

ESTONIA

COUNTRY PHYSICAL ACTIVITY FACTSHEET 2024

World Bank classification: High income
Total population: 1 331 796
Median age (years): 42.6
Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita (€): 16 250
GDP for health (%): 6
GDP for education (%): 5.8
GDP for sports (%): 1.9
Population, male (%): 47.6
Population, female (%): 52.4
Life expectancy, males (years): 73.6
Life expectancy, females (years): 82.3

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



Photo: © Norman Poder

► 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)	NO	People with disability
YES	Older adults (≥ 65 years)	NO	People with chronic diseases
NO	Frail and very elderly adults (≥ 85 years)		

Link to national recommendations: <https://www.terviseinfo.ee/et/valdkonnad/toitumine/riiklike-toitumis-ja-toidusoovituste-uuendamine>

► Monitoring and surveillance of physical activity

Sectors with surveillance systems



Health

YES



Education

YES



Sports

NO



Transport

NO

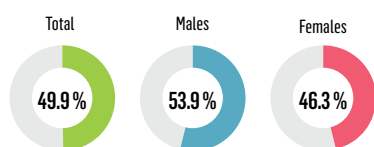
ESTONIA

COUNTRY PHYSICAL ACTIVITY FACTSHEET 2024

► Prevalence of physical activity

Physical activity indicators

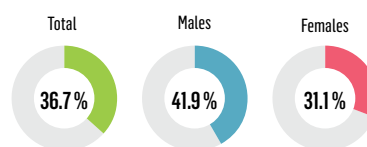
11 years



HBSC, 2021; <https://tai.ee/et/valjaanded/eesti-kooliopilaste-tervisekaitumine>

60 min/day at least 5 times/week

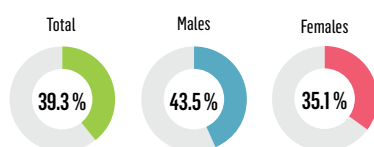
15 years



HBSC, 2021; <https://tai.ee/et/valjaanded/eesti-kooliopilaste-tervisekaitumine>

60 min/day at least 5 times/week

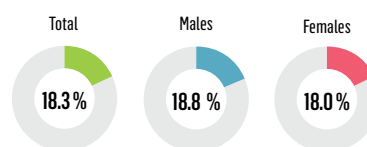
13 years



HBSC, 2021; <https://tai.ee/et/valjaanded/eesti-kooliopilaste-tervisekaitumine>

60 min/day at least 5 times/week

16–64 years



Estonian Adult Population Health Behaviour Survey, 2022; <https://www.tai.ee/et/valjaanded/eesti-taiskasvanud-rahvastiku-tervisekaitumise-uuring-2022-metoodika-ja-standardtabelite>

30 min/day at least 4 times/week

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

The purposes of the Competence Centre for Physical Activity, established in 2022 by the Board of the Ministry of Culture, the European Commission and the Estonian Olympic Committee, are to increase the development, coordination and efficient management of physical activity and to improve cooperation between sports organizations and local governments. The Centre is the main partner of the State in promoting HEPA.

<https://liigume.ee/en/about-the-theme-year/>

SUCCESS STORY

The Ministry of Culture designated 2023 as Be Active year to generate interest in exercising and healthier lifestyles and to increase the number of people in Estonia who exercise regularly. Every month had a theme, and the activities were planned and conducted by the Competence Centre for Physical Activity. The year was a great success, with over 10 000 people taking part in different activities. Participation in the European Week of Sport increased by over 200 000.

<https://liigume.ee/liikumisaasta-2023-kokkuvote-liikumisrõõmu-jagus-igasse-kuusse/>



► 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

YES



Urban planning

YES



Transport

YES



SUCCESS STORY

The aim of the project Schools in motion is to increase the physical activity of schoolchildren during the school day. The goal is to encourage students to move more and sit less, include more activity breaks and integrate physical activity into lessons. The project emphasizes that physical activity is not only sports but also includes active transport, active recesses and active lessons. The aim is to make the school environment more conducive to movement. The programme was pilot-tested by the University of Tartu's Move Lab. It promotes lifelong physical activity and engages school staff, students, parents and local communities. Each school has a team that creates and implements a customized action plan. The University of Tartu supports the work with evaluation tools, seminars, training and material. Schools exchange best practices through networking seminars and a Facebook community. The programme, which now receives direct funding from the Ministry of Education, was initially supported by a European Economic Area programme. Almost half of all schools in the country have joined the initiative.

<https://www.liikumakutsuvkool.ee/>

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

National policy highlights

Fundamentals of Estonian Sports Policy until 2030

Estonia's policy is designed to significantly improve the nation's physical and mental well-being by 2030. The policy has four key objectives: increasing public participation in sports, enhancing the economic role of sports, fostering social cohesion through exercise, and strengthening Estonia's international sports presence. It establishes a framework for these goals, with support from the Ministry of Culture and leading sports organizations. The Government will issue annual reports on progress to ensure effective implementation and drive improvement in public health and sports development.

<https://www.kul.ee/en/sports-and-exercise/sports-management/sport-2030>

Cross-sectoral Physical Activity Action Plan

The Plan was initiated at the end of 2022 when three ministries – Culture, Social Affairs and Education and Research – identified HEPA as a shared priority. The plan was developed throughout 2023 in seminars and online collaboration. The steering group includes representatives from the three ministries, the Competence Centre for Physical Activity, the Tartu University Research Group of Physical Activity for Health and the National Institute for Health Development. The goal of the action plan is to improve coordination among the stakeholders to promote physical activity. It was expected to be available online by June 2024.

Population Health Development Plan 2020–2030

The Plan is intended to enhance overall health by increasing life expectancy and the number of healthy years lived. It was approved in April 2021. The target is an average life expectancy of 78 years for men and 84 years for women; it includes addressing health inequalities and promoting well-being. The focus is to improve the physical activity levels of the population for better health outcomes. It includes physical activity in its holistic approach, integrating health considerations across sectors and encouraging active lifestyles through public policies and community initiatives. The Healthy Choices Programme complements this programme by improving access to information and creating environments that foster healthier choices, including increased physical activity.

<https://www.sm.ee/rahvastiku-tervise-arengukava-2020-2030>

ESTONIA

COUNTRY PHYSICAL ACTIVITY FACTSHEET 2024

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



- 1 Fundamentals of the Estonian sports policy until 2030
<https://www.ku.ee/en/sports-and-exercise/sports-management/sport-2030>
- 2 Green Paper on Nutrition and Physical Activity
<https://www.sm.ee/et/toitumise-ja-liikumise-roheline-raamat>
- 3 Cross-sectoral Physical Activity Action Plan
- 4 National Health Plan 2020–2030
<https://www.sm.ee/rahvastiku-tervise-arengukava-2020-2030>

Plan for evaluation of a specific policy



Policy	1	2	3	4

Sectors involved in the design of the policy or action plan



Health	1	2	3	4
Education	1	2	3	4
Sports	1	2	3	4
Environment	1	2	3	4
Urban planning	1	2	3	4
Transport	1	2	3	4

Target groups included



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

► Sports clubs for health

The WHO Guidelines for Sports Club for Health Programmes have not been implemented in Estonia. Nevertheless, many sports clubs actively promote HEPA to attract more members and engage a wider audience.

► Increasing access to exercise facilities for socially disadvantaged groups

The aim of the Youth Sector Development Plan 2021–2035 is to prevent the exclusion of young people by enhancing their sense of security and providing equal opportunities. It includes increasing awareness of risks and reducing risky behaviour among youth. The plan ensures access to support services and information, especially for young people at risk of exclusion due to health. It includes developing and testing new methods to support young people, in collaboration with various establishments. In response to a 2021 report by Estonia's Government Office that identified issues of accessibility, efforts are being made to improve access to exercise facilities for the elderly and people with disabilities. This includes integrating accessibility criteria into strategic documents, supporting coaches and specialists and monitoring the physical activity of disabled individuals. The goal is to better understand specific needs and provide input to effective policies to enhance access and support.

https://www.hm.ee/sites/default/files/documents/2022-10/ee_youth_sector_development_plan_2021-2035_en.pdf; https://www.riigikantselei.ee/sites/default/files/documents/2021-09/Riigikantselei_Ligip%C3%A4%C3%A4setavuse_rakker%C3%BChma_%20lopparuanne.pdf

ESTONIA

COUNTRY PHYSICAL ACTIVITY FACTSHEET 2024

► Counselling on physical activity and exercise prescription

In 2020, a new programme was launched to train Sport for All coaches. It has yet to be integrated into the health sector.

Health professionals who are trained in health-enhancing physical activity

	 Medical doctors	 Physiotherapists	 Nurses	 Nutritionists/ dieticians	 Psychologists
	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO
Undergraduate	YES	YES	YES	—	—
Postgraduate	YES	YES	YES	—	—
	Mandatory	Mandatory	Mandatory		

SUCCESS STORY

The Sport for All coaches training programme is a flagship initiative of the Competence Centre for Physical Activity to enhance the skills and knowledge of coaches across Estonia. The aim is to ensure that coaches are well equipped to promote physical activity among diverse populations and to foster a culture of inclusivity and active living.

<https://liigume.ee/liikumisharrastuse-treenerikutse/>



► Physical education in schools

Primary schools	Average per week	Secondary schools	Average per week
	2–3 Mandatory		2 Mandatory
Primary schools: mandatory hours: 1st grade, 1–3; 2nd stage (grades 4–6), eight lessons per week; 3rd stage (grades 7–9), six lessons per week			

HEPA in training of physical education teachers

YES	Part of undergraduate studies	Optional	YES	Part of postgraduate studies	Optional
-----	-------------------------------	----------	-----	------------------------------	----------

► Promotion of physical activity in schools

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

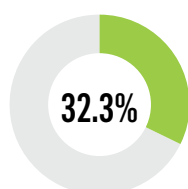
ESTONIA

COUNTRY PHYSICAL ACTIVITY FACTSHEET 2024

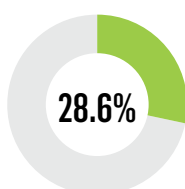
► National travel survey

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

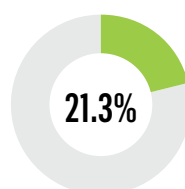
Per person
per day



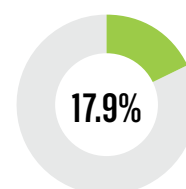
< 15 min



15–30 min



30–60 min



> 60 min

► Infrastructure for leisure-time physical activity

Since 2018, Estonia has invested € 600 000 annually for outdoor leisure-time "sport for all" facilities. Additionally, € 3 million have been spent in building utilities and services in facilities to improve conditions.

► 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

The Walk2Work campaign (Pane kondimootor tööle) encourages people to go to work more actively and to reduce the use of motorized options such as cars and buses. Teams can register online and earn points when commuting to and from work on foot. Winners of the competition receive prizes at the end of the campaign.

<https://www.firmasport.ee/kondimootor/>

Since 2018, expenditure by companies to improve their employees' health is not taxed as a fringe benefit (up to € 100 per employee per quarter) if the employer makes this option available to all employees.

<https://www.emta.ee/en/business-client/taxes-and-payment/income-and-social-taxes/fringe-benefits/health-and-sports-expenses>

► Community interventions for older adults



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

YES

The Estonian national guidelines for physical activity (2017) include older adults. In 2023, the Competence Centre for Physical Activity issued a short list of practical suggestions for older adults and also provided them on their website

https://liigume.ee/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Liikumisaasta_harjutused_seenioritele_A4.pdf; <https://liigume.ee/vanemaalistele/>

► National awareness-raising campaign on physical activity

The Ministry of Culture declared 2023 Be Active Year to promote exercise and healthier lifestyles in Estonia, organized by the Competence Centre for Physical Activity. It was highly successful, with monthly themes and over 10 000 participants. The European Week of Sport had over 200 000 participants. The campaign's website had 6000–7000 monthly visits, and social media posts reached over half a million people. Be Active Year was mentioned 1684 times in the media and physical activity 4320 times.

Media used in national campaigns



Television

YES



Radio

YES



Newspapers

YES



Social media

YES



Public events

YES



Public figures

YES

SUCCESS STORY

The aim of Be Active Year was to create greater interest in physical activity and healthy lifestyles. Despite improvements, Estonia still lags behind the Nordic countries, where nearly 75% of the population engages in regular physical activity.

https://www.baltictimes.com/estonia_s_be_active_year_encourages_thousands_to_explore_new_physical_activities/



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.



© World Health Organization 2024. Some rights reserved. This work is available under the CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/igo>).