

NETHERLANDS (KINGDOM OF THE) COUNTRY PHYSICAL ACTIVITY FACTSHEET 2024

World Bank classification: High income
Total population: 17 590 672
Median age (years): 42.7
Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita (€): 43 800
GDP for health (%): 7.5
GDP for education (%): 5.1
GDP for sports (%): 1.2
Population, male (%): 49.7
Population, female (%): 50.3
Life expectancy, males (years): 80.2
Life expectancy, females (years): 83.1

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



Photo: © Suzanne Van Marik-Bodena

► National recommendations on physical activity for health

Target groups included

YES	Children (< 5 years)	NO	During pregnancy
YES	Children and adolescents (5–17 years)	NO	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)		

Links to national recommendations: www.healthcouncil.nl/documents/advisory-reports/2022/02/22/dutch-physical-activity-advice-for-children-aged-0-4-years; www.healthcouncil.nl/documents/advisory-reports/2017/08/22/physical-activity-guidelines-2017

► Monitoring and surveillance of physical activity

Sectors with surveillance systems



Health

YES



Education

NO



Sports

YES



Transport

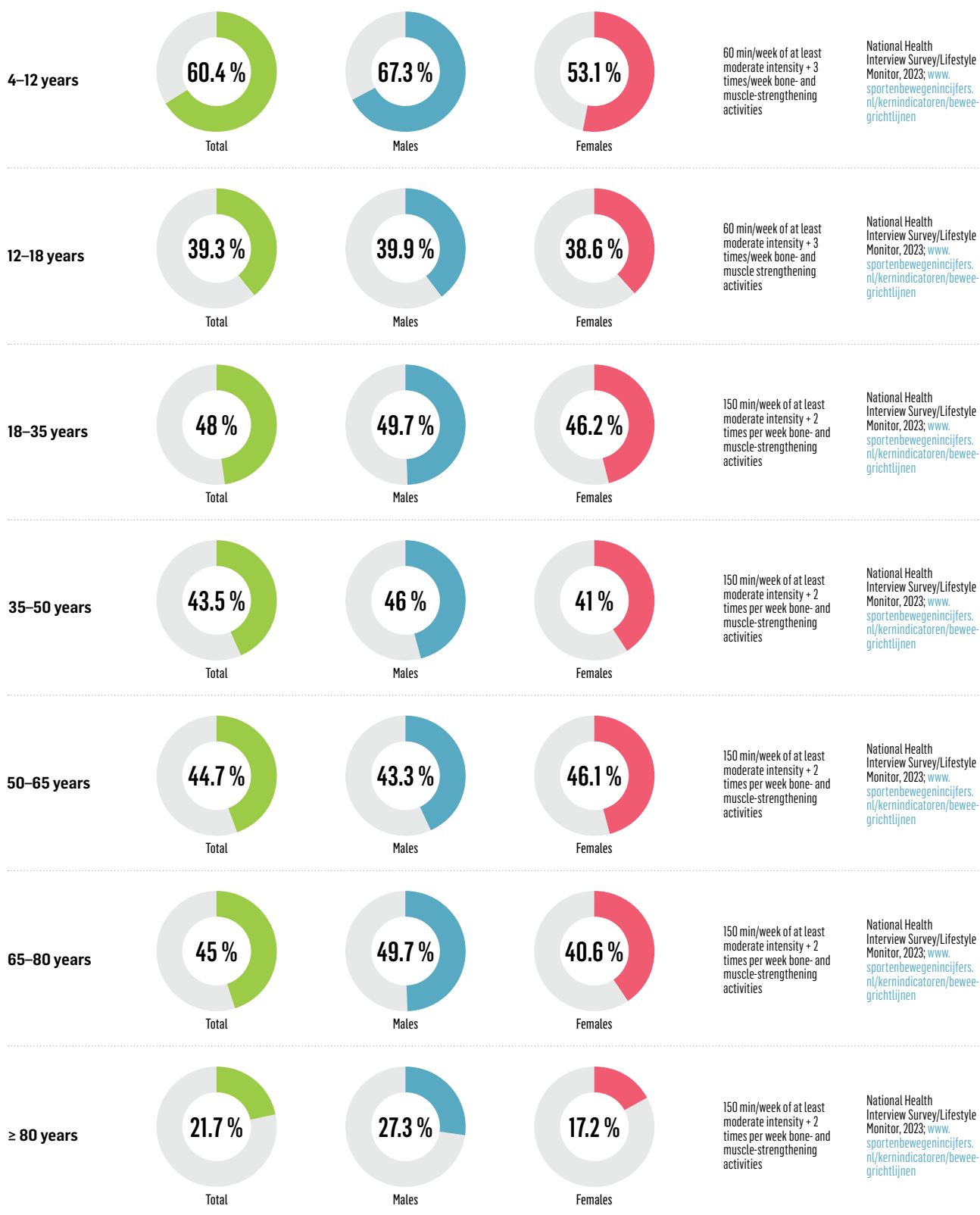
NO

NETHERLANDS (KINGDOM OF THE)

COUNTRY PHYSICAL ACTIVITY FACTSHEET 2024

► Prevalence of physical activity

Physical activity indicators



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

The Physical Activity Alliance (Beweegalliantie), established in 2022 by the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport, connects diverse stakeholders in different layers of society. It enables stakeholders in the field to remove obstacles to more physical activity. The organization encourages change by highlighting local physical activity initiatives started by residents.

www.beweegalliantie.nl



SUCCESS STORY

The Physical Activity Alliance is a recognized organization in the fields of physical activity and public health, with a growing number of stakeholders. Currently, more than 400 stakeholders are involved, the majority of which are organizations rather than individuals.

www.beweegalliantie.nl

► 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

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

National policy highlights

The healthy and active living agreement (Gezond en actief leven akkoord, GALA)

The aim of this strategic initiative is to foster a healthier society by 2040 by collaboration among municipalities, health insurers and the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport. The agreement creates equitable health opportunities from early childhood to old age, with particular attention to vulnerable groups. It integrates health considerations into environmental planning, promotes healthy behaviour and enhances mental health support. GALA emphasizes local and regional cooperation to build a robust prevention infrastructure, share knowledge and resources to address health disparities and encourage active lifestyles.

<https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/rapporten/2023/01/31/gala-gezond-en-actief-leven-akkoord>

Action Plan Netherlands Moves 2022–2024 (Actieplan Nederland Beweegt)

The Plan is to increase public adherence to physical activity guidelines, with a target of 75% of the Dutch population. The plan creates a supportive environment and raises awareness about the benefits of physical activity. Emphasis is placed on groups with lower activity levels, including young children, adolescents, individuals with low socio-economic status, people with chronic conditions or disabilities and the elderly. By addressing these priority groups and fostering environments that encourage daily activity, the plan will reduce health disparities and improve overall public health.

<https://open.overheid.nl/documenten/e75d8fde-7ff2-43a2-9a0f-f96132928ca5/file>

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Beautiful Netherlands (Mooi Nederland)

The guideline provides a strategic framework for incorporating “green–blue” networks into urban planning, ensuring healthier, more sustainable city environments. With the upcoming construction of one million new homes, the guideline addresses the critical need to preserve and enhance public green spaces. It equips municipalities with design principles and tools to create areas that promote physical activity, community interaction and environmental benefits such as biodiversity and water management. By fostering cross-sectoral and cross-border collaboration, the guideline integrates green infrastructure, enhancing both residents' quality of life and the overall sustainability of urban areas.

<https://www.mooinederland.nu/longread/groen-en-gezond-leven-in-de-stad>

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



- 1 National Sports Agreement II (Sportakkoord II)
<http://www.open.overheid.nl/documenten/ronl-63d5bdfa84001663afe8b400d82817edba5af7d8/pdf>
- 2 Healthy and Active Living Agreement (Gezond en actief leven akkoord, GALA)
<http://www.open.overheid.nl/documenten/ronl-e8e739b2e77bf92b7bfed78d4569ae4ecbce8dac/pdf>
- 3 National Prevention Agreement (Nationaal Preventieakkoord)
<http://www.open.overheid.nl/documenten/ronl-1f7b7558-4628-477d-8542-9508d913ab2c/pdf>
- 4 Action Plan Netherlands Moves (Actieplan Nederland Beweegt)
www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/rapporten/2023/05/31/nederland-beweegt
- 5 Tour de Force (Agenda Fiets), bicycle agenda
<https://www.fietsberaad.nl/getmedia/b46be2c8-d935-412d-9888-c79f6d4dc349/Ambitiedocument-Tour-de-Force-2e-etappe-Schaalsprong-Fiets.pdf.aspx>
- 6 City Deal Cycling (City deal fiets)
www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/rapporten/2023/11/13/bijlage-6-dealtekst-city-deal-fietsen-voor-iedereen
- 7 City Deal Walking Space (City deal ruimte voor lopen)
<http://www.agendastad.nl/content/uploads/2020/10/City-Dealtekst-Ruimte-voor-Lopen.pdf>
- 8 Beautiful Netherlands (Mooi Nederland)
<http://www.mooinederland.nu/longread/groen-en-gezond-leven-in-de-stad>

Sectors involved in the design of the policy or action plan



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

Plan for evaluation of a specific policy



Policy	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

Target groups included



General population	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Children < 5 years	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Children and adolescents (5–17 years)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Adults	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Older adults (≥ 65 years)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Frail/elderly (≥ 85 years)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
People with disability	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
People with chronic diseases	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

Pregnant women	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Breastfeeding women	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Low socio-economic groups	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Ethnic minorities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Deprived of liberty	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Migrants	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Unemployed people	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8



SUCCESS STORY

The Dutch Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport has asked the National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (RIVM) to evaluate the Netherlands Moves action plan to increase physical activity in the population. The RIVM, a Government research institute specializing in public health and environmental issues, will assess the effectiveness of the plan with a systems thinking approach. This method is based on consideration of the complex interplay of various factors that influence physical activity, allowing comprehensive understanding of the plan's impact. The RIVM will measure outcomes related to exercise behaviour, identify effective strategies and provide data to guide future policy decisions. The framework used is based on the ENCOMPASS model, designed to evaluate public health programmes within complex systems. This thorough evaluation will help to measure the plan's success and indicate necessary adjustments to optimize health outcomes throughout the country.

<http://www.rivm.nl/bibliotheek/rapporten/Plan-van-aanpak-nederland-beweegt.pdf>

► Sports clubs for health

Netherlands (Kingdom of the) is actively promoting healthy habits and physical activity in sports clubs, even though the WHO Guidelines for Sports Club for Health Programmes have not been fully implemented. Through the National Prevention Agreement, initiatives are in place to encourage responsible alcohol consumption and healthier dietary options in sports canteens. These initiatives are aligned with the National Sports Agreement to foster a culture of health and well-being in sports settings.

► Increasing access to exercise facilities for socially disadvantaged groups

Increasing access to exercise facilities for socially disadvantaged groups is a focus of the National Sports Agreement. This agreement ensures that sports and physical activity are accessible to everyone, regardless of age, physical or mental health, ethnic background, sexual orientation or social position. Local sports agreements often include specific actions to enhance inclusivity, promoting engagement in sports for all communities. A significant achievement is the widespread integration of inclusivity measures in local agreements, reflecting a strong commitment to extending access and participation in sports for diverse groups.






www.kennisbanksportenbewegen.nl/?file=10065&m=1594899321&action=file.download

► Counselling on physical activity and exercise prescription



Since 2019, basic health insurance includes exercise on prescription (under certain conditions). General practitioners and medical specialists refer patients to combined lifestyle interventions. The conditions to be met are: a body mass index of at least 25 kg/m² and another risk factor (e.g. for cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes or a body mass index of ≥ 30 kg/m²). The combined lifestyle intervention is provided by either lifestyle coaches, dietitians, physiotherapists and/or exercise therapists.

www.loketgezondleven.nl/zorgstelsel/gecombineerde-leefstijlinterventie

Health professionals who are trained in health-enhancing physical activity

	 Medical doctors	 Physiotherapists	 Nurses	 Nutritionists/ dietitians	 Psychologists
	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Undergraduate	—	—	—	—	—
Postgraduate	—	—	—	—	—
	Mandatory / Optional	Mandatory / Optional	Mandatory / Optional	Mandatory / Optional	Mandatory / Optional

Physical education in schools

Primary schools	Average per week	Secondary schools	Average per week
	2–3 2 Mandatory		1.5–3.5

A law states that, as of 2023, two teaching hours per week are obligatory for every grade of primary school (www.open.overheid.nl/documenten/21899081-643d-4cd1-8545-c284645661b6/file). For secondary schools, a norm has been set by the education inspectorate: for pre-vocational secondary training: 2.5 lessons of 50 min/week; for higher general secondary training: 2.2 lessons of 50 min/week; and for pre-university training, 2 lessons of 50 min/week.

HEPA in training of physical education teachers

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

SUCCESS STORY

A law states that, as of 2023, two teaching hours per week are obligatory for every grade of primary school.

► Promotion of physical activity in schools

NO

During school breaks

YES

After school

NO

During lessons

NO

Active travel to and from school

<http://www.dus-i.nl/subsidies/school-en-omgeving-2023#:~:text=Voor%20de%20schooljaren%202023%2F2024,beschikbaar%20van%20€563.103.423.&text=Wordt%20voor%20een%20categorie%20meer.categorie%20evenredig%20naar%20beneden%20bijaesteld>

▶ National travel survey

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

The infographic compares walking and cycling. For walking, it shows a person icon, a clock icon for 16.25 minutes, and a distance icon for 1.21 km. For cycling, it shows a person on a bicycle icon, a clock icon for 16.72 minutes, and a distance icon for 3.04 km. Both sections are labeled 'Per person per day'.

Activity	Time (min)	Distance (km)
Walking	16.25	1.21
Cycling	16.72	3.04

► Infrastructure for leisure-time physical activity

Environment Act: Laws concerning the living environment are being combined and modernized. The Act requires a good balance between using and protecting the living environment. One part of the National Sports agreement describes sustainable sports infrastructure. Thus, the exploitation of accommodation will be improved, public spaces will be more physical activity-friendly, and all sports accommodation will switch to sustainable energy.

www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/omgevingswet/vernieuwing-omgevingsrecht; www.sportakkoord.nl/duurzame-sportinfrastructuur/



SUCCESS STORY

In 2021, a new indicator was defined to monitor the friendliness of the living environment for physical activity. The indicator is based on four sub-indicators: the number of public sports accommodations, play areas, recreational space (blue and green zones) and proximity of services.

www.sportenbewegenincijfers.nl/beleid/sportakkoord/duurzame-infrastructuur
www.sportenbewegenincijfers.nl/kernindicatoren/beweegvriendelijke-omgeving

► Promotion of physical activity in the workplace



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

YES

The work-related scheme allows employers to provide some benefits tax free, such as travel allowances, study costs, lunches and Christmas hampers, only if their total value is less than 1.2% of salary costs. If their total value exceeds this threshold, the employer must pay 80% tax on the excess. This scheme provides an opportunity to promote active travel, for example, by buying a bicycle for commuting tax free.

As part of the national cycling agenda (Tour de Force), the working population is encouraged to travel to work by bicycle or to walk. An occupational and health law states that work involving screens must be alternated at regular intervals with other work or with a break to reduce the time working on a screen.

<http://www.werkkostenregeling-wkr.nl/www.fietsberaad.nl/getmedia/b46be2c8-d935-412d-9888-c79f6d4dc349/Ambitiedocument-Tour-de-Force-2e-etappe-Schaalsprong-Fiets.pdf.aspx>; www.arboportaal.nl/onderwerpen/computerwerk/wat-zegt-de-wet-over-beeldschermwerk



National guidance or programme to promote physical activity at the workplace

YES

Vital Work Environment (Vitaal Bedrijf) is an initiative of the Confederation of Netherlands Industry and Employers and Small and Medium-sized Enterprises Netherlands (MKB-Nederland). The aim is to guide entrepreneurs towards a vital future, meaning more effort, more enjoyment, better health, more productivity and more return. The initiative provides an overview of what works and what does not and provides advice on actions for each situation.

www.vitaalbedrijf.info

► Community interventions for older adults



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

YES

Cycle-on (Doortrappen) is an initiative of the Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management. The aim of the programme is to assist older adults to continue cycling as long as possible, with a focus on safety.

www.doortrappen.nl

► National awareness-raising campaign on physical activity

The Fit your Way campaign (Fit op jouw manier) shows people how to work towards a healthy lifestyle in small steps that contribute to resistance. The campaign provides various tips and shows that a plan can be found for everyone. Fit your Way is organized by the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport.

www.campagnestoolkits.nl/fit-op-jouw-manier

Media used in national campaigns



Television

YES



Radio

YES



Newspapers

NO



Social media

YES



Public events

YES



Public figures

NO

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