

CYPRUS

COUNTRY PHYSICAL ACTIVITY FACTSHEET 2024

World Bank classification: High income
Total population: 904 705
Median age (years): 38.3
Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita (€): 27 480
GDP for health (%): 6.2
GDP for education (%): 5.1
GDP for sports (%): 0.7
Population, male (%): 48.8
Population, female (%): 51.2
Life expectancy, male (years): 79.7
Life expectancy, female (years): 83.4

Source: Eurostat
https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tps00205/default/table?lang=en&category=t_demo.t_demo_mor



Photo: © Ioanna Peraskevopoulou

► National recommendations on physical activity for health

Cyprus is discussing national recommendations on physical activity and health.

► Monitoring and surveillance of physical activity

Sectors with surveillance systems



Health

YES



Education

YES



Sports

NO



Transport

NO



Other

YES

SUCCESS STORY

The National Physical Fitness Assessment Program for school-age children, "Aristotle-CyFit," aims to assess the physical fitness of children and adolescents in Cyprus in response to rising childhood obesity levels. Launched in the 2022–2023 school year with a pilot phase in seven schools, the program is now being implemented in 50% of schools for the 2023–2024 year. Its primary goal is to create a comprehensive database on the physical condition of secondary education students, facilitating health monitoring, comparisons with World Health Organization guidelines and scientific research.



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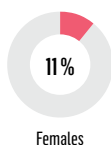
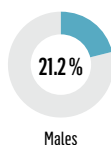
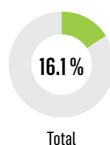
► Prevalence of physical activity

Physical activity indicators

11–15 years

Health Behaviour in
School-aged Children
(HBSC), 2022

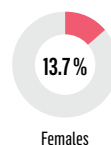
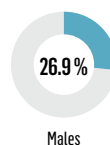
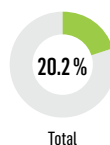
Moderate-to-vigorous
physical activity for
≥ 60 min/day



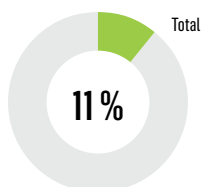
11–15 years

HBSC, 2022

Vigorous physical
activity out of school
hours every day of
the week



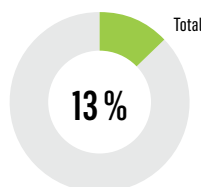
15–≥ 55 years



Eurobarometer 525, 2022

Frequent participation in
physical activity or sport

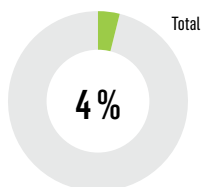
15–≥ 55 years



Eurobarometer 525, 2022

Frequent participation in moderate
physical activity (excluding sport)

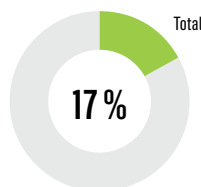
15–≥ 55 years



Eurobarometer 525, 2022

Vigorous physical activity
> 120 min/week

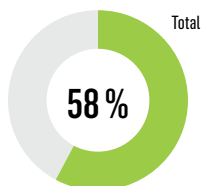
15–≥ 55 years



Eurobarometer 525, 2022

Vigorous physical activity
61–120 min/week

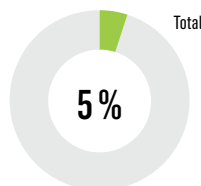
15–≥ 55 years



Eurobarometer 525, 2022

Vigorous physical activity
≤ 60 min/week

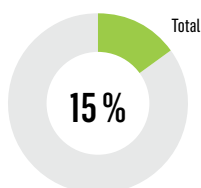
15–≥ 55 years



Eurobarometer 525, 2022

Moderate physical activity
> 120 min/week

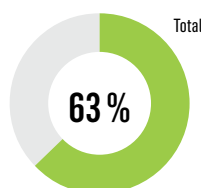
15–≥ 55 years



Eurobarometer 525, 2022

Moderate physical activity
61–120 min/week

15–≥ 55 years



Eurobarometer 525, 2022

Moderate physical activity
≤ 60 min/week

► National government coordination mechanism and leadership on the promotion of physical activity

The Cyprus Sports Organization, established in 1969, is responsible for promoting and implementing HEPA in the country. It is the leading sports authority in Cyprus, under which all sports federations are registered. In Cyprus, multi-sectoral cooperation is promoted within various fields related to health. For example, a committee was formed by the Ministry of Health to re-evaluate and update the national policy on diabetes. This committee brought together experts and stakeholders from various sectors, including the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, the Cyprus Sports Organization, nutritionists, patient groups, and other stakeholders.

<https://cyprussports.org/>

SUCCESS STORY



The most successful programme of the Cyprus Sports Organization related to HEPA is Sports for All, established and implemented in 1985, with growing participation. The programme provides opportunities for sport and physical activity to citizens of all ages, including special populations and groups and minorities. A wide range of activities are led by qualified physical education instructors.

<https://ago.org.cy/>

► Funding for the promotion of physical activity for health

Funding allocated specifically to physical activity promotion by sector



Health

—



Education

YES



Sports

YES



Environment

—



Urban planning

YES



Transport

YES

► National policies or action plans for the promotion of physical activity for health

National policy highlights

Sports for All (Athlitismos Clia Olous)

The Sports for All programme ensures that all citizens have access to sports, regardless of age, gender, nationality or physical condition. The programme is operated through sports centres with 88 qualified physical fitness instructors who promote physical fitness, mental health and social inclusion. Children's activities are central to the Sports for All Programme, which fosters a lifelong enthusiasm for sports and healthy living. It also includes specialized sports, adult and senior programmes and activities for individuals with disabilities. The objectives are to promote lifelong exercise, improve health, cultivate character through fair competition and address social issues such as youth crime and substance abuse. The programme also supports people in prison and visitors to Cyprus to combat isolation and social exclusion while promoting community cohesion.

<https://ago.org.cy/archiki-selida/ago/>; <https://ago.org.cy/archiki-selida/programmata/eparchia-lefkosias/#toggle-id-24-closed>

Sports for all (people with disabilities)

The Cyprus Sports Organization, adhering to the principles of the Sports for All programme, provides equitable sports opportunities for everyone, irrespective of gender, age, social status or health condition. The Organization runs specialized programmes for individuals with disabilities and those experiencing cervical syndrome and joint issues. The programmes are designed to ensure inclusivity and accessibility, providing targeted support and adaptive activities that address specific physical and health needs.

<https://ago.org.cy/archiki-selida/programmata/eparchia-lefkosias/#toggle-id-23>

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National policies or action plans for the promotion of physical activity for health



- 1 Sports for All – Paedagogical games for children aged 4–7 years
<https://ago.org.cy/archiki-selida/programmata/eparchia-lefkosias/#toggle-id-2>
- 2 Sports for All – Sports for pre-school children
<https://ago.org.cy/archiki-selida/programmata/eparchia-lefkosias/#toggle-id-4>
- 3 Sports for All – Dance for children aged 6–14 years
<https://ago.org.cy/archiki-selida/programmata/eparchia-lefkosias/#toggle-id-5>
- 4 Sports for All – Programmes for swimming, football, tennis, volleyball, basketball, gymnastics, yoga, pilates and taekwondo for children and adolescents
<https://ago.org.cy/archiki-selida/programmata/eparchia-lefkosias/#toggle-id-7>
- 5 Sports for All – Adult programmes for activities such as basketball, volleyball, tennis, futsal, swimming, aerobics, weight training, cycling training, pilates, yoga, zumba, functional training, martial arts and self-defence
<https://ago.org.cy/archiki-selida/programmata/eparchia-lefkosias/#toggle-id-20>
- 6 Sports for All – Senior citizens
<https://ago.org.cy/archiki-selida/programmata/eparchia-lefkosias/#toggle-id-22>
- 7 Sports for All – People with disabilities
<https://ago.org.cy/archiki-selida/programmata/eparchia-lefkosias/#toggle-id-23>
- 8 Sports for All – People with neck and spine problems
<https://ago.org.cy/archiki-selida/programmata/eparchia-lefkosias/#toggle-id-24>
- 9 Financial support for activities to promote sport among minority groups
<https://cyprussports.org/files-and-documents/>
- 10 Plan for support of vulnerable populations
<https://cyprussports.org/files-and-documents/>
- 11 Financial support for sports participation of minority religious groups
<https://cyprussports.org/files-and-documents/>

Sectors involved in the design of the policy or action plan



Health	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Education	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Sports	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Environment	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Urban planning	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Transport	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11

Plan for evaluation of a specific policy



Policy	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
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Target groups included



General population	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Children < 5 years	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Children and adolescents (5–17 years)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Adults	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Older adults (≥ 65 years)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Frail/elderly (≥ 85 years)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
People with disability	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
People with chronic diseases	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Pregnant women	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Breastfeeding women	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Low socio-economic groups	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Ethnic minorities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Deprived of liberty	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Migrants	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Unemployed people	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11



SUCCESS STORY

The Sports for All programme established by the Cyprus Sports Organization in 1985 has proven successful in promoting inclusive physical activity nationwide. With approximately 16 000 members, the programme operates 500 centres across Cyprus that provide accessible, affordable sports opportunities to individuals of all ages, genders and fitness levels managed by qualified instructors. It includes initiatives such as fitness programmes for prisoners and military personnel. Additionally, the programme offers fitness testing and appraisals through the Cyprus Sports Medicine and Research Centre, addressing the needs of a diverse population, including those with disabilities and chronic conditions.

<https://cyprussports.org/activity/%cf%84%ce%bc%ce%ae%ce%bc%ce%b1%ce%b1%ce%b8%ce%bb%ce%b7%cf%84%ce%b9%cf%83%ce%bc%cf%8c%cf%82-%ce%b3%ce%b9%ce%b1%cf%8c%ce%bb%ce%bf%cf%85%cf%82/>; <https://ago.org.cy/>

► Sports clubs for health

Cyprus has not specifically implemented the WHO Guidelines for Sports Clubs for Health Programmes but supports health promotion through other means. The Government provides financial support to sports clubs that organize health-promoting activities, including after-school programmes. Private running clubs have contributed significantly to health promotion in Cyprus over the past 10–15 years. These clubs now offer running programmes for beginners and children and organize events that encourage community participation in health-related activities.

<https://www.runningincyprus.com/running-clubs/>







► Increasing access to exercise facilities for socially disadvantaged groups

Cyprus has a national plan to support individuals with addiction to both legal and illegal substances, in collaboration with the National Authority Against Addictions. The plan includes free access to Sports for All programmes to promote an active, healthy lifestyle among vulnerable groups, including free sports equipment. It encourages participation in physical activities to improve mental and physical health. The programme has been successful in addressing addiction among soldiers, who are particularly vulnerable due to the stress associated with their work. The increased participation of members of the armed forces in sporting events across Cyprus demonstrates the programme's effectiveness in promoting a healthier lifestyle in this group.

► Counselling on physical activity and exercise prescription

Currently, counselling on physical activity is not an established policy in Cyprus; however, the Cyprus Sports Organization is raising awareness for inclusion of this topic in the agenda for Cyprus' European Union presidency in 2026. An online peer learning activity and a physical meeting in Cyprus were held to discuss and share successful examples, challenges and solutions to gain expertise to make exercise counselling a mainstream part of the health and exercise sector.

Health professionals who are trained in health-enhancing physical activity

	 Medical doctors	 Physiotherapists	 Nurses	 Nutritionists/ dietitians	 Psychologists	 SPORT SCIENTISTS Other health professionals
	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES
Undergraduate	—	YES	—	YES	—	YES
Postgraduate	—	—	—	YES	—	YES
						Mandatory



SUCCESS STORY

In an ongoing collaboration between the Cyprus Sports Organization and local universities, nutritionists and dieticians regularly visit the Cyprus Sports Research Centre, a department of the Organization, to gain experience and understanding of fitness evaluation, sports science and the association with health. They learn about the impact of physiological parameters on health and performance and experience in interviewing and practical applications with recreational and competitive athletes.

<https://www.unic.ac.cy/nutrition-and-dietetics-bsc-4-years/>

Physical education in schools

Primary
schools



Average
per week

1.5–2
Mandatory

Secondary
schools



Average
per week

2–2.5
Mandatory

HEPA in training of physical education teachers

YES

Part of undergraduate studies Mandatory / Optional

YES

Part of postgraduate studies Mandatory / Optional

Promotion of physical activity in schools

NO

During school breaks

YES

After school

NO

During lessons

NO

Active travel to and from school

Infrastructure for leisure-time physical activity

The Cyprus Sports Organization subsidizes sports facilities for communal and social sports projects financially to increase the participation of citizens of all ages in sports and exercise. The programme is addressed to municipalities, community boards, churches, school boards and others. The objective is to build and make available various types of infrastructure for leisure-time physical activity. Most of the funding comes from the State, and the Cyprus Sports Organization supervises construction.

Promotion of physical activity in the workplace



National guidance or programme
to promote active travel to work
(e.g. walking, cycling)

YES



National guidance or programme
to promote physical activity
at the workplace

NO

The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Works provides financial incentives for citizens to buy new bicycles to encourage bicycle use for active transport and exercise. The bikes include city bikes, road bikes, mountain bikes and bikes for people with disabilities.

http://www.podilato.gov.cy/mtcw/cycling.nsf/mtcw04a_en/mtcw04a_en?OpenDocument



SUCCESS STORY

Participation in corporate sport in Cyprus has been increasing. The events not only promote competitive sports but also encourage employees in various companies to increase their level of physical activity, encourage a team spirit outside the workplace, and motivate individuals to remain active, socialize and strengthen their social bonds. Some organizations engage professional fitness coaches to provide training for people who are already active in sports, introducing sports to beginners and encouraging more people to become and remain active.

<https://www.limassolmarathon.com/article/en/248/>; <https://www.larnakamarathon.com/en/races/5-km-corporate-race/>

Community interventions for older adults



National guidance or programme for community interventions to promote physical activity in older adults

YES

The Sports for All programme of the Cyprus Sports Organization conducts various programmes to provide opportunities for senior citizens to remain physically active and enhance regular social interactions. The programmes are implemented in cooperation with municipal authorities and senior citizen clubs.

<https://ago.org.cy/archiki-selida/programmata/eparchia-lefkosias/#toggle-id-22>

National awareness-raising campaign on physical activity

BeActive, a European-wide campaign on physical activity promotion, is successfully implemented in Cyprus. The campaign is organized and coordinated by the Cyprus Sports Organization in cooperation with sports clubs, municipal authorities, schools and other stakeholders. Sports clubs can promote their sport in the general population and attract new members.

Media used in national campaigns



Television

YES



Radio

YES



Newspapers

YES



Social media

YES



Public events

YES



Public figures

YES

Acknowledgments

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