

LITHUANIA

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

%	ADULTS (18-75 YEARS)
MALES	82.9
FEMALES	78.5
BOTH SEXES	80.4

Total population: 2 943 472

Median age: 42.4 years

Life expectancy at birth males: 68.5 years

Life expectancy at birth females: 79.6 years

GDP per capita: €11 700

GDP spent on health: 6.7% (1)



Monitoring and surveillance

Physical activity in adults

The national health monitoring and surveillance system for physical activity was established in 2011 under the leadership of the Department of Physical Education and Sports (2). Data on physical activity were collected in 2011 and 2013; the information gathered includes frequency, duration and intensity of physical activity. The data can be disaggregated according to age group and socioeconomic indicators.

According to Lithuanian national data (see Table 1)¹, 80.4% of adults (aged 18–75 years) reach the physical activity levels recommended by WHO's *Global Recommendations on Physical Activity for Health* (2010) (3). Disaggregated (national) data are available for adults and older adults, showing that fewer older adults (aged 50–75 years) are active (76.5%) than adults aged 18–49 years (83.2%).

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

%	ALL ADULTS (18–75 YEARS)	ADULTS (18–49 YEARS)	OLDER ADULTS (50–75 YEARS)
MALES	82.9		
FEMALES	78.5		
BOTH SEXES	80.4	83.2	76.5

Source: unpublished 2014 data provided by the Ministry of Health.

The WHO Global Health Observatory (GHO) 2010 estimates for Lithuanian adults (aged 18+ years) (4) are similar to the national survey results: 79.8% meet the WHO recommended physical activity levels, with more males (83.4%) active than females (76.9%).

Physical activity in children and adolescents

Lithuania uses the cut-off points for children and adolescents reaching the recommended physical activity levels, as endorsed in WHO's *Global Recommendations on Physical Activity for Health* (2010) (3). No specific national survey exists for monitoring and surveillance of physical activity in children and adolescents.

Data on children and adolescents are reported together, and according to results from 2010 from the study entitled "Trends in physical activity among school-aged children from 1994 to 2010 in Lithuania" (*Lietuvos mokinių fizinio aktyvumo pokyčiai 1994–2010 metais*) (5) (see Table 2), 28.8% of adolescents (aged 11–15 years) reach the WHO recommended levels of physical activity for health. Boys are much more active than girls (39.5% and 17.5%, respectively).

¹ Unpublished national data from 2014 provided by the Ministry of Health.

Table 2. Prevalence (%) of adolescents reaching the WHO recommended physical activity levels, up to and including 2010

%	ADOLESCENTS (11–15 YEARS)	
	1994–2010 AVERAGE	2010
MALES	45.2	39.5
FEMALES	20.2	17.5
BOTH SEXES	31.9	28.8

Source: Zaborskis & Raskilas, 2011 (5).

The WHO GHO 2010 estimates for Lithuanian adolescents (defined as aged 11–17 years in relation to WHO data) provide different figures. According to data from this report (4), 16.6% of adolescents reach the WHO recommended physical activity levels for health (19.4% for boys and 13.6% for girls).

Policy response

Major policy documents adopted by government bodies

The Parliament of Lithuania has adopted the National Sport Development Strategy for 2011–2020, which serves as a national policy strategy on physical activity (6), specifically addressing Sports for All promotion. This is supplemented by the Interinstitutional Action Plan for the Implementation of the 2011–2020 National Sports Development Strategy (7), and together, these plans aim to create conditions for greater inclusion in sports and physical activity in Lithuania. Three main themes make up the strategy: increasing general public awareness of the benefits of physical activity; promoting healthy lifestyles through physical activity, physical education (PE) and sports; and creating the right conditions for citizens to engage in sports and exercise. More specifically, this includes initiatives to encourage young people to participate in voluntary sports activities; recommendations that establish and implement minimum standards for local sports and health infrastructure; and environmental restructuring to encourage children, adolescents and elderly people to participate in healthy lifestyles and sports.

Guidelines and goals

The 2011–2020 National Sports Development Strategy also serves as a national recommendation on physical activity (supplemented by the aforementioned interinstitutional action plan for its development). The aim is to promote physical activity among the Lithuanian population, in line with WHO's *Global recommendations on physical activity for health* (2010) (3), with adults exercising for at least 0.5 hour every day, children exercising for 1 hour every day, and at least 500 000 people participating in national sports development programmes.

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

Table 3. Summary of key physical activity initiatives in Lithuania

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	NO	NO	YES

* A new programme is being set up in Lithuania, whereby health care professionals can provide information and specialized advice to the population about healthy eating and the advantages of being physically active. It would also distribute more evenly the already high workload for family physicians. The programme is in its initial stages and is yet to be fully implemented.

Additional information on action in key areas

PE in schools

PE is mandatory throughout Lithuanian schooling: 2–3 lessons per week (352 hours in total) are compulsory through grades 1–4 (pupils aged 6–11 years); however this is slightly lower in Lithuania’s national minority schools (320 hours in grades 1–4). In lower secondary education (grades 5–10, pupils aged 10–16/17 years), 2–3 lessons per week are required (456 hours in total). In national minority schools, again, this is slightly lower, at about 422 hours. In upper secondary school (grades 11–12, pupils aged 16/17–19 years), 2 lessons per week are mandatory. Furthermore, from 2015–2016, the school curriculum recommends at least 25 minutes of physical activity daily, potentially manifesting as active school breaks schemes.

Box 1 describes in further detail the multifaceted nature of the National Sports Development Strategy.

Box 1. A multi-purpose strategy

The 2011–2020 National Sports Development Strategy adopted by the Parliament of Lithuania has many facets, including: providing recommendations for physical activity levels for the general population; making policy suggestions to improve the infrastructure and urban planning considerations in order to improve opportunities for exercise; and implementing a clearly formulated national campaign for PE and public awareness of physical activity. Many stakeholders are involved in this campaign: the Department of Physical Education and Sports, Lithuanian national radio and television companies, as well as nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and local municipal organizations. This multifaceted approach is useful in promoting behaviour change in the population, providing information about physical activity and, crucially, ensuring that projects to promote physical activity are implemented.

Successful approaches

Physical Education and Sports Support Fund

Sports for All activities in Lithuania are mostly financed by the Physical Education and Sports Support Fund. All government organizations and NGOs in the field of sports and physical activity may apply to receive funding to finance their activities.

Lithuanian Physical Education Badge programme

Every year at the beginning and the end of the school year, all schoolchildren can test their physical fitness and their sports-related knowledge by taking physical fitness and theoretical tests (on healthy lifestyle, personal hygiene and sports history). Participants are awarded badges, certificates or elite diplomas according to the test results and performance improvement, signed by the Minister of Education and Science and the Director General of the Department of Physical Education and Sports.

"Sunday is a sport sday"

This is a regular physical activity promotion event organized by the non-profit-making organization "Healthy City" (*Sveikas miestas*). In the centre of Vilnius, every Sunday, various sports are presented, and citizens have the opportunity to participate.

National programme to teach children to swim

The main purpose of the long-standing national programme is to teach schoolchildren to swim and to behave safely in and near water. The programme is based on the principle of cooperation, involving school administrations (municipal general education institutions), sports NGOs and higher education institutions. Teachers are invited to integrate topics related to safe conduct in and near water into lessons and extracurricular activities.

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