Sport participation data: Triathlon's demographic shift opens new territory for brands

Multisport market analysis — US, Europe and global event trends

Global multisport participation data for 2024–25 reveals a sport in demographic transition: the core age-group is skewing younger, female participation is climbing, and format diversification is expanding the addressable market for sporting goods brands.

For much of its commercial history, triathlon's core consumer profile was predictable: male, 40-plus, income-secure, loyal to high-performance products at a premium price point. The participation data emerging from the 2024–25 cycle across major national federations, commercial event series and independent registration platforms tells a different story. The sport's demographic centre of gravity has shifted materially — and the implications for sporting goods brands extend well beyond a minor product-mix adjustment.

Multisports is currently navigating a period of recalibration, characterised by a decisive shift from the pre-pandemic boom into a recovery phase of consolidation and diversification. While total participation volume in established markets like the United States and the United Kingdom remains below the historic peaks of the early 2010s, the emergence of high-growth demographic cohorts — specifically Gen Z and young Millennial athletes — coupled with a surge in female engagement, suggests the beginning of a new developmental cycle: slower but steadier growth in participation.

What's the multisport market worth?

The multisport industry is currently valued at several billion dollars, reflecting a high-income participant base with high technological expectations. Market research estimates the triathlon market at between 3.8 and 4.12 billion USD in 2024, with figures slightly higher for 2025. Annual spending on multisport in the US increased by 12 percent in 2023, and over 33 percent of triathletes anticipated their spending would increase further in 2024, according to USA Triathlon.

Clothing makes up the largest product segment. The global triathlon clothing market reached an estimated 2.1 billion USD in 2024, with tri-suits representing the fastest-growing category. Analysts value the 2033 triathlon clothing market at between 3.9 and 4.7 billion USD. The triathlon bike market was valued at between 1.2 and 1.7 billion USD in 2024 and is projected to reach up to 3.5 billion USD by 2033.

Market Segment	2024/25 Value (USD)	Projected 2033 Value (USD)	CAGR
Global triathlon market	3.8–4.12 billion	5.7–7.6 billion	6.9–7.2%
Triathlon clothing	1.8–2.1 billion	3.9–4.7 billion	8.1–8.5%
Triathlon bikes	1.2–1.7 billion	2.3–3.5 billion	6.2–7.4%

Sources: Independent market research aggregated across federation and commercial data, 2025.

At a glance: multisport participation by country 2024–2025

Across national governing bodies (NGBs), strategic priorities are converging: younger cohorts and female participation are universal targets. The sport is positioning itself as a core component of the global endurance and wellness industry for the decade ahead.

Market	Status 2025	Primary Metric	NGB Strategic Focus
United States	Stable	303,000 active members	LA28 pathway; grassroots; Gen Z recruitment
Germany	Record high	61,031 NGB members	Grassroots; youth under-6 expansion
France	Explosive growth	71,000+ licensees	Women's participation; youth talent development
United Kingdom	Recalibrating	120,000 active racers	Runner conversion; female participation; younger age groups
Ireland	Mature	10,373 NGB members	Women in Sports; youth participation; EDI strategy

Netherlands	Stable	Approx. 11,000 NGB members	Retention; youth sports; platform building
Belgium	Growing	+68% Ironman participants vs. 2 years prior	No generalised national sports policy
Switzerland	Climbing	14,478 NGB members	Breitensport; longevity; reduce youth drop-out; female recruitment

Sources: USA Triathlon 2025 Impact Report; DTU; FFTRI; Triathlon Industry Alliance (UK); Triathlon Ireland; national federation data.

United States multisport market: participation analysis

The United States continues to serve as the global benchmark for multisport participation, though its trajectory over the last decade illustrates the challenges of a maturing market. The 2024 and 2025 Impact Reports released by USA Triathlon indicate that the industry is entering a phase of stabilisation after a prolonged decline that predated the global health crisis.

The 'new normal' participation floor

USAT reported 303,000 active members in 2025, up marginally from 301,000 in 2024 and roughly 13 percent below the pre-pandemic baseline recorded in 2019. Industry analysts describe this plateau as the 'trough' or the 'new normal' — a floor that sits 46 percent below the all-time participation peak of 564,000 finishers set in 2011. Independent analysis by Cal Tri Events adds important context: 82 percent of that decade-long contraction had already occurred before 2020, pointing to structural inhibitors — the high cost of entry, the time demands of training — rather than pandemic disruption as the primary drag on volume.

Year	Total Finishers (USA)	Annual Growth	Contextual Note
2011	563,559	+3.00%	Historical participation peak
2013	528,813	–5.98%	Peak number of 'fast' course races
2014	505,427	–4.42%	Peak of Ironman 140.6 participation
2017	396,933	–9.52%	Finishers drop below 400,000
2019	348,767	–2.23%	Pre-pandemic baseline; end of five-year slide
2023	304,143	+8.18%	Post-pandemic highpoint
2024	302,107	–0.67%	Rebound driven by new members

Source: USA Triathlon Annual Impact Reports; California Triathlon / Cal Tri Events.

Demographic shifts: the Gen Z and first-timer surge

The most significant positive indicator for the US market is the radical shift in member demographics. While the 40–59 age cohorts have been in steady decline for over a decade, USAT membership among younger athletes is growing markedly. In 2024, the 20–29 and 30–39 age demographics showed the most substantial growth, with the 20–29 bracket alone adding over 10,000 new members. By 2025, athletes aged 20–39 officially became the largest collective membership demographic, effectively displacing the 'M40' cohort that had anchored the sport since its inception.

This younger skew is particularly evident among first-time participants. In 2025, nearly 20 percent of new USAT members were in the 20–29 age group, with two-thirds of that group having no prior multisport experience. This influx of 'starter' athletes is viewed as a vital pipeline for long-term residency in the sport.

Demographic Category (USA)	2025 Value	Context	Strategic Target
Female membership	36%	Strongest in youth and shorter distances	Growth via NGB initiatives
Athletes aged 20–29	+19%	Largest growth in age group	Retention
Athletes aged 20–39	—	New core age group	Long-term residency
First-timer share	~50%	Triathlon a popular 'bucket list' item	Conversion to repeat participants

Source: USA Triathlon 2025 Impact Report.

Gender representation and inclusivity

Female participation in the United States has shown resilience but continues to lag behind male recovery rates. USAT membership was approximately 36 percent female in 2025 — a significant improvement from 27 percent in the year 2000 — yet women are returning to the sport at a slower pace post-Covid than their male counterparts. In Ironman, female participation has rebounded to roughly 71 percent of pre-pandemic levels, while male participation has reached 91 percent. To address this gap, USA Triathlon launched the USA Kids Tri program, introducing over 9,000 children to the sport in 2024. Female participation among youth athletes reached 44 percent in 2025.

The commercial event landscape

The US event market is dominated by major brands, with near-monopoly positioning for Ironman at the ultra-distance. In the 70.3-mile format, Ironman's US market share rose from 56 percent in 2014 to 86 percent in 2024, according to California Triathlon. While sprint and Olympic-distance races still represent 73 percent of all finishes in 2025, athletes continue to gravitate toward the high-value, branded experiences associated with major commercial series.

Europe multisport market: participation analysis

While the US market is stabilising at a lower volume floor, European triathlon federations are recording growth that in several cases represents all-time highs. The post-Paris 2024 Olympic effect has provided a meaningful participation catalyst across the continent.

Germany: community engagement and record membership

The Deutsche Triathlon Union (DTU) is now home to the world's second-largest triathlon federation after the United States. In 2025, the DTU achieved a record high of 61,031 members across 1,533 clubs, surpassing its previous 2020 peak of 60,630 members. The German market is distinguished by its robust youth development system: the proportion of members under the age of six saw dramatic increases in 2025, with boys up nearly 16 percent and girls up 25 percent. The DTU attributes its success to a strategic emphasis on Breitensport (grassroots sport) and addressing Bewegungsarmut — a lack-of-movement problem within the general population — through club-based community engagement.

France: the Paris 2024 catalyst

The Fédération Française de Triathlon (FFTRI) has capitalised on hosting the 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games to reach historic participation levels. By the close of the 2025 season, the federation recorded 71,000 licensees across 990 clubs. France overtook Germany as the second-largest Ironman market in Europe in 2025 by event registration volume, driven by rapid sell-outs in Nice and Les Sables d'Olonne and a 25 percent increase in domestic Ironman registrations. Ironman identifies France, Germany, the Netherlands and Denmark as among its strongest global demand markets in 2025.

United Kingdom: recalibration and the challenge of density

The UK remains one of the world's most triathlon-dense nations, with approximately one in 565 residents participating in active racing. The 2025 Participation Analysis Report from the Triathlon Industry Alliance (TIA) notes that Great Britain is home to more than 120,000 active racing triathletes, signalling a positive rebound after a downturn in 2024. The federation recorded 112,075 participants across 723 events in FY2023/24, but the loss of 112 cancelled events highlights ongoing financial strain on independent organisers.

UK Participation Insight 2025	Statistic	Strategic Implication
Female membership	31%	Significant growth potential via inclusivity marketing
Female race participants	37%	Higher engagement rate than membership share
Adult participation trend	–2% YoY	Ageing historical base; youth injection required
Youth participation trend	+1% YoY	Small but critical signal of pipeline stability

Source: Triathlon Industry Alliance (UK) Participation Analysis Report 2025; the5krunner.com.

Ireland: engagement through club excellence

Triathlon Ireland reported a membership of over 10,373 across 90-plus clubs by late 2024. Eighty-four percent of members belong to clubs — a record level of community engagement. Female representation stands at 39 percent, while the under-18 segment accounts for 9 percent of the total base. The Tri Heroes youth program reached over 3,300 children in 2024. The establishment of the first National Triathlon Centre at the University of Limerick provides permanent infrastructure for future growth.

Multisport participation in Europe: what brands need to know

- France and Germany have robust and growing participation bases in traditional and endurance multisport formats.
- Ironman is a growing commercial force across European markets.

- Junior (under-18) participants are a priority for all national federations — a long-term customer pipeline, not a one-off cohort.
- Capturing grassroots NGB members can equate to habitual consumers rather than one-off purchasers.

Global Multisport Event Trends: Ironman, Challenge Family and the Rise of Professional Series

The competitive landscape between two large mass-participation series — Ironman and Challenge Family — remains a primary driver of who is doing multisports, where, when and how.

Ironman: harnessing the Gen Z and female surge

Ironman published a global overview for its 2025 season recording over 250,000 athlete registrations across 148 events. The brand reports a 10 percent year-on-year increase in first-time participants, driven by a demographic shift toward younger athletes. Participation among those under 30 grew by 35 percent overall, and the 30–34 age bracket remained the largest category globally for the second consecutive year. The full-distance (140.6-mile) Ironman — traditionally the domain of experienced masters athletes — has seen a 46 percent increase in participation from the under-30 demographic in the last year.

Female participation reached a near-record 49,500 registrants in 2025 for full or Ironman 70.3 distances, accounting for 22 percent of the total athlete base — a 7 percent year-on-year increase. The shorter Ironman 70.3 carries a greater share of female participants (25 percent) compared to the full distance (17 percent). Early 2026 trends indicate that more than a quarter of Ironman 70.3 participants will be women.

Ironman Global Overview 2025	Value	Key Note
Total registrations	250,000+	Strong demand in France, Germany, Netherlands, Denmark, North America
First-timer growth	+10% YoY	Reversing the pre-pandemic sampling slide
Under-30 overall growth	+35% YoY	30–34 largest category; fuelled by 70.3 distance
Female participation — full	17%	2026 trajectory points higher
Female participation — 70.3	25%	Over a quarter of 70.3 field by 2026
Female participation growth	+7% YoY	Women under 30 driving female participation

Source: Ironman Global Overview 2025.

Challenge Family: inclusion and affordability

Challenge Family, which positions itself as the community-centred alternative to Ironman's premium offering, has moved more aggressively on gender inclusion. Its 'The Championship' 2026 event carries a field that is 37 percent female — well above the 20–25 percent long-course industry average. The series also introduced a 25 percent entry discount for students aged 17–23. Overall, Challenge Family closed its 2025 season with an 18 percent increase in starters compared to 2024, across 32 global events.

Research from SheRACES and Fund Her Tri UK found that 84 percent of women are more likely to enter races that feel welcoming and inclusive. A telling statistic: 69 percent of female athletes have been provided only unisex T-shirts. Ironman research also indicates that 23 percent of female endurance athletes who have not competed in an Ironman cite body image concerns as a barrier. The industry's recovery requires not just volume growth but cultural recalibration.

Professional franchise models: T100 and Supertri

A defining trend in 2024/25 has been the emergence of professional leagues combining elite racing with mass-participation events in iconic urban centres. The Supertri series (formerly Super League Triathlon) doubled its Eurosport broadcast viewership in 2024 and acquired the Chicago Triathlon — now the fourth-largest triathlon in the world with 7,400 participants — demonstrating the franchise model's ability to stabilise and grow legacy events. The T100 Tour has similarly focused on closed-road, big-city experiences, converting spectator interest into participation: its final 2025 event in Qatar saw combined age-group fields of over 5,000 athletes.

Harnessing female participation in multisports: what brands need to know

The commercial implication is clear: demand for women-specific product in multisport is structurally undersupplied relative to participation growth. The gap between female participation rates and the share of genuinely female-specific product — across apparel, footwear and equipment — represents a latent revenue opportunity. Brands that have invested in design beyond resized male kit are positioned to capture it.

The retention crisis: sampling vs. residency

A critical concern for the multisport industry is the churn rate among new entrants. US-based race sign-up platform RunSignup reports a 2025 triathlon repeat participation rate of only 7.1 percent compared with the same race in 2024 — significantly below the 17.2 percent repeat rate across the broader 5K-to-ultramarathon spectrum. The attrition rate for first-timers who never race a second time is estimated at nearly 50 percent (the5krunner.com).

Cost, and perceived cost, is a primary barrier. Sixty-seven percent of women are put off entering triathlon events due to cost, according to SheRACES and Fund Her Tri UK. An Ironman 2025 survey found that a greater proportion of existing Ironman participants cite cost as a barrier (28 percent) than non-participants (13 percent) — indicating that affordability concerns intensify with experience.

Retention: what brands need to know

- **Begin with product.** Comfort and fit are the priorities stressed by existing multisport participants when advising newcomers. This includes women-specific design as a baseline expectation, not a premium add-on.
- **Customer service as a differentiator.** Brands looking to enter the multisport market need to invest in matching consumers with the best product fit — in person or via virtual services. Magic5 goggles use a smartphone app scan to create a custom goggle fit. Roka's Maverick wetsuits offer a 'good faith' policy allowing in-water testing. Extended warranties, replacement policies and aftercare services should also feature.
- **Longevity as a value proposition.** A durable product delivers a positive cost-per-wear argument on higher price points and appeals to the sustainability-minded consumer who considers a product's full lifecycle when purchasing.
- **Genuine sustainability credentials.** Multisport athletes are acutely aware of water quality and environmental impact. Sumarpro offers a wetsuit crafted from limestone neoprene — an alternative to petroleum-based neoprene. Kostüme caps each collection at a small number, sold via pre-sale. Maap was the first cycling brand to join Bluesign as a full partner.

Multisport disciplines: beyond traditional triathlon

The state of play for multisports in 2026 is fundamentally a story of diversification. The conventional triathlon definition — swim, bike, run — no longer captures the full participation landscape, and the commercial consequences of this extension are worth mapping. Diversification serves as a critical mechanism for lowering barriers to entry and maintaining year-round engagement across varying climates and geographies. For brands, it means the multisport consumer is not a single equipment-intensive buyer.

Aquathlon and duathlon: the universal gateways

Aquathlon (run-swim-run) is increasingly marketed as the primary entry point for nervous swimmers. World Triathlon emphasises its role in pool-based winter series and as a format where athletes can experience multisport transitions without the gear-intensive bike leg. Duathlon (run-bike-run) remains a major growth segment, with a nearly 6 percent increase in participation share in the UK in 2025, as it eliminates the swimming barrier for the large community of road runners.

Aquabike: retention for the masters demographic

Aquabike (swim-bike) has transitioned from a niche format to a National Championship discipline in regions including Ireland and the USA. It serves as a vital retention mechanism for the 40–65 demographic who may have accumulated running injuries but wish to remain competitive in the multisport community.

Winter and off-road formats

Cross Triathlon (swim-MTB-trail run) continues to thrive as an experiential alternative to road triathlon. Winter Triathlon (run-MTB-XC ski) saw 261 athletes from 20 nations at its 2025 world championship, illustrating its deep regional specialisation in Northern Europe and the Italian Alps.

Discipline	Legs	Primary Market Role
Triathlon	Swim – Bike – Run	Foundational pillar and Olympic discipline.
Duathlon	Run – Bike – Run	Entry-level format for runners; cold-weather alternative. +6% participation share in UK 2025.
Aquabike	Swim – Bike	Growing masters-level discipline; avoids running impact. National Championship status in Ireland and USA.
Aquathlon	Run – Swim – Run	Excellent newcomer gateway; often pool-based in winter.
Cross Tri	Swim – MTB – Trail Run	Off-road community focus; driven by brands including Xterra.
Winter Tri	Run – MTB – XC Ski	Niche resilience in alpine regions. 261 athletes from 20 nations at 2025 world championship.
Quadrathlon	Swim – Kayak – Bike – Run	Four-component challenge; includes a paddling element.

Source: World Triathlon; Triathlon Industry Alliance (UK); national federation data.

The multisport state of play: 2026 and beyond

As multisports moves into 2026, the focus of global national governing bodies is firmly fixed on the LA 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Programs such as USA Triathlon's Elevate28 are intended to institutionalise recent gains in youth and female participation through fundraising and infrastructure investment.

Pivot from 'M40' monoculture

Data from the 2024/25 cycle confirms that the multisport industry has effectively flattened its decline and is building a new participant base that is more diverse and younger than the traditional core triathlete profile. The sport is not 'broken', as some pre-pandemic metrics might have suggested, but it is fundamentally different — skewing younger, more female and more experiential than ever before. Four pillars are driving this evolution:

- **Generation Alpha and Z onboarding.** Successful youth programs in Germany, Ireland and the US are offsetting an ageing demographic base.
- **Format accessibility.** The surge in duathlon and sprint-distance participation confirms that lowering barriers increases participant volume.
- **Branded event dominance.** Series such as Ironman and Supertri are capturing the high-value segment and driving product and experience innovation.
- **Technological efficiency.** Mobile registration and data-driven training habits are professionalising the amateur experience.

Emerging markets and the long-horizon pipeline

China's General Administration of Sport reported more than 400 million people engaged in outdoor sports by late 2025; the triathlon apparel market in the country is projected to grow at a compound annual rate of between 8 and 9 percent through 2033. In Latin America, Colombia recorded 24 percent year-on-year growth in multisport participation and Costa Rica posted 50 percent growth, both supported by new Ironman event launches.

In Australia, AusTriathlon has set an ambitious target of 200,000 Australians on starting lines by 2032. Its New South Wales arm recorded 67,114 multisport start lines in 2024/25 — around 30 percent higher than the prior year. Female-specific events are driving growth: Western Australia's Every Woman Triathlon posted a 46.3 percent registration increase, with 53 percent of participants completing their first triathlon.

The next 24 months will be defined by how effectively NGBs and commercial series can convert the current fitness boom into a multisport boom, leveraging high-visibility urban events and technology-driven participation models. The industry must pivot away from perceptions of a middle-aged male monoculture toward a diverse, multidisciplinary ecosystem that will ensure the sport's long-term stability and growth.

Factfile and sources

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