

DENMARK

COUNTRY PHYSICAL ACTIVITY FACTSHEET 2024

World Bank classification: High income
Total population: 5 873 420
Median age (years): 42.3
Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita (€): 51 660
GDP for health (%): 8
GDP for education (%): 5.3
GDP for sports (%): 4
Population, male (%): 49.8
Population, female (%): 50.2
Life expectancy, males (years): 79.5
Life expectancy, females (years): 83.2

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



Photo: © Tue Kirstensen

► National recommendations on physical activity for health

Target groups included

YES	Children (< 5 years)	YES	During pregnancy
YES	Children and adolescents (5–17 years)	YES	During breastfeeding
YES	Adults (18–64 years)	YES	People with disability
YES	Older adults (≥ 65 years)	YES	People with chronic diseases
YES	Frail and very elderly adults (≥ 85 years)		

Links to national recommendations:

Children: <https://www.sst.dk/da/Fagperson/Forebyggelse-og-tvaergaaende-indsatser/Fysisk-aktivitet/Anbefalinger-om-fysisk-aktivitet/Boern-0-4-aar>

Children and adolescents: <https://www.sst.dk/da/Fagperson/Forebyggelse-og-tvaergaaende-indsatser/Fysisk-aktivitet/Anbefalinger-om-fysisk-aktivitet/Boern-5-17-aar>

Adults: <https://www.sst.dk/da/Fagperson/Forebyggelse-og-tvaergaaende-indsatser/Fysisk-aktivitet/Anbefalinger-om-fysisk-aktivitet/Voksne-18-64-aar>

Older adults: <https://www.sst.dk/da/Fagperson/Forebyggelse-og-tvaergaaende-indsatser/Fysisk-aktivitet/Anbefalinger-om-fysisk-aktivitet/65-plus>

Pregnant women: <https://www.sst.dk/da/Fagperson/Forebyggelse-og-tvaergaaende-indsatser/Fysisk-aktivitet/Anbefalinger-om-fysisk-aktivitet/Gravide>

People with chronic diseases: <https://www.sst.dk/-/media/Udgivelser/2018/Fysisk-traening-som-behandling.ashx>

SUCCESS STORY

Since 2021, the percentage of people > 15 years who do not follow the national recommendations on physical activity has decreased in all age groups except women aged 16–24 years (no difference) and women aged 55–64 years (increased).

<https://www.sst.dk/-/media/Udgivelser/2024/Sundhedsprofil/Sundhedsprofilen-midtvejsundersoegelsen-2023.ashx>



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COUNTRY PHYSICAL ACTIVITY FACTSHEET 2024

Monitoring and surveillance of physical activity

Sectors with surveillance systems



Health

YES



Education

YES



Sports

YES



Transport

YES

HBSC
STUDY

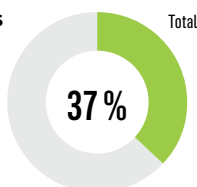
Other

YES

Prevalence of physical activity

Physical activity indicators

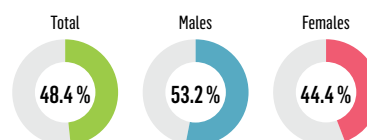
11–15 years



Physical activity and sedentary behaviour among pupils in grades 5–9 (Fysisk aktivitet og stillesiddende adfærd blandt elever i 5–9 klasse), 2018–2022; https://www.sdu.dk/da/sif/rapporter/2023/fysisk_aktivitet_og_stillesiddende_adfaerd_blandt_elever_i_5_9_klasse

≥ 60 min/day during the week

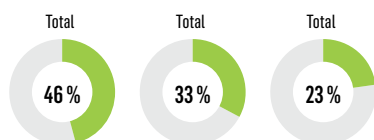
35–44 years



National Health Profile, 2023; <https://www.danskernessundhed.dk/>

≥ 150 min/week

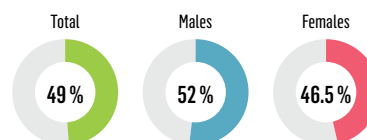
11, 13 and 15 years



Physical activity and sedentary behaviour among pupils in grades 5–9, 2018–2022; https://www.sdu.dk/da/sif/rapporter/2023/fysisk_aktivitet_og_stillesiddende_adfaerd_blandt_elever_i_5_9_klasse

≥ 60 min/day during the week

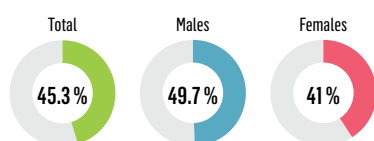
45–54 years



National Health Profile, 2023; <https://www.danskernessundhed.dk/>

≥ 150 min/week

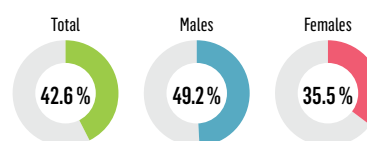
16–75 years



National Health Profile (Danskernes Sundhed), 2023; <https://www.danskernessundhed.dk/>

≥ 150 min/week

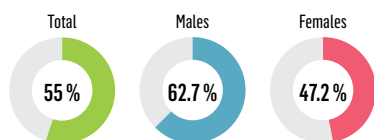
55–64 years



National Health Profile, 2023; <https://www.danskernessundhed.dk/>

≥ 150 min/week

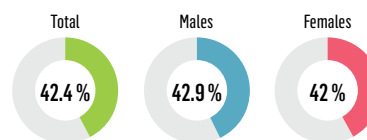
16–24 years



National Health Profile, 2023; <https://www.danskernessundhed.dk/>

≥ 150 min/week

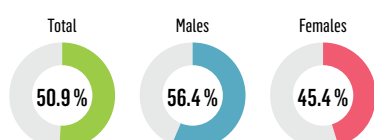
65–74 years



National Health Profile, 2023; <https://www.danskernessundhed.dk/>

≥ 150 min/week

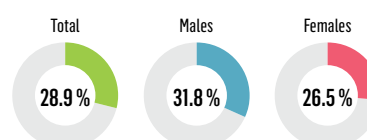
25–34 years



National Health Profile, 2023; <https://www.danskernessundhed.dk/>

≥ 150 min/week

≥75 years



National Health Profile, 2023; <https://www.danskernessundhed.dk/>

≥ 150 min/week

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

Denmark has no established national coordination mechanism or leadership in promoting physical activity. The Danish Health Authority is, however, a member of several advisory boards in which physical activity is discussed and coordinated. One example is the partnership with the Sund City Network (Sund By Netværket), a member of WHO's European Healthy Cities Network, and the region of Zealand is a member of EuroHealthNet. Furthermore, the Danish Health Authority is a member of the WHO HEPA network, and organizations with connections to the Government are members of networks for HEPA promotion.

<https://nfa.dk/sites/sundhedsmiljo/index.html>

► Funding for the promotion of physical activity for health

Funding allocated specifically to physical activity promotion by sector



Health

YES



Education

YES



Sports

YES



Environment

—



Urban planning

—



Transport

YES

SUCCESS STORY



Denmark promotes physical activity through investments in sports facilities, infrastructure and partnerships rather than direct funding. The sports sector is organized under two main umbrella organizations: the Danish Gymnastics and Sports Association (DGI) and the National Olympic Committee and Sports Confederation, which receive State subsidies and distribute funds according to their own structures. Local clubs are often members of both organizations and benefit from municipal support. The Danish Federation of Company Sports oversees workplace sports. The "arm's length" principle allows these organizations to manage public funds autonomously. Recent data show a significant increase in outdoor activities like walking, biking and running, highlighting the effectiveness of these measures.

Link: <https://denmark.dk/people-and-culture/sport>

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

National policy highlights

Move for Life

This strategic initiative aims to make Denmark the most active nation globally by 2025. Funded by the Nordea Foundation and TrygFonden and led by the DGI and the National Olympic Committee and Sports Confederation of Denmark, the programme acts to increase physical activity in all demographic groups. It emphasizes making sports accessible and enjoyable for everyone, from seasoned athletes to novices. Central to its success is collaboration with local municipalities, which helps integration of physical activity into daily life and ensures broad community engagement. A recent survey on volunteering revealed that, while Danes generally view volunteering positively and value its role in community sports, there are challenges. The survey, noting reduced volunteer participation during life transitions, proposed better engagement with the elderly, particularly in areas that require improvement.

<https://www.dif.dk/samfundsansvar/bevaeg-dig-for-livet>

Ministerial Order on Vocational Education and Training, BEK no 953 of 22 June 2023

Section 20 of the Executive Order on Vocational Training requires vocational schools in Denmark to integrate ≥ 45 min of physical activity into the daily teaching schedule for all students. This mandate ensures that physical exercise is a consistent part of the educational experience, promoting better physical health by reducing the risk of obesity, cardiovascular diseases and other health issues associated with sedentary behaviour. The regulation allows schools to offer active breaks or other exercise options beyond the standard curriculum for mental well-being by reducing stress and improving focus, which can enhance academic performance and overall student engagement. This regulation is aligned with public health goals and a holistic approach to student development.

<https://www.retsinformation.dk/eli/ta/2023/953>

Bicycle pool (Cykelpuljen)

This initiative offers municipalities funding to enhance local cycling infrastructure, which is essential for promoting physical activity and improving public health. The programme supports various projects, including construction of bike paths, upgrades to existing cycling facilities and initiatives to encourage cycling as a preferred mode of transport. Grants are available to cover up to 40% of costs for general improvements, up to 50% for projects on school routes or cross-municipal projects and up to 100% for innovative projects and ideas on new cycling technology. An annual allocation of 5 million DKK is designated specifically for innovation to advance cycling infrastructure and foster healthier, more sustainable transport options.

<https://www.vejdirektoratet.dk/side/cykelpulje-2024>

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



- 1 Danish Sport Policy Aims
https://kum.dk/fileadmin/_kum/2_Kulturomraader/ltraet/ltraetspolitiske_sigtelinjer_Januar_2016.pdf
- 2 Move for Life
<https://www.dif.dk/samfundsansvar/bevaeg-dig-for-livet> <https://www.bevaegdigforlivet.dk/>
- 3 Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex study
<https://www.blivgamechanger.dk/viden>
- 4 Act on Primary and Lower Secondary Schools from 2014
<https://www.retsinformation.dk/eli/ta/2024/90> New political agreement (19 March 2024); <https://www.uvm.dk/aktuelt/nyheder/uvm/2024/mar/240319-ny-aftale-om-folkeskolen>
- 5 Physical education and sport as an examination subject in primary and lower secondary schools from 2015
<https://www.retsinformation.dk/eli/ta/2022/1224>
New political agreement (19 March 2024); <https://www.uvm.dk/aktuelt/nyheder/uvm/2024/mar/240319-ny-aftale-om-folkeskolen>
- 6 Jump4Fun
<https://www.dgi.dk/jump4fun>
- 7 ABCs for mental health (ABC for mental sundhed)
<https://www.dgi.dk/samarbejd/om-vores-fokusomraader/fokusomraader/aktive-voksne/abc-for-mental-sundhed/abc-abc>
- 8 Mandatory physical education class in the general upper secondary education programme
<https://www.retsinformation.dk/eli/ta/2017/497>
- 9 Ministerial Order on Vocational Education and Training, BEK no. 953 of 22/06/2023
<https://www.retsinformation.dk/eli/ta/2023/953>
- 10 Cycle pool (Cykelpuljen)
<https://www.vejdirektoratet.dk/side/cykelpulje-2024>
- 11 Political Agreement on Sport
https://kum.dk/fileadmin/_kum/2_Kulturomraader/ltraet/Politisk_stemmeaftale_om_idraet_2014.pdf
- 12 Health, Nutrition and Exercise
<https://www.uvm.dk/-/media/filer/uvm/udd/fgu/2019/apr/190426-didaktiske-pricipper-for-fgu-ua.pdf>

Sectors involved in the design of the policy or action plan



Health	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Education	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Sports	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Environment	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Urban planning	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Transport	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12

Plan for evaluation of a specific policy



Policy	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
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Target groups included

General population	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Children < 5 years	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Children and adolescents (5–17 years)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Adults	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Older adults (≥ 65 years)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Frail/elderly (≥ 85 years)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
People with disability	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Pregnant women	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Breastfeeding women	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Low socio-economic groups	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Ethnic minorities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Deprived of liberty	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Migrants	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Unemployed people	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12

► Sports clubs for health

The WHO Guidelines for Sports Clubs for Health Programmes are not implemented, as sports associations already focus on health.

► Increasing access to exercise facilities for socially disadvantaged groups

Denmark has several initiatives to enhance access to exercise facilities for marginalized and socially disadvantaged groups. The Get2sport project connects youth in vulnerable neighbourhoods with local sports clubs, while the DGI provides financial assistance to children from low-income families, refugees and asylum-seekers to participate in sports. The Danish Federation for Company Sport promotes physical activity among blue-collar workers through campaigns such as Workplace Exercise Week, offering resources such as videos and webinars. The Ministry of Social Affairs funds nongovernmental organizations that engage socially marginalized groups, including individuals with mental and psychosocial disabilities, in sports programmes, such as the homeless soccer concept of OMBOLD and Sport for LIVET, which specifically address the needs of marginalized individuals and those with mental health challenges.

<https://www.firmaidraet.dk/events/arrangementer/arbejdspladsernes-motionsuge/>

Danish Gymnastics and Sports Associations: <https://www.dgi.dk/samarbejd/om-vores-fokusomraader/fokusomraader/boerns-bevaegelsesglaede/alle-boern-og-unge-skal-have-adgang-til-foreningslivet> <https://www.dgi.dk/om/presse/presserum/seneste-nyt/flere-med-handicap-eller-psykiske-saarbarheder-skal-med-i-idraetsforeningerne> <https://www.dgi.dk/om/presse/presserum/seneste-nyt/ny-indsats-skal-hjaelpe-flere-udsatte-boern-ind-i-idraetsforeningernes-faellesskaber>; <https://www.dgi.dk/samarbejd/om-vores-fokusomraader/fokusomraader/boerns-bevaegelsesglaede/socioekonomisk-udsatte-borgere/foreningsliv-for-alle/faa-en-friplads-paa-dgi-s-idraetsskoler>; <https://www.dif.dk/samfundsansvar/dif-get2sport>; <https://www.firmaidraet.dk/webstories/arbejdspladsernes-motionsuge-2023/>; <https://www.dif.dk/nyheder/2024/01/mange-fodboldglade-piger-i-udsatte-boligomraader>

► Counselling on physical activity and exercise prescription

In 2015, the Danish Health Authority released guidelines for hospitals and primary care centres to assess patients' lifestyles and offer interventions if necessary. In 2024, they issued quality standards for municipalities on lifestyle interventions for chronic disease patients, detailing competence requirements for professionals such as physiotherapists. In 2018, they published recommendations for physical activity associated with 31 diagnoses.

<https://www.sst.dk/-/media/Udgivelser/2015/Forebyggelse-i-almen-praksis-og-p%C3%A5-sygehus-2015/SST-Forebyggelse-Guide-til-sundhedspersonale.ashx?la=da&hash=86CE8090919ECECF742371059346F7D03ADB1F43>

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Health professionals who are trained in health-enhancing physical activity

						
	Medical doctors	Physiotherapists	Nurses	Nutritionists/dieticians	Psychologists	Other health professionals*
	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Undergraduate	—	YES	YES	YES	—	—
Postgraduate	—	—	—	—	—	—
	Mandatory	Mandatory	Mandatory	Mandatory	Mandatory	Optional

Physical education in schools

Primary schools	Average per week	Secondary schools	Average per week	
	2 Optional		0-1 Mandatory	Students who choose the Higher General Examination Programme (Idræt C-level) have mandatory physical education for a total of 150 h.

Note: 630 h of physical education in total per year for primary and lower secondary schools

HEPA in training of physical education teachers

YES	Part of undergraduate studies	Mandatory / Optional	YES	Part of postgraduate studies	Mandatory / Optional
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SUCCESS STORY

School Motion Day (Skolernes Motionsdag) is an annual event in which 96% of Danish public schools dedicate a full day to physical activity and education.

<https://skoleidræt.dk/idraetsfaget/omraader/idraetsdage-og-den-%c3%a5bne-skole/skolernes-motionsdag/>

Promotion of physical activity in schools

YES	During school breaks	YES	After school
YES	During lessons	YES	Active travel to and from school

► National travel survey

Walking and cycling for all travel purposes (commuting, shopping, leisure, work)



► Infrastructure for leisure-time physical activity

The State and municipalities are strongly involved in making and maintaining leisure-time infrastructure, beyond classic sports activities, such as sport infrastructure and urban and green spaces. Although these initiatives are regulated by national and local legislation and policies, there is no national action plan.

The Government, municipalities, nongovernmental organizations and private investors are responsible for planning infrastructure according to the Planning Act. The Government and municipalities provide most of the financing. The Act on Non-formal Education and Democratic Voluntary Activity (Consolidated Act No.854 of 11/07/2011) states that municipalities must contribute to the cost of activities and increase the availability of facilities or contribute to the costs of associations. Local sports associations are especially important, organizing activities and cooperating with local authorities on the facilities that require support in the local community.

[https://www.sundhedsstyrelsen.dk/-/media/English/Publications/2020/Forebyggelsepakke-fysisk-aktivitet-\(Engelsk\)/Health-promotion-package-on-physical-activity.ashx?sc_lang=en&hash=F3BB1EEB328D772F7DD3A4DF4E9B6866](https://www.sundhedsstyrelsen.dk/-/media/English/Publications/2020/Forebyggelsepakke-fysisk-aktivitet-(Engelsk)/Health-promotion-package-on-physical-activity.ashx?sc_lang=en&hash=F3BB1EEB328D772F7DD3A4DF4E9B6866); <https://kum.dk/kulturomraader/idraet/udlodningsmidler>

SUCCESS STORY

The Open School (Åben skole) contributes to physical movement among young people who are not engaged with sport associations during leisure time. At the Open School, young people become part of the teaching group in primary and lower secondary schools. Young people who did not previously engage in sport activities become more motivated and curious about new sports activities and in some cases join sports associations as a result. In 2021, various sports organizations initiated the project Together we move (Sammen I bevægelse) to bring Danish citizens together through movement and physical activity during the COVID-19 pandemic. The aim of the project is to inspire movement and create a community around it. Schools all over the country joined the project in various ways, such as Together we walk (Vi går sammen), in which school classes count the kilometres they walk.

► 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

YES

We bike to work (Vi cykler til arbejde) is an annual campaign held in May that promotes use of bicycles as transport to work. The Board of Health in Denmark has issued a handbook on physical activity, which highlights the positive effects of active travel. The Danish federation for company sport also conducts several campaigns for active travel to work. For walking, a campaign called Count steps has more than 50 000 participants each year.

<https://www.vcta.dk/om/om-kampagnen>; https://moreinfo.addi.dk/2.11/more_info_get.php?lokalid=61751688&attachment_type=856_a&bibliotek=870970&source_id=870970&key=4a88a6abe969fd87e4e4; <https://www.taelskridt.dk/countsteps/>

The aim of the Company Sport Association (Firmaidrætten) is to ensure an active work life. They develop community and networking at the workplace through physical activity, such as in campaigns like Workplace Exercise Day (Arbejdspladsernes Motionsuge), Count steps (Tæl skridt) and Bike & Run Relay (Bike & Run Stafetten).

<https://www.firmaidraet.dk/det-vil-vi/>

► Community interventions for older adults



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

YES

In 2023, the Danish Health Authority launched the latest version of the national recommendations for health for older adults (≥ 65 years), based on the latest evidence on the association between physical activity, sedentary behaviour and health among adults aged ≥ 65 years. National recommendations are used in community interventions for older adults with local prevention programmes in municipalities, often in collaboration. For older adults with dementia, the Danish Health Authority published a Guide to Physical Exercise and Activity for People with Dementia in 2018 as part of the National Dementia Action Plan 2025. The aim of the guide is to help municipalities, volunteers, relatives, coaches and others who support citizens with dementia to remain physically active. The guide is based on evidence from research on physical exercise and activity for people with dementia and provides recommendations on activities for different stages of dementia.

https://www.sst.dk/-/media/Fagperson/Fysisk-aktivitet/SST-FA-aeldre_final.ashx; <https://www.sundhedsstyrelsen.dk/da/Vaerdighed/Temaer/Demens/Viden-om/Traeningsguide-for-mennesker-med-demens>; <https://www.sst.dk/-/media/Udgivelser/2019/Erfaringer-guide-fys-akt-demens/Fysisk-aktivitet-demens-Casesamling>

► National awareness-raising campaign on physical activity

The Danish Week of Sport, organized by the Danish Federation for Company Sport, lets citizens try various sports in week 41, ending with a national school activity day, in which 96% of schools participate. In 2023, over 7000 activities took place. Campaigns like "Exercise your own way" target adults, "Move for Life" and "Every Step Counts" highlight that all movement, no matter how small, adds up. Every Step Counts promotes workplace activity through step counting, and the Cyclists' Association's campaign encourages biking to work each May.

<https://www.bevaegdigforlivet.dk/alt-taeller/hvad-er-alt-taeller>; <https://www.taelskridt.dk/>; <https://www.vcta.dk/>

Media used in national campaigns



Television

YES



Radio

YES



Newspapers

YES



Social media

YES



Public events

YES



Public figures

YES

**PRESS, PUBLIC
RELATIONS**

Other

YES

Acknowledgments

This publication was funded by the European Union. Its contents are the sole responsibility of the WHO Regional Office for Europe and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union.



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