

# SPAIN

PREVALENCE (%) OF ADULTS REACHING THE  
RECOMMENDED PHYSICAL ACTIVITY LEVELS, 2011/2012

%	ADULTS (18-69 YEARS)
MALES	68.7
FEMALES	64.2
BOTH SEXES	66.4

Total population: 46 512 199

Median age: 41.8 years

Life expectancy at birth males: 80.2 years

Life expectancy at birth females: 86.1 years

GDP per capita: €22 300

GDP spent on health: 9.3% (1)



# Monitoring and surveillance

## Physical activity in adults

Spain's national health monitoring and surveillance system was established in 1987 and includes population-based measures of physical activity. The data collection is carried out periodically, through the Spanish National Health Survey (*Encuesta Nacional de Salud de España* (ENSE)) (2) under the leadership of the Ministry of Health, Social Services and Equality and in collaboration with the National Statistics Institute. The cut-off point used in Spain for adults reaching the recommended physical activity levels is in line with *Recommendations on Physical Activity for Health* (2010) (3).

The latest ENSE survey from 2011/2012 (4) uses population-based measures of physical activity, based on the International Physical Activity Questionnaire (IPAQ) (5), in its methodology. Among the items measured are frequency, duration and intensity of physical activity, among different age groups and disaggregated by socioeconomic status. This report also gathers data on physical activity at work and during leisure time, on sedentary and resting behaviours among adults and children, and on leisure-time activities among children.

The Spanish national data from the 2011/2012 ENSE survey, as Table 1 presents, show the percentage of adults (aged 18–69 years) who reach the WHO recommended physical activity levels, ranging from 66.4% for adults and 68.1% for older adults (4).

Table 1. Prevalence (%) of adults reaching the recommended physical activity levels, 2011/2012

%	ADULTS (18–69 YEARS)*	OLDER ADULTS (60–69 YEARS)
MALES	68.7	71.6
FEMALES	64.2	64.8
BOTH SEXES	66.4	68.1

\* Adults include people aged 18–69 years, so the data also encompass the older adults age group (60–69 years).  
Source: ENSE survey, 2011/2012 (4).

The WHO Global Health Observatory (GHO) 2010 estimates for Spain (6) show results similar to those of the ENSE 2011/2012 survey, for both sexes together (66.6%) and for males (70.8%), with slightly lower values among females (62.6%).

## Physical activity in children and adolescents

Spain does not have a specific national survey for monitoring or surveillance of physical activity in children. As with the adult data, the country uses the international cut-off point for children reaching the recommended physical activity levels, endorsed in WHO's *Global Recommendations on Physical Activity for Health* (2010). The ALADINO Study (on food, physical activity, child development and obesity) (7), which forms part of the Strategy for Nutrition, Physical Activity and the Prevention of Obesity (NAOS Strategy), which in turn forms part of the WHO Regional Office for Europe's Childhood Obesity Surveillance Initiative (COSI), collects information on nutrition, physical activity and

lifestyles in children aged 6–9 years. The third round of data collection will include data on the extent to which the recommendations for physical activity in children are fulfilled.

The latest Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) study (10) reports data disaggregated by age. Unpublished data for Spain from the 2013/2014 round of the study are reported in Table 2, showing that only 24.4% of adolescents reach the recommended physical activity levels for health (according to the WHO recommendations), with significantly more boys being active than girls (31.7% and 17.3%, respectively).

Table 2. Prevalence (%) of adolescents reaching the recommended physical activity levels, 2013/2014

%	ADOLESCENTS (11-17 YEARS)
MALES	31.7
FEMALES	17.3
BOTH SEXES	24.4

Source: unpublished data from the HBSC 2013/2014 study.

The WHO GHO 2010 estimates for the Spanish adolescent population (defined as aged 11–17 years in relation to the WHO data) (6), reveal slightly lower figures for adolescents reaching the recommended physical activity levels (22.8%; 30.3% for boys and 15.7% for girls) than those from the 2013/2014 round of the HBSC study.

## Types of physical activity and modes of transport

The Spanish Metropolitan Mobility Observatory (MMO) is an initiative that brings together a number of government actors, including the public transport authorities (*Autoridades de Transporte Público* (ATP)) of the main Spanish metropolitan areas; the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Environment; and the Ministry of Public Works and Transport, among others. The MMO publishes an annual report analysing mobility and modes of transport used in participating metropolitan areas for work-related and leisure-time journeys. According to the latest data for work-related journeys from 2012, 37% of people either walk or cycle, 11% use public transport, and 52% use a car or motorbike (11).

# Policy response

## Major policy documents adopted

The Integral Plan for Physical Activity and Sports (Plan A+D) is the primary policy instrument adopted by the Spanish Government (12). Its aim is to ensure that the Spanish population has universal opportunity to participate in sports and physical activity, thereby helping to reduce the levels of physical inactivity and obesity, in addition to promoting

active and healthy lifestyles. The Plan was adopted by the National Sports Council, which gathers together the Ministry of Health, Social Services and Equality, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports and representatives of the autonomous communities and the Spanish Olympic Committee, among others.

Through the Spanish Agency for Consumer Affairs, Food Safety and Nutrition (AECOSAN), the Ministry of Health, Social Services and Equality launched the aforementioned NAOS Strategy in 2005 (8), further strengthened in 2011 by the Spanish Law on Food Safety and Nutrition (13). The NAOS Strategy focuses on several approaches to physical activity, including campaigns targeting the general population, as well as specifically aimed at children and adolescents, and interventions to promote physical activity in schools, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports.

At a meeting of the Interterritorial Council of the National Health System in December 2013, the Ministry of Health, Social Services and Equality, in cooperation with the Spanish autonomous regions, approved the Strategy for Prevention and Health Promotion in the Spanish National Health System (14).<sup>1</sup> This strategy focuses on public health care and aims to increase the length of healthy lives, reducing years of life lived with disability by addressing the following main factors: physical activity, nutrition, and tobacco and alcohol use. The strategy is also intended for use in schools and workplaces.

## Guidelines and goals

Within the framework of the aforementioned Strategy for Prevention and Health Promotion in the Spanish National Health System, the Ministry of Health, Social Services and Equality – through the Directorate-General of Public Health, Quality and Innovation, and in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports – has adopted recommendations for the population on physical activity and the reduction of sedentary behaviour (15), in line with WHO's *Global Recommendations on Physical Activity for Health* (2010), addressing the specific needs of children (including those aged under five years), adolescents, adults and elderly people. These recommendations are also reflected in the NAOS Strategy.

Alongside the regional governments and local authorities, the NAOS Observatory of Nutrition and Study of Obesity has also developed a set of indicators (which are revised periodically) to assess physical activity in adults and children and physical activity in the workplace (16).

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<sup>1</sup> An English summary is available on the website (14).

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

Table 3. Summary of key physical activity initiatives in Spain

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 national recommendation on physical activity
YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES

## Additional information on action in key areas

### Health sector

The Ministry of Health, Social Services and Equality, in collaboration with various scientific societies and the Spanish autonomous regions, has developed a programme to provide guidance to health professionals on how to counsel patients and deliver active healthy lifestyle advice in primary care settings (17). The programme is linked to the Strategy for Prevention and Health Promotion in the Spanish National Health System (14), and has a dedicated budget.

A second programme to promote physical activity through primary health care has been developed by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports as part of the Plan A+D (12), called "Take action, advise health" (*Actívate, aconseja salud*) (18) (for more details see the Successful approaches section). The programme is implemented in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, Social Services and Equality and is run as an online course for health professionals (see the section on Successful approaches).

### Schools

In Spain, establishing the education curriculum is largely the responsibility of the 17 autonomous regions. The national Government defines a minimum weighting (percentage of total hours) to specific subjects, but the autonomous regions have significant flexibility to choose how they allocate hours within the curriculum. There is thus some variation in the hours dedicated to physical education (PE), with an average of 2 hours per week in primary schools. In the case of secondary schools, all autonomous regions have agreed to 2 hours per week as the minimum number of compulsory hours of PE.

The Ministry of Health, Social Services and Equality and the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports have various tools for schools: "¡Dame 10!" ("Give me 10!") to promote a series of short (5–10-minute) physical activity breaks between classes (19); and active teaching units (*Unidades Didácticas Activas* (UDAs)), which include materials to ensure that at least 50% of children and adolescents achieve moderate- to vigorous-intensity physical activity (MVPA) (20). These projects are being implemented in collaboration with national and regional public institutions involved in the education sector in Spain.

In addition to national interventions, a number of successful regional and local initiatives exist in Spain to promote physical activity in schools, such as the extracurricular activity support plan for Andalusian families (*Plan de apoyo a las familias andaluzas, actividades extraescolares*) from the Junta de Andalucía Autonomous Community (21), providing direct financial support to families in order to facilitate and encourage after-school physical activity. Other regional and local education plans exist, encouraging active travel to school, such as the Navarra Sustainable Schools Network (*Red de Escuelas Sostenibles de Navarra*) (22) and the Cantabrian Health-promoting Schools Network (*Red Cantabra de Escuelas Promotoras de la Salud*) (23).

## Workplace

The National Institute for Safety and Health at Work participates in the European Network for Workplace Health Promotion (24). To date, 21 Spanish companies have been recognized as models of good practice in terms of their promotion of health at work.

## Public awareness

The NAOS Strategy runs public awareness campaigns: Take Care of Yourself+ Plan (*Plan Cuídate+*) (25) (two editions); the Get Active Movement (*Movimiento Actídate*) (26), aimed at adolescents (aged 13–17 years) to encourage regular physical activity; and *Activilandia*, a virtual theme park used as an educational initiative to promote healthy habits among children aged 6–12 years (27).

In addition, annual NAOS Strategy Awards are held to officially recognize initiatives which promote physical activity and healthy nutrition (28) (see the Successful approaches section for further details).

The Directorate-General of Public Health, Quality and Innovation – through the Strategy for Prevention and Health Promotion in the Spanish National Health System – is working on the development of a website to promote healthy life styles, including physical activity. It is expected to reinforce the health literacy of the population. In addition, online educational courses have been developed to raise awareness and build capacity, both among health professionals and the population.

Box 1 explains health-enhancing physical activity (HEPA) promotion in Spain.

### Box 1. How is HEPA promotion coordinated?

In Spain, physical activity promotion at the national level is coordinated by a HEPA working group, established in 2015 (29) by the National Sports Council (30). The working group brings together representatives from various ministries and autonomous communities, and is primarily tasked with aligning the activities of the different government actors, gathering information and analysing data for all issues relating to HEPA.

## Addressing target groups

Plan A+D (12) clearly addresses the specific needs of different groups. Participation in sports and physical activity in school, university and work settings is complemented by separate recommendations addressing the needs of women, people with disabilities and older people. The potential for sports and physical activity to promote social inclusion is also addressed.

Both key strategies, (the NAOS Strategy and the Strategy for Prevention and Health Promotion in the Spanish National Health System) differentiate their recommendations by age groups. For example, fragility and the prevention of falls among elderly people, as well as children, are highlighted and addressed in separate guidance.

## Successful approaches

### Physical activity promotion initiatives in Spain

Various successful regional and local initiatives to promote physical activity can be found throughout Spain.

"Take action, advise health" (*Actívate, aconseja salud*) is a free online course for health professionals, that enables them to prescribe physical activity through the institutions of the Spanish National Health System, developed by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports and disseminated in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, Social Services and Equality (18). The course includes the basic concepts for the assessment of an individual's physical condition and specific recommendations on physical activity for the whole population, as well as for patients with certain risk factors or diseases, and for older adults. So far, over 1700 health professionals from all autonomous regions have registered. The course has also been included as part of several specific regional plans to promote physical activity and to prevent sedentary lifestyles and obesity. For example, it is included in the "Active" plan of Murcia Autonomous Community (in collaboration with the municipalities), as well as in the Balearic Islands, in the project entitled "Healthy Routes", designed to help health care professionals in public health centres.

Irún Sasoain is a project of the City of Irún that develops programmes to promote physical activity (28). Its success is based on the participation of all municipal services in the fields of sports, education, youth, urbanism, environment, mobility, social services, language (Basque: Euskera), public safety, citizen participation, legal services and economic development. Associations, companies, clubs, schools, health centres and neighbourhood associations are all involved on one level or another. The project designs, implements and evaluates stable and lasting interventions.

In Catalonia, the Plan of Physical Activity, Sports and Health (PAFES Plan) (31) aims to build capacity for professionals in the health and sports fields, enabling them to prescribe physical activity and provide advice and environments in which it is easy to practise physical activity, by identifying, designing and creating resources for physical activity at the local level. This was recognized at national level with the NAOS Strategy Award in 2008.

Other regional examples of good practices on physical activity can be found in annexes 8, 9 and 10 of the Strategy for Prevention and Health Promotion in the Spanish National Health System (14). A number of cities are endorsing the strategy, with its guide for local implementation (32).

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