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# Mental Health and Sport

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European Region

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# Overview of today's presentation:



WHO Office on Quality of Care and Patient Safety



Physical activity and mental health



Conclusions



# The Programme on QoC for C&A MH







**“PUT YOUR  
MENTAL HEALTH  
FIRST...  
THAT’S MORE  
IMPORTANT  
THAN ANY OTHER  
MEDAL YOU  
COULD WIN”**

*- Simone Biles*

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# Mental health and athletes

- There is a lack of high-quality systematic reviews
- However current evidence suggests that athletes are equally at risk of mental health conditions as the general population.
- A greater risk of mental health conditions may be experienced by elite athletes who are injured, approaching / in retirement or experiencing performance difficulty.



# Mental health help seeking and athletes

- Athletes are as likely as the general population to seek mental health care.
- Barriers to help seeking include team culture and concerns around selection and confidentiality
- Facilitators of mental health seeking suggest the value of athlete role models in normalizing help-seeking for athletes



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# Prevalence of child and adolescent mental health conditions in the WHO European Region

**1 in 7** children and adolescents (0-19 years old) are living with a **mental health condition**

**1 in 5** adolescents aged 15-19 years old are living with a **mental health condition**

**Suicide** is the **leading cause of death** for those aged **15-29 years old**.





# Prevalence of child and youth mental health conditions in Greece

**1 in 4 adolescents** aged 15-19 year olds is estimated to be living with a mental health condition. (25.5%)

Adolescents are reporting **more sleep difficulties and irritability** now than they were a few years ago.

Self-harm is the **6th leading cause of death** among 10-14 and 15-19 year olds in Greece.

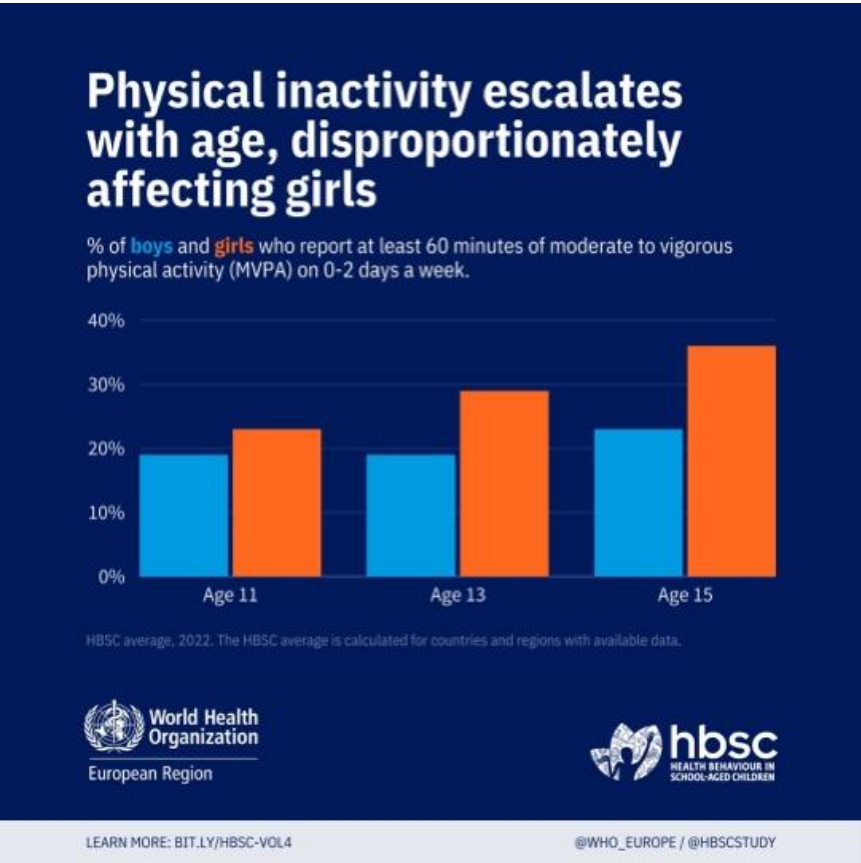
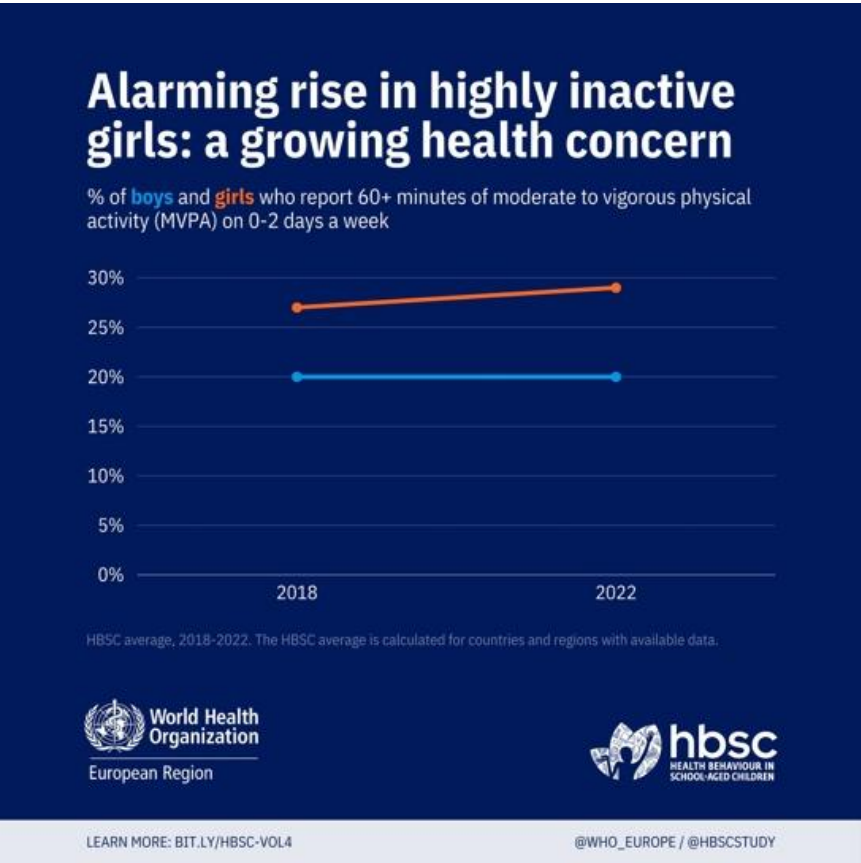


# Physical activity as a way to improve mental health

- Participation in sport (community and elite) is related to better mental health, lower psychological ill-being and improved social outcomes
- Adults participating in team sport have more favorable health outcomes than those participating in individual sport, and those participating in sports more often generally report the greatest benefits.
- Physical activity has positive effects on cognitive function, academic outcomes and mental health



# Physical activity in children and young people across the WHO European Region



# WHO guidelines for physical activity

## CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS

## WHO guidelines on physical activity and sedentary behaviour

At least



**60**  
minutes a day



**moderate- to vigorous-intensity physical activity** across the week; most of this physical activity should be aerobic.



On at least



**3**  
days a week



**vigorous-intensity aerobic activities**, as well as those that **strengthen muscle and bone** should be incorporated.



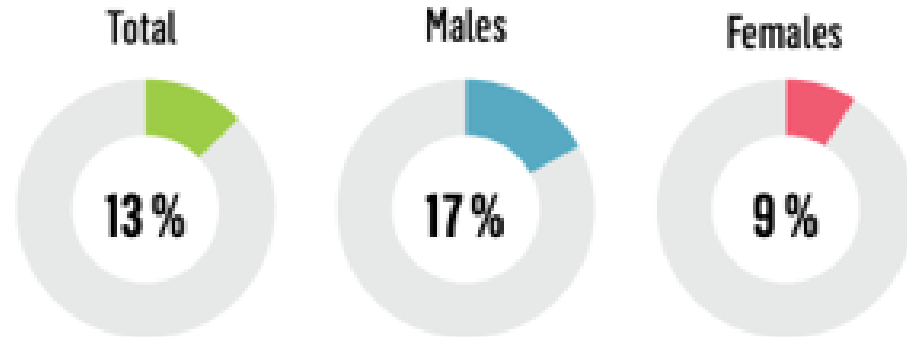
**LIMIT**  
the amount of time spent being sedentary, particularly recreational screen time.





# Physical activity in Greece in 15 year olds

## 15 years



HBSC, 2017–2018; <https://hbsc.org/publications/reports/a-focus-on-adolescent-physical-activity-eating-behaviours-weight-status-and-body-image-in-europe-central-asia-and-canada/>

$\geq 60$  min/day of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity

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# Summary

- Athletes can play an important role in increasing awareness around mental health
- Athletes may be at an increased risk of experiencing mental health conditions when injured or nearing retirement
- Barriers to accessing care for athletes include stigma, particularly around competing.
- Many children and adolescents are living with mental health conditions, with those in Greece affected more than on average across the WHO European Region.
- Low levels of adolescents reach report doing the recommended levels of physical activity
- Increasing physical activity can improve mental health and health outcomes for the general population.

# Thank you for your time