

# Physical Activity Factsheet

## Sri Lanka



### Demographics<sup>1</sup>

**Capital:** Colombo    **Population:** 22 037 000    **Urban population:** 19%    **Life expectancy:** 77 years  
**Gini inequality index:** 0.38    **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 Sri Lanka.

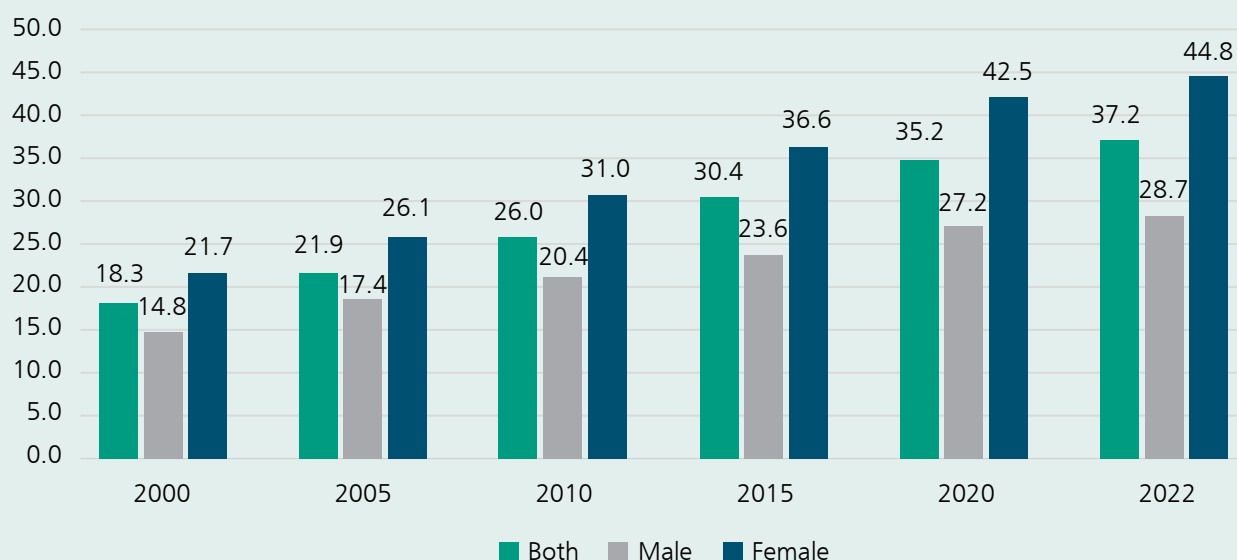
### Physical activity participation

**Estimated prevalence of physical inactivity<sup>2</sup>**  
**Adults (18+ years)**



**Total: 37.2%    Male: 28.7%    Female: 44.8%**

## Prevalence of insufficient physical activity among adults aged 18+ years (age-standardized estimate)<sup>2</sup>



### National surveillance

Sri Lanka conducted the national NCD Risk Factor Survey (STEPS) in 2021 which includes questions to assess physical activity among adults. PA questions included are based on the GPAQ questionnaire. There is no national data on sedentary behavior.



### Policy response

Currently, Sri Lanka has no stand-alone national physical activity action plan, however the promotion of physical activity is addressed in the National Multi-sectoral Action Plan for Prevention and Control of Non Communicable Diseases, 2023-2027<sup>3</sup>.

The promotion of physical activity is also addressed directly or indirectly in other policy domains, for example in Sri Lanka's national sport policy. Sri Lanka has national physical activity guidelines for the (pre)school setting, higher education institutions and the workplace setting<sup>4</sup>.

In 2021 Sri Lanka conducted a national situational analysis using the WHO SAT tool to collate what is being done in terms of policy action to promote PA. All relevant policy domains, sectors and stakeholders were engaged.



### PA policy actions<sup>5</sup>

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



## National coordination mechanism and leadership in promotion of physical activity

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Sri Lanka has a national focal point for physical activity promotion at the Ministry of Health as well as a technical working group on the promotion of physical activity representing health and non-health stakeholders. The National NCD Council as well as the National Steering Committee and Advisory Board on NCD are additional forums where national level decisions on promotion of PA are discussed and monitored. At subnational level the promotion of physical activity is coordinated by the District and Divisional Steering Committees on NCD.



## Promising initiatives

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A description of national initiatives/success stories per policy domain

- ◉ Sri Lanka's Directorate of Non-Communicable Diseases from the Ministry of Health developed and published 'Promotion of Physical Activity in Primary Health Care Facilitator Guide for Training of Trainers sessions'. This guide is used to train master trainers who on their turn train other healthcare staff attached to primary health care institutions.
- ◉ Sri Lanka provides Healthy Lifestyle Centres (HLC) which offer screening services for NCDs and risk factor. Clients are provided with guidance to engage in physical activity and encouraged to enroll in activities such as aerobics, yoga or zumba sessions conducted at these HLCs or at community level.
- ◉ In Sri Lanka regular awareness programmes, such as the Move More Month are conducted throughout the month of April. Campaign material is rolled out at national and district levels through electronic, social and print media.

### 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) Ministry of Health Sri Lanka (2023). National Multisectoral Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of Chronic Non-Communicable Diseases 2023-2027.
- (4) Ministry of Sports and Youth Affairs, Ministry of Healthcare and Indigenous Medical Services, Ministry of Education (2018). Physical Activity and Sedentary Behavior Guideline Sri Lanka.
- (5) NCD Country Capacity Survey (2023). World Health Organization.

