

# AUSTRIA

PREVALENCE (%) OF ADULTS PHYSICALLY  
ACTIVE ON A REGULAR BASIS, 2014

%	ADULTS (15+ YEARS)
MALES	34
FEMALES	26
BOTH SEXES	30

Total population: 8 506 889

Median age: 42.9 years

Life expectancy at birth males: 78.6 years

Life expectancy at birth females: 83.8 years

GDP per capita: €37 000

GDP spent on health: 11.1% (1)





# Monitoring and surveillance

## Physical activity in adults

Austria does not currently have a health monitoring and surveillance system that includes population-based measures of physical activity, but it is envisaged that a system will be established in the near future. Moreover, the country is planning to conduct a modular study on selected indicators. The development of these indicators is closely linked to the development of measures to support the country's health targets regarding physical activity and this process should be finalized by early 2016.

The country has 2 national policies on physical activity for health: 1 exists as part of Austria's national health targets (adopted in 2012) issued by the Austrian Federal Ministry of Health (2), and the other entitled the National Action Plan Physical Activity (adopted in 2013) (3) led by the Federal Ministry of Defence and Sports. The country's national recommendation and cut-off point for adults reaching sufficient physical activity levels for health are based on WHO's *Global Recommendations on Physical Activity for Health* (2010) (4). The country's national recommendation addresses children and young people adults and older adults (5).

Data from a 2014 Eurobarometer (6) show that 30% of the Austrian population (aged 15+ years) are physically active on a regular basis, with males being more active (34%) than females (26%).

The WHO Global Health Observatory (GHO) estimates from 2010 for Austrian adults (aged 18+ years) (7) indicate that 73.6% meet the WHO recommended physical activity levels for health, again with males being more active (78.9%) than females (68.7%).

## Physical activity in children and adolescents

Austria does not have a specific national survey for monitoring and surveillance of physical activity in children and adolescents. The country uses the cut-off points for children and adolescents reaching the recommended physical activity levels as set out in WHO's *Global Recommendations on Physical Activity for Health* (2010) (4).

Physical activity levels in Austrian adolescents are assessed through the Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) study (8). According to the HBSC results from 2014 for Austria (see Table 1), 17.4% of the adolescents (aged 11-17 years) meet the recommended physical activity levels of 60 minutes per day (boys 23.2%, girls 12.5%). Moreover, 28.5% of these young people are physically active for more than 7 hours per week (8).

Table 1. Prevalence (%) of adolescents reaching the recommended physical activity levels, 2014

%	ADOLESCENTS (11-17 YEARS)
MALES	23.2
FEMALES	12.4
BOTH SEXES	17.4

Source: Ramelow et al., 2015 (8).

The WHO GHO 2010 estimates for Austrian adolescents (defined as aged 11–17 years in relation to WHO data) report that 24.6% reach the recommended physical activity levels for health, where the proportion of boys meeting the recommended levels is almost twice as high as that of girls (34.4% and 15.1%, respectively) (7).

Box 1 gives details of national campaigns in Austria designed to encourage health-enhancing physical activity (HEPA).

### Box 1. Raising Public Awareness: The Austrian Day of Sports and the European Week of Sports

The annual Austrian Day of Sports (*Tag des Sports*), carried out in September each year, was established in 2001 (9). Over the years, this event has grown into one of the largest sports-related open air events in Austria. In 2014, a record high of more than 500 000 visitors was recorded at Heldenplatz in Vienna, the focal point of the event. In addition to honouring distinguished top athletes, various acts perform on several stages, auto-graph sessions are held and over 150 sports-related stands are erected presenting sports, equipment and accessories, for visitors of all ages to explore. In the past the event has been themed, with a specific focus, such as a new trend in sports (e.g. "street sports"). The European Week of Sports (*Europäische Woche des Sports*) will be organized in Austria by the Federal Ministry of Defence and Sports, and the event will be held for the first time in the second week of September 2015. The aim of such event is to change behaviours and attitudes towards physical activity and to encourage increased uptake of measures to build physical activity into everyday routines (10).

## Policy response

### Major policy documents adopted by government bodies

The Austrian Federal Ministry of Health has issued 10 national health targets (2). Target no. 8 specifically addresses physical activity: "To promote healthy, safe exercise and activity in everyday life through appropriate environments". It defines physical activity for all ages as being paramount to health and calls physical activity to be integrated into everyday life by improving infrastructures (such as cycle paths, play grounds, and routes to school). The health targets also promote the "joy of engaging in physical activity and sports" and call for physical activity to be fostered in preschools and schools, elderly people's homes, as well as in social clubs and societies. Provisions are also made for the specific requirements of people with disabilities.

Another important document issued by the Federal Ministry of Health and the Federal Ministry of Defense and Sports is the aforementioned National Action Plan Physical Activity (3). This is a comprehensive document covering many issues, including: promoting physical activity education, urban planning, and physical activity for marginalized groups. It was developed in line with the country's national health targets.

### National physical activity guidelines

National Recommendations on Health-enhancing physical activity were issued by the Austrian Federal Ministry of Health (5). To promote good health, adults are encouraged to carry out at least 150 minutes per week of moderate-intensity physical activity, or 75 minutes per week of high-intensity exercise, or ideally a combination of moderate- to

high-intensity physical activity (MVPA). Each exercise session should last for at least 10 minutes. For optimal health gains, 300 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity should be carried out per week, or 150 minutes of high-intensity exercise. Children and young adults should exercise for at least 1 hour per day (exercise of at least moderate intensity).

Moderate-intensity exercise is defined as when breathing is accelerated but conversation is still possible. High-intensity physical activity is defined as when deep breathing is required and only a short exchange of words is possible. These recommendations are in line with WHO's Global recommendations on physical activity for health (2010) (4).

Table 2 presents a summary of the key measures in place to monitor and address physical activity in Austria.

Table 2. Summary of key physical activity initiatives in Austria

HEALTH	SPORTS	EDUCATION	TRANSPORT	MONITORING	GUIDELINES
Counselling on physical activity as part of primary health care services	Existence of a national Sports for All policy(ies)	Mandatory physical activity in primary and secondary schools	National or subnational schemes promoting active travel to school and/or workplace	Physical activity included in the national health monitoring system or separate routine survey	Existence of a national recommendation on physical activity
YES	YES	YES	YES	YES*	YES

\* A monitoring system is envisaged to be implemented in the near future.

## Additional information on action in key areas

### Sports in schools

It is mandatory in Austria as part of the federal syllabus for primary and secondary schools to provide a minimum of 2 sessions of physical education (PE) per week. Schools specializing in sports (e.g. ski-sport schools) allocated more hours to PE (11).

# Successful approaches

In recent years, Austria has developed a solid policy framework addressing physical activity. The national health targets, National Action Plan on Physical Activity, the National Child Health Strategy (12), the National Action Plan for Integration (13) and the Cycling Masterplan (*Masterplan Radfahren*) (14) all address physical activity in one context or another. The cooperation between the Federal Ministry of Defence and Sports and the Federal Ministry of Health is a solid basis upon which to build further action and cooperation with other stakeholders.

The development of the Austrian Recommendations for Health-enhancing physical activity (5) provides a common basis for promoting physical activity.

A strong partnership with the Austrian Sports for All organizations – including their network of over 15 000 sports clubs – allows their experience to be drawn upon in terms of HEPA promotion and delivery. Provision of sufficient public funding through the Fit for Austria (*Fit für Österreich*) initiative, since 2006, has strengthened the Sports for All organizations' competences to provide a countrywide network of health-oriented sports clubs (15). Collaboration between these partners ensures that activities such as the annual Austrian Day of Sports and "School Olympics" activities are successful.

This partnership is also responsible for Austria's largest cooperation programme between the sports and education sectors, entitled Move Children Healthy (*Kinder gesund bewegen*) (16). The initiative aims to build cooperation between sports clubs, preschools and primary schools and to promote an active lifestyle by offering a joyful and fun approach to physical activity for children aged 2–10 years. By the end of 2014, more than 120 000 interventions have been provided to almost 7000 preschools and primary schools since 2009.

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