



BELGIUM*

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY FACTSHEET 2021

Total population: 11.57 m

Median age: 41.8 years

GDP per capita: 33 560 €

Life expectancy, males: 78.6 years

Life expectancy, females: 83.1 years

Sources: Eurostat (2020/2021)



National recommendations on physical activity for health

TARGET GROUPS INCLUDED

- ✓ Children (< 5 years)
- ✓ Children and adolescents (5–17 years)
- ✓ Adults (18–64 years)
- ✓ Older adults (≥ 65 years)
- ✓ Frail and very elderly adults (≥ 85 years)
- ✓ Pregnant and breastfeeding women
- ✓ People with disabilities
- ✓ People with chronic diseases

The recommendations are based on [WHO recommendations](#) (2010), [WHO physical activity, sedentary behaviour and sleep recommendations for children under 5 years old](#) (2019), [WHO guidelines on physical activity and sedentary behaviour](#) (2020), [Physical activity guidelines for Americans](#) (2018) and the Flemish scientific-expert consensus group. They were implemented in 2006 and were updated in 2021, coordinated by the Flanders Institute for Healthy Living.

*All data, figures, and policies are from the Flemish community only.

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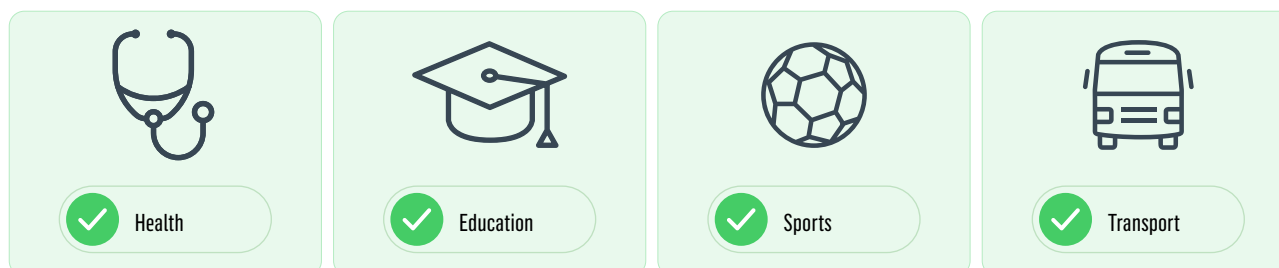
PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

FACTSHEET 2021



Monitoring and surveillance of physical activity

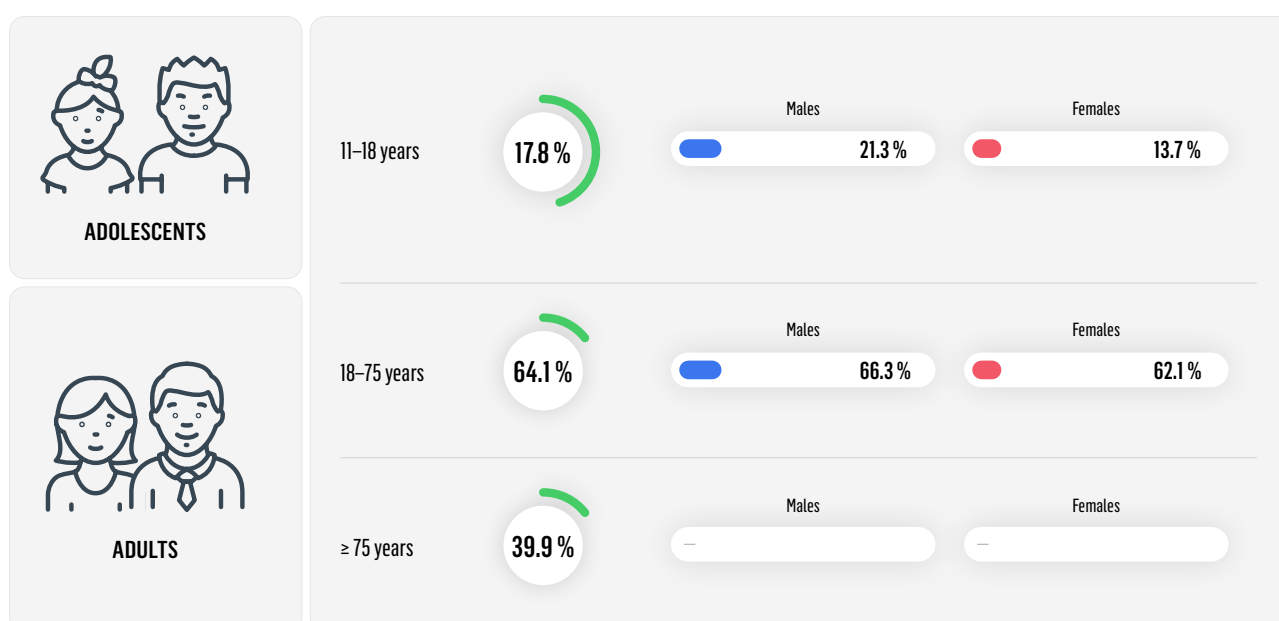
SECTORS WITH SURVEILLANCE SYSTEMS



SUCCESS STORY

The monitoring of both physical activity and local health in different settings guided the national health policy. Combining both monitoring strategies allows for deeper understanding, because local physical activity has been proven to be an important determinant of national physical activity. The results of three annual surveys of physical activity policy indicators (Indicatorenbevraging) in various settings are disseminated by the Flanders Institute for Healthy Living to stakeholders in those settings to mobilize them to set better health policies.

Estimated prevalence of sufficient physical activity levels



Levels of physical activity among adolescents were assessed in the [Health Behaviour of School-aged Children survey](#) in 2017–2018; data for adults and older adults were collected in the [Belgian Health Interview Survey–Flanders](#) in 2018.

BELGIUM

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY FACTSHEET 2021



National government coordination mechanism and leadership in the promotion of physical activity

The Sports Ministries coordinates Belgian Health-enhancing Physical Activity (HEPA), established in 2015. It includes Informal meetings for data collection, exchange of information and good practices and preparation of international HEPA meetings.

Funding for the promotion of physical activity for health

FUNDING FOR THE PROMOTION OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY FOR HEALTH

<p>Health</p> <p>✓ Yes</p>	<p>Education</p> <p>✓ Yes</p>	<p>Sports</p> <p>✓ Yes</p>	<p>Environment</p> <p>○ No</p>	<p>Urban planning</p> <p>○ No</p>	<p>Transport</p> <p>○ No</p>
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SUCCESS STORY



The **Flanders Institute for Healthy Living** receives funds specifically for developing and supporting policy instruments, strategies and projects for HEPA promotion and reducing sedentary behaviour. **Local and regional health organizations** receive funding to disseminate the instruments, strategies and projects. They also support intersectoral partnerships for HEPA and health in all policies. The Move Along (MOEV) strategy supports schools in developing high-quality, dynamic exercise policies that are incorporated into health policy to create a "movement-rich" school culture.

Policy response



NATIONAL POLICIES OR ACTION PLANS FOR THE PROMOTION OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY FOR HEALTH

- 1 ORGANIZED SPORTS SECTOR: GUARANTEE OF SUSTAINABLE SPORT
- 2 ACTION PLAN: SPORTS AT THE WORKPLACE (SPORT OP HET WERK)
- 3 G-SPORT POLICY AND ACTION PLAN FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES
- 4 STRATEGY TO OPEN SCHOOL SPORT INFRASTRUCTURE AFTER SCHOOL HOURS
- 5 STRATEGIC PLAN "DE VLAMING LIVES HEALTHIER IN 2025" (STRATEGISCH PLAN 'DE VLAMING LEEFT GEZONDER IN 2025)
- 6 MOVE ALONG (MOEV): PHYSICAL ACTIVITY POLICY IN THE HEALTHY SCHOOLS FRAMEWORK
- 7 EDUCATIONAL GOALS FOR HEALTH

TOTAL NUMBER OF POLICIES

7



SECTORS INVOLVED IN THE DESIGN OF THE POLICY/ACTION PLAN

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

BELGIUM

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY FACTSHEET 2021



POPULATION GROUPS TARGETED BY EACH POLICY

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

POLICY HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 The organized sports sector: guarantee of sustainable sport.** The aim is to promote an inclusive, diverse policy of sports federations, sport organizations and clubs. The programme provides financial support to sports federations and organizations that promote non-organized and sporting leisure activities for population groups that do not engage regularly in sports or those in disadvantaged groups.
- 2 Action plan: Sports at the workplace (Sport op het werk).** The aim of the plan is to promote physical activity in small companies by targeting the areas of commuting to work, exercise in and around work and participation in corporate sport competitions and events. It is promoted through media campaigns on national television, social media and other media channels. It seeks to reach 250 companies yearly.
- 4 Strategy to open school sport infrastructure after school hours.** AGION and Sport Vlaanderen jointly launched a strategy to provide financial support for opening sports and physical activity infrastructure after school in pre-primary, primary and secondary educational institutions. The aim is to improve sports infrastructure and facilitate good sports practice after school. The maximum grant for secondary education per application and location is € 140 000 and € 160 000 for preschool and primary education.

Sports Clubs for Health

The Physical Activity, Sports & Health Research Group, Department of Movement Sciences, KU Leuven is a partner in the Sports Clubs for Health 2020–2022 project. In Flanders, a programme has been developed to disseminate a health policy in sports clubs. The Flanders Institute for Healthy Living has taken the lead in its development in cooperation with stakeholders in the sports sector. The initial focus was a policy for tobacco control and non-smoking in youth sports clubs, but the programme has now been extended to healthy nutrition and physical activity.

- <https://www.gezondleven.be/settings/vrije-tijd/sportclubs/sportclubs-en-roken>
- <https://www.gezondleven.be/settings/vrije-tijd/sportclubs/een-voedingsbeleid-in-de-sportclub>
- <https://www.vad.be/artikels/detail/sportivos-over-alcohol-en-drugs-in-de-sportclub>
- <https://www.vad.be/artikels/detail/de-sportclub-als-ideale-setting-voor-gokpreventie>

Increasing access to exercise facilities for socially disadvantaged groups

Several programmes are being implemented in Flanders to provide access to physical activities and sports to children, adolescents and older adults in ethnic and cultural groups living in poverty. This is one of the main policy principles of the strategic plan “Flemish Live Healthier in 2025”.

- <https://www.gezondleven.be/gezondheidsongelijkheid>

BELGIUM

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY FACTSHEET 2021



Counselling on physical activity and exercise prescription

The project [Physical Activity on Referral \(Bewegen op Verwijzing\)](#) is funded by the Flemish Ministry of Health and coordinated by the Flanders Institute for Healthy Living. Its aim is to increase the physical activity of inactive and/or sedentary people in primary care. Patients are referred by a physician to a physical activity coach, who has a bachelor's or master's degree in physical activity and supports the patient in developing a personal plan through motivational interviews and counselling. As part of the project, regular media campaigns are directed to professionals and the general adult population.

HEALTH PROFESSIONALS WHO ARE TRAINED IN HEALTH-ENHANCING PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

	Medical doctors	Physiotherapists	Nurses	Nutritionists/ dietitians	Psychologists	Other health professionals
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Undergraduate	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Postgraduate	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Mandatory	Mandatory	Mandatory		

Physical education in schools

PRIMARY SCHOOLS:	HOURS PER WEEK	SECONDARY SCHOOLS:	HOURS PER WEEK
	2		2
	Mandatory		Mandatory

Physical activity and health (such as health effects, determinants and effective interventions) is part of the undergraduate and postgraduate curriculum of physical education teachers. The quality of physical education classes in schools is coordinated by the School Inspection Service, which organizes general and specific screening in schools.

BELGIUM

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

FACTSHEET 2021



PROMOTION OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IN SCHOOLS



During breaks



During lessons



After school



Travel to and from school

The Healthy school framework (Gezonde school) is the main school health policy for health-enhancing physical activity and sedentary behaviour, with the **Sports move your school programme** (Sport beweegt je school).

For toddlers, the programme **Woogie Boogie** offers short online video clips with popular animated figures and children and animated instruction cards for active lessons. Physical activity breaks for primary-school children are promoted by the **Dip Dobbel Doe programme**. In primary and secondary schools, short online video clips and instruction cards are used for active breaks with dynabands.

In **Open School with Sports Activities** (Brede School met Sportaanbod), schools cooperate with local organizations such as day care, sports clubs, youth and cultural organizations to create learning opportunities for children. Each age group has its own "sports product" for organized activities: Multimove, Sportsnack, SNS Passport. Furthermore, **Active day care in schools and municipalities** (Actieve Kinderopvang) provides different strategies and tools for health policy during day care, including non-structured physical activity (e.g., supervised free-play strategies) in order to enhance implementation among day-care providers with limited resources.

The **Octopusplan** promotes sustainable active travel to and from school and safe, child-friendly school environments.



SUCCESS STORY

Within the **Octopusplan**, school streets (schoolstraat) near educational institutions are not accessible to motorized vehicles at the beginning and end of the school day for a certain length of time, typically half an hour. They are solely accessible to pedestrians, bicycles and speed "pedelecs" in order to promote health and safe active travel for pupils and (grand)parents and contribute to a more pleasant living environment.

National travel survey

The **Onderzoek verplaatsingsgedrag Vlaanderen survey** collects information on the mobility behaviour of the Flemish population from the age of 6. The fifth study into travel behaviour in Flanders was conducted between January 2015 and January 2020.



WALKING

PERSON PER DAY



3.5 km



CYCLING

PERSON PER DAY



10.5 km

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PHYSICAL ACTIVITY FACTSHEET 2021



Infrastructure for leisure-time physical activity

The Global Sports Infrastructure Plan for Flanders offers a framework for targeted investment in sports infrastructure. One of the main aspects of the plan is a structural subsidy scheme for supralocal sports infrastructure. The Flemish Government launches a twice-yearly call for projects to local authorities, sports organizations, federations and clubs to submit applications for subsidies, which are screened in two phases. Sports infrastructure in Flanders is mainly under the authority of cities and municipalities. The Flemish Sports Administration (Sport Vlaanderen) gives financial support for construction and renovation of local and high-level sports infrastructure and facilities. Sport Vlaanderen itself supports 14 sports centres in Flanders in four domains: elite sports, recreational sports with a possibility to stay overnight, small sports and education.

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

Bike to work: Method for employers to encourage employees to travel actively to work by bike. Consists of promotional materials, guidelines for employers for instituting a bike policy at work, professional education and networking for mobility coordinators, a competition element, online registration system, use of ambassadors and a support/help desk.

Sports at work (Sport op het Werk) – Healthy work framework (Gezond werken) is the main workplace health policy framework or scheme for HEPA and reducing sedentary behaviour.

Community-based interventions for older adults



NATIONAL GUIDANCE OR PROGRAMME FOR
COMMUNITY-BASED INTERVENTIONS TO PROMOTE
PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IN OLDER ADULTS



Yes

Physical activity interventions, including prevention of falls, in a community approach for older adults and prevention of sedentary behaviour. This includes evidence-based guidelines for prevention of falls in communities. The Ottawa programme includes exercises for the elderly in community care (e.g., nursing homes), training of coaches for preventing falls, guidance and support for a falls prevention policy in nursing homes and campaigns such as the 10 000 Steps community project, an annual campaign week for falls prevention, community healthy walks and an educational tool for strength exercises for seniors (Spierkracht voor senioren).

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PHYSICAL ACTIVITY FACTSHEET 2021



SUCCESS STORY

The **annual campaign week for fall prevention (Week van de valpreventie)** was held for the 10th time in 2021, with a series of "challenges" that are effective in falls prevention, including "starting with a physically active week", healthy meals and walking more without falling. Famous Belgians acted as ambassadors for each challenge, and local organizations were challenged in many initiatives in their communities in order to win the prize for "the best falls-prevention province of Flanders".

National awareness-raising campaign on physical activity

The **"#sportersbelevenmeer"** campaign invites active sports people to share their (sport) experiences through social media to encourage non-sportspeople to participate in sports. The aim is to emphasize experiences of being active. A number of inspirational examples are created in cooperation with sports clubs to motivate other clubs to include more experience in their sports programme and thereby attract more people. In addition to social media, large campaigns on radio and television spots are used to promote this campaign.

10000 Steps (10.000 stappen) is an annual physical activity awareness-raising campaign based on evidence and a community approach. The evidence is from peer-reviewed research on the pilot project and implementation in Flanders (De Cocker et al., 2005; Van Acker et al., 2012). The campaign includes individual and environmental interventions for inactive adults and older people, including (social) media strategies and different campaign materials.

MEDIA USED IN NATIONAL CAMPAIGNS

Television	Radio	Newspapers	Social media	Public events	Public figures	Other*
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes

Large number of promotional materials such as beach flags, banners, flyers and posters