

**A Healthy Life:
Desired by Many,
Lived by Only
Half of Europeans**



What's keeping
you from living a
healthier life?

Across Europe, a fundamental transformation is underway: through self-care, people are becoming architects of their own health. They are actively shaping their well-being through exercise and healthy eating, and are cultivating habits that benefit both their bodies and their minds. However, this growing sense of personal responsibility and self-empowerment is fraught with paradoxes.

The STADA Health Report 2025 reveals the complexity of healthy living in the modern age. I am pleased to see that trust in healthcare professionals remains high, and more Europeans are embracing preventive measures and healthy routines. On the other hand, they can only do so much – stagnating system satisfaction, limited access to preventive and mental healthcare, and a perceived lack of fairness fuel frustrations across the continent. In their private lives, many Europeans find themselves torn between knowing what is best for them and simultaneously being pulled in another direction by their circumstances and day-to-day responsibilities.

Amid such contradictions, we must ask ourselves what can and must be done to drive even more self-empowerment and encourage Europeans to make good on their commitment to healthy living. We must help them turn knowledge into sustainable action. Unfortunately, the data shows that the most vulnerable among us – people experiencing

financial hardship and mental health issues – are also struggling most with healthy living. Our message to them must be one of support and enablement, especially since they are evidently most disillusioned by current health systems.

Such systems stand to be transformed by the advent and implementation of Artificial Intelligence. New technologies bring a mix of hope and hesitation. Although it will enrich research access, diagnoses and treatment, it is fair to say that Europeans still trust a familiar face more than any machine. This is reflected in the enduring trust people place in pharmacists, doctors and other actors in the healthcare system. Harnessing AI's astounding abilities to improve people's lives and relieve overburdened healthcare systems is one of the great opportunities of our time.

Balancing innovation and personal care with empathy will be key – and this is where all actors in healthcare must come together. For us at STADA, Caring for People's Health as a Trusted Partner is our very purpose. With the Health Report, we strive to understand, reflect on and aid in finding solutions to what is keeping Europeans from living the healthiest lives possible and at the same time being able to finance it. And sometimes, this means asking the hard questions and being left with even more complicated answers. I invite all actors within the healthcare system – policymakers, manufacturers, distributors, medical specialists, carers and patients – to join the discussion to turn these insights into impact.

Peter Goldschmidt
CEO STADA Arzneimittel AG



Health starts with empowerment

From green juices to gym selfies, healthy living is one of the defining lifestyle trends of our time. Fuelled by social media feeds and real-life conversations, the flood of opinions on what it means to be “truly” healthy appears endless. With the intention of following up on a trend discovered in the STADA Health Report 2024 – Europeans taking their health into their own hands in the wake of growing dissatisfaction with healthcare systems, amid other causes – the STADA Health Report 2025 set out to investigate how deeply healthy habits truly run.

From diets, exercise and prevention to vices like drinking and excessive consumption of digital media: How serious are Europeans about healthy living? Do they walk the walk or just talk the talk? Whose opinion do they trust when it comes to matters of health? What blind spots can be identified in the context of healthy living, and which conflicting behaviours do Europeans exhibit? Where do individual finances and mental health come into play? And if we expect individuals to make responsible choices for their own health, what hurdles must our healthcare systems overcome to support them (more) effectively? The STADA Health Report 2025 delivers answers to these – and many more – questions.

Looking back

Launched in 2014 as a national study to examine the health literacy of the German population, the STADA Health Report has grown steadily and is now the largest and most comprehensive international study in the industry. True to STADA's purpose of “Caring for People's Health as a Trusted Partner”, the Health Report has tracked health trends as well as the attitudes and behaviours of the European population towards both physical and mental health, highlighting shifts, challenges and potential improvements to help enable a healthier future for all.

Sample and methodology 2025

The 2025 international survey was conducted by Human8 via an online questionnaire in February and March 2025 in the following 22 countries: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czechia, Denmark, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Kazakhstan, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and Uzbekistan. The panel included well-balanced, representative



Origin, Objectives and Methodology



samples between 1,000 and 2,000 respondents aged 18 to 99 in each country. As always, the survey is representative in terms of age, gender and region.

The questionnaire consisted of more than 30 questions covering topics such as healthy lifestyle perceptions and actions, satisfaction with national healthcare systems, trust in doctors and pharmacists, preventive healthcare, mental health, and more.

Geographically, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan form part of Central Asia. For the sake of this report and its readability, both countries and the results from their respective surveys, together with the 20 participating European nations, have been subsumed under the term “European”. ■



01

PHYSICAL HEALTH & HEALTHY LIVING

How Europeans navigate physical well-being amid real-life challenges

Aiming High, Falling Short?

Despite growing enthusiasm for health, a well-rounded lifestyle remains a complex undertaking. Across Europe, many are striving to make better choices amid a booming culture of fitness, supplements and self-care. Yet a truly healthy life goes beyond routines. And even though Europeans often know what is best for them, everyday life and circumstances get in the way.

96%

of Europeans care about a healthy lifestyle.

Only 51% follow through.





identify good physical health as their top incentive.

The gap between hope and habit

Most Europeans value good physical health – yet many struggle to put it into practice.

At first glance, it seems as though the health craze has well and truly taken over the continent: Only 9 percent of Europeans say they are leading what they would consider an “unhealthy” lifestyle. 40 percent are neither here nor there, and 51 percent pride themselves on a healthy way of life. In Spain, this applies to more than two-thirds (68) of the population, more than twice the just one in three (33) who feel the same in Czechia.

Health awareness has landed in Europe: Out of all respondents, only 4 percent say that a healthy lifestyle does not matter to them. The remainder of the population is aware of the importance of health in daily life: The 87 percent of Europeans who trust that a healthy diet is essential for preventing diseases is just one piece of evidence in terms of how far they have come in their understanding of healthy living.

Having attested to Europeans being generally conscious of the topic of healthy living, one might wonder: What is the driving force behind their pursuit of a healthy life?

Physical health as the ultimate goal – in theory

When it comes to motivating factors, most Europeans cite good physical health as the main driver for maintaining healthy habits, with 71 percent

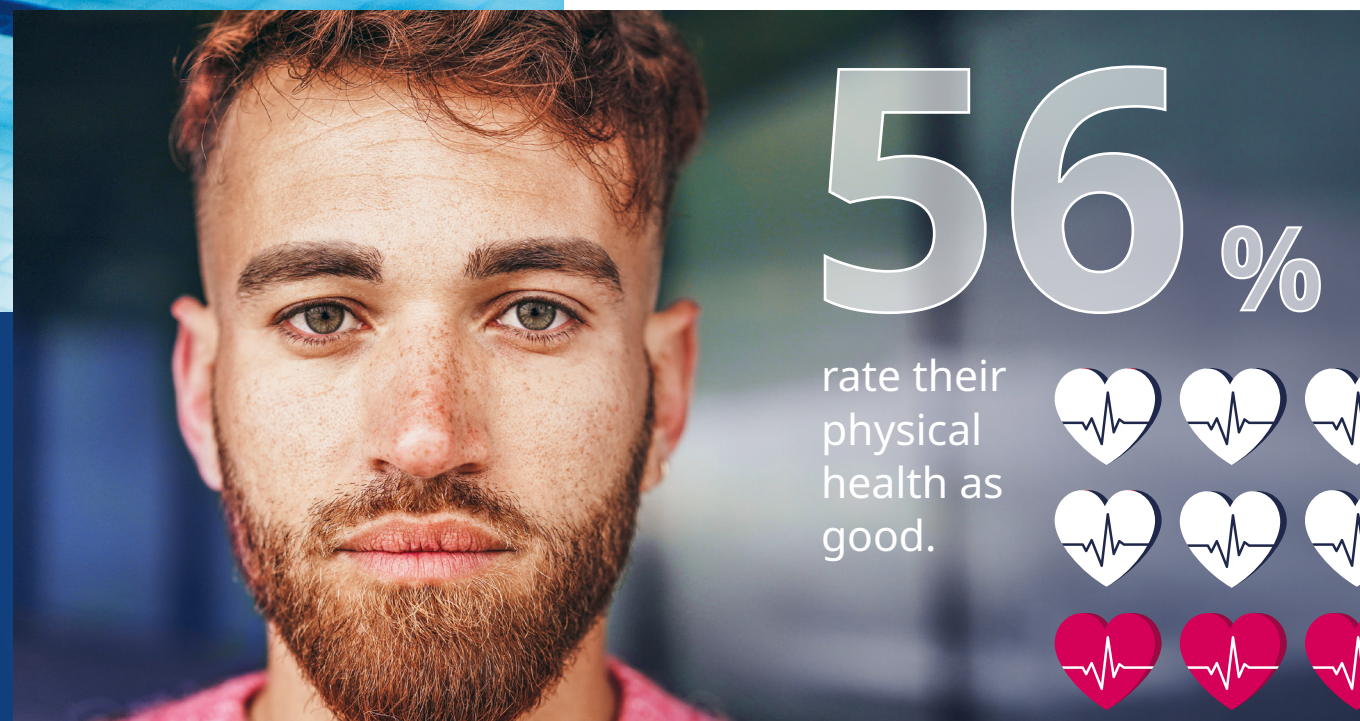
identifying it as their top incentive, Austria (80) and the Netherlands (78) ranking highest out of all surveyed countries. Good mental health follows at 56 percent, particularly in Ireland and Sweden (both 68). Longer life expectancy due to a healthy lifestyle is especially appealing to people in Romania, the UK and Ireland (49 each), whereas social pressure, which plays a comparatively minor role for Europeans overall (10), is rather pronounced in Uzbekistan (29) and among European young adults under the age of 34 (15).

While physical fitness is the main ambition for the majority of Europeans in pursuit of healthy living, only 56 percent overall do in fact rate their physical health as good. At the opposite end of the spectrum, 1 in 10 Europeans consider their physical well-being poor. In 2024, this was true of 54 and 11 percent, respectively, marking a modest improvement.

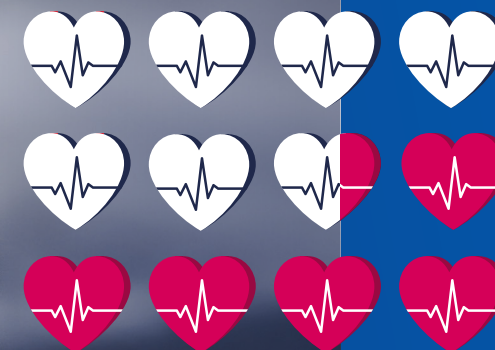
Romania (70), Austria (68), Switzerland (67) and France (66) report the highest shares of people in good physical condition. By contrast, Sweden (41), Slovakia (40), Kazakhstan (40) and Hungary (39) rank lowest, with Sweden and Hungary also showing the highest percentage of negative self-assessments (20 each).

From motivation to action

Knowing what is good for us is one thing – acting on it is another. So, how do Europeans turn intentions into daily routines when it comes to healthy habits? In this case, it is not so much the availability of such measures that counts, but whether people avail themselves of them. >>



rate their physical health as good.



! The diet disconnect

Acting against better judgement is a common theme for Europeans – and it starts with what they put on their plate:

Overall, 72 percent of Europeans say they regularly – at least once a week – engage in one or a variety of habits such as taking supplements, eating a balanced diet or exercising. Together with Hungary and Denmark (83 each), Ireland (81) and Slovakia (80) are most likely to take everyday action to support their health. In France (42), Belgium (37) and the Netherlands (35), many readily admit to foregoing such measures. Women (75) are more likely to engage in preventive activities than men (69).

The most common preventive behaviour, aside from practicing good hygiene (70), is the consumption of nutritional supplements (65) – mainly for immune support (34), energy and vitality (27) or to fill gaps in nutrition (22) – especially in Czechia (81), Hungary (80) and Slovakia (78). Regular physical activity (62) ranks third in Europe's prevention pyramid, championed by Austria and the Netherlands (both 73) as well as France, Germany and Spain (72 each). A not-so-fun fact: While 73 percent of Europeans follow a skincare routine, only 36 percent include sun protection in their regimen to prevent skin cancer.

Healthy habits: highs and hiccups

Speaking of “not-so-fun”: 25 percent of Europeans say they do not take any health prevention steps – they either do not see the need and feel healthy enough (31), struggle to cover the associated costs (21), lack motivation required to make preventative health a habit (19) or do not have enough time – either due to work (15) or personal commitments (13). And that leads us directly to the flip side of the healthy living coin, where not everything that glitters is gold.

Remember how 87 percent of Europeans acknowledge the benefits of a healthy diet? Upon closer inspection, only 57 percent act on this knowledge – a significant gap. Spain, ranking among the top three countries with the strongest conviction that a healthy diet can have preventative health benefits (93), has the highest share of people taking this to heart and eating healthily – 73 percent, marking a 20 percent difference. Interestingly, the fiercest proponents of healthy



eating – Romania (94) and Portugal (93) – also exhibit the most notable cognitive dissonance on the topic: a 34 percentage-point gap between those who understand that healthy eating is important and those who act accordingly.

A short way from wallet to well-being

Personal circumstances are a key reason for the gap between insights and actions: Factors like income and mental health reveal the gravity of circumstantial factors on the very ability to lead what may be considered a healthy life.

Among those facing economic struggles, only 36 percent describe their lifestyle as healthy; compared to 58 percent of those who are financially comfortable. Only 40 percent of people struggling to get by describe their physical health as good – among those with a solid financial background, this applies to 64 percent. According to Thomson et al. (2022), the transition out of poverty has a positive impact on mental health, but the impact of loss of income has an even more severe negative impact on mental health.¹ Another example: Barely 1 in 2 Europeans (49) who struggle financially say their mental health is good, compared to 72 percent of those better off. Overall, people working white-collar jobs are more likely to report a healthy lifestyle (55) than those working blue-collar jobs (44).

The STADA Health Report reveals many more examples of structural inequality in health matters – largely driven by individual financial circumstances. At a time when crises, inflation and economic challenges are spreading across the continent, the close link between income and health status can become a serious threat.

Health decisions start at home

One key reason why personal circumstances matter so much in health decisions is that people tend to trust those closest to them when it comes to health advice. So, whom do people rely on most >>

49%

of Europeans want to cultivate healthier habits.

for help and inspiration in decision-making: their family (58) and life partners (57). General practitioners (56) are the most influential professional voices, but pharmacists also hold considerable sway (30). In comparison, the government (14) and cultural or religious values (22) play modest roles. Digital communities or forums (15) and influencers (11) matter least, except among younger respondents under 34. They are more likely to base health decisions on what they see online (23) or what they are told by influencers (21) than their government (16), and to them, friends are just as relevant a source as their GP (51 each).

Roadblocks on the path to health

Aside from personal circumstances, what are other hurdles when it comes to implementing health in everyday life? 41 percent of Europeans cite a lack of motivation that keeps them from living healthier – a particular hindrance for people in Belgium and Ireland (52 each), as well as Poland,

the UK and Sweden (51 each). Yet, according to Ariana et al. (2024), engaging narratives, the effective use of social media, and the involvement of community leaders significantly impact the promotion of a healthy lifestyle.² Around 1 in 3 Europeans (31) say they simply do not have enough time in their day to make it happen, with white-collar workers and full-time students reporting the biggest time constraints. The financial aspect of healthy living is too much to bear for 28 percent, which applies most to people in Hungary (54), Portugal (39) and Uzbekistan (35), and more so to women (32) than men (24). Again, outside support is encouraged: 15 percent think guidance from someone more knowledgeable could help them live healthier lives.

1 in 3 Europeans drink to feel happy

Beyond the battle with ourselves, the lure of sweet temptations often stands in the way of healthy living. Alcohol consumption is high on



Bryan Kim
Executive Vice President
Western Europe

“Health awareness is high across Europe – but awareness without access or support leads to frustration, not progress. If we want healthier societies, **we must close the gap between intention and action and create conditions that make healthy living truly achievable for all.**”

the list of unhealthy behaviours, second only to caffeine consumption and certainly more harmful. While alcohol abuse is not necessarily defined by any particular number of drinks but the effects it can have on people's lives, health risks increase with each intake. One in three (34) of Europeans say they drink at least on a weekly basis, 15 percent do so multiple times a week. The UK takes the lead in weekly consumption, with 46 percent stating they drink at least once every 7 days, followed by Ireland (45), the Netherlands and Spain (both 42). The main reasons for alcohol consumption include wanting to feel happy (31), needing help to relax or sleep (23) and stress relief (18). Men (44) are significantly more likely to drink on a weekly basis than women (25) and twice as likely to drink daily (6 vs 3 percent). They also score higher than women for all motivators like happiness (34 vs 27), needing help to unwind or sleep (25 vs 22), stress relief (20 vs 17) and distraction from problems (15 vs 13). Unsettlingly,

almost a third of women (32) say they do not know why they drink, compared to 23 percent of men. 31 percent of Europeans light a cigarette or consume other tobacco products at least once a week, especially in Bulgaria (47), Serbia (42) as well as Czechia (41), mainly to relieve stress. Other unhealthy behaviours include both overeating and excessive physical exercise (26 each, at least weekly). Drugs – soft and hard – are consumed by 5 and 3 percent of Europeans, respectively.

(Un)healthy despite themselves

Looking at the extent of unhealthy habits amid their pledge to healthy living, many Europeans (49) are aware they could and want to do better. Of those willing to make a change, 39 percent say they need less stress at work to change unhealthy behaviours, 36 percent wish for less stress in their home environment, 30 percent require support from loved ones and 24 percent are open to professional support.

The investigation into European health attitudes and behaviours shows that while many are on the right path, understanding alone is not enough. What matters are the habits we cultivate, ideally in a structurally fairer environment, which have a profound influence on long-term outcomes. The proof is – quite literally – in the pudding. ■

02

MENTAL HEALTH & RESILIENCE

How Europeans are staying afloat in an age of overload

Coping or Cracking?

In a world that tends to pull them in all directions, emotional well-being remains a delicate topic in Europeans' lives – despite increasing openness around mental health. Stress and burnout are no longer taboo, and many are eager to improve their mindset. But with work and financial stress wreaking havoc on their minds, Europeans are struggling to strike a healthy balance.



36%

of Europeans struggle with mental health.

Only 7%

are getting support from a therapist.



29%

of Europeans with poor mental health have called in sick due to stress.

Healthy lifestyle behaviours and habits promote mental health as well as our overall well-being – and vice versa. Not only does the state of our mental health directly impact our perception of physical health, as we revealed in Chapter 1; it also forms the very foundation of our ability to function and navigate life’s challenges. In 2025, 64 percent of Europeans say they have “good” mental health – a slight but noteworthy stabilization compared to 65 percent in 2024. Romania (84), Bulgaria (80), Serbia and Switzerland (both 74) report exceptionally good mental health. Looking at gender differences, men score higher rates for mental health (68) than women (60). Overall, more than one-third of Europeans (36) struggle with their emotional well-being, of which 9 percent even rate their mental health as outright “poor” or “very poor”.

Finances and work most taxing for mental health

Delving into the causes of this emotional strain, two culprits stand out: Financial concerns (26) are the most prominent mental health killer, with people in Uzbekistan (45) and Ireland (38) feeling this most acutely. People who struggle financially are three times more likely to report “poor” mental health (16) compared to those who are economically comfortable (5). Following close behind is work-related stress, the effects of which are most strongly felt in France (35), Switzerland (34), Denmark and Spain (both 32).

Burnout: a generational divide

Finances also exacerbate experiences of burnout: 72 percent of people who are struggling to get by report familiarity with feelings of burnout, compared to 62 percent of people who have fewer money worries. Overall, 66 percent of Europeans have either experienced burnout, felt on the verge of it or at least reported feelings associated with it – a considerable increase compared to the former all-time high of 60 percent in 2024. Burnout is especially common in Ireland (80), Hungary (76), Kazakhstan (75), Serbia (74), and Denmark (73).

Women (71) are considerably more likely to experience feelings of burnout than men (60). There is also a striking difference in generational experience: 75 percent of Europeans under 34 report feelings of burnout, compared to 71 percent of 35- to 54-year-olds and only 53 percent of those aged 55 and above.

Calling in stressed

In the face of these pressures, many Europeans are taking short-term action to protect their mental health. In the past year, 13 percent have called in sick due to stress. For people with poor mental health, this figure climbs more than twice as high to 29 percent. Among 18- to 34-year-olds, one in five (21) have called in stressed – compared to 14 percent among those aged 35 to 54. This could signal a turning point – a generation less willing to “push through” at all costs. In the UK (22) and Denmark (19), people are most likely to miss work due to feeling overwhelmed. In their 2024 study on immune-neuroendocrine responses to stress, Hamilton et al. found that stress and poor mental health can lead to measurable biological changes, which in turn increase the risk for physical health problems.¹

In the context of these challenges, new work models such as part- or full-time remote work offer new ways of navigating work and home life. Though 57 percent of Europeans cannot work from home, either due to the nature of their job (45) or company policy (12), the rest feel rather confident about the benefits. 73 percent of those work remotely, at least in part, think it has improved their mental health, mainly due to an improved work-life balance (41), less time spent commuting (34) and increased productivity (30). Still, remote work is not without its downsides: 13 percent report feelings of isolation and 12 percent struggle with motivation at home.

Mental health support far from widespread

With financial worries and work-related stress weighing heavily on Europeans’ minds, surely

people must be eager to find support in supporting and improving their mental health? It seems the opposite is true. Only 17 percent are engaged in some sort of professional or self-help routine, of which a mere 10 percent work with mental health professionals such as therapists (7) or counsellors (3). One possible reason for this low uptake – apart from accessibility, which is insufficient in most countries – may be how mental health is valued at the systemic level. Three in five (60) Europeans think that mental and physical health are not treated equally in their country’s healthcare system. This perception of inequality is particularly strong in Spain (78), Hungary and Bulgaria (76 each), and Portugal (70). In contrast, people in Switzerland (40) and Uzbekistan (47) are more likely to feel that their systems give mental and physical health equal attention.

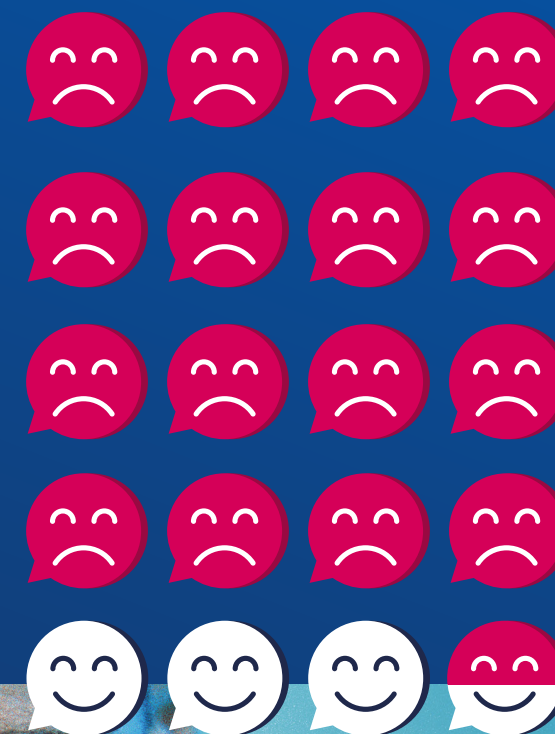
All pain, no gain?

The main motivations to seek outside support include reducing stress and anxiety (60), improving overall happiness and well-being (52), and learning how to better manage one’s emotions (47). Physical health benefits from better mental health are motivation enough for 41 percent, and an equal share seek to stabilise existing mental health problems. Just under 1 in 4 (24) say they seek support to manage a diagnosed mental health condition, most commonly in Germany, Denmark and Sweden (35 each). In a 2023 Policy Study, the Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS) investigated the necessity of a Europe-wide approach to the mental health crisis. >>



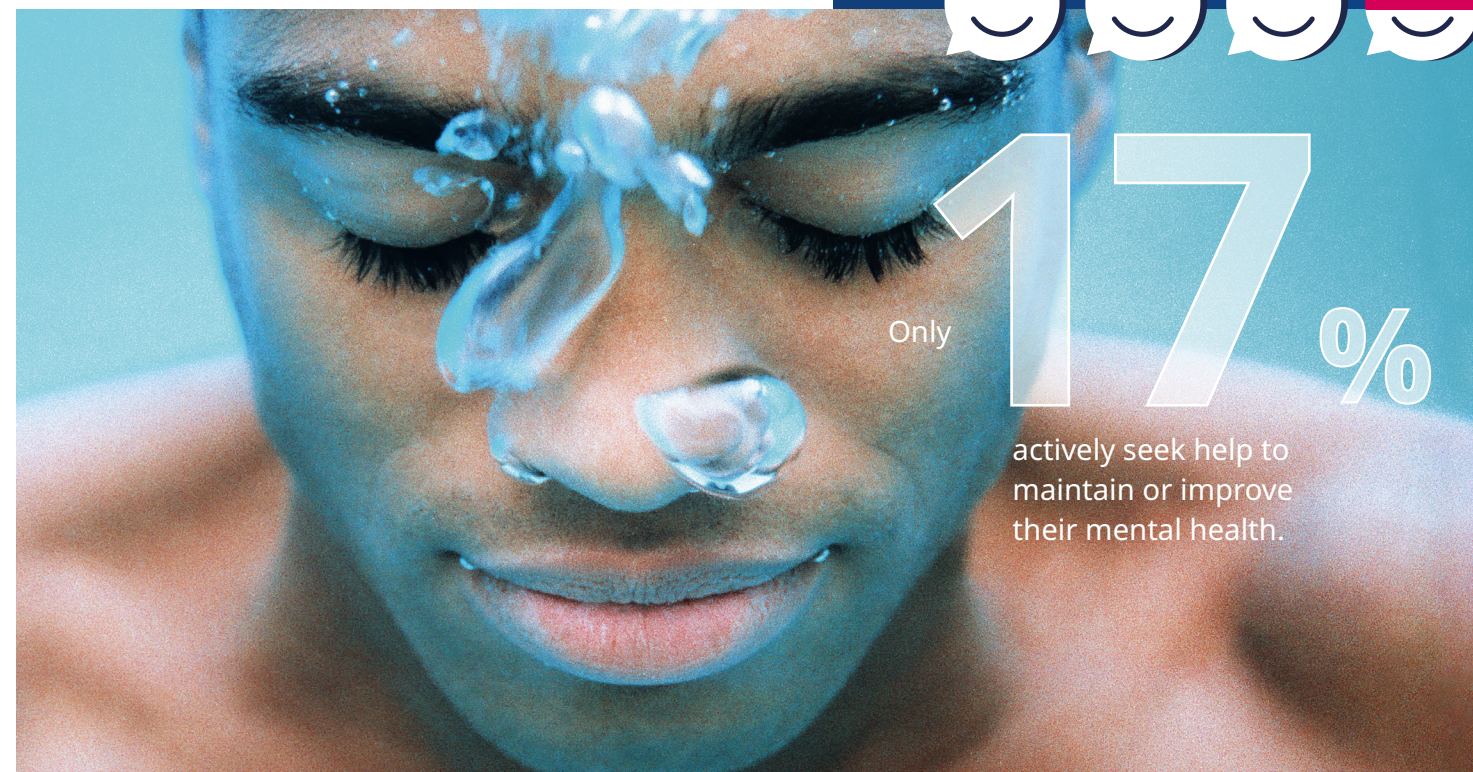
Suffering in silence

Despite numerous factors putting their mental well-being to the test, most Europeans refrain from getting help.



Only 17%

actively seek help to maintain or improve their mental health.





Stressed and struggling

Amid financial worries and work-related stress, Europeans have plenty of motivation to relieve the pressure:



60 %

52 %

47 %

With limited access to and openness towards professional mental health support, many rely on informal coping mechanisms:

Spending time with loved ones

Physical exercise

Meditating and yoga

Reducing stress and anxiety

Boosting overall happiness

Improving emotion management

27 %

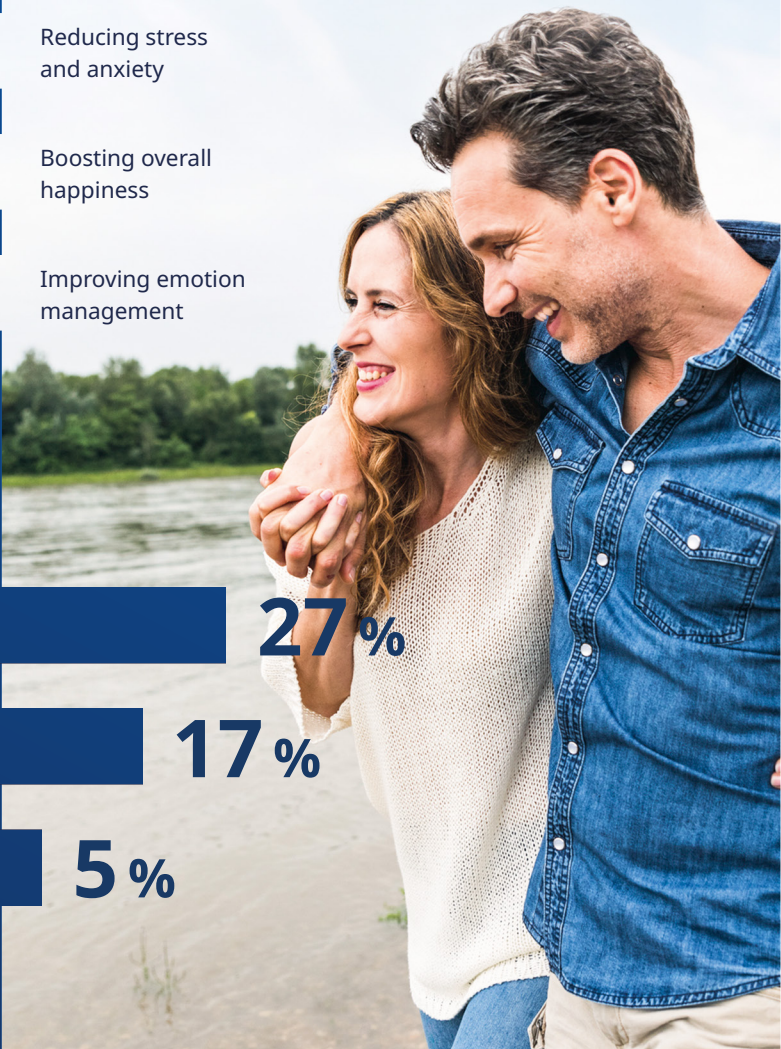
17 %

5 %

Through different case studies, they found that chronic underinvestment, workforce shortages, long waiting lists and persistent stigma mean that many people with mental health needs – especially in vulnerable groups – are unable to access timely and appropriate care, with civil society organisations often left to fill the gaps.² Yet, the majority abstain – (29) feel that professional support would not be effective for them, 22 percent cannot afford it and 12 percent shy away from the emotional labour of dealing with mental health issues. Or so they think. It seems that even those who are not seeking professional help are still looking for relief, albeit in different ways.

Informal coping mechanisms make up for lack of professional help

In fact, 1 in 2 Europeans find alternative coping mechanisms to mitigate mental distress, with time spent with loved ones (27) and exercise (17) the most popular alternatives. And it might be worthwhile to consider how cultural conditioning plays into the mental health debate: While Bulgaria is among those least likely to seek outside help, they earn top results (56) in terms of self-administered mental health support, along



“When one in five young Europeans calls in sick due to stress, it speaks volumes about the weight they carry. This isn’t about resilience or productivity, but people. We owe it to our teams to create spaces where they feel supported and appreciated.”



Simone Berger
Chief People Officer STADA Group

with Uzbekistan (62) and Serbia (55). Here, social norms, stigma or lack of access may limit straightforward professional intervention – and in its place, community practices and individual resilience step in.

Social media: the habit that works against us

While mental health seems to be stabilising, a look below the surface reveals that all is far from well. And although the younger generation are taking steps to prioritise their mental well-being and seeking support more readily than their parents did, many still rely on alternative coping mechanisms. And they remain largely unaware of a major threat looming in their pockets: social media.

Although only 7 percent of under-34-year-olds identify social media overuse as potentially dangerous behaviour, their habits tell a different story. 44 percent use it obsessively at least once a week, and 22 percent say they check it compulsively every day. Their intentions are clear: distraction from problems (29), seeking happiness (22), wanting to unwind (20) or aiming to relieve stress (17). Alarmingly, 12 percent even acknowledge compulsive tendencies. While these motivations are classic self-soothing behaviours, they are potentially misdirected at a medium that may instead perpetuate symptoms. Young Europeans are caught in a vicious cycle: the very tool they use to escape stress and emotional overload may, in fact, be reinforcing it.

Breaking the cycle: the case for unplugging

Not everyone is blind to this contradiction. Half of young Europeans say they would consider a digital detox – taking deliberate breaks from

socials and their phone to reset and relax – to improve their ability to focus (22), spend more intentional time with loved ones (19), and achieve better sleep or lower stress levels (17). Ironically, these goals are aligned with the reasons they use social media in the first place. However, 41 percent say they are not ready to disconnect. They worry about feeling isolated (9), losing touch with the world (9), or missing out professionally (7).

Rethinking mental health, taking action

The tension between mental health and digital connection will define how the next generation approaches well-being. Helping them navigate this paradox on their own terms will not only be about screen-time limits, but about reshaping habits, managing and abandoning societal and generational expectations, and redefining what it means to relax.

This shift requires action on two fronts: Healthcare systems must move beyond raising awareness and grant mental and physical health equal recognition, facilitating resources and accessibility of services. Simultaneously, and perhaps just as importantly, individuals must recognise that significant potential for mental health improvement – a more sustainable approach to social media use, for example – is literally in their hands.

03

HEALTH SYSTEM & TRUST

How frameworks hinder healthy choices

A Call for Reform.

Europe's health systems are under pressure – and under scrutiny. While trust in doctors and pharmacists remains high, it stands on shaky ground. Large parts of the population find their systems unfair and feel left behind, especially those facing mental and financial hardship. Preventive care is on the rise, but access is limited – even as technologies like AI offer the potential to make European healthcare more equal and accessible for all.



58%

of Europeans are satisfied with their national healthcare systems.

Only 51%

of Europeans think their healthcare system is fair.

! Humans over algorithms

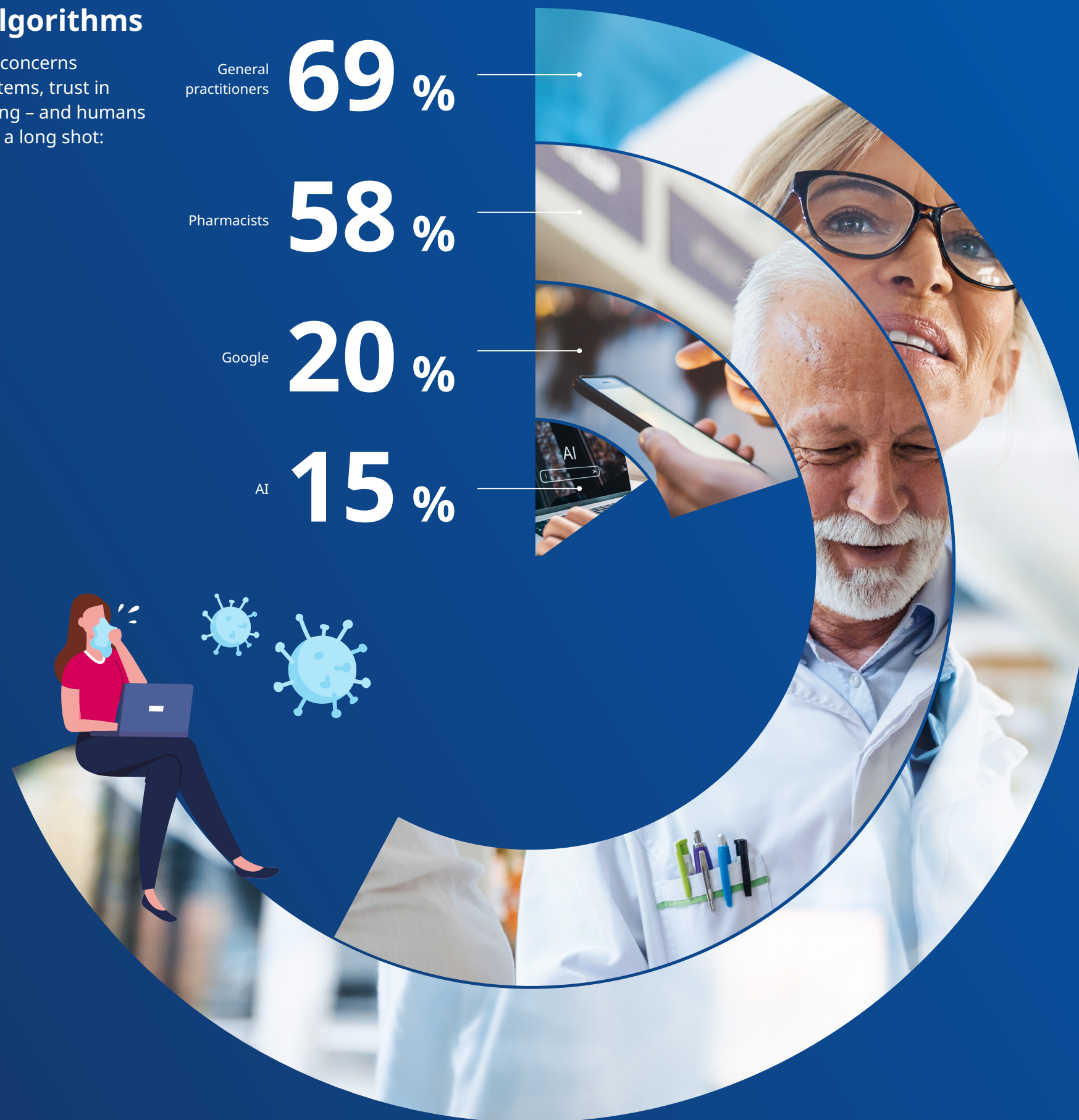
Although Europeans have concerns about their healthcare systems, trust in its key actors remains strong – and humans outperform technology by a long shot:

With a population striving for healthier living and agency but falling short of the mark – not exclusively through any fault of their own – European healthcare stands at a crossroads. Today, 58 percent of Europeans are satisfied with their national healthcare systems, which indicates a slight uptake from 56 percent in 2024, yet remains far from the 74 percent recorded in 2020. In some countries, dissatisfaction is alarmingly high: Hungary (74), Serbia (63), Bulgaria (59), and Ireland (57) are among the countries where more than half of the population do not feel adequately supported by their healthcare system. In contrast, satisfaction is highest in Belgium (81), Switzerland (81), Denmark (79), and the Netherlands (76).

Once again, social disparities transcend borders, digging trenches along the lines of which the future of health in Europe may be decided. Financial security dictates where Europeans stand on system satisfaction, with a sharp drop among those who are financially struggling (48) compared to the financially comfortable (63). Health status, which healthcare systems should improve for all, is an even more divisive factor, with those already in good physical health reporting considerably higher satisfaction (63) than those on the opposite end of the spectrum (44). The same applies to mental health: 62 percent of those with good mental well-being are satisfied with their healthcare system, compared to just 42 percent of those struggling. It seems that the people most in need of support from their healthcare systems are disillusioned by what they find.

Unfair systems cause continental divide

Could this – at least partly – be grounded in an underlying sense of injustice? A recent study suggests that a country's political system, its formal institutions and the ability of citizens to participate in the decision-making process can have a significant positive impact on the well-being of the population (Pereira et al., 2024).¹ While invaluable overall, healthcare systems are not only measured



in terms of the levels of care they provide, but also by the accessibility of this care and services. However, only half of Europeans (51) would say their healthcare system is fair, and 44 percent explicitly disagree with this statement. Again, financial vulnerability proves divisive, with fairness perception differing starkly among those who are struggling (41) and comfortable (56). With limited access to support in many countries, poor mental health adds to the dilemma, with only 38 percent of those struggling calling their system fair, compared to 54 percent of their peers with stronger mental health. Notably, fairness perception rises to 72 percent in countries where people think mental and physical health are treated as equally important, compared to just 43 percent where parity is lacking. It seems that high-quality healthcare comes at a price: exclusivity. In Belgium and Switzerland, for instance, 81 percent are satisfied with their healthcare systems – but a much lower share of their respective populations also call their systems fair (63 and 68 respectively). Can a healthcare system be considered good if it serves only a portion of the population?

Doubts about critical care readiness

With current satisfaction at best moderate and fairness called into question, how confident do Europeans feel about the possibility of future improvement, more specifically their healthcare system's ability to provide the required care in case of a serious illness? Only 15 percent of Europeans have total faith that they would be looked after, an additional 43 percent have mild reservations, and 42 percent confess more substantial doubts. In Denmark (78) and Spain (77), trust levels are particularly strong, with significant shares even expressing complete confidence (32 and 24 respectively). In nations like Hungary (42), Serbia and Kazakhstan (34 each) as well as Romania (31), Slovakia (29) and Bulgaria (28), a significant portion of the population fears being left alone when it matters most.

Naturally, reservations about future care correlate strongly with financial security and mental health. Those who feel mentally unwell or economically insecure are more likely to worry about falling through the cracks of overburdened systems.

Trust in health actors remains strong

Thankfully, concerns about the system do not seem to foster reservations against their actors. In health matters, general practitioners remain the most trusted professionals in Europe (69), especially in Denmark (81), Belgium (80) and Portugal (79). Other medical professionals (61) and pharmacists (58) are close behind, with >>

pharmacists particularly trusted in Ireland and Belgium (both 69), as well as in the Netherlands and the UK (both 68) – followed by a significant drop-off. About 1 in 4 (24) rely on the information provided by specialised trade media, and Google comes in second among non-human health advisors (20). AI (15) is more trustworthy than general media (12) and healthcare influencers (11). While politicians come in last place – only 8 percent of Europeans trust them on health matters – the young generation are considerably more likely (11) to have faith in them compared to those aged 55 and over.

AI in healthcare: opportunity or obstacle?

While only a minority of Europeans currently trust AI on health matters, it offers a multitude of new opportunities for improvements in healthcare. And, looking at fairness and doubts about quality of future care, it could assist in equalising

systems, delivering faster and more objective diagnoses and treatment, thereby reducing costs. A recent study shows that AI is suitable for providing helpful health recommendations. The AI answers were easy to understand and 85.4 percent correct (Deiana et al., 2023)², and can therefore be a useful aid in healthcare. However, these tools are not free from risk and should be consulted with medical experts (Deiana et al., 2023)². Still, Europeans remain divided on the topic of AI in healthcare. 2 in 5 (39) would consider consulting AI instead of a doctor – and almost half in Denmark (48) and Sweden (47). The main benefits include its round-the-clock accessibility and immediate response, which 49 percent of AI supporters value, together with convenience (45) and the technology's supposed objectivity (31). 1 in 5 Europeans in favour of AI even say they feel more comfortable sharing sensitive information with a digital service than a person.

Still 1 in 2 Europeans (52) remain wary of the technology. Reservations are most pronounced in Uzbekistan (71), followed by Belgium (65) and the Netherlands (61). And their scepticism is rooted in valid concerns: 53 percent have doubts about the accuracy of AI, especially in the UK and Ireland (both 61), while 44 percent do not want to miss out on personal interaction with their healthcare provider, especially in Sweden (54) and France (53). Roughly 39 percent simply do not want to depend on technology for such crucial matters, especially in Germany (49). Concerns about data safety and privacy are especially pronounced in Ireland (25) and the UK (24). However, these barriers may be temporary, as 25 percent of those opposed to AI might reconsider once the technology matures.

Pharmacies are Europe's health safety nets

Despite accelerating growth and incorporation of AI in healthcare, in-person contact remains a steadfast need for many Europeans. This is also reflected in their care-seeking behaviour: when dealing with common health complaints, many turn to their GP or pharmacist for support.

The most common complaint sending Europeans to their GP surgery is back pain, for which 48 percent make an appointment. Fatigue (43) and fever (41) are almost equally likely to trigger a visit, although significant shares of the population (25 and 35 respectively) also say they would give trusted home remedies a try to get relief. 1 in 3 would consult their doctor in case of insomnia. While home remedies are rather popular for many everyday concerns like headaches, sore throats, stuffy noses and nausea, it is striking that pharmacists are very close behind – Europeans are taking self-care very literally, with pharmacists as their trusted safety net.

Although most pharmaceutical and medicinal products can be ordered online, face-to-face interaction remains among the main motivations for Europeans to visit physical pharmacies. 40 percent specifically value their pharmacists' advice, particularly in Portugal and Serbia (48 each). Another 40 percent feel secure knowing they can get whatever they need from their pharmacy whenever they need it – in Czechia (53), Bulgaria (50), Austria (49) and Slovakia (48). Pharmacies are also regarded as convenient "one-stop shops" for all health needs by 30 percent of Europeans. 28 percent say they go to their pharmacy particularly because they know and trust the people who work there – such bonds are especially cherished by people in Spain (44), Ireland (43), Belgium and Portugal (41 each). In Germany (35), Ireland (34) and Austria (27), people are

"Europeans are ready to live healthier lives. It's our responsibility to meet their motivation with systems that support, technologies that empower, and policies that ensure no one is left behind."



Christos Gallis
Executive Vice President Eastern Europe

proud to support local businesses, which 17 percent of Europeans cite as a reason to shop at a physical pharmacy. Other reasons include not leaving a digital trail by shopping locally (17), receiving advice on "taboo topics" (14) as well as discounts and loyalty programmes (14). Only 5 percent of Europeans say they do not visit physical pharmacies.

Prevention on the rise

We have learned that Europeans know what actions they can take in their everyday lives – following through is what they struggle with. >>

39%

of Europeans currently trust AI when it comes to health matters.

Acute health issues can occur at any time. How do they fare when it comes to preventive health screenings, many of which are usually scheduled once a year or even more seldomly?

Fantastic news: Preventive screenings are on the rise. Two-thirds of Europeans now attend at least some preventive check-ups, and 20 percent say they attend all available screenings – an increase by 5 percentage points compared to 2023. Women (25) and those over 55 (26) continue to lead the way in terms of attendance, while men and young people lag behind (16 and 14 percent attend all respectively). Looking at countries, the Netherlands is the frontrunner in prevention: 79 percent attend preventive screenings, 42 percent of which even say they get all examinations relevant to them. The main motivations to get screened include the simple conviction that screenings are sensible and important (55), and the peace of mind from knowing that all is well – or that potential issues are caught in time (50).

Misconceptions about preventive health checks still widespread

Romania and Kazakhstan bring up the rear with non-attendance rates of 62 and 58 percent, respectively, mainly because they feel they do not need preventive health checks (30 and 27, respectively). This notion is also the most widespread argument for Europeans overall (28). Alarming-ly, 1 in 4 Europeans say they do not know which screenings they can and should attend. Consequently, 21 percent also draw a blank on the preventive check-ups covered by their national service or insurance – interestingly, no one is as unclear on this as the Netherlands, the number one overall attendant: Here, 39 percent of people do not know which preventive checks are covered by their health insurance.

The majority (58) are content with the preventive care they are offered – 23 percent even state that all services they use are covered by their insurance. Looking at countries, Denmark (40), UK and Czechia (32 each), all with stellar attendance, are particularly satisfied. Still, 21 percent of Europeans are dissatisfied with the range of services available to them.

While reasons for lack of attendance are complex and manifold, one way to address them could not be more obvious: Countries where people are sent reminders – e.g. by their GP or insurance company – have higher attendance rates for preventive screenings than those without. In Ireland, Sweden and France, over 1 in 4 people also say that campaigns issued by national health agencies motivate them to attend preventive screenings, and men are more likely to attend preventive



Prevention gains ground

While misconceptions about preventive check-ups are still widespread, attendance has improved.

screenings suggested by their doctor. The bottom line: The more people hear about prevention, the more likely they are to get screened.

The elder care conundrum

Even if all goes well – thanks to a healthy lifestyle, regular preventive check-ups, sheer luck or a combination of the three – there may come a time when living by oneself is no longer an option. With the baby-boomer generation approaching retirement, Europeans have different ideas about how to care for the elderly and what they would like their own care to look like.

While no respondents currently live in a care home themselves, 12 percent would consider moving there in the future. In Portugal (21), Sweden and Denmark (19), Italy (18) and Austria (16), people are very open to the idea. About 1 in 5 (19)

are undecided about the prospect, and 68 percent reject the idea, with Uzbekistan (94), the Netherlands (85), Hungary (84), Kazakhstan and Romania (80 each) particularly outspoken in their rejection. It seems, however, that Europeans have different standards for their own care and that of their relatives for whom they are responsible: 27 percent of Europeans would consider putting a family member into a care facility; 12 percent have already done so. The main reasons for placing or having placed someone in a care home include them requiring a round-the-clock-care (50), special kinds of care (49) or being physically unable to provide the care someone needs (28). Openness to care homes is consistent across all age groups, but a financial consideration: people who are struggling financially are less likely (33) to out-source care of the elderly than those who have money to spend (42).

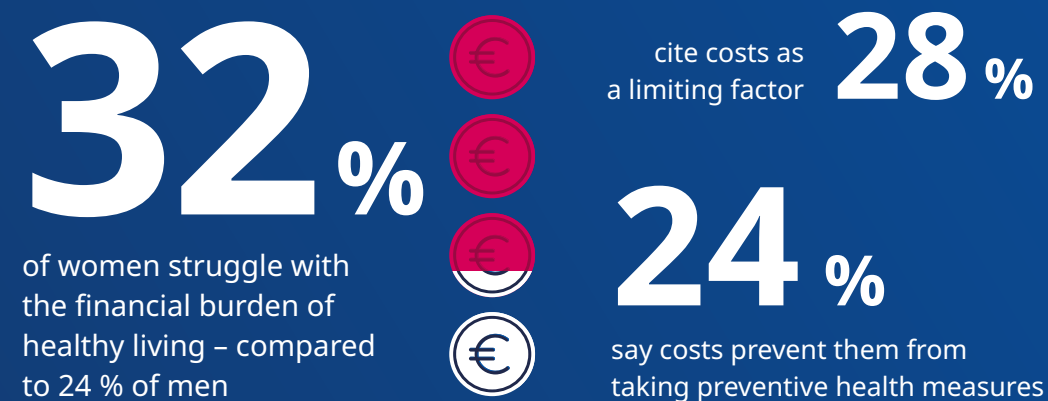
47 percent reject the idea of putting relatives into a care home, especially in Uzbekistan (97), Kazakhstan (76), Romania and Bulgaria (64 each) as well as the Netherlands (58). Their main reasons include better quality of life at home for the person requiring care (37), the fear that a relative may feel abandoned when placed into a home (36), their own struggle with guilt (33), worries about inadequate care due to staff shortages (27), as well as cultural expectations and customs dictating that the family care for the elderly at home (23).

Building a healthier future together

Europe's healthcare landscape seems to be dictated by individual agency and systemic inadequacy. Europeans are willing to invest in their health and embrace lifestyle improvements, but require guidance from trusted health actors like pharmacists and GPs, as well as encouragement and reminders to seek preventive care. Yet, personal motivation is destined to clash with systems that are perceived as unfair and inadequate by many. Mental health is a ticking time bomb, deprioritised despite its demonstrable impact on system trust, satisfaction, and overall health behaviours with potential for considerable economic consequences. Money – or rather, a lack thereof – is a key barrier to access that perpetuates health inequality.

To move forward, Europe must support individual efforts, incentivise healthy behaviours, and not only modernise but also humanise its healthcare systems. Future investments in AI must go hand in hand with policies that promote equity, accessibility and mental well-being. The road ahead is long – but Europeans are ready to take on the challenge. ■

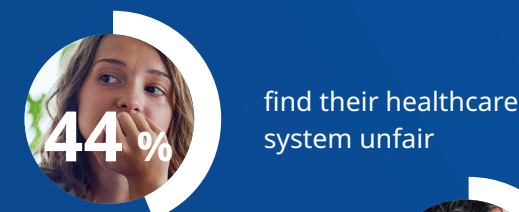
Economic barriers for Europeans not living a healthy lifestyle:



Personal barriers for Europeans not living a healthy lifestyle:



Systemic barriers all Europeans face:



are dissatisfied with their healthcare system



Barriers Europeans with poor mental health experience:

64% do not seek external support for mental health struggles



have called in sick due to stress – this goes for 13 % of Europeans overall

The biggest **barriers** in
European healthcare

References

Chapter 01

1. Thomson, R. M., Igelström, E., Purba, A. K., Shimonovich, M., Thomson, H., McCartney, G., Reeves, A., Leyland, A. H., Pearce, A., & Katikireddi, S. V. (2022). How do income changes impact on mental health and wellbeing for working-age adults? A systematic review and meta-analysis. *The Lancet Public Health*, 7(6), e515–e528. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2468-2667\(22\)00058-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2468-2667(22)00058-5)
2. Ariana, P. M., Clarashiva, A., & Pakaya, S. S. (2024). Mass communication strategy in encouraging the adoption of a healthy lifestyle in society. *Ilomata International Journal of Social Science*, 5(1), 237–253. <https://doi.org/10.52728/ijss.v5i1.1096>

Chapter 02

1. Hamilton, OS., Iob, E., Ajnakina, O., Kirkbride, JB., & Steptoe, A. (2024) Immune-neuroendocrine patterning and response to stress. A latent profile analysis in the English longitudinal study of ageing. *Brain, Behavior, and Immunity*. 115, 600–608. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bbi.2023.11.012>
2. Mitchell, G., Murphy, E., Bojarcz, S., & Cohen, S. (2023). Is an EU-wide approach to the mental health crisis necessary? FEPS Policy Study. <https://feeps-europe.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/PS-Is-an-EU-wide-approach-to-the-mental-health-crisis-necessary.pdf>

Chapter 03

1. Pereira, C., Gonçalves, H., & Sequeira, T. (2024). Determinants of well-being [arXiv preprint]. *arXiv*. <https://doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.2401.17047Academia+2>
2. Deiana, G., Dettori, M., Arghittu, A., Azara, A., Gabutti, G., & Castiglia, P. (2023). Artificial intelligence and public health: Evaluating ChatGPT responses to vaccination myths and misconceptions. *Vaccines*, 11(7), 1217. <https://doi.org/10.3390/vaccines11071217>

Author

STADA Arzneimittel AG
Stadastraße 2-18
61118 Bad Vilbel
Telephone: +49 (0) 61 01/6 03-0
E-mail: info@stada.de
Website: www.stada.com

Publisher

STADA Arzneimittel AG

Responsible in accordance with press law
Frank Staud

Project management and editing

STADA Arzneimittel AG, Bad Vilbel
Market research: Human8
Layout/design: komm.passion GmbH
Printing: Pinsker Druck und Medien GmbH

Image sources

© Jacob Lund – stock.adobe.com; © Halfpoint – stock.adobe.com;
© Lemberg Vector studio – shutterstock.com; © Frazao Studio Latino – gettyimages.de;
© BalanceFormCreative – stock.adobe.com; © DisobeyArt – stock.adobe.com;
© Iconic Prototype – shutterstock.com; © Lucas Ottone/Stocksy – stock.adobe.com;
© SurfsUp – shutterstock.com; © Miljan Živković – stock.adobe.com; © Lydia Gorges;
© Guido Mieth – gettyimages.de; © Tatiana Maksimova – gettyimages.de;
© Laurence Monneret – gettyimages.de; © Westend61 – gettyimages.de;
© gorodenkoff – istockphoto.com; © peopleimages.com – stock.adobe.com;
© Dusan Petkovic – stock.adobe.com; © iana_kolesnikova – stock.adobe.com;
© terovesalainen – stock.adobe.com; © ivector – shutterstock.com;
© The img – shutterstock.com; © Rido Franz – istockphoto.com; © Angelika Zinzow;
© Peakstock – stock.adobe.com; © bnenin – stock.adobe.com;
© Yakobchuk Olena – stock.adobe.com; © Drazen – stock.adobe.com;

Copyright

© 2025 by STADA Arzneimittel AG
Current information on the STADA Group can be found on the Internet at www.stada.com.

Legal notice

Distribution – in whole or in part – is only permitted when quoting the source and copyright.

This publication is protected by copyright. All copying is expressly forbidden, unless written permission from STADA Arzneimittel AG is obtained. Copying for exclusively private use is the exception to this.

Sample copies can be requested from:

STADA Arzneimittel AG
Media Relations
Telephone: +49 (0) 61 01/6 03-597
E-mail: press@stada.de

STADA Arzneimittel AG
Stadastraße 2-18, 61118 Bad Vilbel

