



BULGARIA

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY FACTSHEET 2021

Total population: **6.92 m**

Median age: **44.8 years**

GDP per capita: **6 600 €**

Life expectancy, males: **69.9 years**

Life expectancy, females: **77.5 years**

Sources: Eurostat (2020/2021)



National recommendations on physical activity for health

The Ministry of Youth and Sports in Bulgaria is adapting the [WHO recommendations](#), which have been translated into Bulgarian and distributed to various stakeholders.

Monitoring and surveillance of physical activity

SECTORS WITH SURVEILLANCE SYSTEMS



✓ Health



✓ Education



✓ Sports



— Transport

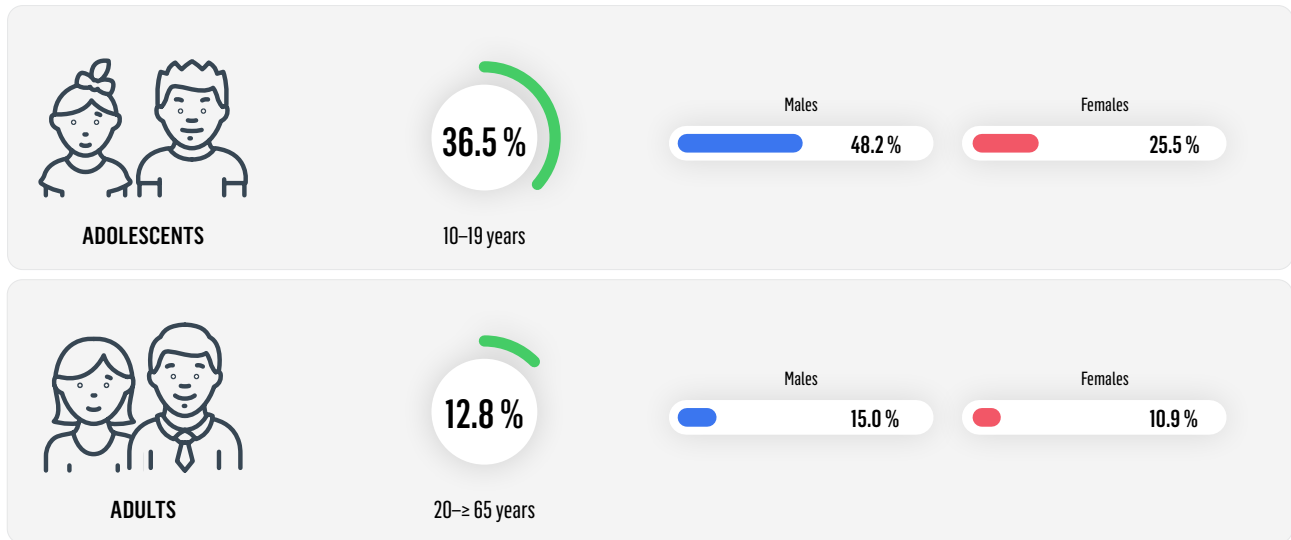
Bulgaria conducted a national survey on risk factors for health in 2014–2015, and the physical fitness of children and adolescents is measured every year. In 2020, a survey on sports habits and preferences was conducted.



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Estimated prevalence of sufficient physical activity levels

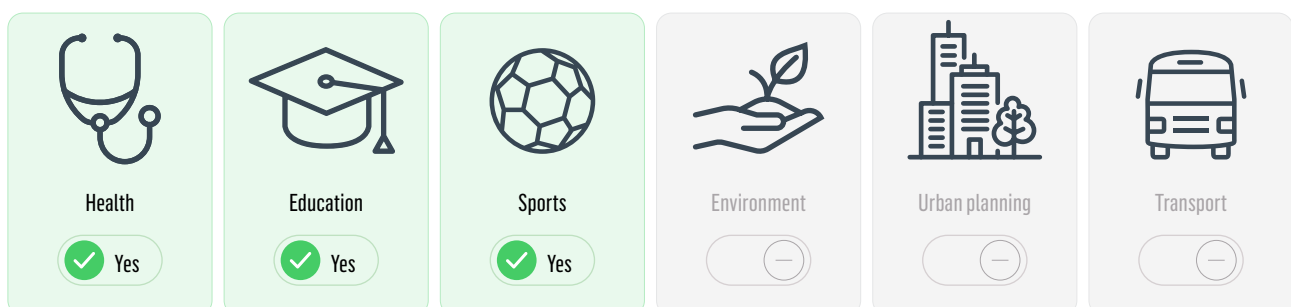


National government coordination mechanism and leadership in the promotion of physical activity

The Ministry of Youth and Sports is establishing a national coordination mechanism and national adoption of the WHO Guidelines on physical activity and sedentary behaviour and the Guidelines on physical activity, sedentary behaviour and sleep for children under 5 years of age.

Funding for the promotion of physical activity for health

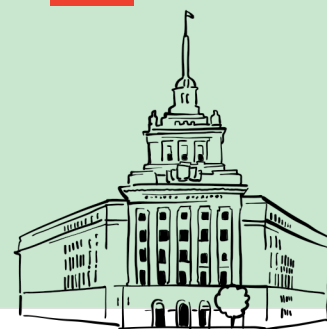
FUNDING FOR THE PROMOTION OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY FOR HEALTH



Promotion of physical activity for health is a specific goal of several programmes of the Ministry of Youth and Sports. These programmes do not have separate budgets, and funds are provided. Further funding is provided through the National Programme for Noncommunicable Disease Prevention (2014–2020), which will be updated shortly.

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SUCCESS STORY

The national student competition **"Ambassadors of health"** encourages young people to embrace a healthy lifestyle to prevent behavioural risk factors for health such as unhealthy eating, low physical activity, alcohol abuse and smoking. This is an initiative of the Ministry of Health, in partnership with the Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Youth and Sports, the Ministry of Environment and Water, the WHO Country Office in Bulgaria and the Bulgarian Youth Red Cross.

Policy response



NATIONAL POLICIES OR ACTION PLANS FOR THE PROMOTION OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY FOR HEALTH

- 1 NATIONAL PROGRAMME FOR DEVELOPMENT OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY, PHYSICAL EDUCATION, SPORTS AND TOURISM ACTIVITIES 2021–2022
- 2 NATIONAL HEALTH STRATEGY 2014–2020
- 3 NATIONAL HEALTH STRATEGY 2021–2030
- 4 NATIONAL PROGRAMME FOR PREVENTION OF CHRONIC NONCOMMUNICABLE DISEASES 2014–2020
- 5 NATIONAL PROGRAMME FOR PREVENTION OF CHRONIC NONCOMMUNICABLE DISEASES 2021–2025
- 6 NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR DEVELOPMENT OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND SPORTS 2012–2022

TOTAL NUMBER OF POLICIES

6



SECTORS INVOLVED IN THE DESIGN OF THE POLICY/ACTION PLAN

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Health	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Education	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sports	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Environment	○	✓	✓	✓	✓	○
Urban planning	○	✓	✓	✓	✓	○
Transport	○	✓	✓	✓	✓	○

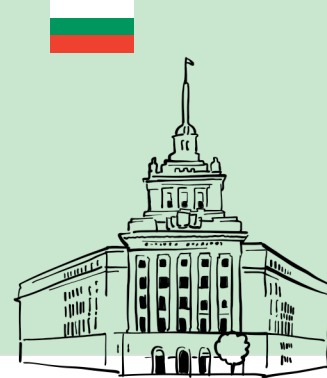
POPULATION GROUPS TARGETED BY EACH POLICY

	1	2	3	4	5	6
General population	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Children < 5	○	✓	✓	✓	✓	○
Children and adolescents (5–17)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Adults	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Older adults (≥ 65)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Frail/elderly (≥ 85)	○	○	○	○	○	○
People with disabilities	✓	○	○	○	○	✓
People with chronic diseases	○	✓	✓	✓	✓	○

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Pregnant women	○	✓	✓	✓	✓	○
Breastfeeding women	○	✓	✓	✓	✓	○
Low socio-economic groups	✓	○	○	○	○	●
Ethnic minorities	○	○	○	○	○	○
Deprived of liberty	○	○	○	○	○	○
Migrants	○	○	○	○	○	○
Unemployed people	○	○	○	○	○	○

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POLICY HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 National Programme for Development of Physical Activity, Physical Education, Sports and Tourism Activities 2021–2022.** The aim is to develop a functioning system to promote physical activity, physical fitness, and sports to improve health outcomes and increase physical activity through joint activities with the education, sports and tourism sectors. It works towards the SDGs, particularly objective 3: Health and welfare. It also promotes walking, cycling and use of public transport and promotion of good practices in sports. It also seeks to develop, promote and monitor physical activity guidelines.
- 3 National Health Strategy 2021–2030.** Its aim is to ensure a healthy lifestyle and promote well-being by reducing risk factors such as use of tobacco and alcohol, unhealthy diets and physical inactivity. It works towards the SDGs and the WHO's Global Strategy for Nutrition, Physical Activity and Health.
- 6 National Strategy for Development of Physical Education and Sports 2012–2022.** It seeks to restructure the physical education and sports system and to promote and increase physical activity in the next 10 years, revamp sport facilities, raise awareness through media campaigns and sports events, promote inclusion of people from different social groups, promote active recreation at work and develop a long-term programme to foster regular exercise and leisure physical activity.

Sports clubs for health

There are 21 clubs that endorse the guidelines for sports clubs for health. The Bulgarian federation, **Sports for All**, promotes a healthy lifestyle through regular exercise and sports by providing opportunities for individuals interested in sports, disadvantaged people, retired people and various ethnic groups. It builds and implements programmes to promote sports and physical activity and establishes sports clubs across the country. It also raises funds from the State, municipalities and individual ministries to finance activities in the field of sports for all.

Increasing access to exercise facilities for socially disadvantaged groups

The Physical Education and Sports Act requires that all State-owned sports facilities provide access to people with disabilities and provide programmes and activities free of charge for a certain period to promote sports for all at national and local levels. The Ministry of Youth and Sports provides opportunities to people with disabilities to practise local and elite sports through the Sports Development Programme for people with disabilities, 2021, and the Sports for Children at Risk, 2021, which supports children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

↗ <http://mpes.government.bg/Pages/Documents/Law/default.aspx> ↗ <http://mpes.government.bg/Pages/Programmes/Default.aspx?evntid=sddRAgD%2fvZ0%3d>
↗ <http://mpes.government.bg/Pages/Programmes/Default.aspx?evntid=8bN503ofW%2bk%3d>

Counselling on physical activity and exercise prescription


Within the **national programme for prevention of chronic noncommunicable diseases** between 2014 and 2020, an important activity was building the capacity of medical professionals to counsel and support people wishing to engage in physical exercise and sports. To this end, the Ministry of Health issued Ordinance No. 8 in 2016 for prophylactic medical examinations and screening.




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Physical education in schools

PRIMARY SCHOOLS:	HOURS PER WEEK
	3–3.5 Mandatory

SECONDARY SCHOOLS:	HOURS PER WEEK
	3–3.5 Mandatory

Physical education teachers are trained in physical activity and health (e.g. health effects, determinants, effective interventions) as a mandatory subject in their undergraduate studies.

PROMOTION OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IN SCHOOLS

<input type="checkbox"/> During breaks	<input type="checkbox"/> During lessons	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> After school	<input type="checkbox"/> Travel to and from school
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In Bulgaria, schools, centres for personal development, municipalities, sports federations and their member sports clubs create many opportunities for children to engage in physical activity outside compulsory schooling. Training and competition are oriented towards developing children's interests, improving their sports and technical skills, promoting a healthy lifestyle and development and selection of sports talents. A remarkable example is the "Sport for children in their leisure time" programme of the Ministry of Youth and Sports.

<http://mpes.government.bg/Pages/Programmes/default.aspx>



SUCCESS STORY

A national cycling movement has existed in Bulgaria for 35 years. The Bulgarian Auto Union and the Ministry of Science and Education created an "Applied cycling" programme to promote cycling while educating children in road safety. The goal of Applied cycling is to develop the skills of children and adolescents in riding a bicycle and to teach them road safety. Training and club membership are free of charge and thus accessible to every child.

National travel survey

Although there is no specific travel survey, the national survey on risk factors for population health in Bulgaria collects data on walking and cycling by its adult population. In the most recent survey, in 2014, slightly under 50% of Bulgarians spent over 60 min walking every day. For cycling, this proportion was only 5.5%, while 27% spent less than 30 min/day.

	PERSON PER DAY
	> 60 min
WALKING	for 50 % of people

	PERSON PER DAY
	< 30 min
CYCLING	for 27 % of people



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Infrastructure for leisure-time physical activity

In the national programme for the development of physical activity, physical education, sports and sports tourism 2021–2022, a specific measure is foreseen under priority 6 “Construction and quality improvement of the sports infrastructure for leisure-time sport for citizens”, which is to be implemented by municipalities. The operational programme “Regions in growth” 2014–2020 supports projects for improving infrastructure for leisure-time physical activities. Some of the measures eligible for funding are improvement of the urban environment under Priority axis 1 “Sustainable and integrated urban development” (for example, construction and rehabilitation of public recreation areas, such as parks, green areas, playgrounds, sports grounds and other elements of urban furniture; construction, reconstruction, rehabilitation of the physical elements of the urban environment, such as pedestrian alleys, construction of bicycle paths and alleys and pedestrian zones). Elements such as sports and children’s playgrounds and outdoor gymnasiums are built within this programme.

Promotion of physical activity in the workplace

The Strategy for corporate social responsibility (2019–2023) and relevant action plans: Measures foreseen are organizing seminars and information campaigns, sharing good practices through media channels, including for practising physical activity at the workplace. A number of good practices have been presented, such as football for truck drivers, family games and free cards for practising different sports.

According to Article 294 of the Labour Code, “The Employer may solely or together with other bodies and organizations provide its employees and servants: bases (basic conditions) for long-term and short-term recreation, physical culture, sport and tourism”. The Law on healthy, safe working conditions implies that employers shall provide a physiological regime for work and breaks. The regimes are described in Ordinance 15 (1999) and are based on work pressure, monotony, work posture, work load, etc. They include breaks that may be active, semi-passive or passive and should be part of regular working hours.



SUCCESS STORY

Chair up is a programme that helps people whose jobs involve sitting for long periods or a high level of decision-making responsibility. The programme recommends workouts, physiotherapy and yoga therapy as well as remedial exercises that can be done in both offices and at home. Monthly thematic programmes are proposed, as well as one-off training sessions on diverse topics. The general goals are to introduce a healthy, active lifestyle to people working in offices and at home; improve the physical shape and health of employees whose work requires sitting; increase employee concentration, stress resistance and overall work efficiency; and raise the general awareness of employees about solutions to problems related to working in a sitting position. Programmes of Chair up have already been implemented in companies, institutions and business centres for a total of more than 12 000 employees.

Community-based interventions for older adults



NATIONAL GUIDANCE OR PROGRAMME FOR
COMMUNITY-BASED INTERVENTIONS TO PROMOTE
PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IN OLDER ADULTS





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The national strategy for active living of elderly people in Bulgaria (2019–2030) and the action plan 2021–2022 foresee various measures for encouraging elderly people to be active, including access to sports facilities. The aim is to improve and maintain elderly people in optimal health through HEPA. Free access to a number of sports facilities is foreseen, with training in health for groups. More elderly people will take part in events, initiatives and campaigns for a healthy, active lifestyle. One of the seven target groups of the National programme for prevention of chronic noncommunicable diseases 2021–2025 is old and elderly people.



SUCCESS STORY

The **Happy bones project** promotes physical activity for women aged 50–65 by offering an innovative exercise protocol to involve them in moderate physical activity and thus strengthen their personal resources and practise of the physical activity necessary for their well-being. The aim of the exercise protocol is to promote the importance of health-enhancing physical activity by increased participation in exercise.

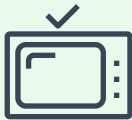






National awareness-raising campaign on physical activity

The Ministry of Youth and Sports organizes the European Week of Sport in Bulgaria each year, with strong communication in the mass media and the involvement of famous athletes.

Bulgaria implements the European campaign NowWeMove Bulgaria through the BGBeActive organization. The campaign is based on three principles: raise awareness about the benefits of physical activity; encourage regular practice of sport and physical activity; and improve access to sports and physical activity. The campaign includes Move Week, No elevators day, European school sports day, European fitness day, MOVEment prescriptions, training and workshops.

On Children's Day on 1 June 2020, a national initiative "Play sports with the President" was launched to build a network of partnerships with schools, sports organizations, institutions and parents and to stimulate the practice of sports to improve the health, development of motor skills and social communication among young people.

MEDIA USED IN NATIONAL CAMPAIGNS

						
Television	Radio	Newspapers	Social media	Public events	Public figures	Other
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes