

POLAND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY FACTSHEET

This is one of the 28 European Union Member States factsheets on health-enhancing physical activity, developed as a part of a joint initiative between the European Commission (EC) and WHO Regional Office for Europe in the context of the implementation of the Recommendation of the Council of the European Union on promoting health-enhancing physical activity across sectors and the European Noncommunicable Diseases Action Plan 2012-2016.

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World Health Organization
REGIONAL OFFICE FOR Europe



POLAND

PREVALENCE (%) OF ADULTS REACHING THE
RECOMMENDED PHYSICAL ACTIVITY LEVELS, 2014

%	ALL ADULTS (15+ YEARS)	
	LEISURE TIME	LEISURE TIME PLUS TRANSPORT*
MALES	21.0	23.0
FEMALES	15.5	18.0
BOTH SEXES	18.0	20.0

Total population: 38 017 856

Median age: 39.2 years

Life expectancy at birth males: 73.0 years

Life expectancy at birth females: 81.2 years

GDP per capita: €10 100

GDP spent on health: 6.8% (1)



Monitoring and surveillance

Physical activity in adults

In Poland, the WHO *Global recommendations on physical activity for health* (2010) (2) are currently used. It is anticipated that national recommendations on physical activity targeting the general population (based on WHO and European Union (EU) recommendations) will shortly be introduced with the implementation of the *Sports development programme 2020*, which is currently only available in draft form (3). In addition, the Polish Society of Sports Medicine has developed specific recommendations on physical activity for adults and older adults, based on recommendations of the European Society of Cardiology, the American College of Sports Medicine and the American Heart Association (4).

The Polish health monitoring and surveillance system, established under the leadership of the Ministry of Sport and Tourism in 2014, includes population-based measurements of physical activity (based on the IPAQ questionnaire (5)). Information on physical activity is collected twice a year and includes the frequency, duration and intensity of physical activity, including cycling/walking. The data can be disaggregated by age and socioeconomic status. The current monitoring system includes leisure-time and transport physical activity only, but other activity/inactivity measures – such as physical activity during working hours or sedentary behaviour – are planned to be introduced into future research.

A national representative study from 2014 (financed by the Ministry of Sport and Tourism)¹ reports that 18.5% of adults (aged 15–69 years) meet the WHO *Global recommendations on physical activity for health* (2010) (2) in terms of their leisure-time activities. This study also provides data for physical activity carried out using transport, through a separate question; this has been included in Table 1 to provide figures that combine leisure-time and transport-based physical activity.

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

%	ADULTS (15–69 YEARS)		ALL ADULTS (15+ YEARS)	
	LEISURE TIME	LEISURE TIME PLUS TRANSPORT*	LEISURE TIME	LEISURE TIME PLUS TRANSPORT*
MALES	21.5	23.5	21.0	23.0
FEMALES	16.0	18.5	15.5	18.0
BOTH SEXES	18.5	21.0	18.0	20.0

* Data for physical activity carried out while using transport do not include walking, and physical activity for transport reasons (e.g. cycling, roller-skating) is considered to be moderate-intensity physical activity.
Source: unpublished data from 2014 arising from research carried out by the Ministry of Sport and Tourism.

The WHO Global Health Observatory (GHO) 2010 estimates for Poland (6) show that 79.5% of the adult population (aged 18+ years) meet the WHO recommended physical activity levels (across all domains of life, including work/household, transport and leisure time), with more males (85.6%) being active than females (74.0%).

¹ Data from unpublished research by the Ministry of Sport and Tourism, based on the IPAQ questionnaire, received through communication with the country focal point.

Physical activity in children and adolescents

Poland uses the international cut-off point for children and adolescents reaching the physical activity recommendations, as set out in WHO's *Global recommendations on physical activity for health* (2010) (2).

The latest Polish "Physical activity in school-aged children" study of children aged 9–17 years (*Aktywność fizyczna młodzieży szkolnej w wieku 9–17 lat*), which is based on the Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) methodology (7), reports that 21.5% of adolescents reach the WHO recommended levels of physical activity for health, with significantly more boys (28.5%) being active than girls (15.2%) (see Table 2).

Table 2. Prevalence (%) of adolescents reaching the recommended physical activity levels, 2013

%	ADOLESCENTS (11–17 YEARS)
MALES	28.5
FEMALES	15.2
BOTH SEXES	21.5

Source: unpublished data from a Polish national study of physical activity in school-aged children, carried out in 2013.

According to the WHO GHO 2010 data (6), the percentage of Polish adolescents (defined as aged 11–17 years in relation to WHO data) reaching the WHO recommended physical activity levels is similar to those reported in the 2013 national survey. The GHO data also indicate that male adolescents are more physically active (25.3%) than their female counterparts (15.8%).

Types of physical activity and modes of transport

Car, public transport and walking are the main modes of transport used in Poland. No national transport survey exists in Poland, but data from 2014 on levels of walking and cycling can be acquired from the national physical activity survey². According to the survey, the following percentages of the population (aged 15+ years) engage in the following modes of transport and activities:

- walking (recreational): 51.5% at least once a week; 16.5% on 5 days a week or more;
- walking (as a mode of transport): 52% at least once a week; 33.5% on 5 days a week or more;
- cycling (as a mode of transport): 18% at least once a week; 4.5% on 5 days a week or more.

² Data from unpublished research by the Ministry of Sport and Tourism, based on the IPAQ questionnaire, received through communication with the country focal point.

Box 1 gives details of a physical activity promotion scheme in place in Poland.

Box 1. "Stop abstention from PE classes" (Stop zwolnieniom z wf)

This scheme was established in 2013 by the Ministry of Sport and Tourism. The main goal of the campaign is to promote physical activity among schoolchildren and adolescents and to encourage them to attend physical education (PE) classes at school. The target groups include children and adolescents themselves, along with parents, PE teachers, schools, local governments and doctors (8).

Policy response

Major policy documents adopted by government bodies

Both the *Strategy for the development of sports in Poland until the year 2015* (9) and its draft replacement, the *Sports development programme 2020* (3) (draft, 2015) were created by the Ministry of Sport and Tourism, encompassing features of a national Sports for All policy. The former has 3 main priorities: (1) promotion of sports for everyone, (2) growth of professional sporting activities and (3) developing the sports and recreation infrastructure (9). The main objective of the draft *Sports development programme 2020* is to create conditions for the development of sports and to promote health-enhancing physical activity (HEPA). Further specific objectives include: creating the conditions, and ensuring the availability of opportunities, for physical activity at every stage of the life-course; using sports to build social capital; improving organizational and legal conditions for the development of sports; increasing the availability of qualified human resources; and using the potential of sports at competitive level to promote physical activity in general and/or to promote Poland internationally (3). The Ministry of Health also created the *National health programme for the years 2007–2015* (10). Within this, operational objective 4 is "increasing physical activity of the population"; operational objective 8 is "supporting physical [...] development and health of children and adolescents, and preventing health and social problems that most commonly affect them"; and operational objective 10 involves "creating conditions for active life of the disabled".

Table 3 presents a summary of the key measures in place to monitor and address physical activity in Poland.

Table 3. Summary of key physical activity initiatives in Poland

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
NO	YES	YES	NO	YES	NO*

* It is envisaged that national recommendations on physical activity (based on WHO and EU recommendations) will be introduced and officially adopted as part of the implementation of the new HEPA-oriented sports development programme 2020, available in draft form (3). While there is no official schedule for the recommendations, the document is expected to be fully implemented during 2016.

Additional information on action in key areas

Schools

Four lessons of PE per week are mandatory in Polish primary schools (classes 4–6, for pupils aged 10–13 years), with each lesson lasting just under 1 hour, and in middle and secondary schools (for pupils aged 13–19/20 years), 3 to 4 hours of PE per week are mandatory. For younger children, in classes 1–3 of primary schools (pupils aged 6–10 years), PE is integrated into the educational structure; the division between subjects and activities is the responsibility of the teacher who delivers a core curriculum at each educational level.

Physical activity among older adults

The *Government programme for senior citizens' social activity for 2014–2020 (Rządowy Program na rzecz Aktywności Społecznej Osób Starszych na lata 2014–2020)* is a programme run by the Polish Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (11). Specific priorities are to enhance physical activity among older adults, notably by promoting participation of older adults in recreational and touristic physical activity, and increasing the accessibility and availability of social services, including sporting services. This programme is funded by the Polish Government and has been rolled out nationwide (12).

In addition, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy is implementing a nationwide programme entitled Senior-WIGOR 2015–2020, with the main objective of improving the quality of life of older adults, mostly by providing day-care homes where social, educational, cultural and physical activities are a priority, in addition to daily care and support (13).

Participation in international networks

Poland is a member of the Schools for Health in Europe (SHE) network (14), the WHO European action network on reducing marketing pressure on children (15), the WHO European Healthy Cities Network (16) and the Healthy Eating and Physical activity in Schools (HEPS) project (under the umbrella of the SHE network).

Successful approaches

Physical activity promotion in Poland

In Poland, ongoing work to promote physical activity across the country has led to some significant changes; most notably the following highlights:

- Provision of PE classes is now mandatory, meaning that children at all levels of school education are engaged in PE relatively frequently.
- Recognition and funding for Sports for All projects are gradually increasing, corresponding to the growing popularity of sports and physical activity in Polish society in general.
- A new strategic document in the field of sports is being developed (*Sports development programme 2020*), providing a cross-sectoral approach to HEPA promotion, in line with the WHO European Physical Activity Strategy (17).

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