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Participation In Running Events And Promotion Of Health-Enhancing Physical Activity: A Cross-Cultural Study In Greece, Belgium, Holland and Lithuania

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Introduction



- Running events are one of the fastest growing markets within the sport industry.
- It is estimated by [Scheerder and Breedveld \(2015\)](#) that in Europe there are over 50 million runners today.
- These European runners are estimated to spend 9.6 billion euro annually on expenses related to the activity of running.
- According to Van Bottenberg, Scheerder & Hover (2010), with respect to the trend in road running events, 32 Member Federations (68%) reported that the number is increasing in their countries, while 14 Member Federations (30%) described the trend in running events as stable, and only one (2%) assessed the trend as slightly decreasing.
- In the United Kingdom for example, the number of adults who participated in athletics, running and jogging at least once a month increased by 460,000 between 2005/2006 and 2007/2008, from 5.0 to 6.1% of the adult population. Similar figures were reported for Netherlands. The percentage of the Dutch population (6 years and over) who participated at least once a year in running or jogging increased from 8% (about 1.2 million people) in 1999 to 18% (about 2.7 million) in 2007).
- Organized running in the form of city marathons has also shown considerable growth, recently. In 2013 there were at least 80 major international marathons worldwide and thousands of smaller ones (Stewart & Dwiarmein, 2015).



Running Events and Benefits

- Running events Can Contribute to:
 - a) Adoption of an Active Life-Style , b) Psychological Health c) Social Welfare d) Economic / Tourism Development
- A) Active Life-Style
 - Participating in running events works as a stimulus for sport participation
 - 90% of participants in running events did some training before the event
 - 60% kept on training for three months after the event
 - 70% reported that running events helped participants to become more active, indicating an interest for participating in more events (Lane et al., 2008)
- Sport events can attract local, national and international media
- The sport itself (running) will be promoted, which can increase its popularity among the general population. (Stewart & Dwiarmein, 2013).



Running Events and Benefits

B) Individual Level: Psychological Health

- Personal happiness
- Psychological well-being
- Improved social life
- Improved quality of life over the long term

(Alexandris, 2016; Theodorakis et al., 2015)

- Participants in such events form “social groups” (e.g., become members of running clubs)
- This socialization aspect is a strong incentive to participate in future events and continue training (Scheerder et al., 2007)

Running Events and Benefits

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C) Society Level: Social-Welfare

Contribute to

- Social (community) integration and Social Cohesion. It is an on-going process of developing a community with shared values, shared challenges and equal opportunities (Hover et al., 2016).
- National/Community Pride and the Feel-Good Factor, related to the good feelings of communities.
- Actions for social responsibility. The London marathon, for example, which is a model event for social impact, raised 53.2 million euro in 2014; these money were used for donations and actions of social responsibility (Stewart, & Dwiarmein, 2013).

All the above are particularly important because such events take place in local communities, in which the impact of such events can be particularly strong (Djaballah, et al., 2015, Taks et al., 2015)



Running Events and Benefits

D) Economic and Tourism Development

Running events can contribute towards tourism and economic development:

- They can have a significant impact on local economies, due to the money which is spent by participants, associated persons, spectators and sponsors (Stewart & Dwiarmein, 2013).
- Leveraging the effects of running events is an important task. The 2010 London marathon, for example, contributed 110.1 million to the London economy (Stewart, & Dwiarmein, 2013).
- They can contribute towards tourism development and branding of the destinations, in which they take place.



The Serious Leisure Perspective

- Serious leisure “is the steady pursuit of an amateur, hobbyist, or career volunteer activity that captivates its participants with its complexity and many challenges.
- It is profound, long-lasting, and invariably based on substantial skill, knowledge, or experience, if not on a combination of these three”
 - (Stebbins, 1992, p. 23).



Serious Leisure and Running

So,

- Running involves some form of perseverance throughout the activity, since runners negotiate barriers to participation, such as expenses, traveling to the race destination, injuries, etc.
- It also involves a long-term “career” development. The term has a metaphoric used and it means that runners follow a progression through several stages, like building a career.
- They start from a basic level of participation (e.g. jogging) and they might move toward participating in challenging running races, such as mountain marathons



Serious Leisure and Running

- They also devote considerable effort on physical training and skill development; they expect specific benefits and rewards from participating, such as enhancement of self-image, self-expression and self-actualization

(Yair, 1992)

- Unique ethos is also associated with the activity (Stebbins, 1992).
- A central component of this ethos is the “social worlds” that runners become part of. Social worlds can be formal groups such as running associations, or informal groups such as running groups and teams.
- These perceived benefits and rewards are usually so strong that they help them overcome barriers to participate in running



Research Objectives

1. To study the demographic and psychographic (life-style) profile of runners
2. To explore what motivates individuals to participate in running events in a cross-cultural setting
3. To test the influence of participation in running events on participants' intention to adopt a more active life-style.



Methodology

On-Line Surveys in eleven running events in the four countries

The running events were the following:

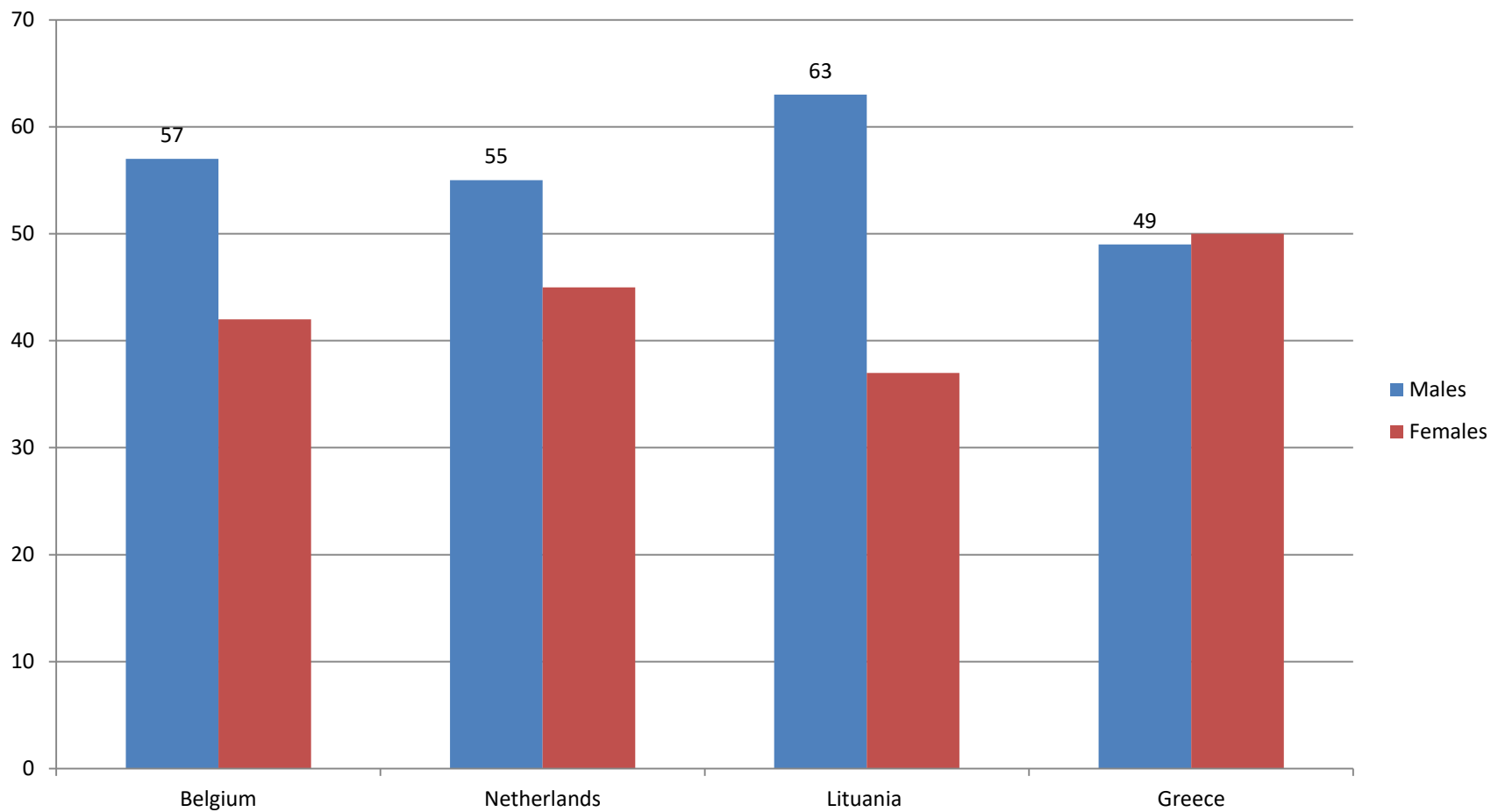
1. AG Antwerp 10 Miles
2. Fintro Dwars door Brugge
3. Great Breweries
4. Stadsloop de Gentenaar
5. BrandLoyalty Vestingloop
6. Lampiris Abdijentocht
7. Birstono Pusmaratonis
8. Olimpina Diena
9. Marathon Amersfoort
- 10: RunTogether
- 11: Run for Fun (Greece)

Questionnaire

- A) socio-demographic questions, behavioral questions related to running behavior,
- B) Motivation for Participation (Alexandris et al., 2012)
- C) Running Involvement (Alexandris, 2016)
- D) Emotions related to event participation
- E) Behavioral intentions related to running behavior questions

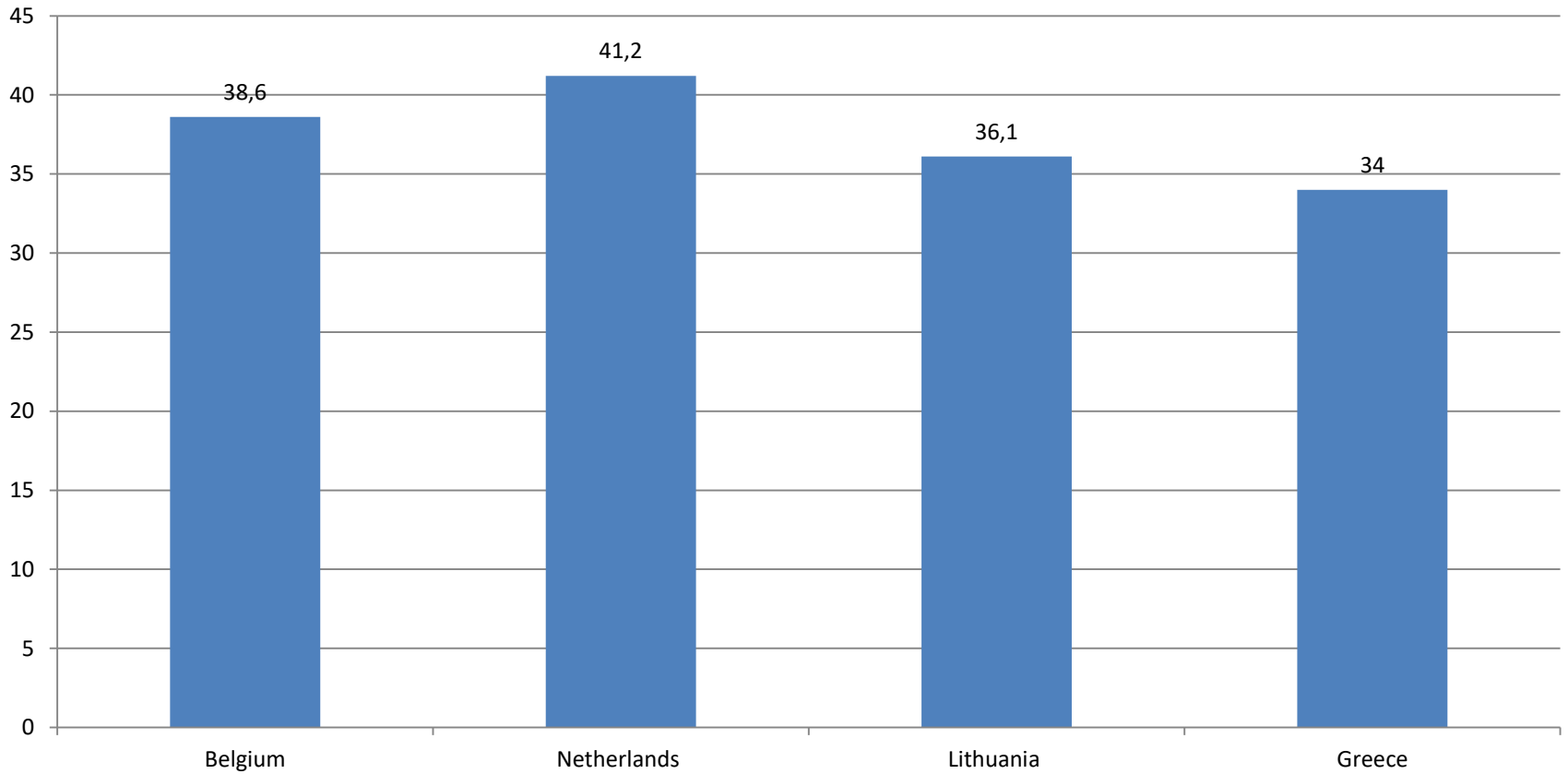


Gender



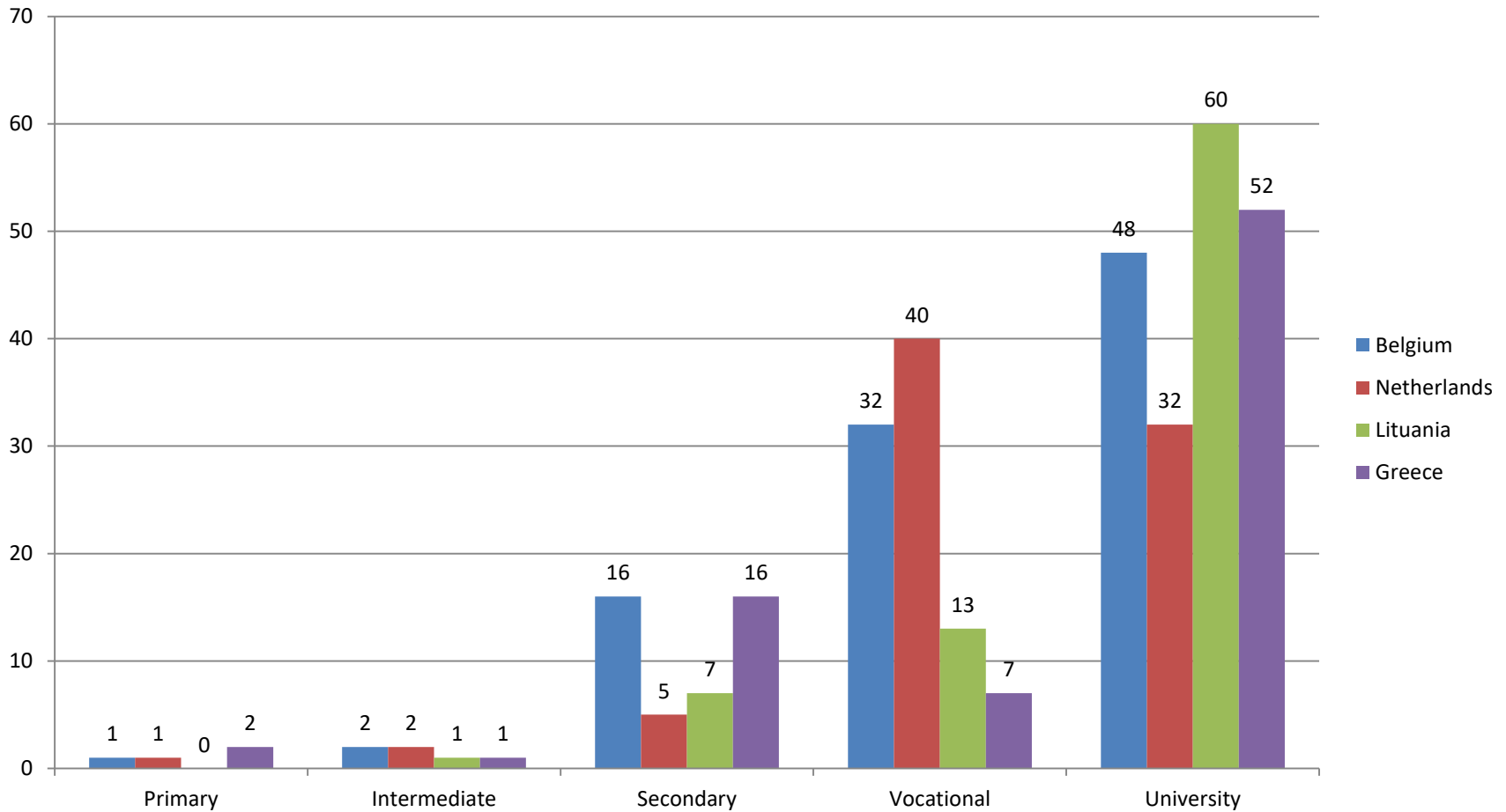
Average Age

Average Age



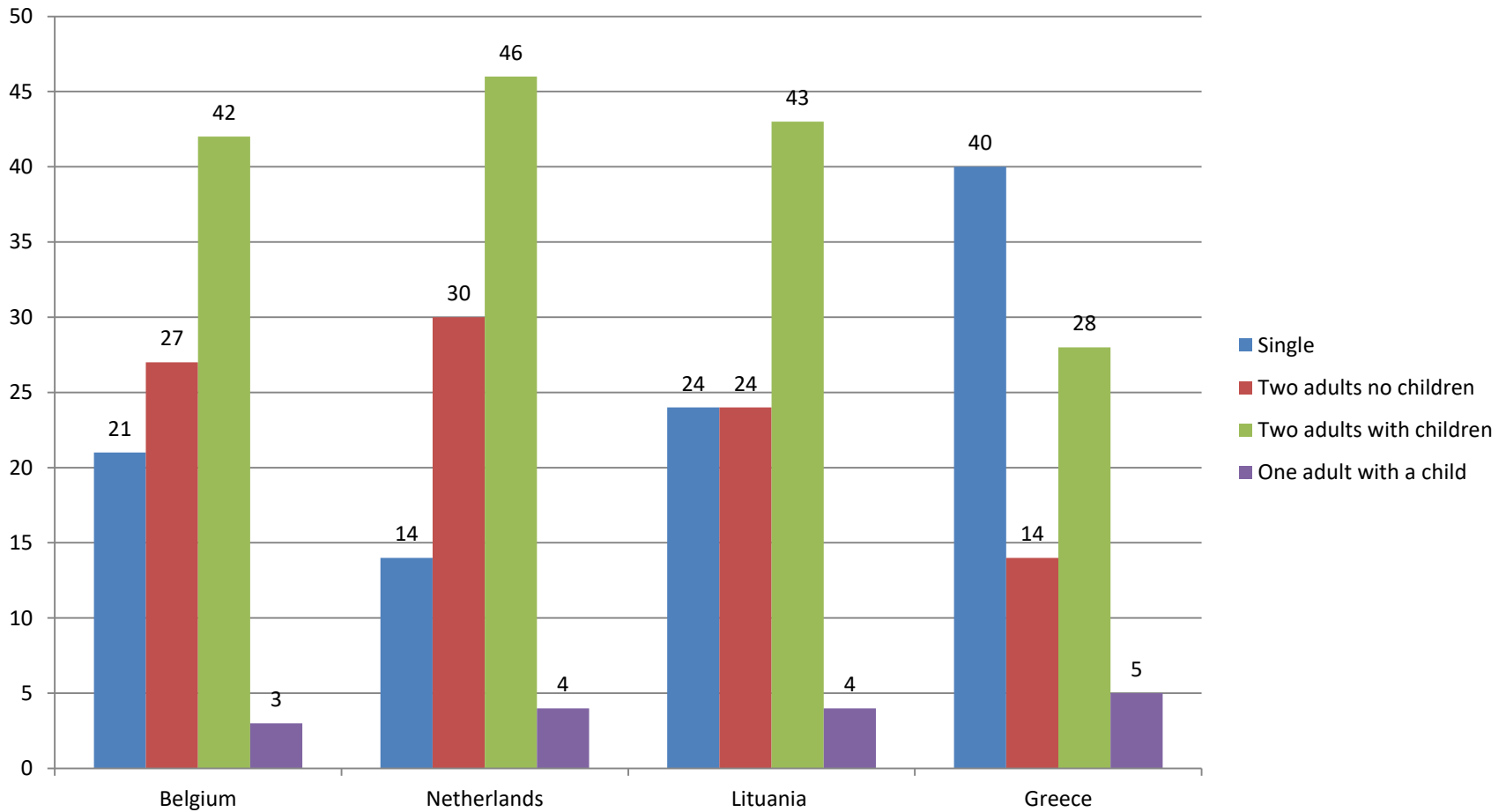


Type of Education



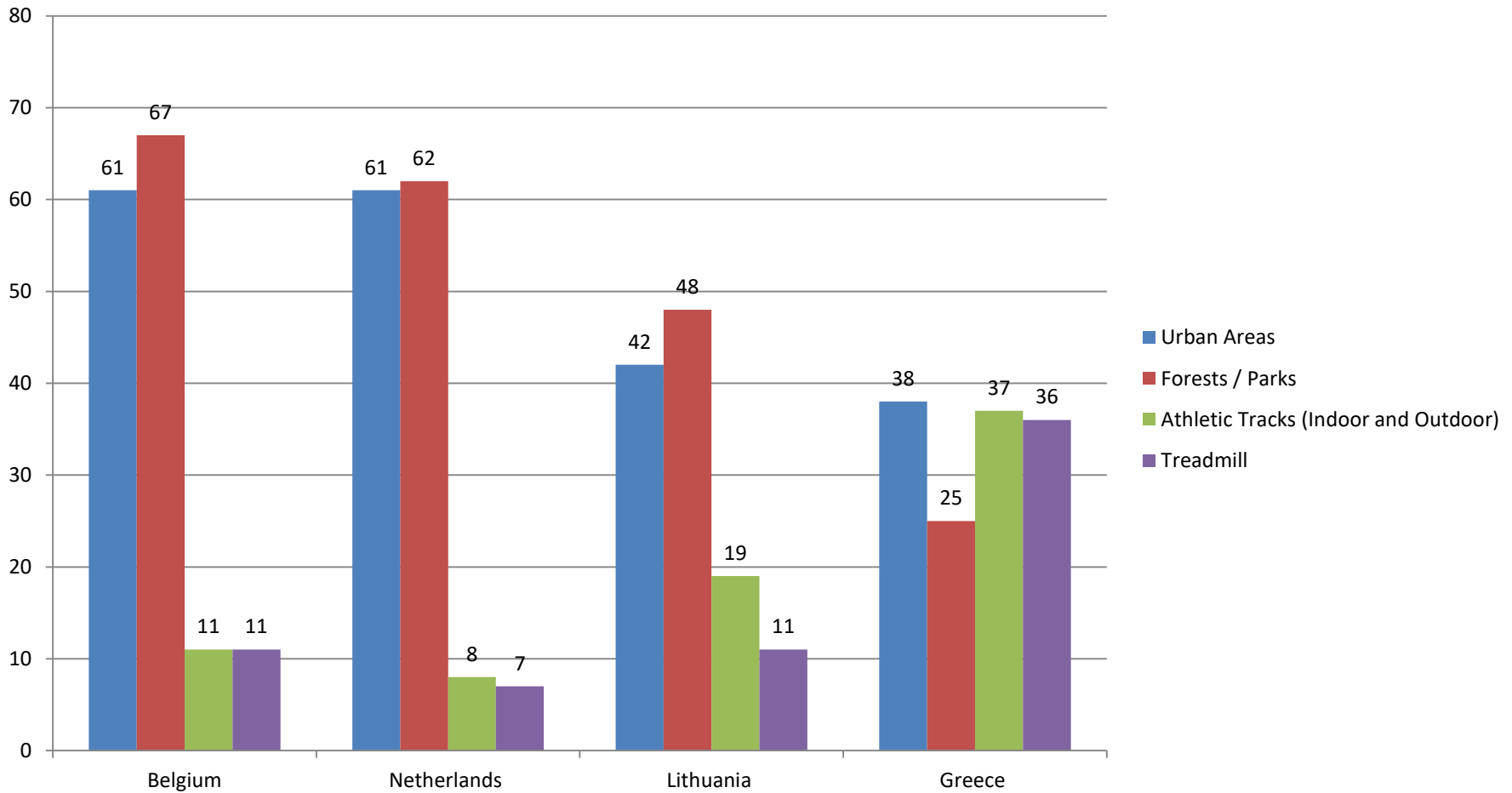


Type of Household



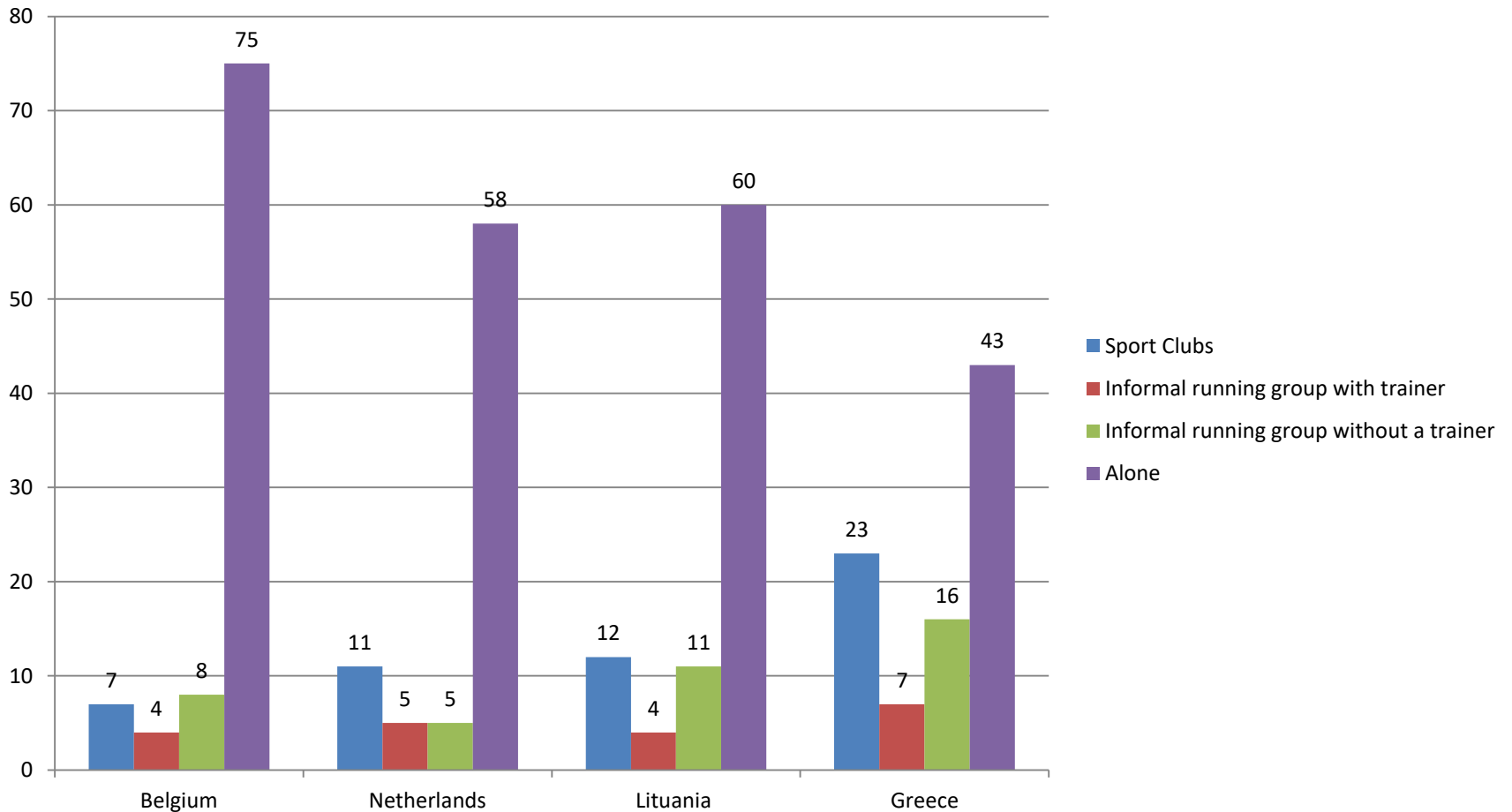


Place of Running



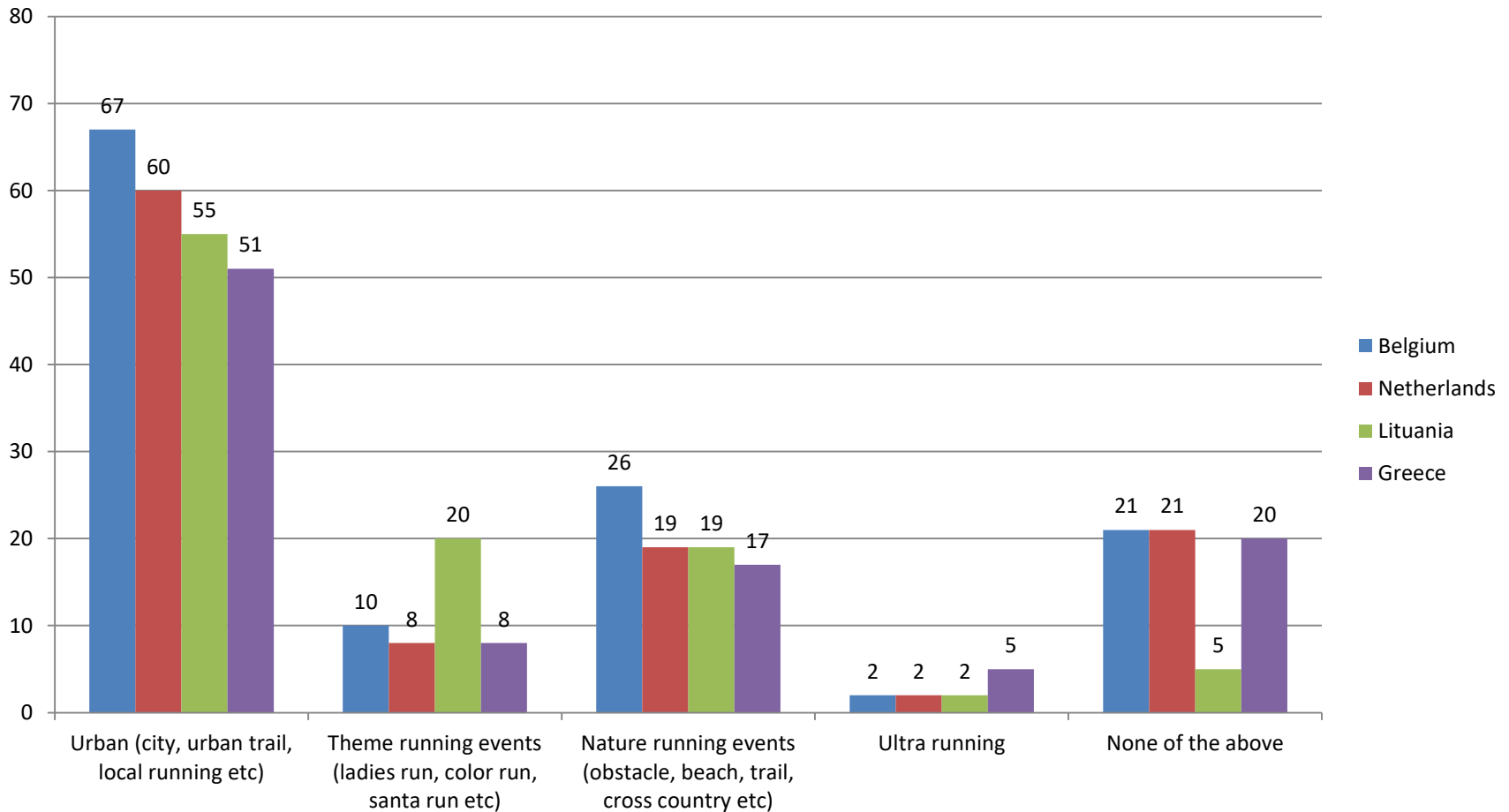


Context of Running



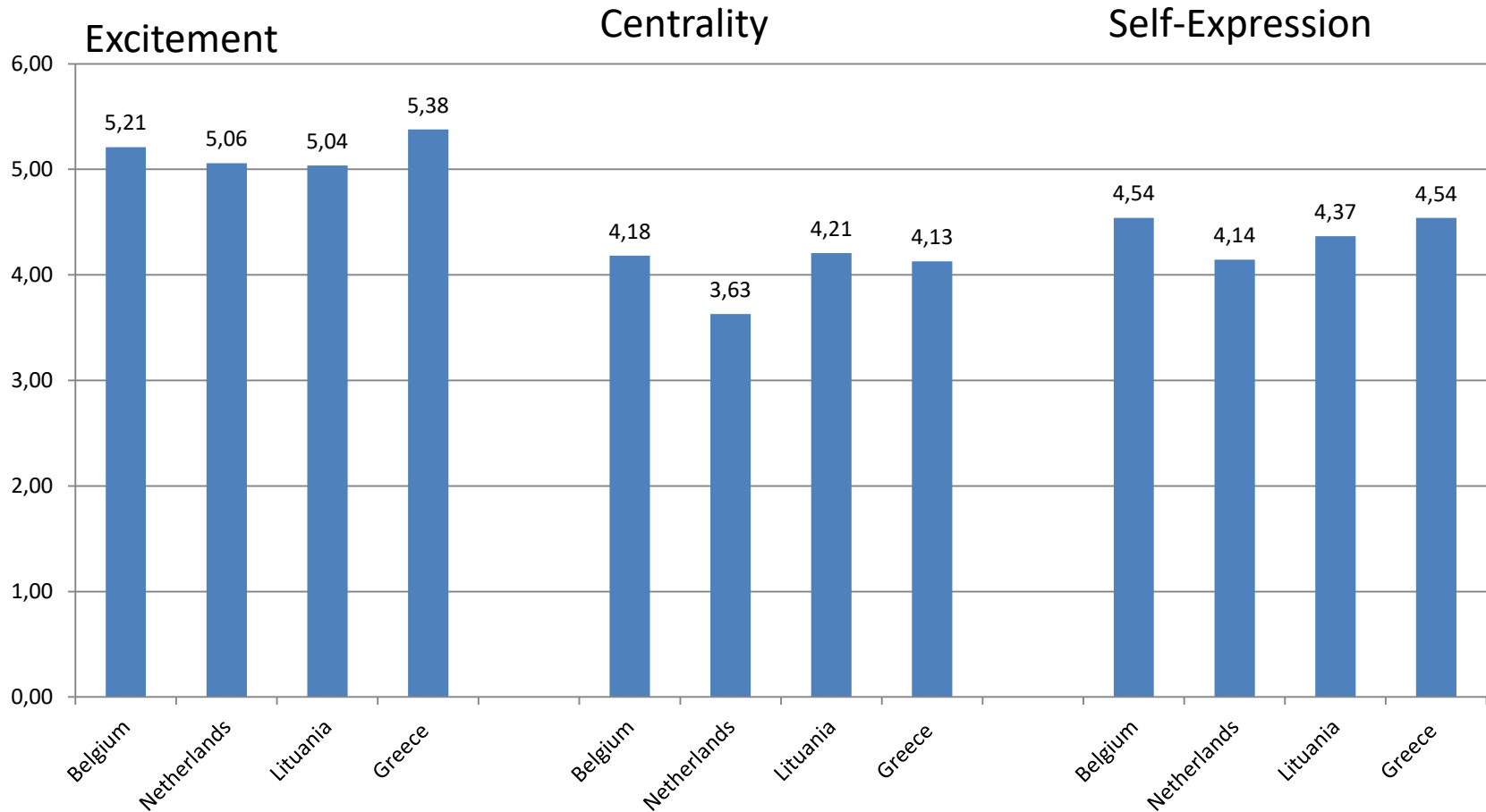


Type of Event



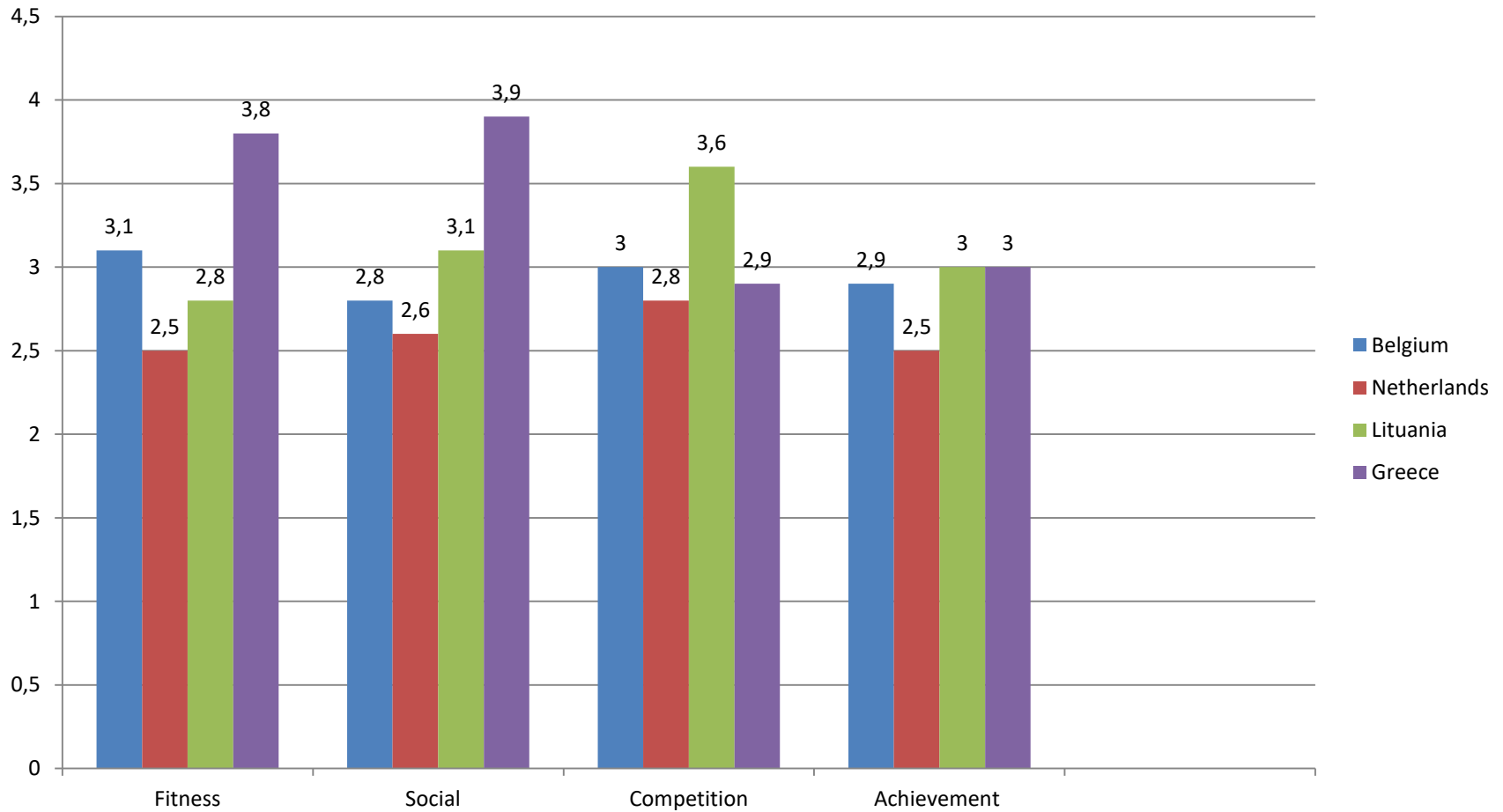


Involvement Levels



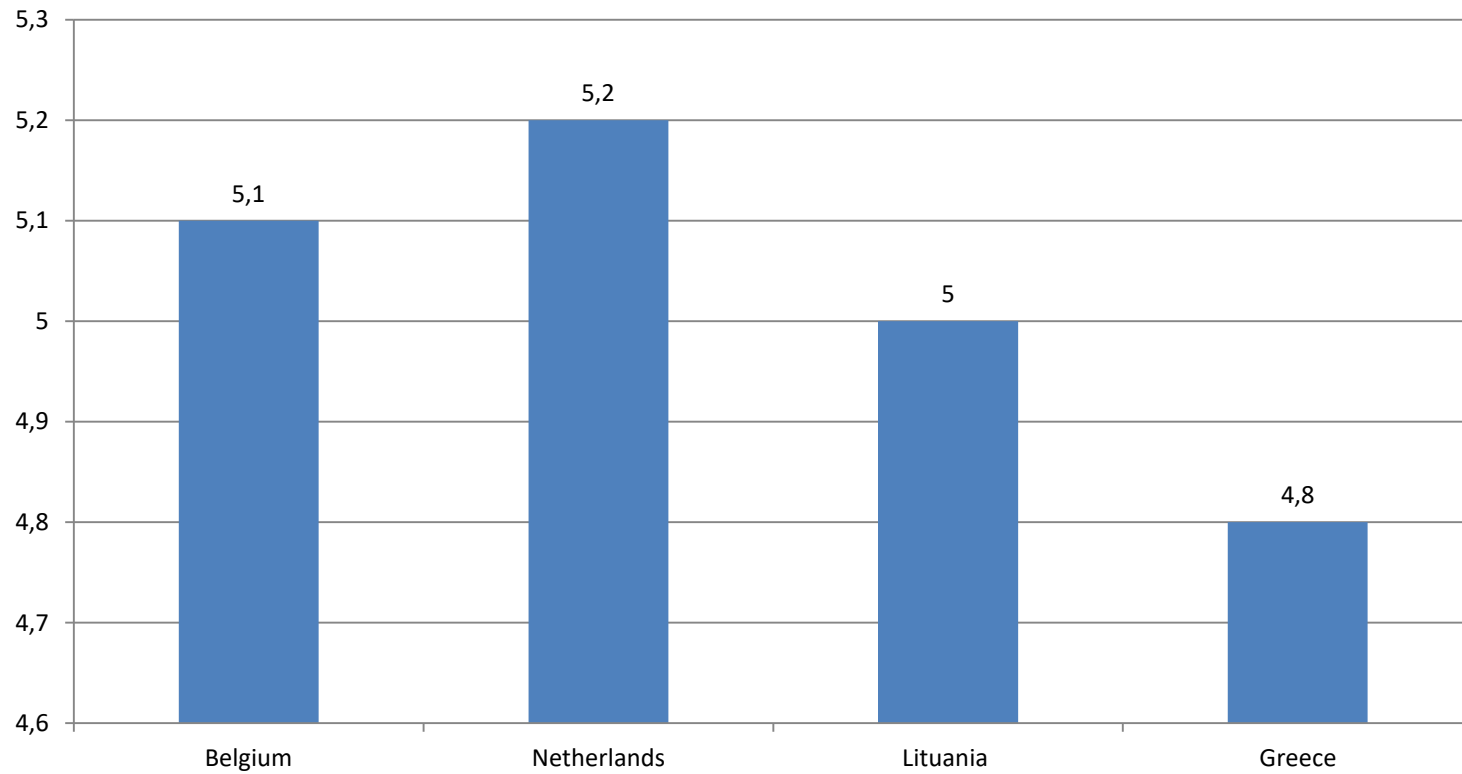


Motives for Participation





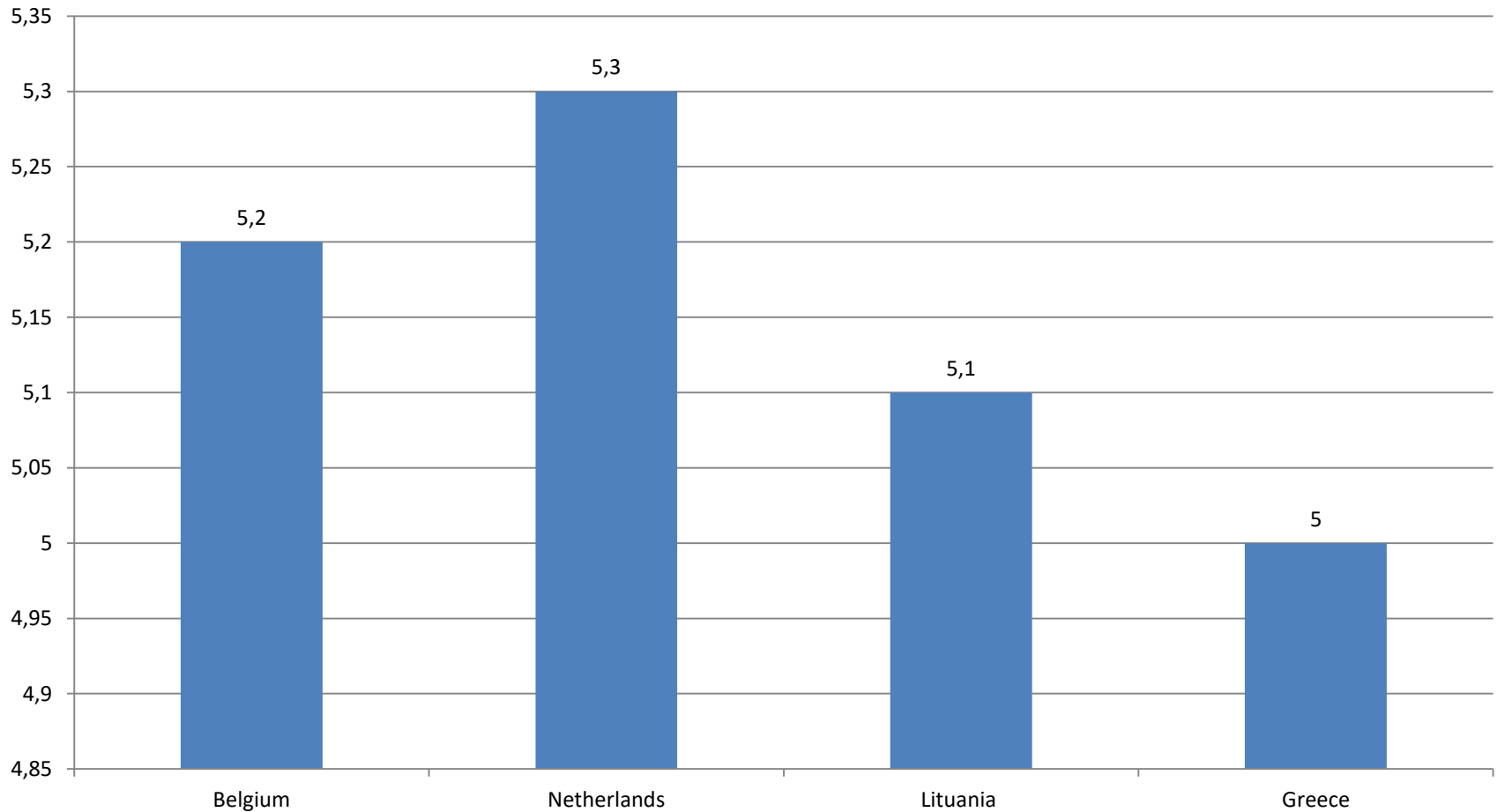
Satisfaction from Health



ANOVA: $p < .001$

Satisfaction from Life

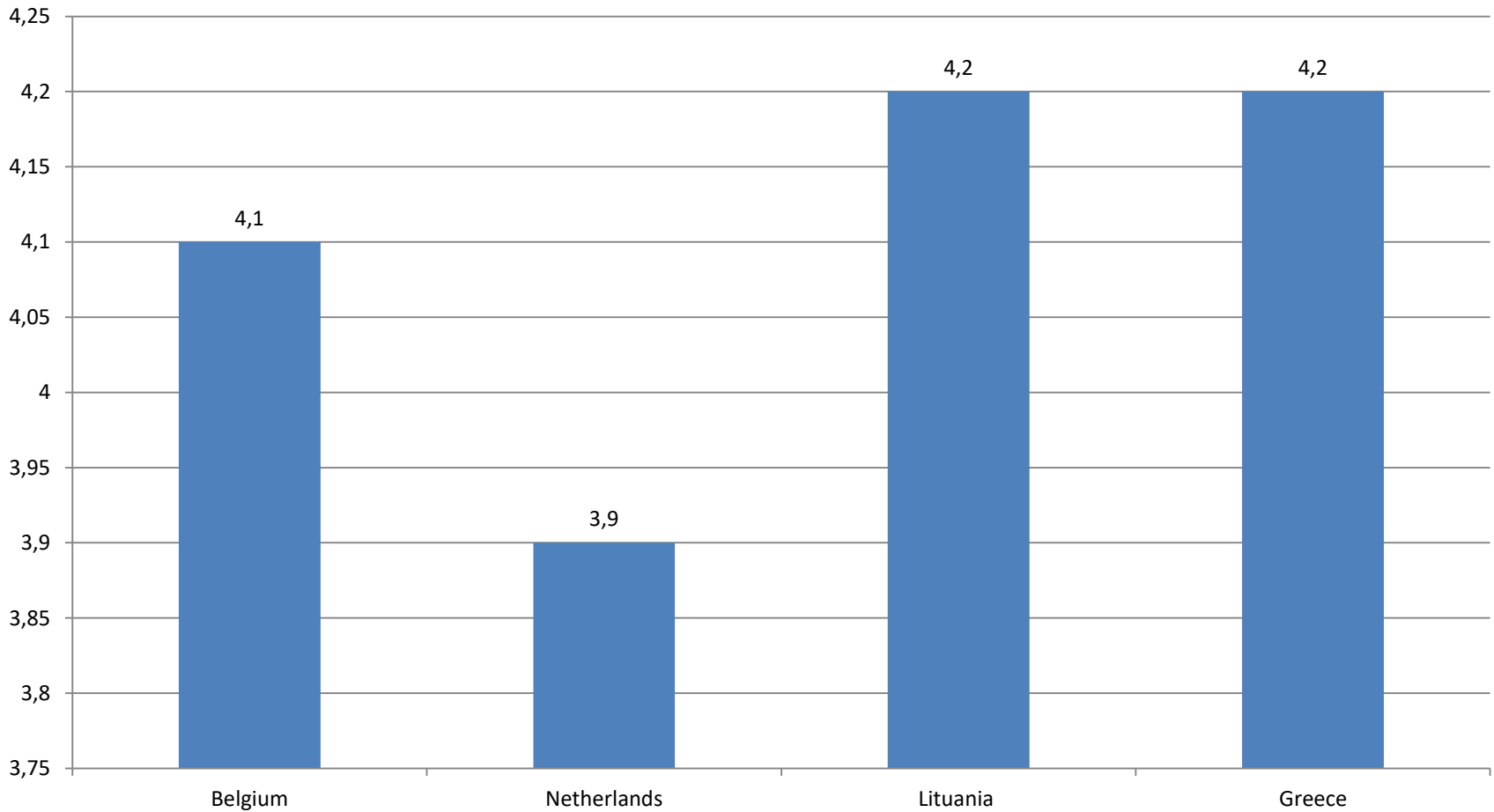
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ANOVA: $p < .001$



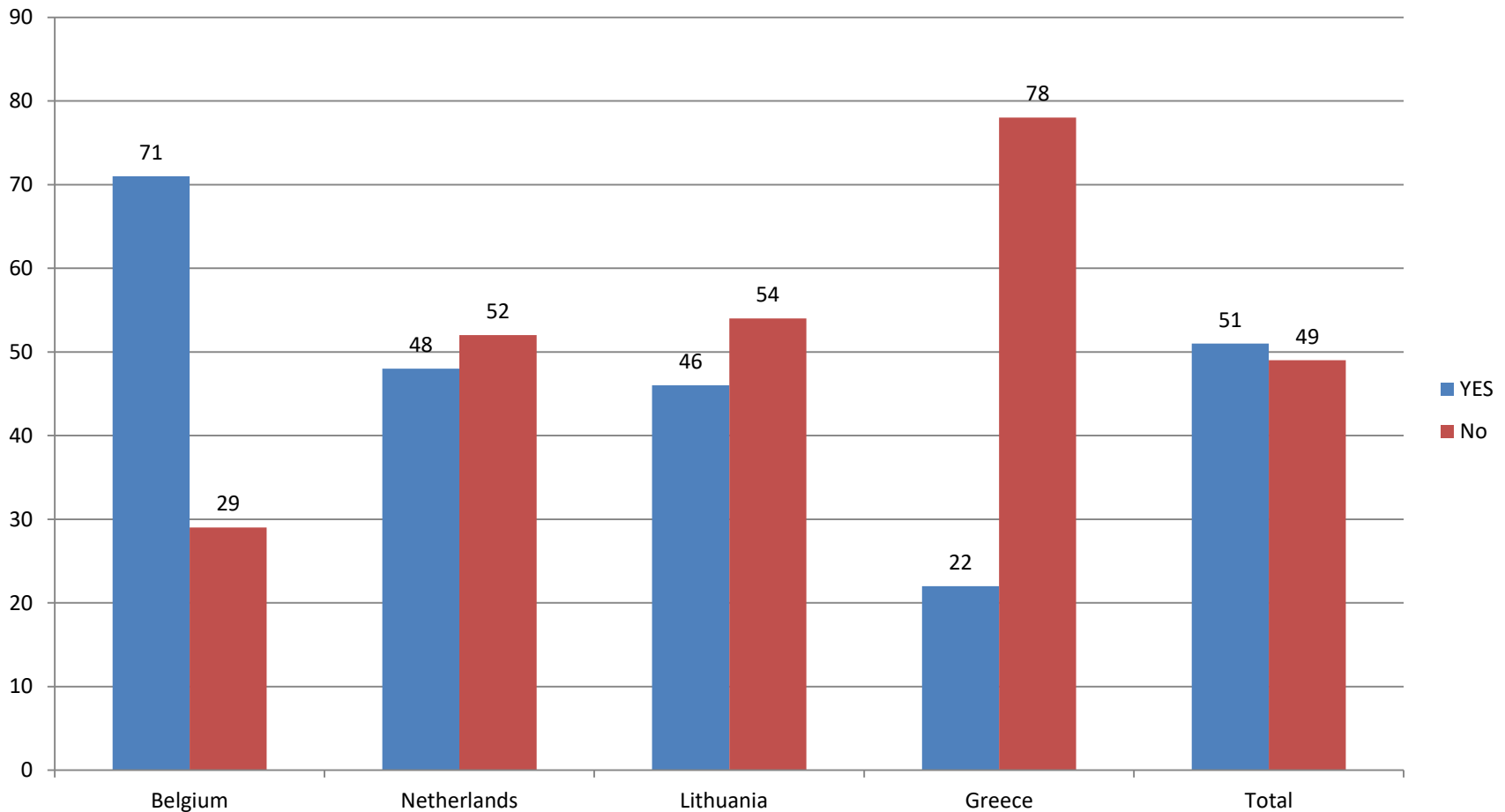
Positive Emotions



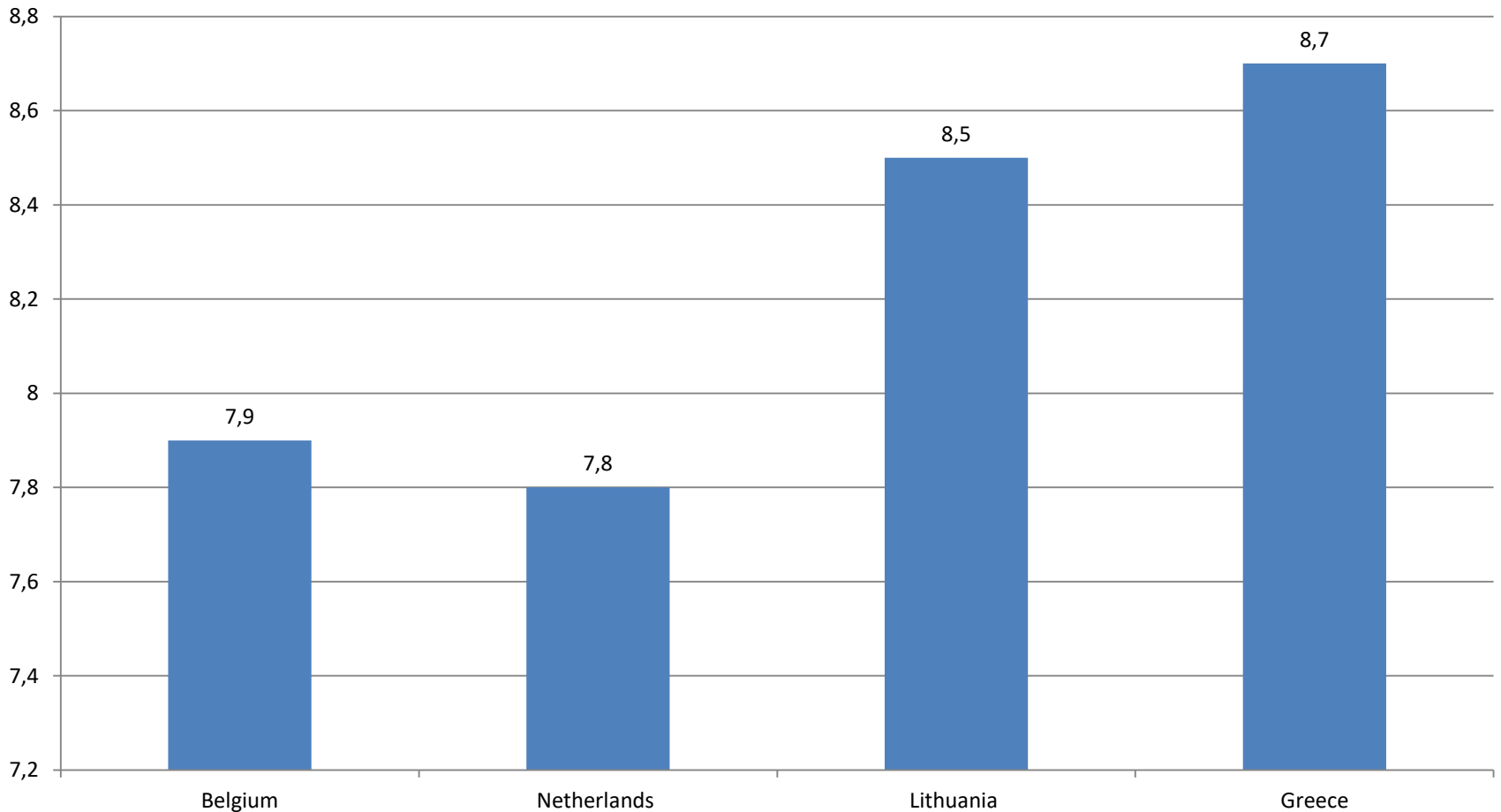
ANOVA: $p < .001$

Did you increase the frequency of sport participation / training before the event?

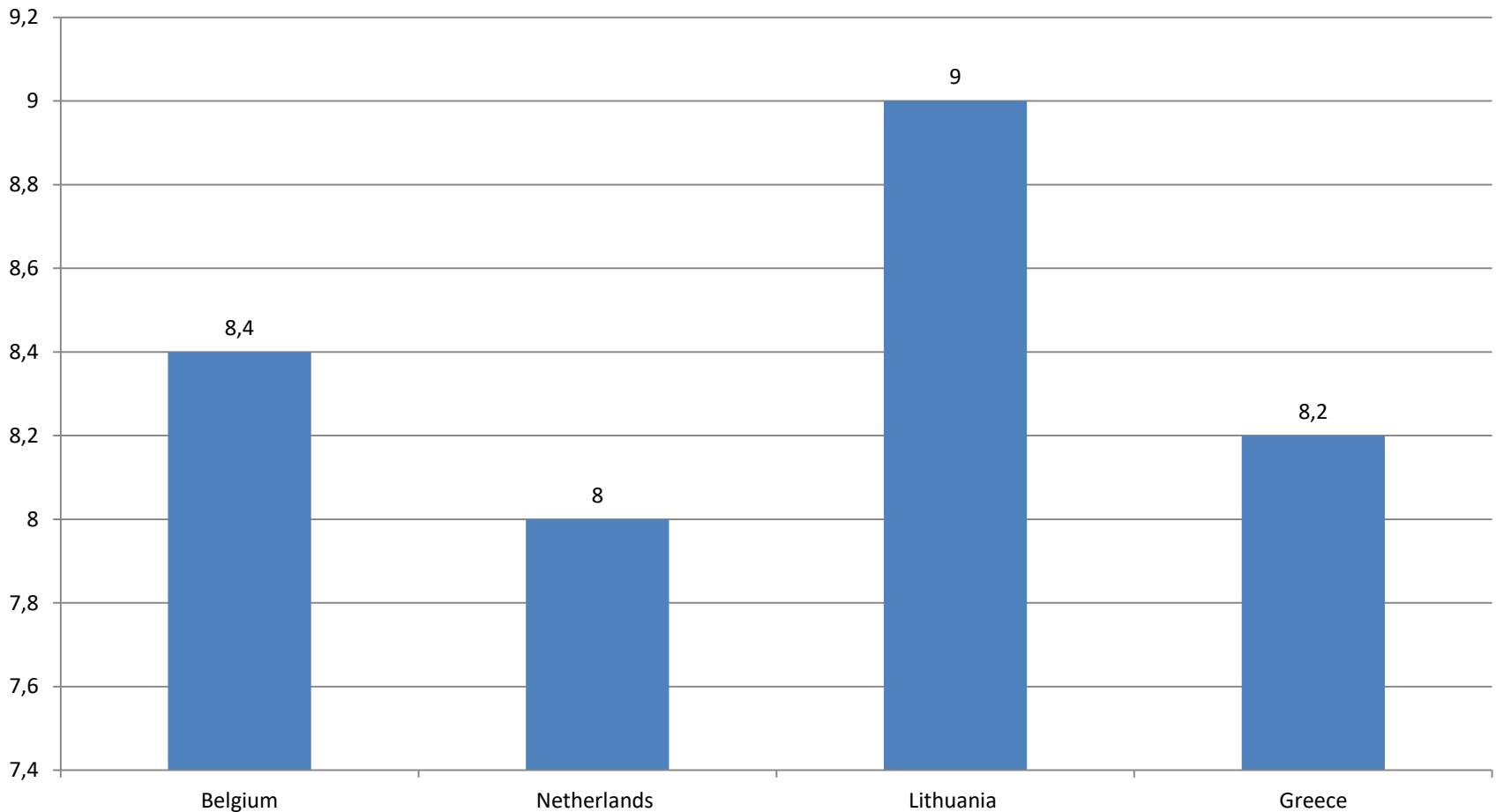
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How likely is that you will participate in the event next year (1-10)



How likely is that you will recommend the event to your friends?





Discussion

Demographic Profile / Common Patterns

- Males, but there is a significant proportion of females - new market
- Highly Educated – Benefits of Participation – Negotiate Barriers - Attractive Market
- Age: Close to 40 years old
- Families – Ideal for promoting family sports – building values
- Support the profile report in previous studies (REF)



Discussion

Context / Common Patterns

- Informal training
- Significant proportion go running as members of sport clubs
- Parks and urban places
- Small proportion of runners goes through personal training
- Urban events are the most popular
- Theme and nature events – Belgium – Latvia (new products)



Discussion

Involvement - Common Patterns

Scores are high among participants in all countries –
Serious Leisure Perspective (Stebbins, 1992)

Excitement – Intrinsically motivated behavior –
event management

Higher scores in Greece (cultural element)

Self-expression scores are high (identification with
the activity)



Discussion

- Motivation – common patterns – Differences
- Social motives are strong in all the countries – particularly Greece - social aspect
- Competition motives are relatively strong especially for Latvia and Belgium
- Support the social aspect (Scheerder et al., 2007)
- Fitness strong for Greece and Belgium
- Achievement motives are lower for Dutch runners



Discussion

Psychological Outcomes – Common Patterns and Differences

Scores are high among runners in all countries (running outcomes)

Satisfaction from Health and Life (Dutch runners)

Positive emotions are particularly high in Lithuania and Greece (cultural aspect)

Discussion

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Running Participants and Active Life-style

- More than half of the participants in all the countries, except Greece, reported increase in sport participation / running some weeks before the event (the case is particularly strong for Belgium)
- Support previous studies (Lane et al., 2008)
- Running events act as incentives
- The majority reported intention to participate in the event next year and develop positive WOM
- Running events can play an important role in promoting active life-style
- Good strategy for promoting mass participation

Limitations / Future Research



- The types of the events used influence the results
- Analysis after using a taxonomy of the events
- The culture of participants influence the way that they fill the questionnaires (perceptions, feelings etc)
- The sample is not equal in its size among the countries

Thank you

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