

BHUTAN



Demographics¹

Capital: Thimpu **Population:** 786 385 **Urban population:** 44% **Life expectancy:** 72 years
Gini inequality index: 0.28 **World Bank income category:** Low middle income

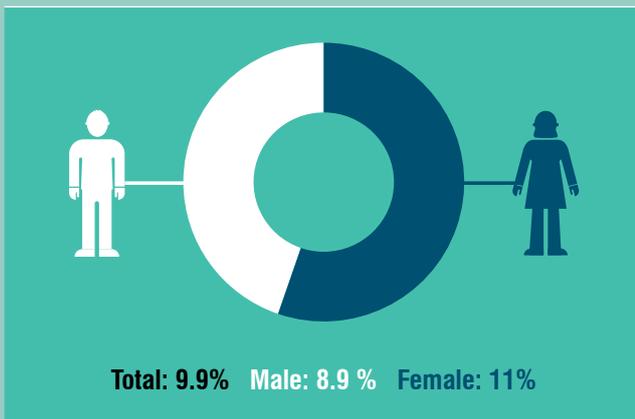
Introduction on physical activity promotion

Regular physical activity is proven to help prevent and treat noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) such as heart disease, stroke, diabetes and breast and colon cancer. It also helps to prevent hypertension, overweight and obesity and can improve mental health, quality of life and well-being. In this factsheet an overview is presented of the status of physical activity promotion and policy response in Bhutan.

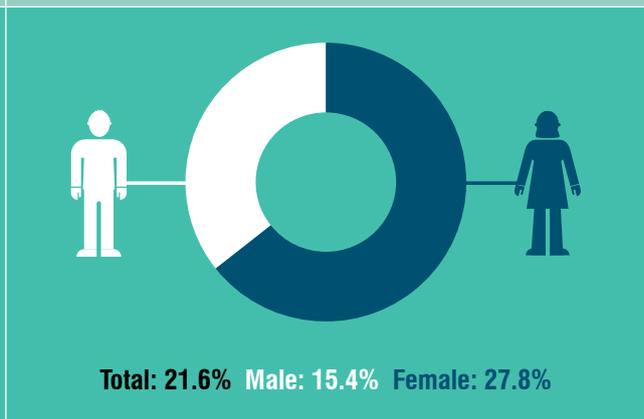
Physical activity participation

Estimated prevalence of physical inactivity²

Adults (18+ years)



Adolescents (15-24 years)³

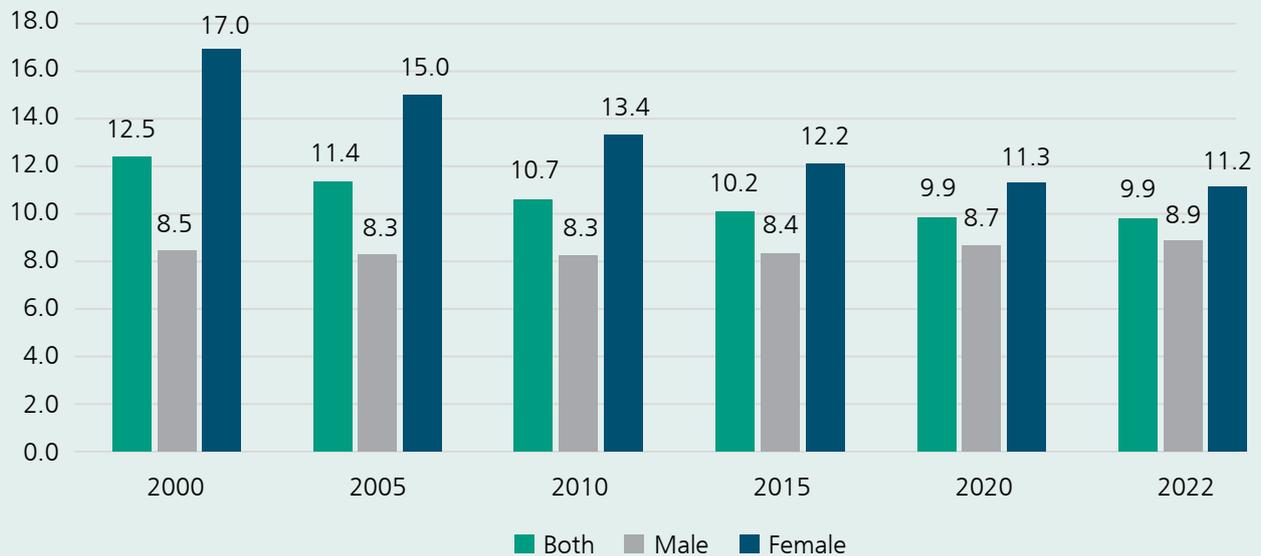


Sitting time³



>15-69 year olds spend 146.1 minutes per day sitting or reclining

Prevalence of insufficient physical activity among adults 18+ years (age-standardized estimate)²



National surveillance

Bhutan has a national health survey including questions to assess physical activity among both adults and adolescence. The survey has been administered in 2014, 2019 and 2023 and the PA questions included are based on the GPAQ questionnaire.



Policy response

Currently, Bhutan has no stand-alone national physical activity action plan, however the promotion of physical activity is included in the Multisectoral National Action Plan for Prevention and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases 2015–2020⁴. Decreasing sedentary behaviors is not addressed at national policy level. National physical activity guidelines for both adults and children were developed in 2011 but need to be updated.



PA policy actions⁵

National target for PA	Yes
(sub)national PA communications campaign	No
National road-safety policy	Yes
Promotion of PA in the workplace	No
Brief intervention on PA in PHC	Partial
School based approach	Yes



National coordination mechanism and leadership in promotion of physical activity

Currently there is no national focal point nor a separate national steering committee or coordination for PA stakeholders. The Ministry of Health runs a Lifestyle Related Diseases Programme which is responsible for the coordination of physical activity among the stakeholders.



Promising initiatives

A description of national initiatives/success stories per policy domain

- ◉ Bhutan promotes community-based physical activity in monastic schools and municipalities through supply of open air gym equipment. The Ministry of Health through the support of World Health Organization has initiated open air gym facilities in the 20 districts and 4 municipalities since 2016. In 2024, WHO supported 43 sets of gym equipment to monastic schools and institutions. This drive reinforces the importance of physical activity by making religious institutions the champions of physical activity as they play an essential role in influencing people's mindset in the community.
- ◉ Bhutan's Ministry of Health's traditional medicine department with the support of WHO initiated traditional Sorig Zhiney (yoga) and Luejong (physical exercise) in the district hospitals, nunneries and schools to promote physical activity and mental wellbeing.

Data sources

- (1) The World Bank. Data on population, urban population, life expectancy, gini inequality index, and country income category. Accessed March 2025.
- (2) World Health Organization (2024). Global Health Observatory Data. Prevalence of insufficient physical activity among adults aged 18+ years (age-standardized estimate).
- (3) Noncommunicable Diseases Risk Factors: Bhutan's STEPS survey report (2019). World Health Organization. Ministry of Health, Royal Government of Bhutan.
- (4) Multisectoral National Action Plan for Prevention and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases 2015-2020 (2015). Ministry of Health, Royal Government of Bhutan.
- (5) NCD Country Capacity Survey (2023). World Health Organization.



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