

Spotlight on unmet needs in osteoarthritis



Osteoarthritis affects millions in Europe and the burden is growing

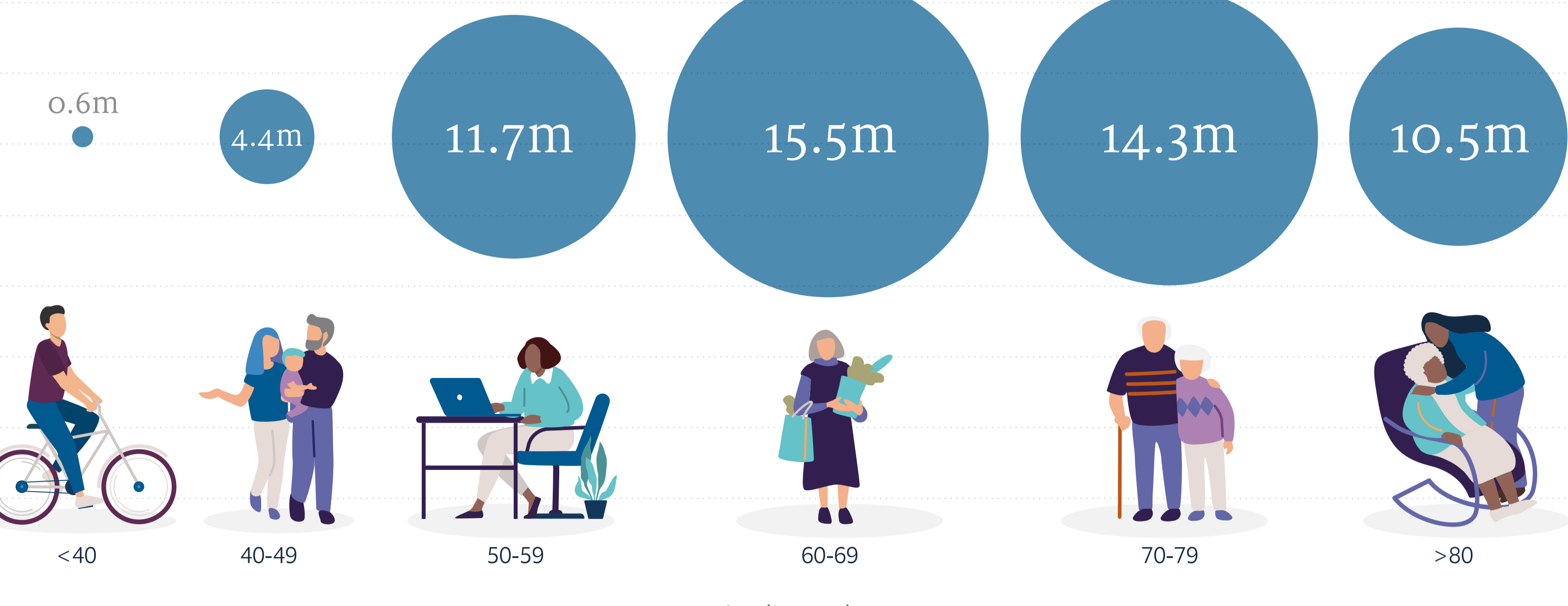
In 2019, over 57 million people in Western Europe¹ had osteoarthritis (OA), and it caused the loss of over 2 million years of healthy life.² Numbers affected in the region have grown by 54% since 1990.

Increase since 1990
Numbers affected in 2019

Source: IHME, Global Burden of Disease Data 2019

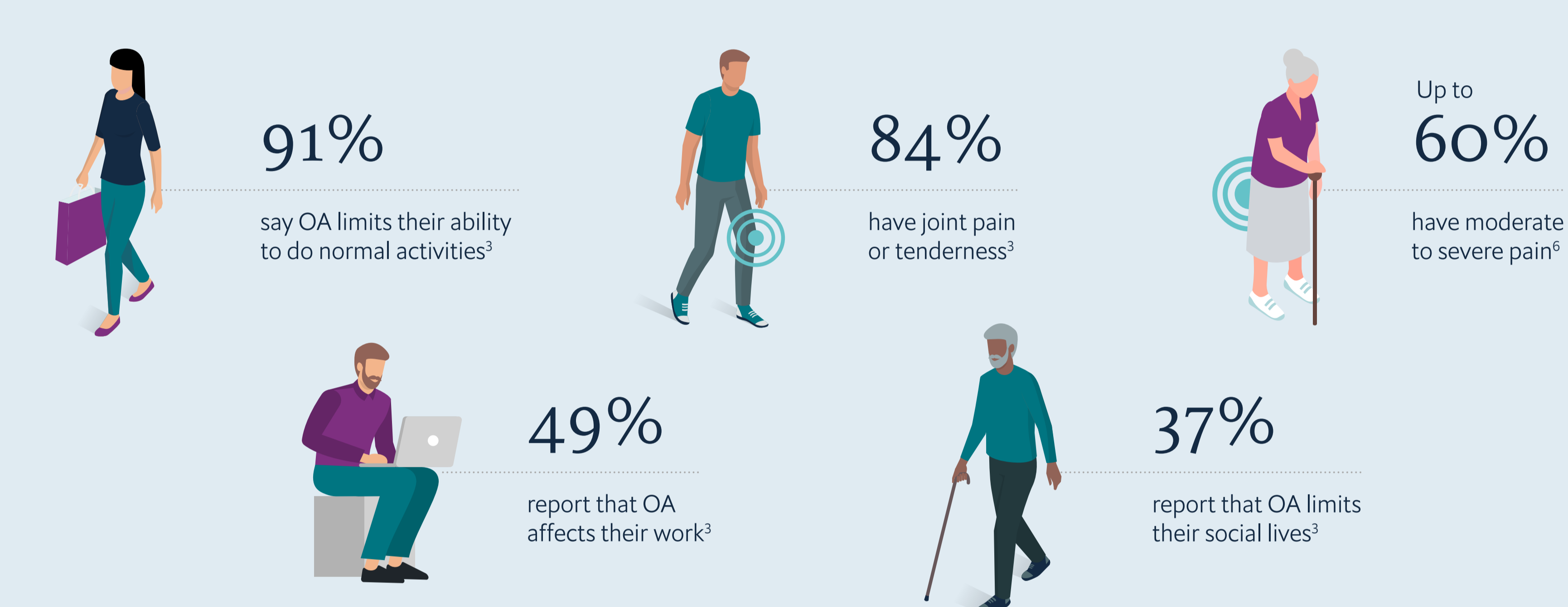


OA does not just affect the elderly: 43% of those affected are under 65



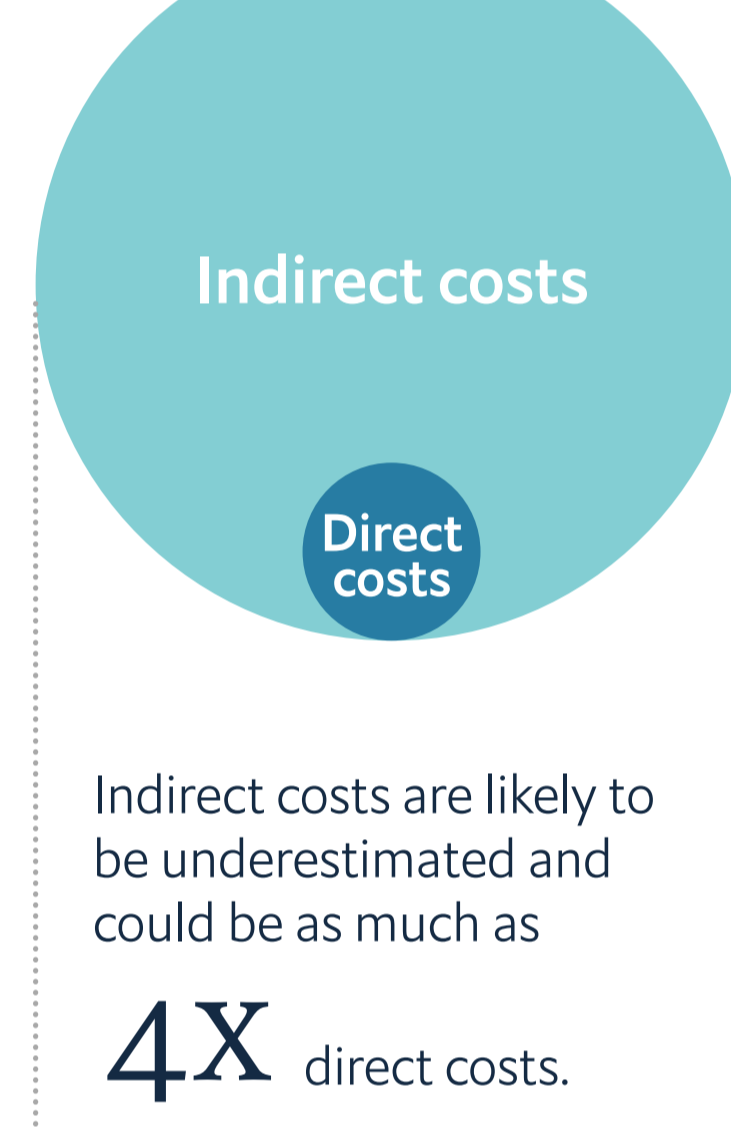
OA has a significant impact on people's quality of life and daily activities

Most people with OA have joint pain, and this impacts their ability to function normally. People who have more severe pain have more limitations to their activities,³ and also worse mental health⁴ and quality of life.⁵



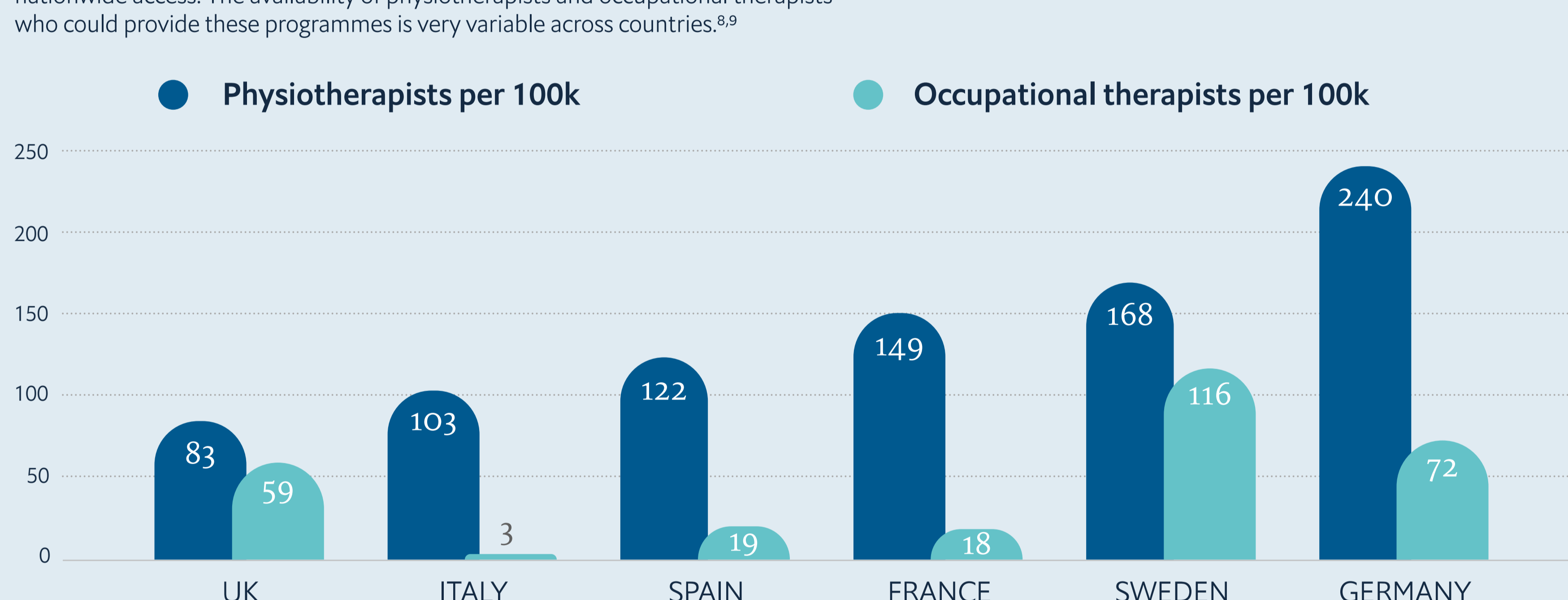
OA causes lost productivity and costs Europe billions of Euros each year

- In addition to the substantial direct healthcare costs, OA also impacts economies by causing absenteeism, presenteeism and early retirement, necessitating income support or disability allowance payments. People with OA may also need formal and informal care.
- European countries have reported annual OA-related costs in the billions:⁷



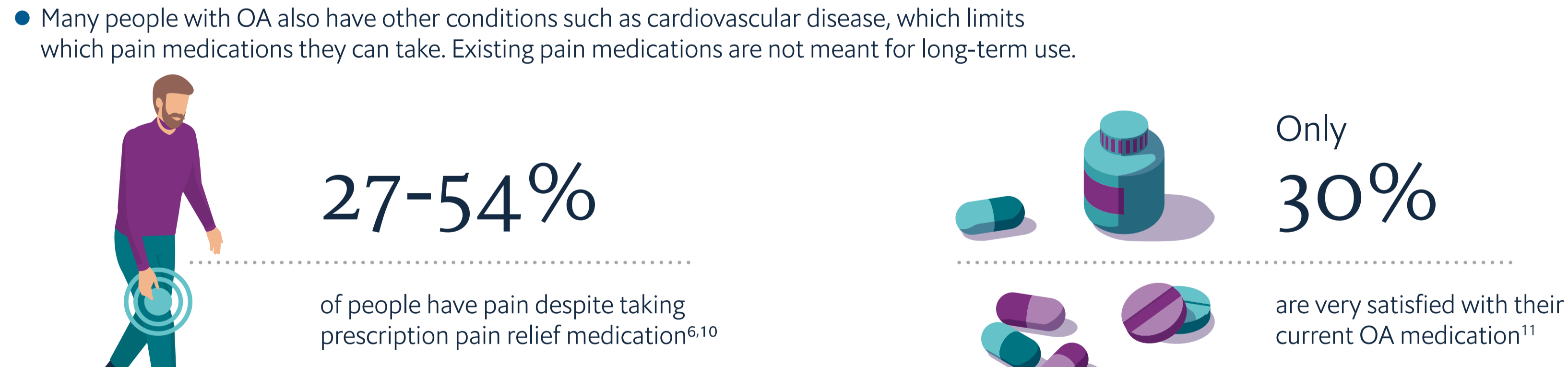
People with OA can't always access non-pharmacological support

Supported self-management programmes involving education and exercise are recommended by guidelines, but of our focus countries only Sweden provides nationwide access. The availability of physiotherapists and occupational therapists who could provide these programmes is very variable across countries.^{8,9}



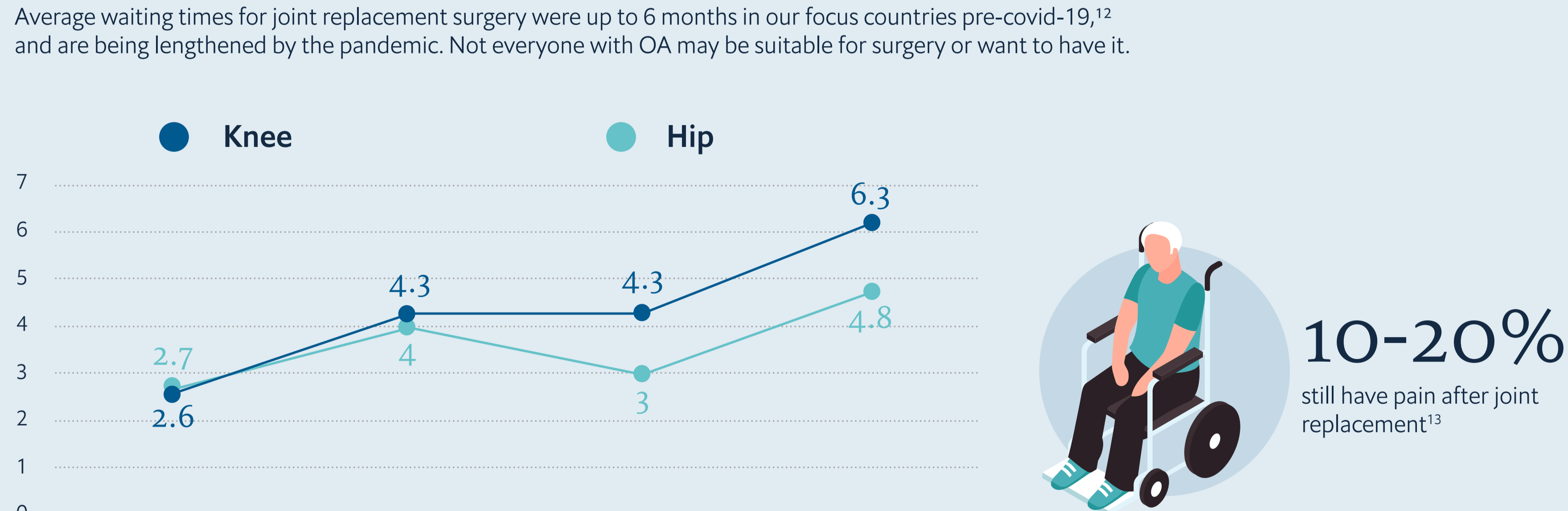
Options for pharmacological symptom relief are limited

- No treatments can stop or reverse the joint damage associated with OA.
- Many people with OA also have other conditions such as cardiovascular disease, which limits which pain medications they can take. Existing pain medications are not meant for long-term use.



Waiting times for joint replacement surgery can be long

Average waiting times for joint replacement surgery were up to 6 months in our focus countries pre-covid-19,¹² and are being lengthened by the pandemic. Not everyone with OA may be suitable for surgery or want to have it.



Meeting the needs of people with OA: a path forward

Our research identified several steps which could be taken to help meet the needs of people affected by OA:



¹ 22 countries including all 6 of our countries of focus

² Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation, Global Burden of Disease 2019. Used with permission. All rights reserved.

³ Vitaloni M et al. BMC Musculoskeletal Disorders. 2020;21(1):1-9.

⁴ de Koning EJ et al. Journal of Pain. 2018;19(6):690-8.

⁵ Vitaloni M et al. BMC Musculoskeletal Disorders. 2020;20(1):493.

⁶ Doane MJ et al. Annals of the Rheumatic Diseases. 2018;77(Suppl 2):1806.

⁷ Various sources, see full report for details: The Economist Intelligence Unit. The hidden burden of osteoarthritis: unmet needs in Europe. 2021.

⁸ World Physiotherapy. Profile of the global profession (2020 data). Available from: <https://world.physio/membership/profession-profile>.

⁹ Council of Occupational Therapists for the European Countries. Summary of the occupational therapy profession in Europe 2020. Available from: <https://www.cotecurope.eu/updates/summary-of-the-profession/>.

¹⁰ Conaghan PG et al. Rheumatology. 2015;54(2):270-7.

¹¹ Kingsbury SR et al. Rheumatology. 2014;53(5):937-47.

¹² OECD. Health Care Utilisation: Waiting times. Available from: <https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?ThemeTreeId=9#>

¹³ Beswick AD et al. BMJ Open. 2012;2(1).