

# REVOLUTIONARY WORK HABITS: RESEARCH FINDINGS ON PROMOTING INNOVATION AND EMPLOYEE HEALTH THROUGH WORKPLACE WORKOUTS

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|                                   |           |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|
| <b>Table list</b>                 | <b>3</b>  |
| <b>Images list</b>                | <b>3</b>  |
| <b>Introduction</b>               | <b>4</b>  |
| <b>1. Research report context</b> | <b>5</b>  |
| 1.1. Data analysis                | 5         |
| <b>2. Recommendations</b>         | <b>14</b> |

## TABLE LIST

|  |    |
|--|----|
| 1.1.1 table. Attitude towards physical activity (average rating by respondents) _____  | 12 |
| 1.1.2. table. Have you participated in Research activities (using the bike/standing desk)? (%)_____  | 12 |
| 1.1.3. table. How do you rate such equipment for promoting physical activity in workplaces? (1 – very poorly, 5 – excellent) (average rating by respondents) _____ | 12 |

## IMAGES LIST

|   |    |
|---|----|
| 1.1.1. picture. Gender distribution (%) _____   | 5  |
| 1.1.2 picture. Age distribution (%) _____   | 6  |
| 1.1.3 picture. Education (%) _____  | 6  |
| 1.1.4 picture. Occupations (%) _____  | 7  |
| 1.1.5. picture. Are you physically active (play sports/exercise)? (%) _____   | 7  |
| 1.1.6. picture. Level of physical activity (%) _____  | 8  |
| 1.1.7. picture. Work activities (%) _____   | 8  |
| 1.1.8. picture. Participation in Research activities (%) _____  | 9  |
| 1.1.9 picture. For what reason do you not engage in sports/physical exercises? (Total average rating) _   | 9  |
| 1.1.10 picture. For what reason do you not engage in sports/physical exercises? (Average rating) ____   | 10 |
| 1.1.11. picture. What active physical activities do you engage outside of working hours at least 3 times a week? (Number of participants) _____ | 11 |

## INTRODUCTION

The vision of the Research report was to offer employers new tools for encouraging employees to be active in the workplace by integrating innovative physical activity measures into their office environments and daily routines.

The Research report, titled “Revolutionary Work Habits: Research Findings on Promoting Innovation and Employee Health through Workplace Workouts”, aimed to address the problem of the lack of physical activity and innovative measures in workplaces, as well as the absence of methodologies specifically focused on workplaces with particularly long sedentary working hours. This problem was identified before the Research submission. The objective of the report was to analyze and answer the question: “How can we increase physical activity and promote innovation in workplaces with long sedentary hours?”.

The problem that the Research report aimed to address was identified: the lack of physical activity and innovative means in workplaces, as well as the absence of a methodology specifically focused on countries with particularly long sedentary working hours.

The objective of the Research report was to integrate innovative physical activity measures into workplaces, with the aim of fostering regular physical activity habits for middle-aged office workers (between 30 and 65 years old). Specifically, the goal was to increase physical activity levels among middle-aged office workers.

A methodology was developed based on structured data, using the data collected from focus group surveys (qualitative surveys) conducted before the implementation of the inventory and after the completion of the Research. The Research involved 500 employees per partner country, from 12 different companies across 2 countries, who developed physical activity habits over the course of four months.

The target group consisted of middle-aged office workers (between 18 and 65 years old) who spent at least 7 hours a day sitting in front of a computer. This target group comprised 500 employees from 12 different companies in two different countries (9 in Lithuania and 3 in Latvia).

The Research report parties included the Lithuanian association "Sports for All", which served as the Research report coordinator, and the Latvian Sports Federations Council, which participated as a Research partner.

The target group’s activities included innovative physical activities, such as the use of a bike or standing desks for office workers. Specially installed sensors recorded the total kilometers covered by these stations, regardless of where they were located.

The Research mainly focused on promoting activities that encouraged the practice of sport and physical activity, and on promoting sport and physical activity as tools for health.

## 1. RESEARCH REPORT CONTEXT

In Europe, more than 54,4% of people of working age do sedentary work for more than 40-50 hours a week. This share exceeded 50,0% in 11 EU countries and reached more than 70% in Bulgaria, Romania, Latvia, Lithuania and Hungary (Eurostat, 2021)<sup>1</sup>. Such long working hours limit a person's ability to engage in physical activity after working hours, because of which a person's physical and mental capacity decreases, and the risk of illness and death increases. Cardiovascular diseases (CVD) remain the leading cause of mortality and a major cause of morbidity in Europe (more than 11 million new cases of CDV in Europe as a whole, every year).<sup>2</sup> Additionally, WHO statistics (World Health Organization), which state that by 2050, the number of people over the age of 60 will increase from 12,0% to 22,0%, which means that the society will have to remain active longer.<sup>3</sup>

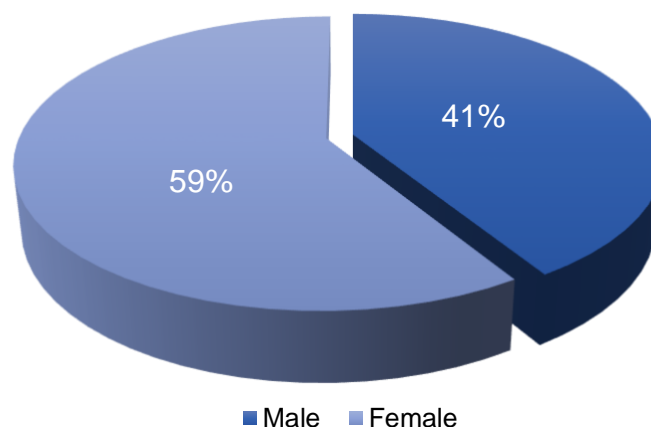
Considering that these are also the countries where the population decreases the most in the EU every year it is necessary to ensure the health and physical capacity of middle-aged and older people as these countries are currently the weakest link in Europe.

The Research report examines workplace workouts / bike or standing desks and effects on promoting physical activity.

### 1.1. Data analysis

Physical activity in the workplace is an innovative approach to integrating movement and exercise into daily routines. Traditionally, work has been a sedentary activity, with employees spending long hours sitting at desks or in front of computers. However, Research showed that prolonged sitting and physical inactivity were linked to numerous health issues, including obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and musculoskeletal disorders. To address these concerns, Research was conducted to introduce employees to the benefits of incorporating physical activity into their daily work environment. The Research had the potential to improve the health and well-being of middle-aged office workers in two different countries.

Based on the table provided, there was a detailed analysis of the participants' characteristics and activity levels. The gender distribution showed higher participation from females (59,0%) compared to males (41,0%). This gender imbalance might have reflected differing levels of interest or availability for engaging in Research activities.



1.1.1. picture. Gender distribution (%)

Sources: created by authors

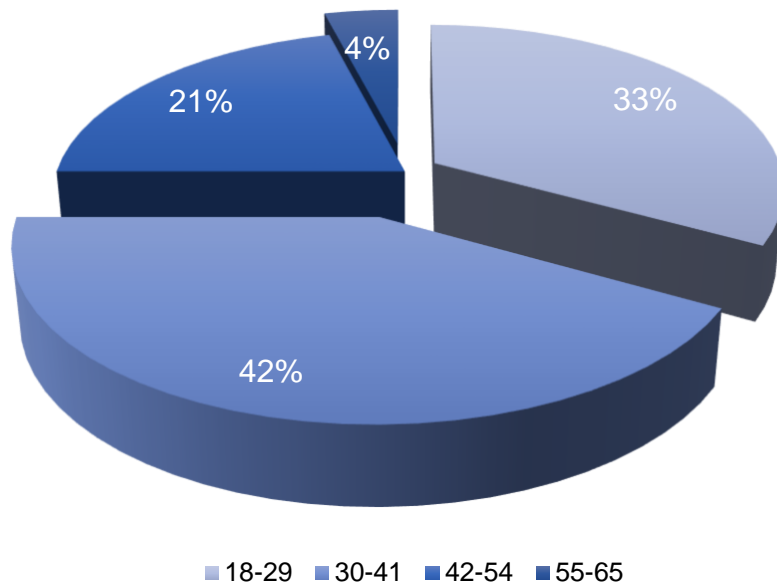
Most participants (43,0%) fell in the 42–54 age group, followed by the 30–41 group (33,0%). Together, these two age groups accounted for 76,0% of the total participants. This did not mean that the

<sup>1</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Hours\\_of\\_work\\_-\\_annual\\_statistics](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Hours_of_work_-_annual_statistics)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.escardio.org/The-ESC/Press-Office/Fact-sheets>

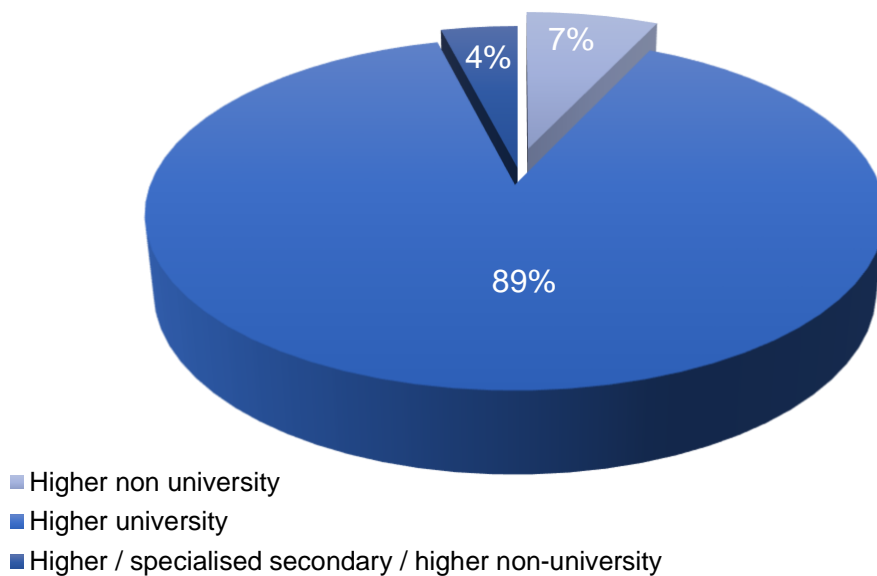
<sup>3</sup> <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/ageing-and-health>

Research specifically targeted middle-aged employees, but rather that middle-aged employees happened to make up the majority of the participant pool.



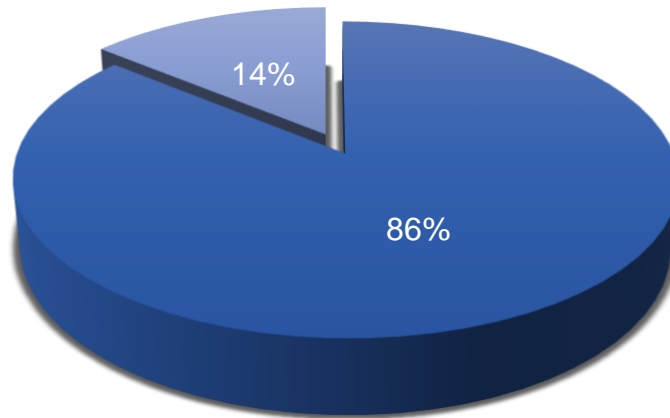
**1.1.2 picture. Age distribution (%)**  
*Sources: created by authors*

The overwhelming majority (91,0%) of participants had a higher university education, indicating that the Research engaged highly educated individuals, with only 7,0% from "Higher non-university." The fact that 91% of participants had a university-level education suggested that most of these participants were accustomed to knowledge-based work, which often correlated with more sedentary roles (e.g., desk work).



**1.1.3 picture. Education (%)**  
*Sources: created by authors*

The participant pool was predominantly composed of individuals in Senior/Middle-Level Managers/Specialists roles (86,0%), while Hired Workers accounted for 14,0%.

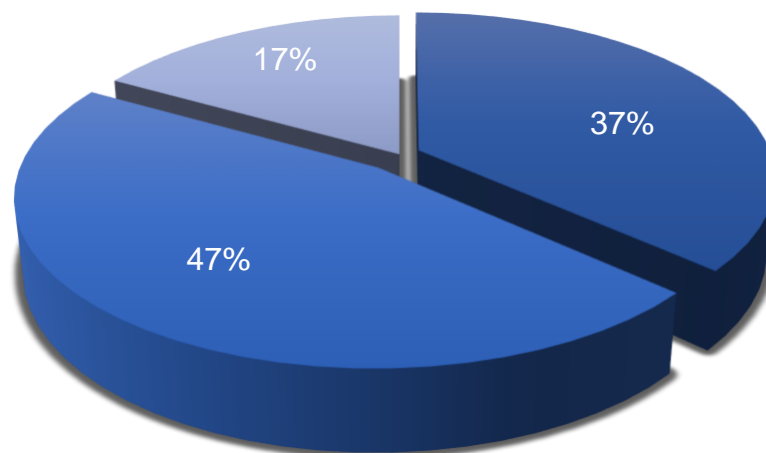


- Hired employee (senior or middle level manager, specialist)
- Hired worker

#### 1.1.4 picture. Occupations (%)

Sources: created by authors

A large proportion of participants (47,0%) were partially physically active, while 37,0% engaged regularly in physical activity. This presented a significant opportunity for the Research to target those who were already somewhat active, to increase their engagement, and to encourage the 17,0% who were not active at all.

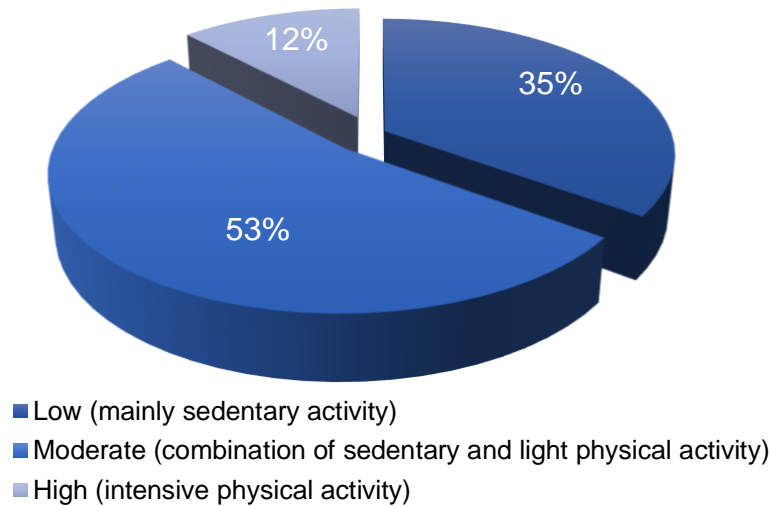


- Yes
- Partly yes
- No

#### 1.1.5. picture. Are you physically active (play sports/exercise)? (%)

Sources: created by authors

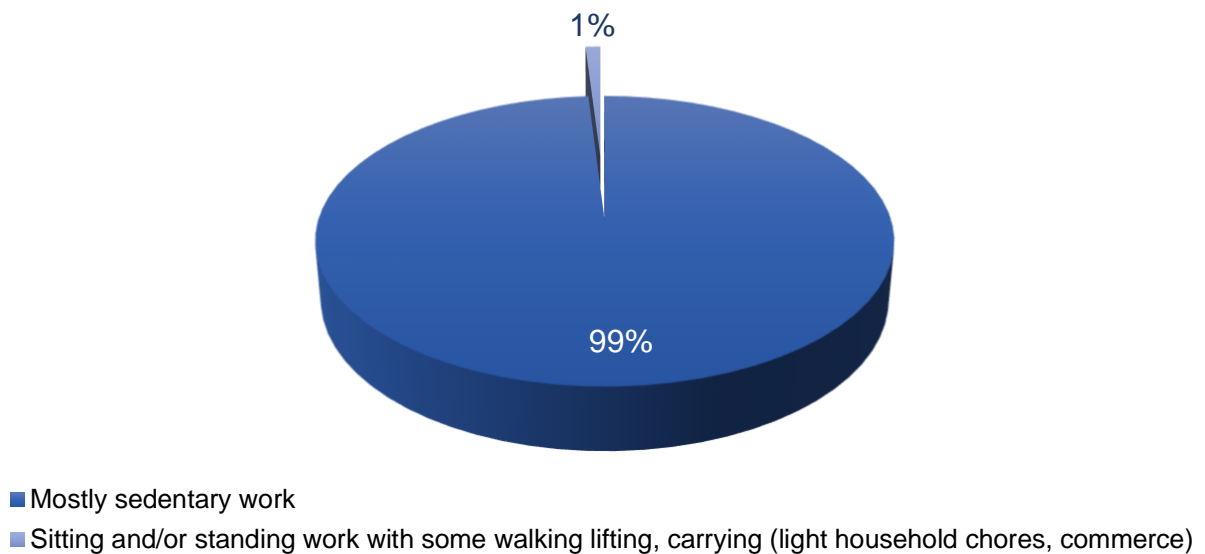
Most participants (53,0%) had a moderate level of physical activity, combining sedentary work with light activities. However, 35,0% of the participants engaged in predominantly sedentary activities, which highlighted a key target group for promoting more physical activity within the workplace. 12,0% of participants were engaged in high-intensity physical activity. 7 respondents did not respond to this question.



**1.1.6. picture. Level of physical activity (%)**

*Sources: created by authors*

Nearly all participants (99,0%) were engaged in sedentary work, underscoring the critical need for interventions like standing desks or active workstations to reduce sedentary time during work hours. Only 1% of the respondents were engaged in work with movement.

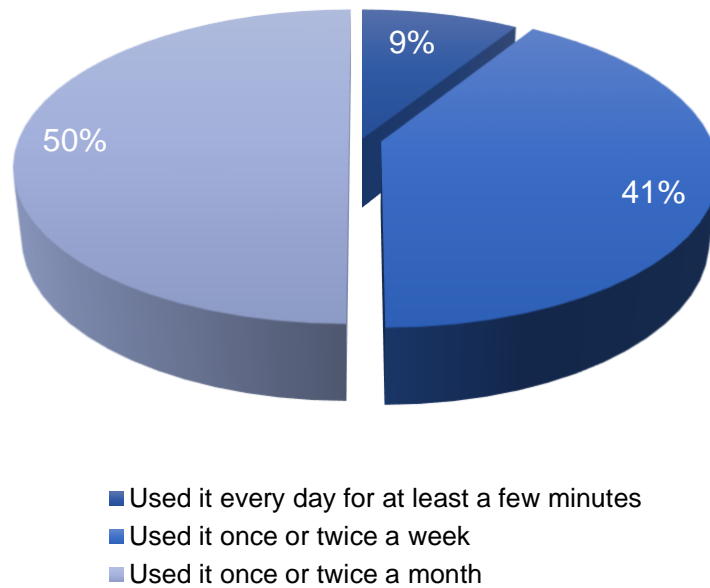


**1.1.7. picture. Work activities (%)**

*Sources: created by authors*

Research results showed that 9,0% of participants used Research tools (such as a bike or standing desk) every day. 41,0% used the equipment once or twice a week, and 50,0% used it once or twice a month. Encouraging regular use and engaging non-respondents could have improved the overall impact of the Research.





**1.1.8. picture. Participation in Research activities (%)**

*Sources: created by authors*

Picture 1.1.9 provided by all age groups shows the average rate of the main reasons why individuals across different age groups did not engage in sports or physical exercises.

The highest scoring reasons were "There was no time for that," with an average of 7,19 and "There was no motivation for it," with an average rate of 6,75. This indicated that time constraints and lack of motivation were the most common barriers to physical activity. "Attractive activities" scored an average of 3,06, showing that the availability of appealing exercise options was a moderate concern. Health-related barriers, such as disabilities or illness, had a lower average score of 1,72 while rate of 1,53 reported cost as a limiting factor for engaging in physical activity. Injuries from past sports activities received the lowest average, 1,06 suggesting it was the least common reason for avoiding physical activity.



**1.1.9 picture. For what reason do you not engage in sports/physical exercises? (Total average rating)**

*Sources: created by authors*

Picture 1.1.10 shows a detailed version of the primary reasons why individuals did not participate in sports or physical exercise, based on their age group, with responses measured on a scale from 1 (rarely applicable) to 10 (strongly applicable). Below is an analysis of each response based on the average intensity scores provided:

“No time for sports/physical exercise” was the most cited reason across all age groups except for the 42–54 and 55–65 groups. However, it peaked slightly in the 42–54 (average rate – 8) and 55–65 (average rate – 8) groups, compared to the 18–29 (average rate – 7,2) and 30–41 (average rate – 6,8) groups.

The second most common reason, particularly noticeable in the older groups, was “No motivation.” Motivation decreased notably with age. For example, it rose sharply from 4,9 (average rate) in the 18–29 group to 9,75 (average rate) in the 55–65 age group. This suggested that as people got older, there was a growing mental or emotional barrier to engaging in physical activity. For the 30–41 (average rate – 7,1) and 42–54 (average rate – 7) groups, motivation became more of an issue compared to younger adults 18–29 age group (average rate – 4,9).

“Disability or illness” was a relatively minor concern overall, but it increased slightly in the 30–41 group (average rate – 2,1) and peaked in middle age before dropping off in the 55–65 group (average rate – 1). This indicated that while chronic illness or disability affected participation in sports, it became less of a concern compared to motivation or time constraints.

“Exercising is too expensive” was one of the lesser concerns across all age groups, never rising above 2, except in the 30–41 age group (average rate – 1,6) and 42–54 age group (average rate – 2).

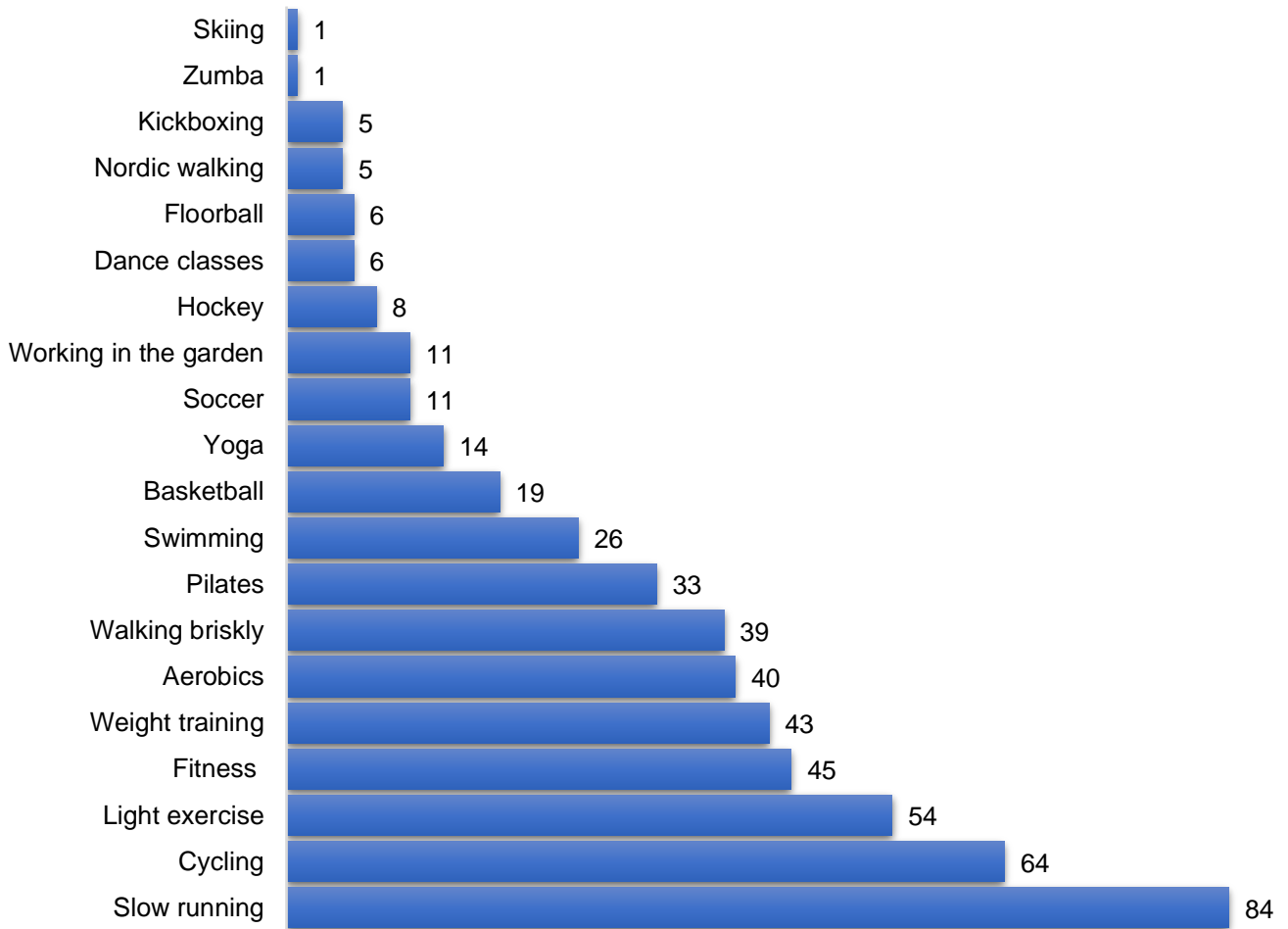
“Lack of attractive activities” varied more between the younger and older groups. It was higher among 18–29-year-olds (average rate – 4,1), possibly due to a preference for more dynamic social activities. The percentage dropped off significantly in the 30–41 (average rate – 2,9) and 42–54 (average rate – 2) age groups. However, it rose slightly again in the 55–65 group (average rate – 2,5), suggesting that older adults might have felt disconnected from or uninterested in available exercise options.

“Injury” was a very small reason across all age groups, ranging between 1 and 1,1 average rates.



1.1.10 picture. For what reason do you not engage in sports/physical exercises? (Average rating)  
Sources: created by authors

The chart 1.1.11 illustrates the top physical activities that people engage in outside of working hours at least three times per week. From the analysis of the chart, slow running stood out as the most frequently mentioned activity, followed by cycling and light exercise. Other notable activities included fitness, weight training, aerobics, walking briskly and Pilates.



**1.1.11. picture. What active physical activities do you engage outside of working hours at least 3 times a week? (Number of participants)**

*Sources: created by authors*

For individuals who answered “Yes,” “Partly Yes,” and “No” to the question about engaging in physical activity or sports, their attitudes towards physical activity in the workplace were evaluated across several areas on a scale from 1 to 10.

Across all three groups, respondents who were engaged in or intended to start exercising at work, the scores ranged between 7,6 and 8 average rates, with the highest average rating of 8 coming from the group that answered “Yes” to the question, “Are you physically active (play sports/exercise)?” All groups showed the greatest enthusiasm for exercising while working remotely, with scores ranging from 8,4 to 8,6 average rates. Opposition to workplace exercise was minimal across all groups, with scores ranging from 1,6 to 2 average rates. The bike or standing desk played a significant role in facilitating workplace exercise, demonstrating its potential as an effective tool for promoting a healthier and more active work environment.

**1.1.1 table. Attitude towards physical activity (average rating by respondents)**

| Are you physically active (playing sports/exercise)? | I value workplace exercise positively (I either engage in or intend to start exercising at work, I take or plan to take physical activity breaks) | I am or, if possible, would like to be physically active while working in the office | I am or, if possible, would like to be physically active while working remotely (from home) | Negatively (I do not exercise at work and do not plan to, I do not take and would not take physical activity breaks) |
|--|---|--|---|--|
| <b>Yes</b>   | 8,0   | 7,8  | 8,6   | 1,6  |
| <b>Partly yes</b>                                    | 7,6   | 6,9  | 8,4   | 2  |
| <b>No</b>  | 7,6   | 7,3  | 8,4   | 1,8  |
| <b>Total average (1–10)</b>                          | <b>7,7</b>  | <b>7,3</b>   | <b>8,5</b>  | <b>1,8</b>   |

Sources: created by authors

The data reflected responses to a survey on how often people engaged in physical activity, categorized as “Yes,” “Partly Yes,” and “No.” These categories were further segmented by the frequency of using a bike or standing desk (once or twice a week, once or twice a month, or daily). Among those who responded “Yes” to being physically active, 44,0% reported using the bike or standing desk once or twice a week, 42,0% used it once or twice a month, and only 14,0% used it daily. Respondents were more likely to use the bike or stand at a desk once or twice a month or once or twice a week. Daily usage of the bike or standing desk was highest among physically active respondents. The data suggests that the bike or standing desk motivated physically active individuals to engage in even more physical activities and those who reported moderate physical activity levels were also more likely to use the equipment weekly or monthly.

**1.1.2. table. Have you participated in Research activities (using the bike/standing desk)? (%)**

| Are you physically active (playing sports/exercise)? | Used it once or twice a week | Used it once or twice a month | Used it every day for at least a few |
|--|------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <b>Yes</b>   | 44%                          | 42%                           | 14%                                  |
| <b>Partly yes</b>                                    | 32%                          | 62%                           | 6%                                   |
| <b>No</b>  | 60%                          | 38%                           | 2%                                   |
| <b>Total average</b>                                 | <b>45%</b>                   | <b>47%</b>                    | <b>7%</b>                            |

Sources: created by authors

Among individuals who reported not engaging in physical activities, the average rating for the use of a bike or standing desk to promote physical activity in the workplace was 3,3 average rate on a scale of 1 to 5. Those who answered "Yes" to participating in physical activities gave a slightly higher average rating of 3,4 for the bike or standing desk. For respondents who answered, "Partly Yes," the average rating for using a bike or standing desk to promote physical activity in the workplace was the highest, at 3,6 average rate.

**1.1.3. table. How do you rate such equipment for promoting physical activity in workplaces? (1 – very poorly, 5 – excellent) (average rating by respondents)**

| Are you physically active (play sports/exercise)? | Average rating (1-5) |
|---|----------------------|
| <b>Yes</b>  | 3,4                  |
| <b>Partly yes</b>                                 | 3,6                  |
| <b>No</b>   | 3,3                  |
| <b>Total average</b>                              | <b>3,4</b>           |

Sources: created by authors

**Summary:** Several factors contributed to low physical activity levels, including a lack of motivation, time constraints, and predominantly sedentary jobs. Additionally, the absence of appealing or enjoyable activities limited engagement in physical exercise. Many employees maintained moderate physical activity levels, balancing sedentary work with light tasks. The most popular physical activities were slow running, cycling, slow running, light exercise, fitness, weight training, aerobics, walking briskly and Pilates. Data

showed that physically active respondents were more likely to use workplace equipment (bikes or standing desks) daily, compared to non-active participants and the "Partly Yes" group who used bike or standing desk once or twice a week or month. Interestingly, non-active respondents reported higher weekly use, suggesting moderate engagement despite low physical activity. The average physical activity levels were excellent; all participants in the Research used the bike or standing desk. Monthly use was most common among the "Partly Yes" group, indicating sporadic engagement. The data illustrated that respondents average rating of the Research activities (using the bike/standing desk) was 3,4 average rate out of 5, with the highest rate among the "Partly Yes" group. It was possible that the equipment was viewed as helpful for maintaining or increasing the "Partly Yes" group's activity, which could explain their higher rating.

## 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the detailed analysis of the data, here are several recommendations for improving participation and optimizing the use of bikes or standing desks in the workplace:

- ❖ The data suggests that promoting consistent, daily use of physical activity equipment could be a key intervention point, especially for the “Partly Yes” and “No” groups. This could include challenges or rewards for those who consistently use the equipment or pair the standing desk with tasks like meetings or brainstorming sessions to create an active routine.
- ❖ Since the highest rate about using the bike or standing desk was among “Partly yes” group there could be focus on this group as they are more likely to adopt new habits.
- ❖ Implementing habit building step by step initiatives and provide structured programs like weekly reminders, suggested standing desk activities, or set times during the day to use the equipment. Integrate group activities. Facilitate connections between employees who are physically active and those who are less active.
- ❖ address barriers for inactive individuals. Offer education, awareness campaigns, and low-barrier options to encourage participation.
- ❖ encourage employees to integrate physical activity into their work routines through strategies like standing meetings and virtual challenges.
- ❖ The data indicates that remote work opportunities were correlated with increased physical activity levels. This suggests that creating a more conducive environment for using bikes or standing desks in the workplace could encourage greater employee engagement in physical activity in the workplace.
- ❖ The data suggests that the 18–29 age group is less demotivated compared to the 55-65 age group. Younger generations can promote leadership participation and motivate older individuals (55-65) to set a positive example. The 30–41 and 42–54 age groups can demonstrate effective time management skills, which can be beneficial for younger groups (18–29 age group) in managing their time for physical activity including the use of bike standing desks.
- ❖ Provide customized equipment for different needs: tailor the equipment to different levels of physical activity and comfort. For example, for those less physically active, provide equipment that requires minimal effort (like basic standing desks or easy-to-use bikes). For more active users (who responded that they are weight training), introduce advanced features like resistance settings on bikes.