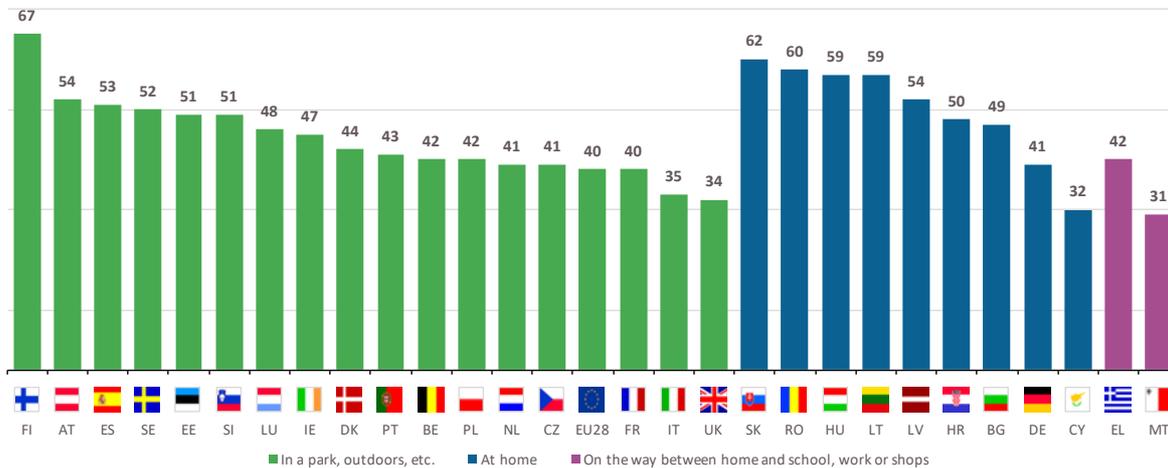
#### ii. Findings by individual countries

The country-level data reveal different preferences for the settings in which people choose to engage in sport or physical activity.

In the EU overall, the most common setting is a park or outdoors (40%), and this is the most popular answer in 17 individual countries (from 67% in Finland to 34% in the United Kingdom). The home is the preferred setting among respondents in nine countries, while in two countries (Greece, 42% and Malta, 31%) the most popular setting is on the way between home and school, work or shops.

The patterns for the different countries are similar to those seen in the 2013 survey.

**QB7** Earlier you said you engage in sport or another physical activity, vigorous or not. Where do you do this?  
 (MULTIPLE ANSWERS POSSIBLE)  
 (% - THE MOST MENTIONED ANSWER BY COUNTRY)



Base: Respondents who exercise, play sport or engage in other physical activity (N= 19,982)

**iii. Findings by socio-demographic groups**

The differences between socio-demographic groups include:

- Younger people are more likely to use formal settings; for example, the proportion using a health or fitness centre ranges from 22% among 15-24 year olds to 10% among those aged 55 or over. The use of sport clubs and sport centres is particularly high among men aged 15-24 (26% and 22% respectively). School or university is also a popular location for younger people (24% of 15-24 year olds).
- The use of formal settings is higher among those who spent more time in education. While 18% of people who ended education at the age of 20 or above engage in sport or physical activity in a health or fitness centre, this falls to 12% among those who ended education between the age of 16 and 19, and to 7% among those who finished education by the age of 15.
- People living in rural areas are more likely to engage in sport or physical activity at home (40%, compared with 29% of those in small or medium size towns, and 27% of those in large towns). By contrast, those living in large towns are more likely to use health or fitness centres (20%, compared with 13% of those in small or medium size towns and 13% of those in rural areas).

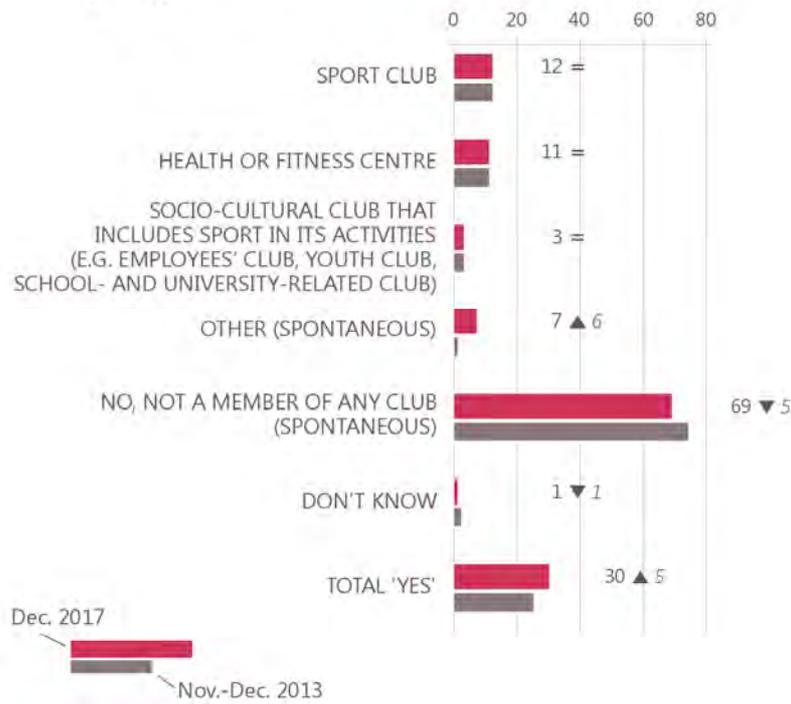
## 2. Club membership

### i. Findings for the EU as a whole

Three in ten respondents (30%) say that they are members of a club where they participate in sport or recreational physical activity. Specifically, 12% of respondents are members of a sport club, while 11% belong to a health or fitness centre. In addition, 3% are members of socio-cultural clubs that include sport in its activities, such as an employees' club, a youth club or a club related to school or university. A further 7% say they are a member of another type of club.

The overall proportion of EU citizens who are members of any club (30%) is higher than in 2013 (24%). However, this is entirely due to an increase in the proportion of respondents saying that they are members of other types of club (+6 pp), as the figures for sport clubs, health or fitness centres and socio-cultural clubs have remained unchanged from 2013.

**QB10** Are you a member of any of the following clubs where you participate in sport or recreational physical activity? (MULTIPLE ANSWERS POSSIBLE) (% - EU)

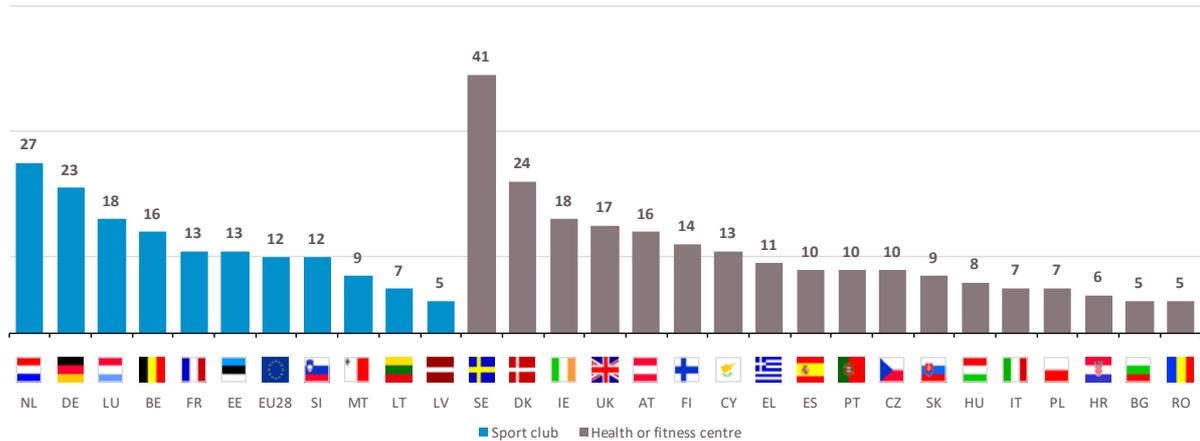


Base: All respondents (N=28,031)

### ii. Findings by individual countries

The club membership figures vary considerably between the different EU Member States. Sport clubs are the most common type of club in 10 countries, with the highest proportion seen in the Netherlands (27%). In the other 18 countries, respondents are more likely to belong to a health or fitness centre, most notably in Sweden (41%).

**QB10** Are you a member of any of the following clubs where you participate in sport or recreational physical activity?  
(MULTIPLE ANSWERS POSSIBLE)  
(% - THE MOST MENTIONED ANSWER BY COUNTRY)



Base: All respondents (N=28,031)

### iii. Findings by socio-demographic groups

Socio-demographic variations include:

- Men are more likely than women to be members of a sport club (16% compared with 8%).
- Young people are more likely than older people to be members of a sport club (20% of 15-24 year olds, falling to 8% of those aged 55 or over), as well as of a health or fitness centre (ranging from 18% of those aged 15-24 to 6% of those aged 55+).
- Membership at a sport club is high among young men (29% of men aged 15-24, falling to 10% of men aged 55 or over). The age difference is much less pronounced for women (11% of women aged 15-24 are members at a sport club, falling to 6% of those aged 55+).
- There is a link between membership at clubs and level of education. Those who finished education at the age of 20 or above are more likely to be members at a club of some kind (40%), than those who ended education at the age of 16-19 (24%) and those who finished education by the age of 15 (18%). This pattern applies to membership at both sport clubs and health or fitness centres.

### III. UNDERSTANDING MOTIVATORS AND BARRIERS TO SPORT PARTICIPATION

## 1. Motivators

### Key findings

Improving health and fitness are the main considerations for EU citizens when engaging in sport or physical activity. In the EU as a whole, the most common reason for engaging in sport or physical activity is to improve health (54%), and this is also the most frequent response in 22 individual countries. The other most commonly cited reasons for engaging in sport or physical activity are to improve fitness (47%), followed by relaxation (38%), to have fun (30%) and to improve physical performance (28%).

There have been some changes since the 2013 survey. Respondents are less likely to say they engage in sport or physical activity in order to improve their health (-8 pp), although this remains the most common response. They are more likely to mention doing this to improve fitness (+7 pp) and to improve physical performance (+4 pp).



Base: Respondents who exercise, play sport or engage in other physical activity (N= 19,982)

Variations across socio-demographic groups include:

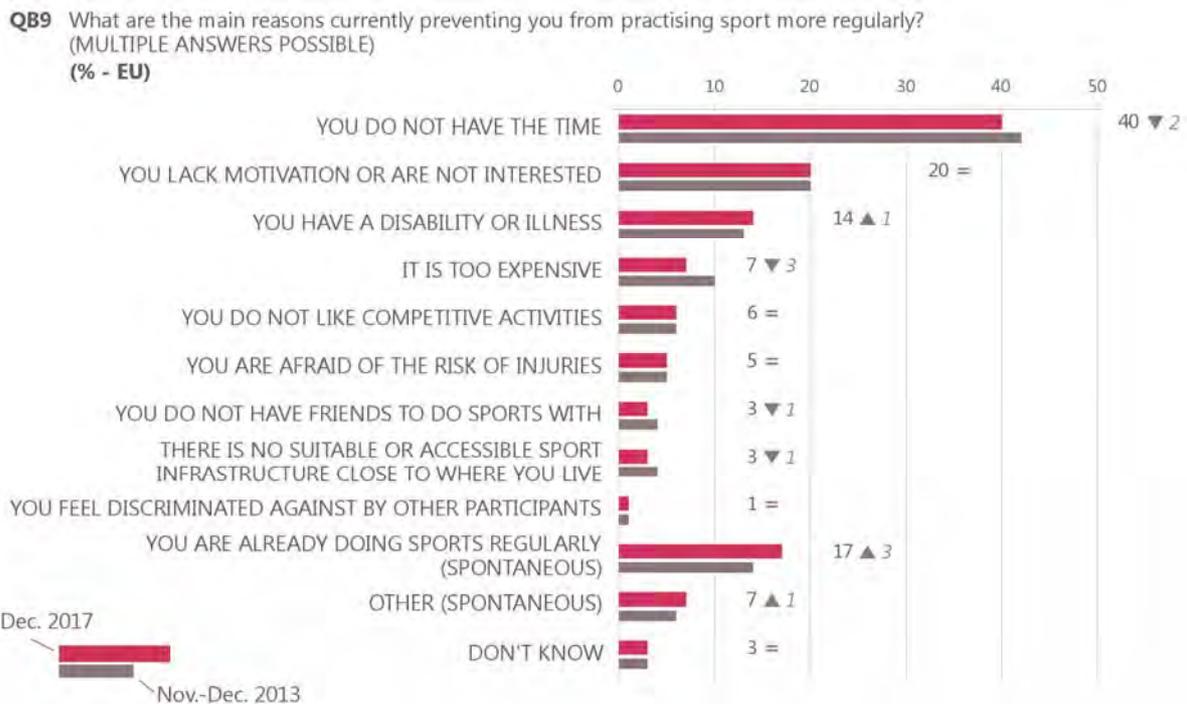
- Men are more motivated by having fun (33% compared with 28%), being with friends (22% compared with 16%) and by competition (8% compared with 2%).
- A number of factors are more likely to be mentioned by younger respondents, including improving physical appearance (29% of 15-24 year olds, falling to 12% of those aged 55 or over), having fun (ranging from 44% for those aged 15-24 to 23% for those aged 55+) and being with friends (33%, falling to 15%).
- By contrast, older people are more likely than younger people to mention improving their health (57% of people aged 55 or over, compared with 49% of those aged 15-24) and counteracting the ageing process (25% compared with 3%).

## 2. Barriers

### Key findings

In the EU as a whole, lack of time is the most mentioned reason for not practising sport more regularly (by 40% of respondents), followed by lack of motivation or interest (20%), having a disability or illness (14%), the fact that it is too expensive (7%), a dislike of competitive activities (6%) and fear of the risk of injuries (5%). Lack of time is also the most common reason mentioned in every EU Member State for not practising sport more often.

The findings are very similar to those observed in the 2013 survey, although there have been small decreases in the proportions mentioning lack of time (-2 pp) and expensiveness (-3 pp), while respondents are now a bit more likely to say that they are already doing sport regularly (+3 pp).



Base: All respondents (N=28,031)

#### IV. SUPPORT FOR SPORT PARTICIPATION IN CITIZENS' LOCAL AREA

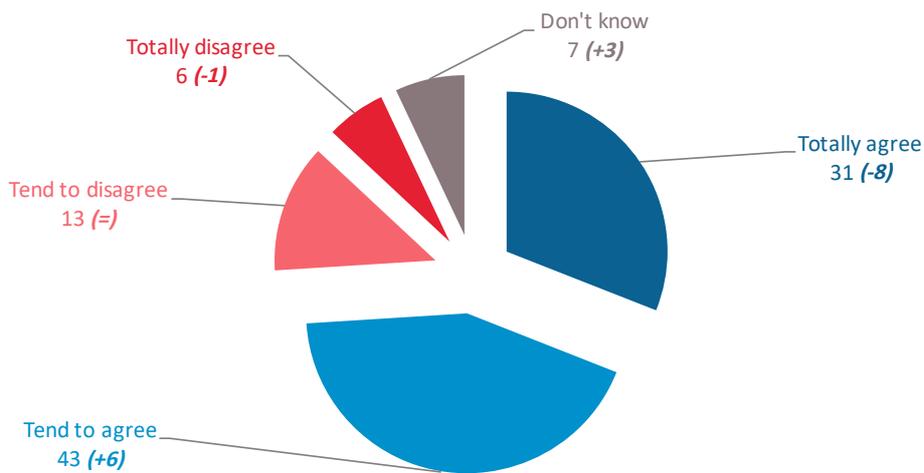
### 1. Opportunities in the local area

#### Key findings

Around three in four EU citizens (74%) either totally agree (31%) or tend to agree (43%) that their local area provides them with opportunities to be physically active. However, 19% of respondents either tend to disagree (13%) or totally disagree (6%) that this is the case. A further 7% say they do not even know if their area offers them opportunities.

The overall proportions of respondents that agree or disagree with the statement are similar to those seen in the 2013 survey. However, there has been a larger decrease in the proportion that totally agree (-8 pp), while the proportion that tend to agree has increased (+6 pp). This indicates that attitudes are now slightly less positive than in 2013.

**QB11.1** To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about sport and physical activity?  
**The area where you live offers you many opportunities to be physically active**  
 (% - EU)



(Dec. 2017 - Nov.-Dec. 2013)

Base: All respondents (N=28,031)

Moreover, perceptions of local opportunities to be physically active vary considerably between different countries. In some countries, large majorities of respondents agree that their local area offers them many opportunities: the Netherlands (94%), Denmark (91%), Sweden (88%), France and Germany (both 87%); the majority of respondents even totally agree with this statement in the Netherlands (66%), Denmark (64%) and Sweden (61%). By contrast, more than one in three respondents disagree that they have many opportunities in their area in Bulgaria (51%), Romania (43%), Malta (36%) and Croatia (35%).

Overall, agreement amongst respondents that their local area offers many opportunities to be physically active has increased in seven countries, but has decreased in 21 countries since 2013.

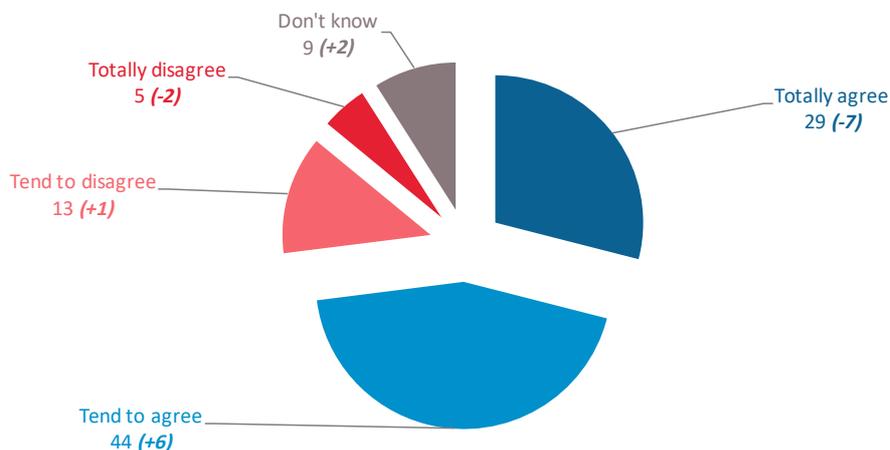
## 2. Opportunities offered by local sport clubs and other providers

### Key findings

The majority of EU citizens (73%) either totally agree (29%) or tend to agree (44%) that their local sport clubs and other providers give them many opportunities to be physically active. However, 18% of respondents tend either to disagree (13%) or totally disagree (5%).

Once again, there has been a large decrease in the proportion of respondents who totally agree (-7 pp), while the proportion that tends to agree has increased (+6 pp). However, overall levels of agreement (-1 pp) and disagreement (-1 pp) are stable.

**QB11.2** To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about sport and physical activity?  
Local sport clubs and other local providers offer many opportunities to be physically active (% - EU)



(Dec. 2017 - Nov.-Dec. 2013)

Base: All respondents (N=28,031)

The patterns for individual countries are similar to the previous question. The highest levels of agreement in relation to the opportunities offered by local sport clubs and other providers are observed in the Netherlands (94%), Sweden (91%) and Denmark (90%), followed by France, Germany and Belgium (all three 85%).

Respondents are the most likely to disagree that clubs and providers offer many opportunities in Romania (45%), Bulgaria (41%), Croatia (37%), Greece (34%), Cyprus (33%) and Italy (30%).

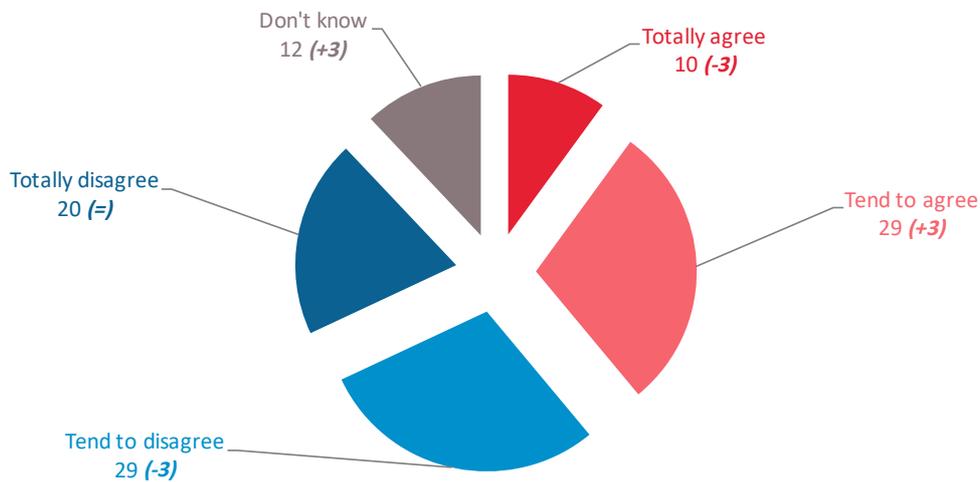
### 3. Local authority provisions

#### Key findings

There are more mixed views (compared to the two previous statements) as to whether local authorities do enough to provide their citizens with opportunities to be physically active: 39% agree that they do not do enough, while 49% disagree.

The proportion of those who totally agree that local authorities do not do enough has slightly decreased since 2013 (-3 pp), alongside a small increase in the proportion of those who tend to agree (+3 pp). There has also been a small decrease in the proportion of those who say they tend to disagree (-3 pp).

**QB11.3** To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about sport and physical activity?  
**Your local authority does not do enough for its citizens in relation to physical activities (% - EU)**



(Dec. 2017 - Nov.-Dec. 2013)

Base: All respondents (N=28,031)

When looking at country level, a majority of respondents in four countries think that their local authority is not doing enough: Italy (55%: 12% totally agree; 43% tend to agree), Poland (53%: 10% totally agree; 43% tend to agree), Romania (52%: 18% totally agree; 34% tend to agree) and Spain (51%: 17% totally agree; 34% tend to agree).

By contrast, views are the most positive in Germany (where 71% disagree), the Netherlands (69%), Finland (68%) and Denmark (64%).

## V. VOLUNTEERING IN SPORT

### 1. Prevalence of volunteering in sport

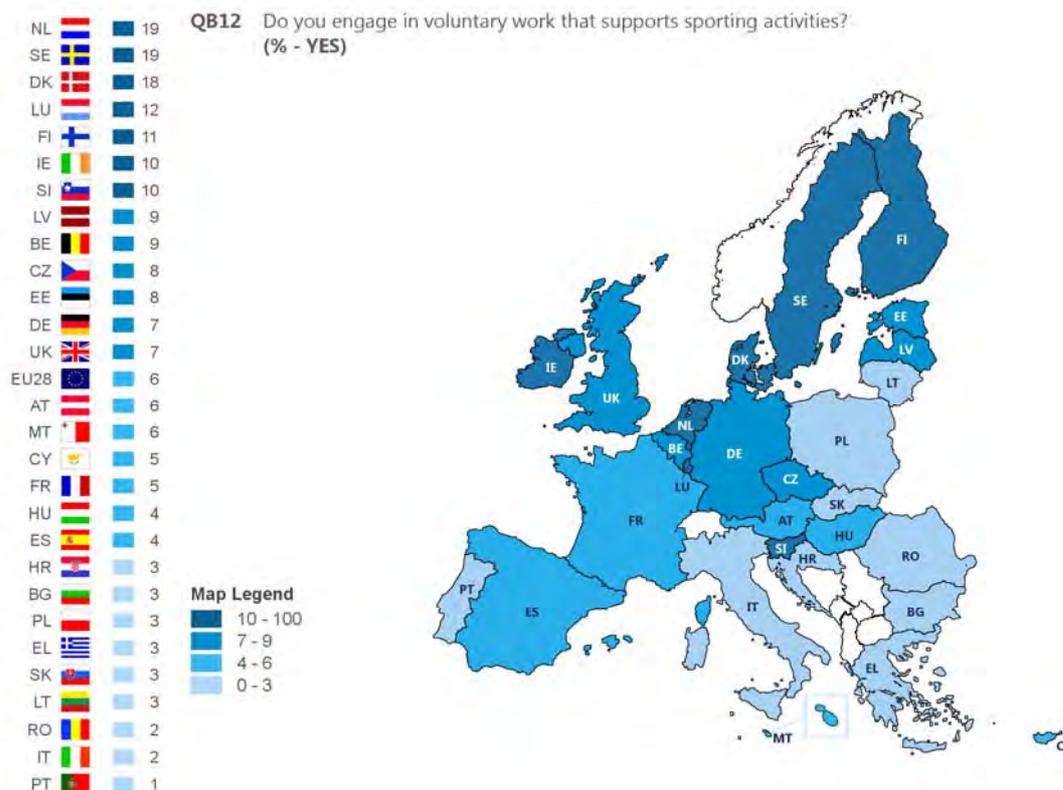
#### Key findings

In total, 6% of EU citizens (-1 pp since the 2013 survey) engage in volunteering to support sporting activities.

At Member State level, highest proportions of respondents volunteer in sport in the Netherlands, Sweden (both 19%) and Denmark (18%). Relatively high figures can also be seen in Luxembourg (12%), Finland (11%), Ireland and Slovenia (both 10%).

Volunteering in sport is least common among respondents in Portugal (1%), Italy, Romania (both 2%), Lithuania, Slovakia, Greece, Poland, Bulgaria and Croatia (all 3%). These are also countries where a lower proportion of people exercise or play sport on a regular basis.

In most countries, the level of volunteering in sport has remained substantially stable since 2013.



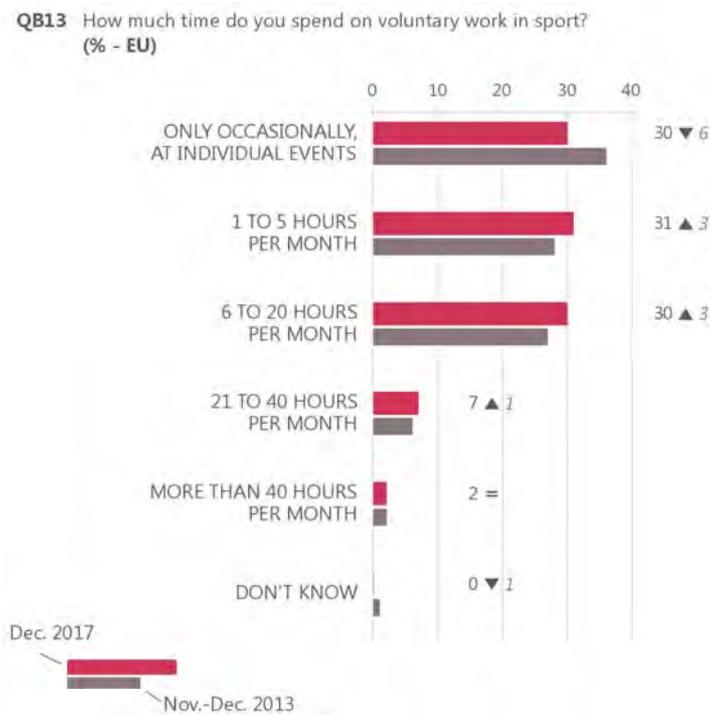
Base: All respondents (N=28,031)

## 2. Time spent on volunteering in sport

### Key findings

Three in ten respondents (30%) who give their time to volunteering in sport only do so on an occasional basis. A similar proportion of people spend between one and five hours per month (31%) volunteering in sport. However, 39% of respondents devote at least six hours of their time each month to volunteering in sport, including 9% who spend 21 hours or more.

The amount of time that people spend volunteering in sport is slightly higher than was recorded in 2013. The proportion who only do so occasionally has decreased (-6 pp), with a corresponding increase in the proportions who spend between one and five hours per month (+3 pp) and those who spend 6 to 20 hours per month (+3 pp).



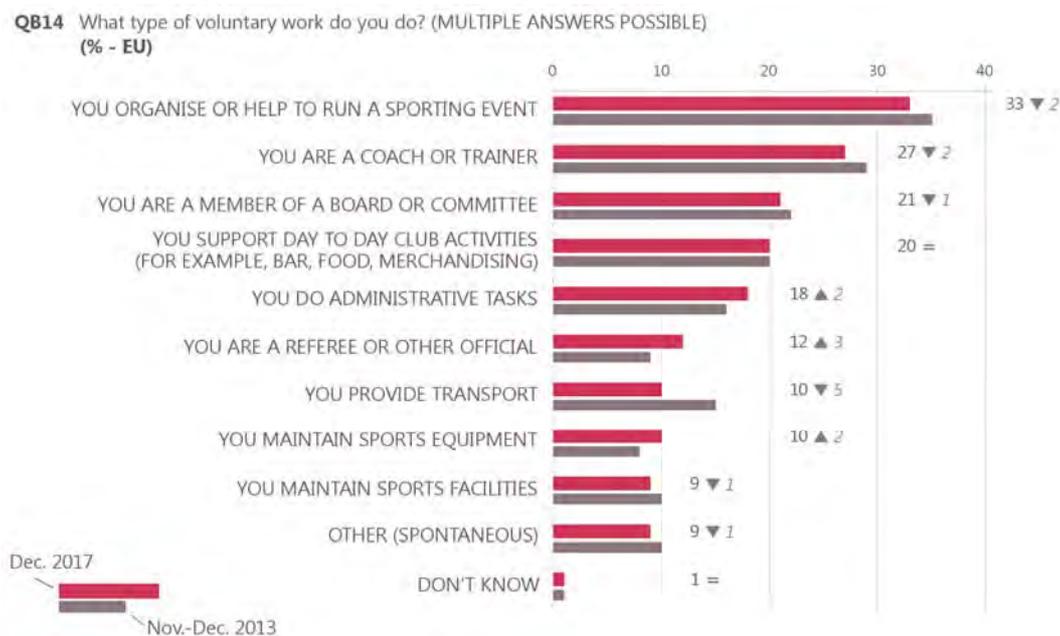
Base: Respondents who engage in voluntary work that supports sporting activities (N= 1,602)

### 3. Types of activities of voluntary work in sport

#### Key findings

People who volunteer in sport do a range of different activities. The most common activity is organising or helping to run a sporting event (33%), followed by coaching or training (27%). Other common activities include being a member of a board or committee (21%), supporting day-to-day club activities (20%) and doing administrative tasks (18%).

There have been some small changes in the findings since 2013: respondents are now more likely than in 2013 to say they are a referee or other official (12%, +3 pp), but are less likely to provide transport (10%, -5 pp).



Base: Respondents who engage in voluntary work that supports sporting activities (N= 1,602)

## CONCLUSION

Despite the growing importance attached to the promotion of physical activity in EU Member States, an earlier Eurobarometer survey in 2009 identified “alarmingly high” rates of physical inactivity in the EU. Since then, the proportion of Europeans that never exercise or play sport has increased even further, from 39% in 2009 to 42% in 2013 and 46% in 2017.

Declining levels of participation are also evident in both vigorous and moderate physical activities, while respondents also typically spend longer sitting than in 2013. Such findings might indicate that the message about the importance of sport and physical activity for an individual's health and well-being has still not got through to significant segments of the EU population.

The survey also indicates socio-demographic variations. For instance, women (in particular in the younger age groups) are far less active than their male counterparts, while participation is generally much lower in the older age groups.

It is also notable that participation levels are much lower among those who have lower levels of education, and among those in more difficult financial situation. A recent OECD report<sup>5</sup> found close links between low income and poor health, and these findings suggest that lower levels of engagement in sport and physical activity are part of this pattern.

As in previous surveys, the results show large disparities among EU Member States on many questions. The more physically active countries tend to be clustered in the Northern part of the EU (particularly the Nordic countries), while the lowest proportions of active Europeans can be found in the Southern EU Member States. These variations are likely to reflect the facilities and infrastructure available, as the same country patterns apply when respondents were asked about opportunities for physical activity.

This new edition of the survey also confirms that most sport or physical activity takes place in informal settings – in parks and outdoors, at home, or on the journey between home and school, work or shops, as well as at work or at school or university. This suggests that such opportunities to engage in physical activity should be promoted alongside the practice of sport and physical activity in organised settings – particularly given the lower participation rates among those with financial difficulties, who may struggle to afford membership of formal sport facilities.

Finally, the proportion of EU citizens who engage in voluntary work that supports sporting activities remains quite low (6% in 2017, compared to 7% in 2013), despite the many different types of work volunteers engage in. Strategies to increase volunteering in sport could therefore insist on the fact that there are numerous ways in which different people can get involved.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.oecd.org/els/soc/cope-divide-europe-2017-background-report.pdf>