Sport participation - attending live sporting events

Statistics Explained

Data extracted in April 2024
Planned article update: October 2029.

Highlights

In 2022, more than one third of individuals in Ireland, Luxembourg and the Netherlands attended live sports events .

In 2022, in 14 EU countries, the participation rate in live sports events for individuals in the highest income group was at least twice that of individuals in the lowest income group.

In 2022, in 10 EU countries, at least 20% of individuals were involved in some formal sports and outdoor voluntary activities.

This article presents statistics on participation in live sports events and formal sports and outdoor voluntary activities, with data from the 2022 six-yearly rolling module on Quality of Life of the European Union's (EU's) statistics on income and living conditions (EU-SILC) .

Participation in live sports events

In 2022, in 3 EU countries, over one third of people aged 16 and over attended live sports events

In 2022, in 23 EU countries , less than one third of the population aged 16+ reported attending live sports events in the previous 12 months; the exceptions were Ireland (40%), Luxembourg (38%) and the Netherlands (37%). The lowest participation rates (under 10%) were recorded in Bulgaria and Romania (both 7%), see Figure 1. In terms of frequency, in 21 EU countries people mostly attended live sports events up to 3 times a year, while in the Netherlands, Belgium, Spain, Czechia and Cyprus they attended at least 4 sporting events a year.

People attending live sports events in the last 12 months, 2015 and 2022
(% of population aged 16 and over)

	2015			2022		
	Never	From 1 to 3 times	At least 4 times	Never	From 1 to 3 times	At least 4 times
Belgium	68.6	11.8	19.6	74.4	11.8	13.8
Bulgaria	82.5	10.6	6.9	92.9	4.8	2.4
Czechia	58.7	21.8	19.5	84.9	4.0	11.2
Denmark	58.8	28.5	12.7	69.0	17.0	14.0
Germany	64.8	18.1	17.1	:	:	:
Estonia	72.5	16.7	10.8	80.2	12.2	7.6
Ireland (')	56.5	17.9	25.6	60.1	22.8	17.0
Greece	73.1	22.0	4.9	83.9	11.1	5.0
Spain	74.5	11.2	14.3	75.5	12.0	12.5
France	71.6	17.0	11.5	80.5	11.9	7.6
Croatia	74.1	14.2	11.8	78.3	11.1	10.6
Italy	81.1	10.9	8.0	86.2	8.9	4.8
Cyprus	76.7	11.1	12.2	82.2	8.2	9.6
Latvia	66.6	21.6	11.8	87.6	9.4	3.1
Lithuania	75.1	19.2	5.8	87.3	9.6	3.1
Luxembourg	59.5	18.8	21.7	62.4	27.9	9.7
Hungary	75.0	15.3	9.7	87.0	7.8	5.2
Malta	78.0	10.5	11.5	86.0	9.1	4.9
Netherlands	46.4	21.4	32.2	62.7	14.1	23.2
Austria	64.2	19.1	16.7	80.1	11.5	8.3
Poland (')	72.5	21.9	5.6	83.4	11.8	4.8
Portugal	72.5	13.7	13.8	76.2	12.3	11.5
Romania	83.8	9.9	6.3	93.0	5.2	1.8
Slovenia	68.8	15.6	15.6	79.7	11.8	8.5
Slovakia	61.0	20.1	18.9	77.9	14.7	7.4
Finland	51.8	26.8	21.5	71.2	17.3	11.5
Sweden	52.0	21.7	26.3	70.4	15.6	14.0
Norway	48.6	20.1	31.2	63.1	18.3	18.6
Switzerland	49.1	21.5	29.4	65.0	16.2	18.8
Montenegro	71.8	14.9	13.2	85.9	7.6	6.5
Albania	:	:	:	89.2	9.3	1.5
Serbia	77.9	10.5	11.6	85.2	10.0	4.8
Türkiye	:	:	:	95.0	2.7	2.2

Note: Data not available for Germany in 2022 due to high item non response rate.
(') 2015 data: low reliability
Source: Eurostat (online data codes: ilc_scp03)

eurostat

Table 1: People attending live sports events in the last 12 months, 2015 and 2022 (% of population aged 16 and over) Source: Eurostat (ilc_scp03)

In almost all EU countries more men than women attended live sports events at least once

In 2022, men reported attending more live sports events than women in all EU countries, except for Czechia. Ireland (50% of men and 30% of women), Luxembourg (44% of men and 31% of women) and the Netherlands (42% of men and 33% of women) recorded the highest percentages for both sexes (see Figure 2). In 4 countries the differences between the sexes were of at least 20 percentage points (pp) : Cyprus (25 pp), Croatia (24 pp), Slovakia (21 pp) and Ireland (20 pp).

In 11 EU countries the participation rate of men in live sports events was at least twice as high as that of women, with Cyprus and Romania recording a percentage of men at least 4 times higher than that of women: at the other end of the scale, in addition to Czechia, the smallest ratios of participation rates of men to women were recorded in the Netherlands (1.3), Luxembourg and Denmark (1.4 each).

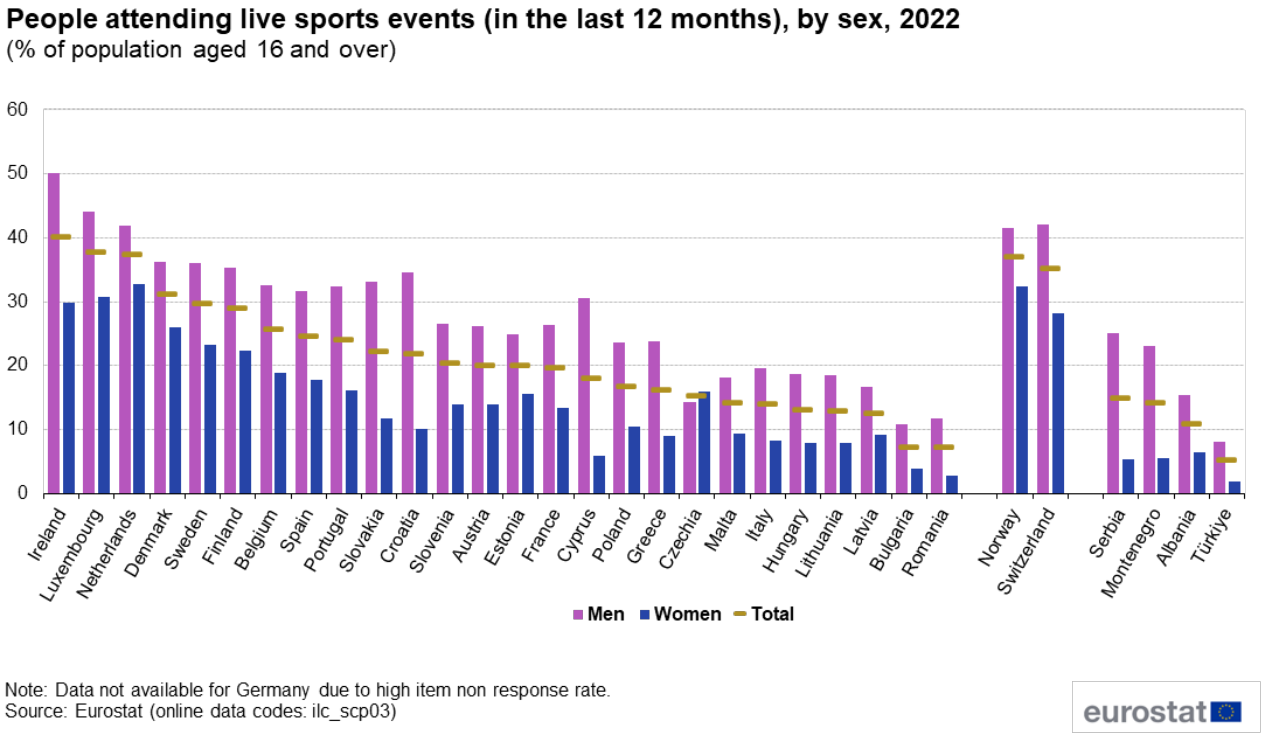


Figure 1: People attending live sports events (in the last 12 months), by sex, 2022 (% of population aged 16 and over) Source: Eurostat (ilc_scp03)

Participation in live sports events was significantly affected by levels of income in most EU countries

Figure 2 shows the participation rate of people in the first and fifth income quintile groups .

In 2022, the participation rate between the highest and the lowest income quintile was at least twice that of people in the first income quintile in 14 EU countries. In Latvia the participation rate of people in the fifth quintile was 5 times that of people in the first quintile. By contrast, in Luxembourg the participation rate of people in the fifth quintile was 1.3 times that of people in the first quintile, the smallest ratio among the EU countries.

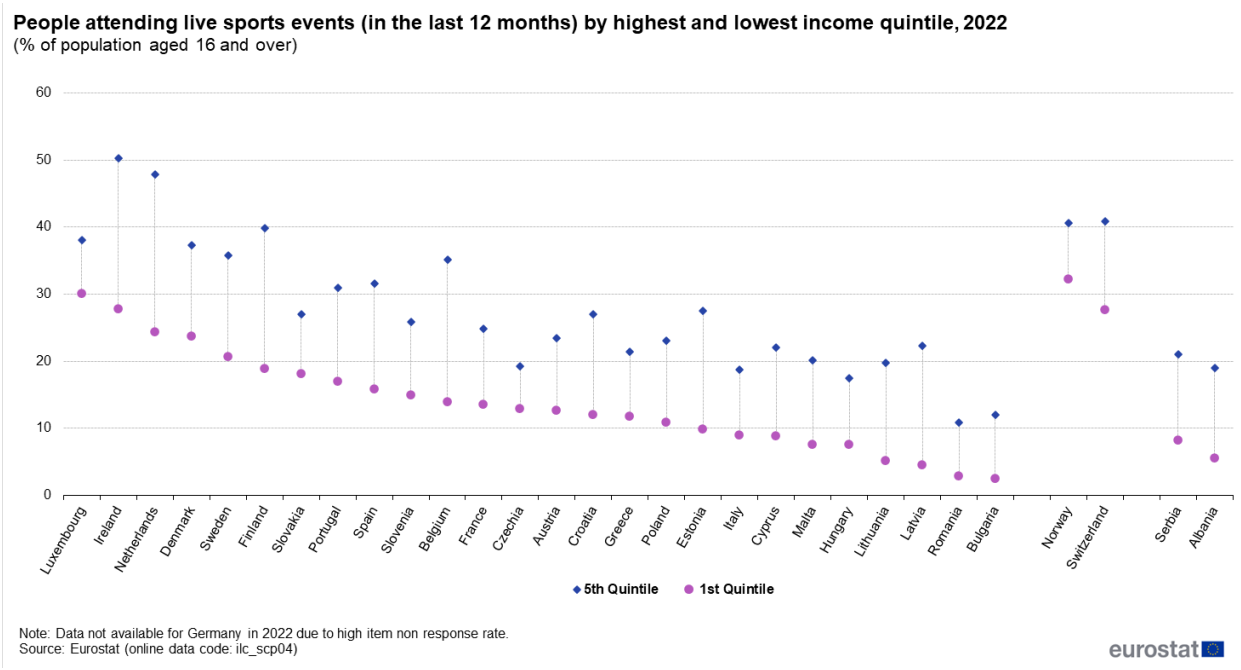


Figure 2: People attending live sports events (in the last 12 months) by highest and lowest income quintile, 2022 (% of population aged 16 and over) Source: Eurostat (ilc_scp04)

The level of disability clearly affected participation in live sports events

In 2022, people declaring at least some level of activity limitation had a significantly lower attendance in all EU countries.

- Only 6 EU countries recorded a participation rate for people with some level of disability of at least 20%, with the highest rate in Luxembourg (29%).
- At the other end of the scale, in 12 countries the participation rate of people with some level of disability did not reach 10% (see Figure 3).
- In 15 EU countries the participation rate of people without any disability was at least twice that of people with some level of activity limitation.
- In Luxembourg, Czechia and Denmark, the difference in participation rates between people without any disability and people with some disability was limited to 1.5 or less.

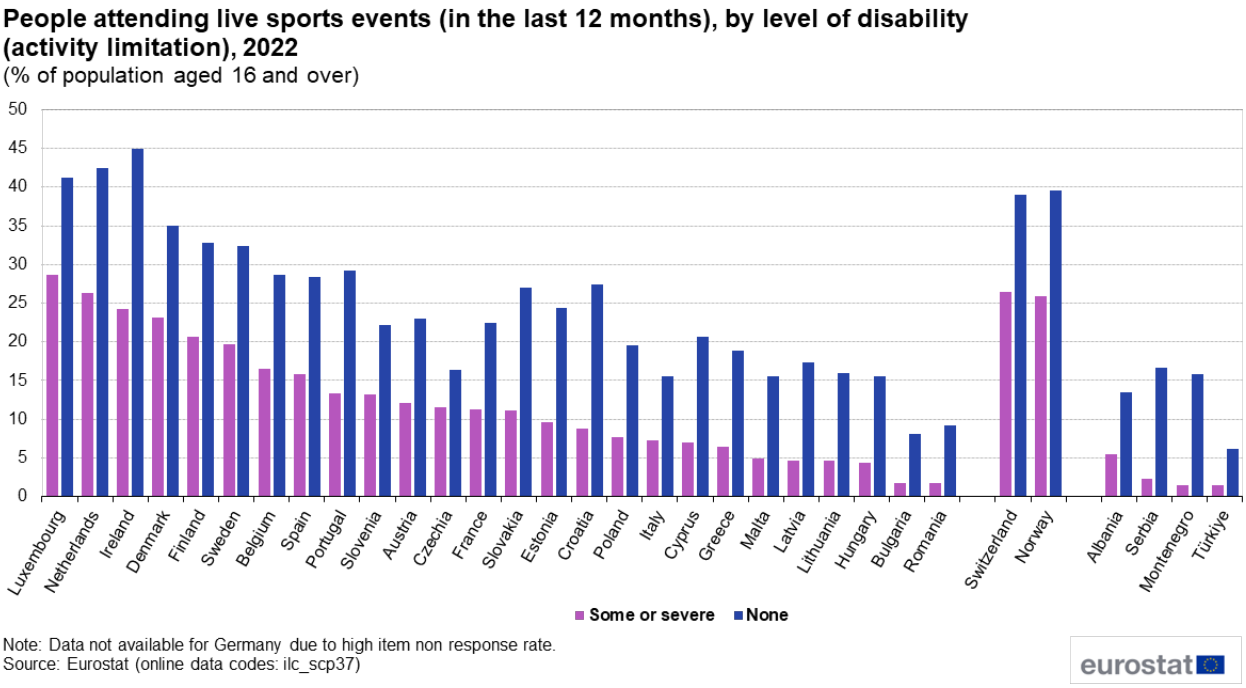


Figure 3: People attending live sports events (in the last 12 months), by level of disability, 2022 (% of population aged 16 and over) Source: Eurostat (ilc_scp37)

In most EU countries, the main reason for not participating in live sports events was lack of interest

- In 20 EU countries the main reported reason for not attending live sports events was 'lack of interest', with the highest values recorded in Belgium (68% of non-participants), Cyprus (60%) and the Netherlands (58%) (see Table 2).
- 'Watching or experiencing sports events other ways' was given as the main reason for not attending live sports events by people from Estonia (44% of non-participants) and Lithuania (33%). This reason was also given by at least 30% of non-participants in Croatia (35%), Poland (31%) and Bulgaria (30%).
- 'Financial reasons' were given as the main obstacle to attending live sports events particularly by people in Spain (9%).
- In addition, 'lack of time' was the most reported reason for not attending live sports events in Luxembourg (10%).
- 'Lack of live sports events in the neighbourhood' had the highest percentage of people (6%) in Romania and Finland.
- In 2 EU countries – Italy (39%) and Bulgaria (36%) – the percentage of people not attending live sports events for 'other reasons' was higher than in any other EU country.

Reasons for non-participation in live sports events (in the last 12 months), 2022
(% of non-participants)

	Financial reasons	No such activities in the neighbourhood	No time	Watching or experiencing by other means	No interest	Other reason
Belgium	4.0	0.9	3.3	15.7	68.6	7.5
Bulgaria	4.8	2.8	4.4	30.3	21.6	36.1
Czechia (²)	10.6	42.2	19.3	0.0	27.9	0.0
Denmark	2.5	2.6	3.3	14.5	57.0	20.1
Germany	:	:	:	:	:	:
Estonia	1.2	1.3	4.0	44.3	32.1	17.1
Ireland	4.7	1.4	3.0	10.0	50.7	30.4
Greece	6.2	2.3	3.4	15.9	56.8	15.4
Spain	9.4	2.9	4.8	17.0	43.3	22.6
France	5.8	2.3	4.5	7.8	57.3	22.3
Croatia	1.0	0.9	3.8	35.0	42.9	16.4
Italy	5.3	1.9	6.0	8.5	39.1	39.2
Cyprus	2.2	0.0	2.8	26.7	59.8	8.5
Latvia	4.1	2.6	3.3	25.6	37.7	26.6
Lithuania	3.9	2.6	3.2	32.9	32.4	25.0
Luxembourg	4.5	4.2	9.7	15.4	55.0	11.4
Hungary	6.0	2.6	5.2	29.6	48.6	8.0
Malta	2.2	0.3	1.9	26.5	51.5	17.5
Netherlands	2.8	3.4	3.6	13.9	58.4	17.9
Austria (²)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0
Poland	1.6	3.6	7.2	31.3	45.9	10.4
Portugal	6.2	2.6	4.5	11.8	52.2	22.7
Romania	4.1	5.8	5.8	28.8	43.1	12.4
Slovenia	2.8	1.3	6.1	24.5	38.6	26.8
Slovakia	1.8	1.0	5.4	22.3	42.6	26.9
Finland	1.3	5.8	2.3	18.9	42.4	29.3
Sweden	2.2	2.5	3.1	12.0	51.9	28.3
Norway	1.1	5.8	4.7	19	49.8	19.6
Switzerland (¹)	2.8	3.3	5.1	13.3	47.1	28.4
Montenegro	3.2	2.0	8.3	26.5	36.8	23.2
Albania	22.1	9.0	5.3	17.1	40.6	5.9
Serbia	3.0	1.7	3.7	31.8	51.3	8.4
Türkiye	8.2	1.6	10.9	3.5	75.1	0.7

Note: Data not available for Germany due to high item non response rate.
(¹) Low reliability
(²) Not significant
(³) 'Watching or experiencing by other means' and 'No interest': not significant
Source: Eurostat (online data codes: ilc_scp05)

eurostat

Table 2: Reasons for non-participation in live sports events (in the last 12 months), 2022 (% of non-participants) Source: Eurostat (ilc_scp05)

Participation in formal sports and outdoor voluntary activities

Volunteering is an important part of sports events: it provides essential support to sports clubs and contributes to the social and economic value of sport. The aim of the question on participation in formal sports and outdoor voluntary activities is to ascertain if the respondent, during the last 12 months, has done any unpaid non-compulsory work for or through a sports organisation, a formal group or a club (such as a football club or youth sports centre).

In 2022, in 10 EU countries, at least 20% of people aged 16 and over were involved in some sort of formal sports and outdoor voluntary activities. This share was above 30% in Ireland (39%) and the three Nordic countries . By contrast, there were 7 EU countries where fewer than 1 in 10 people participated in formal sports and outdoor voluntary activities, with the lowest percentage in Cyprus (2%).

Figure 4 shows the level of participation in formal sports and outdoor voluntary activities by degree of urbanisation. In 2022, of the 23 EU countries with available data, only in Greece, Slovenia and Bulgaria was the percentage of people living in cities who were involved in formal sports and outdoor voluntary activities higher than that of people living in towns and suburbs or rural areas. In 14 EU countries the participation rate in formal sports and outdoor

voluntary activities was higher for people living in towns and suburbs, ranging from 46% in Ireland to 5% in Cyprus, while in France, the Netherlands, Estonia, Spain, Malta and Portugal this percentage was higher in rural areas.

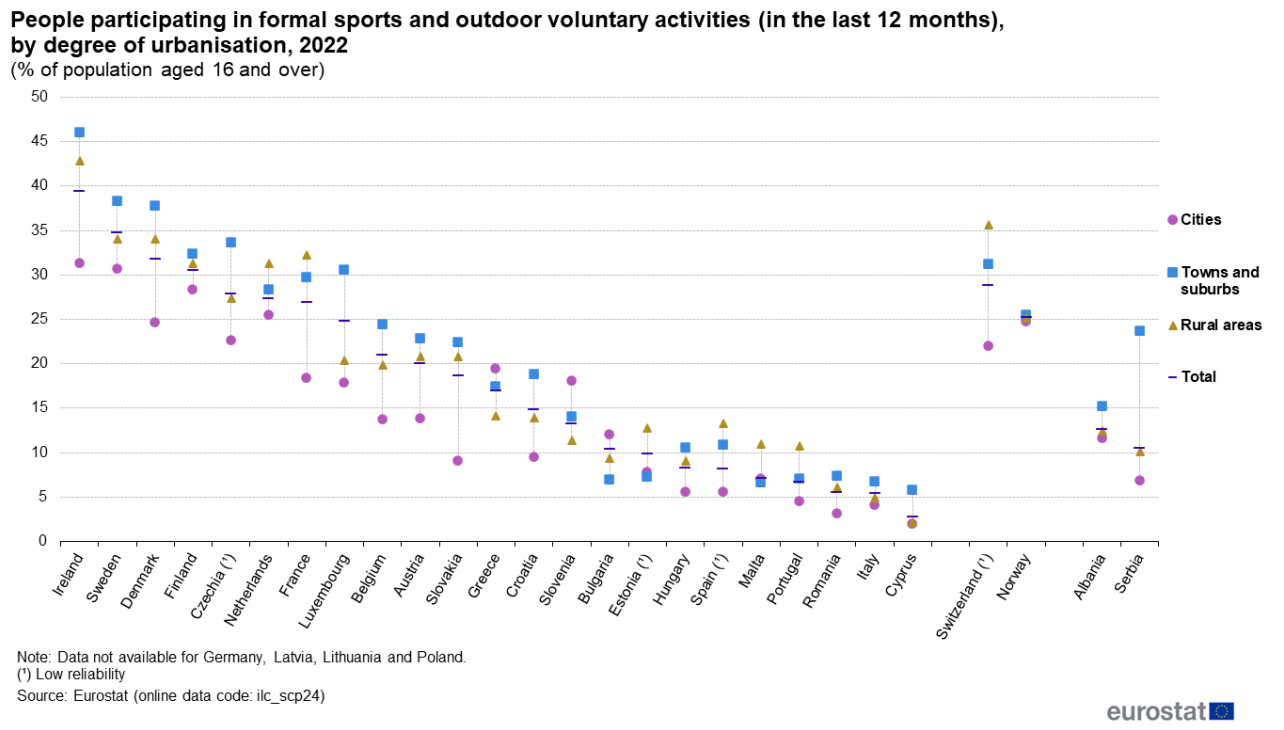


Figure 4: People participating in formal sports and outdoor voluntary activities, by degree of urbanisation, 2022 (% of population aged 16 and over) Source: Eurostat (ilc_scp24)

Source data for tables and graphs

- Sport participation: tables and figures

Data sources

The data in this article are derived from the 2022 six-yearly rolling module on Quality of Life of the EU statistics on income and living conditions (EU-SILC).

Methodology

The reference population for the information presented in this article is all private households and their current members over 16 years old residing in the territory of an EU Member State (or non-member state) at the time of data collection; people living in collective households were excluded from the target population. The reference period for people's characteristics is 2022. Data are available for the EU Member States and for Norway, Switzerland and some candidate countries.

People attending live sports events was measured by frequency:

- at least once in the previous 12 months;
- one to three times;

- more than three times;
- never.

Data are presented as a proportion of the target population (aged 16 or over) or of non-participants (for reasons of non-participation). On attendance at live sports events, the EU-SILC 2022 question referred to physical attendance at a live professional or amateur organised sports event. Interviewees were asked what their main reasons were for not participating in sports events. They were given a choice between six possible answers:

- financial reasons (cannot afford to)
- lack of interest
- lack of live sports events in the neighbourhood
- lack of time
- watching or experiencing sports events by other means (TV, internet)
- other reasons

It should be noted that attending live sports events and participating in group activities, such as sports clubs, in 2022 was still limited by restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic in several EU Member States. These restrictions varied from one country to another: for this reason, they should be taken into account while comparing 2022 data among different EU Member States.

In particular, the respondents were asked to report under 'other reason' if the main reason for not attending live sports events was also related to COVID-19 (for instance due to 'lockdown' or 'the fear of getting sick').

Context

The multiannual work programme (EU work plan for Sport for 2024-2027) agreed by the EU Council , sets the priorities and principles for cooperation on sport between the European Commission and the Member States.

Several expert groups have been set up to achieve concrete results. Among them, the Expert Group on the Economic Dimension of Sport (XG ECO) and the Expert Group on Health-Enhancing Physical Activity (XG HEPA) play a key role in implementing evidence-based policies in the sports sector. XG ECO, for example, has developed an economic definition of sport (' Vilnius definition '), and made progress towards developing Sport Satellite Accounts in some EU Member States. XG HEPA is working on implementing the Council recommendations on physical activity adopted in 2013. These include a monitoring framework with indicators for both the level of physical activity, and policies to promote physical activity, in Member States. Eurostat comparable data on international trade, employment in sport, participation in sports activities, etc. make a valuable contribution to monitoring and developing the EU's policies in this area.

Explore further

Other articles

- Sport participation - practicing sport and physical activity
- Employment in sport
- International trade in sporting goods
- Enterprises in the sports sector
- Household expenditure on sporting goods and services
- Consumer prices of recreational and sporting goods and services

Database

- Sport (sprt), see:

Sport participation (sprt_pcs_ilc)

Attending sport events - EU-SILC (sprt_pcs_ilc)

Persons participating in cultural or sport activities in the last 12 months by sex, age, educational attainment, activity type and frequency (ilc_scp03)

Persons participating in in cultural or sport activities in the last 12 months by income quintile, household composition, degree of urbanisation, activity type and frequency (ilc_scp04)

Persons not participating in cultural or sport activities in the last 12 months by sex, age, educational attainment, activity type and reasons (ilc_scp05)

Persons not participating in cultural or sport activities in the last 12 months by income quintile, household composition, degree of urbanisation, activity type and reasons (ilc_scp06)

Persons participating in formal voluntary activities by sex, age, educational attainment and type of organisation (ilc_scp23)

Persons participating in formal voluntary activities by income quintile, household composition and type of organisation (ilc_scp24)

Persons participating in cultural or sport activities by sex, age, level of disability (activity limitation), activity type and frequency (ilc_scp37)

Persons not participating in cultural or sport activities in the last 12 months by sex, age, level of disability (activity limitation), activity type and reasons (ilc_scp38)

Thematic section

- Sport
- Income, social inclusion and living conditions

Publications

- Sports statistics – infographics – 2024 version
- The economic dimension of sport

Methodology

- Sport participation (ESMS metadata file — sprt_pcs_esms)
- Vilnius definition of sport
- Income and living conditions (ilc) (ESMS metadata file — ilc_sieusilc)
- Income and living conditions - information on data
- Income and living conditions - methodology

Legislation

- EU Work Plan for Sport for 2024–2027
- Summaries of EU Legislation: Sport — a spur to innovation and excellence
- Income and living conditions - legislation

External links

- DG Education and Culture — Sport policy and programmes
- Erasmus+ Sport
- Special Eurobarometer — Sport and physical activity
- European Week of Sport