



# FINLAND

## PHYSICAL ACTIVITY FACTSHEET 2021

Total population: 5.53 m

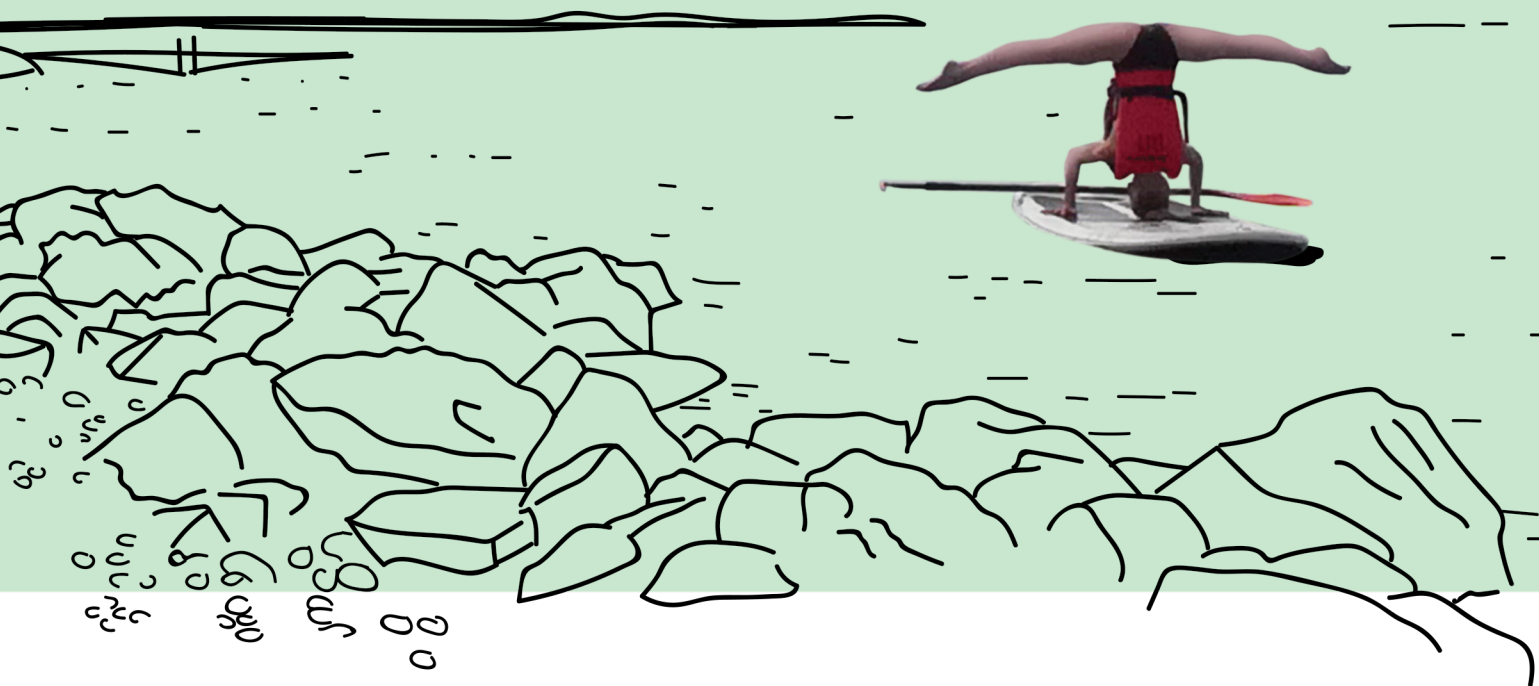
Median age: 43.1 years

GDP per capita: 36 070 €

Life expectancy, males: 79.4 years

Life expectancy, females: 85.0 years

Sources: Eurostat (2020/2021)



### National recommendations on physical activity for health

#### TARGET GROUPS INCLUDED

- |                                                                           |                                                                      |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Children (< 5 years)                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Frail and very elderly adults (≥ 85 years)  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Children and adolescents (5–17 years) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Pregnant and breastfeeding women |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Adults (18–64 years)                  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> People with disabilities         |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Older adults (≥ 65 years)             | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> People with chronic diseases     |

National recommendations are based on [WHO physical activity, sedentary behaviour and sleep recommendations for children under 5 years old](#) (2019), [WHO guidelines on physical activity and sedentary behaviour](#) (2020) and [Physical activity guidelines for Americans](#) (2018).

#### SUCCESS STORY

Recommendations for physical activity were prepared by a multidisciplinary and professional group of experts on the physical activity and well-being of children and adolescents. Researchers from different fields and physical activity stakeholders for children and adolescents were represented.





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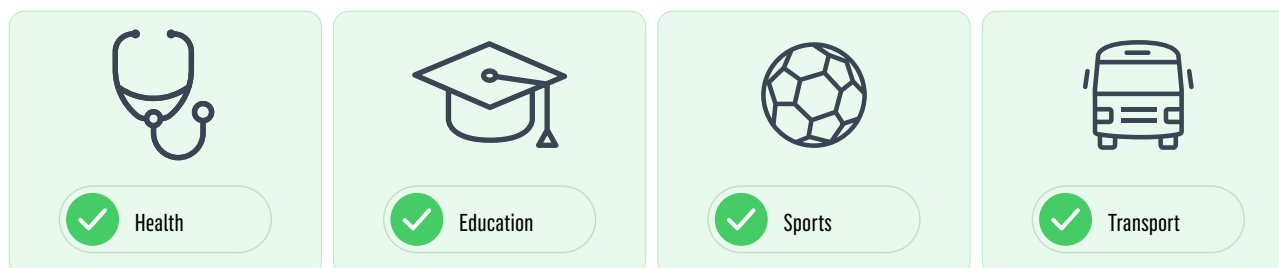
## PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

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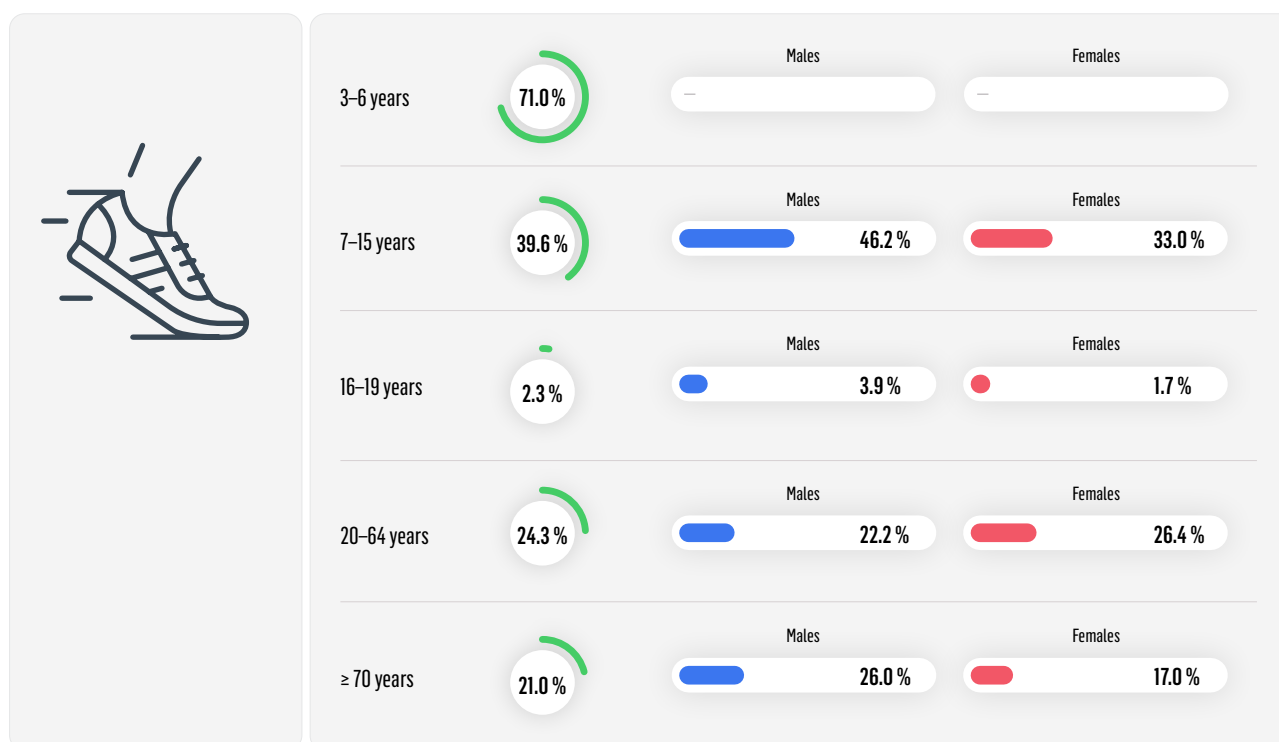


## Monitoring and surveillance of physical activity

### SECTORS WITH SURVEILLANCE SYSTEMS



## Estimated prevalence of sufficient physical activity levels



Levels of physical activity among children and adolescents were assessed in the [DAGIS \(Määttä 2018\)](#) in 2015/2016, and in the Finnish School-age Physical Activity (FSPA) in 2018 and 2020; data among adults were collected through the [FinFit 2017 study](#) in 2017/2018; data among older adults were collected through the [National Fin Health Study](#).

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

The [Sports Policy Coordination Body](#), established in 2018 by the Ministry of Education and Culture, aims to support all ministries and sectors to advance physical activity. The body coordinates, monitors and evaluates ministries' and sectors' actions in sports policy. The Sports Policy Coordination Body organized workshops in every ministry and their administrative branches in March and April 2021. The aim of the workshops was to find out how attached each ministry and administrative branch was to the coordination body's action plan, what concrete aims they had and what actions they were taking. These workshops were successful and have managed to expand the network and increase awareness of the importance of promoting physical activity in the state public sector.

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## 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>✓ Yes</p> | <p>Urban planning</p> <p>✓ Yes</p> | <p>Transport</p> <p>✓ Yes</p> |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|



### SUCCESS STORY

Several projects in Finland provide information and guidance on implementing active and sustainable modes of transportation. These programmes are co-funded by different ministries and are carried out in partnership with the transport sector and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). The Smart to School programme, for instance, aims to increase active travel to school, improve road safety, strengthen a culture of active transportation and support schools to implement policies that promote these objectives. Similarly, the Smart to Work forum is a nationwide network of governmental, labour and NGOs that promotes active travel as a strategy to increase levels of physical activity among workers and encourage climate-friendly choices.

► <https://fiksustikouluun.fi/> ► <https://liikkuvaakuinen.fi/sidosryhmat/fiksusti-toihin-foorumi/>

## Policy response



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

- 1 GOVERNMENT REPORT ON SPORTS POLICY
- 2 GOVERNMENT RESOLUTION FOR PROMOTING HEALTH AND WELLBEING
- 3 THE NATIONAL PROGRAM ON AGING 2030: FOR AN AGE-COMPETENT FINLAND
- 4 NATIONAL ON THE MOVE PROGRAMMES
- 5 FINNISH MODEL ON LEISURE ACTIVITIES
- 6 THE STRATEGY FOR RECREATIONAL USE OF NATURE
- 7 RESOLUTION ON PROMOTING WALKING AND CYCLING
- 8 HEALTHY PARKS, HEALTHY PEOPLE FINLAND
- 9 NATIONAL NUTRITION RECOMMENDATIONS
- 10 EUROPEAN AGRICULTURAL FUND FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT EAFRD
- 11 SPORTS LAW (LIIKUNTALAKI)

TOTAL NUMBER OF POLICIES

11



### SECTORS INVOLVED IN THE DESIGN OF THE POLICY/ACTION PLAN

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

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POPULATION GROUPS TARGETED BY EACH POLICY

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

POLICY HIGHLIGHTS

**3 Finland's National Programme on Ageing – 2030.** The programme seeks to increase the number of active and functional-capacity life-years of older adults. It supports and motivates older adults to adopt healthy behaviours by improving their diet, increasing physical activity and creating age-friendly services and residential environments. It also promotes inclusive mental health programmes by investing in the early identification of at-risk populations and targeting preventive measures to improve and extend functional abilities and ensure equality for older adults. It has a cross-sectoral approach and involves cooperation with the sport, transport, education and catering sectors.

**6 Strategy for Recreational Use of Nature.** The strategy aims to provide information on the benefits and advantages of the recreational use of nature as a tactic to increase physical activity, enhance exercise/sports performance, and improve physical and mental health. The Ministry of the Environment is encouraging stakeholders to design recreational strategies. The strategy seeks to clarify the role of stakeholders and is linked to the sports policy report, health and safety, the Walking and Cycling Promotion programme and the Finnish Tourism Strategy.

**7 Finland's resolution on promoting walking and cycling.** The programme under the resolution aims to have a positive impact on the public health of the population and on the climate. It includes 10 sets of measures that aim to increase walking and cycling by 20% and reduce emissions from transport by 0.3 million tons. It is co-funded by national and local government and seeks to manage and develop infrastructure and land-use planning to influence population attitudes and mobility preferences. Cooperation between national and local government in promoting walking and cycling has been significant, involving the ministries of the environment, social affairs and health, and education and culture, the National Sports Council, Transport Agency, Cyclists' Federation and Network of Finnish Cycling Municipalities. It is linked to the National Energy and Climate Strategy, which aims to reach 30% growth in the number of journeys on foot or by bicycle by 2030.

## Sports Clubs for Health

Around 9 000 sports clubs in Finland have embraced the Sports for Health definition, and 557 sports clubs and 45 sport discipline/sport associations have adopted the guidelines for Sports Club for Health programmes (SCforH). The Star Club programme began in 2018 and is grounded in the SCforH guiding principles. It involves all sports associations working with children, adolescents and adults and also elite sports people. The Club Programme is part of the Olympic Committee which, together with stakeholders, conducts official audits to determine if associated clubs are implementing the SCforH principles in their activities. The Star Club's Olympic Committee disseminates relevant information and tools via its website.

## Increasing access to exercise facilities for socially disadvantaged groups

The Government's report on sports policy follows the principles of equality, equity and gender inclusion. It targets individuals with disabilities, immigrants and older people. The Government, as a promoter of adapted physical activity and para sports, also created the municipal sport instructor system by funding a professorship of adapted physical activity at the University of Jyväskylä, developing adapted physical activity services and disability sport integration, and making sports facilities more accessible to people with disabilities. The system requires that the government sector supports the promotion of adapted physical activity through its projects and grants.

► <https://minedu.fi/-/valtioneuvosto-antoi-selonteon-liikuntapolitiikasta>

► <https://www.sportscience.fi/adapted-physical-activity/apa-related-research-in-finland/the-government-as-a-promoter-of-adapted-physical-activity-and-para-sports.html>

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### Counselling on physical activity and exercise prescription

National guidelines for counselling on physical activity and Physical Activity Prescription are coordinated by the Adults on the Move programme and the UKK Institute. The guidelines are directed at health and exercise professionals working in physical activity services in the public and private sectors, primary health care and hospitals, and those who provide counselling services to promote health and well-being among sedentary adults. The counselling process requires a service chain that brings together health professionals such as doctors, nurses and physiotherapists with sports services, pharmacies and NGOs.

#### HEALTH PROFESSIONALS WHO ARE TRAINED IN HEALTH-ENHANCING PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

|               | Medical doctors                         | Physiotherapists                        | Nurses                                  | Nutritionists/<br>dieticians | Psychologists            | Other health<br>professionals*          |
|---------------|-----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
|               | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/>     | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes |
| Undergraduate | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>     | <input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>     |
|               | Mandatory                               | Mandatory                               | Optional                                |                              |                          | Optional                                |

\*Wellness coaches

### Physical education in schools

| PRIMARY SCHOOLS: | HOURS PER WEEK | SECONDARY SCHOOLS: | HOURS PER WEEK |
|------------------|----------------|--------------------|----------------|
|                  | 1.9            |                    | 2              |
|                  | Mandatory      |                    | Mandatory      |

..... Average values .....

#### SUCCESS STORY

The **Pyöräily Elämäntavaksi [Biking as a Way of Life]** 2019–2021 project has been developed to promote biking in primary education and upper-secondary schools. The aim is to create a positive image of the bike and year-round cycling, inspire and encourage school children, students and teachers to cycle, increase mobility during school days and make cycling a part of the daily lives of primary and secondary school students. The project has been organized by the Network of Finnish Cycling Municipalities, Finnish Cycling Federation and School Sports Federation.



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#### PROMOTION OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IN SCHOOLS



During breaks



During lessons



After school



Travel to and from school

Finnish Schools on the Move is a national programme established in 2010 that aims to increase physical activity during the school day. Schools and municipalities develop their own ideas and several joint projects have been initiated for recess activities. One example is peer activator training, in which pupils from classes 4 to 9 are trained to organize guided recess activities for their peers. Every other participant school has added one long (over 30 minutes) activity-based recess to their daily schedule.

Teacher-training programmes, such as Learning on the Move, aim to educate primary, secondary and high-school teachers and principals in physically active teaching methods and materials. Currently, around half of Finnish teachers use activity-based methods during most of their classes and around 73% of schools utilize the schoolyard and local environment to support education. These programmes are supported by the Ministry of Education and Culture and are provided by municipalities and regional sport organizations in cooperation with NGOs and universities.

The Finnish model, established in 2020 by the Ministry of Education and Culture, aims to enable every child and young person to have a leisure activity they enjoy and can access free of charge. This is done via consultation with children on leisure activities, coordination of existing procedures and practices, and cooperation between schools and actors in leisure activities. A range of afternoon and club activities is arranged in the schools by municipalities and schools. For example, exercise or sports associations such as the Finnish Olympic Committee organize extracurricular recreational activities in connection with school days in approximately 50% of schools.

During the last 10 years, the Ministry of Education and Culture has funded projects related to active commuting to and from school. Active commuting to school and back (and during the school day) is part of the Finnish Schools on the Move programme. Most pupils with school journeys under 5 km engage in active transportation to and from school and 61% of schools encourage pupils to walk or cycle to school.



### National travel survey

The [Finnish National Travel Survey](#), managed by the Finnish Transport and Communication Agency, aims to collect basic data on mobility in Finland. The data are used to enhance mobility opportunities, improve road safety and reduce harmful environmental impacts arising from traffic. The last round of data collection in 2016 included more than 9 300 Finns aged 6 years and above, with the exception of residents of Åland. The survey will be renewed in 2021; thereafter, a new set of annual follow-up surveys will make the data collection continuous.



WALKING

|                 |        |
|-----------------|--------|
| Work            | 0.1 km |
| Shopping        | 0.1 km |
| Sports          | 0.5 km |
| School/studying | 0.1 km |

PERSON PER DAY



14.9 min



1.0 km



CYCLING

|                 |        |
|-----------------|--------|
| Work            | 0.2 km |
| Shopping        | 0.1 km |
| Sports          | 0.2 km |
| School/studying | 0.1 km |

PERSON PER DAY



4.4 min



0.7 km

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### Infrastructure for leisure-time physical activity

About 80% of the 33 000 sports facilities in Finland have been constructed by and are run by local authorities. The Ministry of Education supports research into, and the development of, sports facilities. Local authorities and organizations can apply for state subsidies for the construction and renovation of sports facilities, although the subsidies cover only a fraction of the cost. The ministry also ensures that expert advice and information about construction and maintenance is available.

### 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 Smart Commute Task Force has 23 representatives of government departments, municipalities, labour-market organizations, research institutes and NGOs. The aim of the task force is to create a favourable operational environment in society for smart commuting. Objectives include increasing awareness and participation within networks and influencing national strategies and programmes in relation to smart commuting.

“Workplaces on the move”, a theme of the Adults on the Move programme, aims to renew and strengthen the status of physical activity in Finnish working life. This thematic focus provides factual information to support decision-making processes and presents solutions and tools to help management and employees integrate physical activity into the workdays.

### Community-based interventions for older adults



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

☒ Yes

The Strength in Older Age programme aims to promote autonomy and quality of life for independently living older adults (75+ years) who experience decreased functional capacity. Municipalities implement good practices, supported by mentoring activities from the Institute for Ageing. Activities are organized locally in cooperation with NGOs, the public sector and older adults. The programme has developed several good practices that focus on physical activity (exercise counselling, guided strength and balance exercises, opportunities for daily and outdoor exercise and virtually guided exercise), structures for promotion (collaborative local groups, older people's councils, voluntary activities and regional learning networks) and education.

My Retirement Years, a group-coaching project coordinated by the Institute for Ageing, aims to promote physical activity and mental well-being among recently retired people. The model is group-based and is developed to be implemented either by a professional or a volunteer.

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#### National awareness-raising campaign on physical activity

Coordinated by the Adults on the Move programme, "Lean forward" hosts a series of free online events that focus on physically active lifestyles, especially on issues of immobility. The Adults on the Move programme produced six "Lean forward" online events in 2021.

Every Move Counts is an advertising campaign on television and social media. Two commercials have been made, featuring celebrities who completed regular household chores that were made to appear like sports performances. A famous Finnish sports commentator provided the narration for the performances. The commercials end with a slogan, "Every move is a victory." The purpose of the campaign is to raise awareness, especially among inactive people, that doing everyday chores can support their physical health.

The aim of the [Finland forward \(Suomi harrastaa\)](#) campaign is to increase well-being through active movement outside the home. The nationwide campaign, which will take place this year between 27 August and 31 October, encourages people to move, engage in physical activity in various areas of life and to ensure well-being in everyday life, keeping in mind guidelines and recommendations for safety. The campaign includes events and regional campaigns throughout Finland.

The campaign is implemented by the Government, regions, organizations and hobby clubs as part of "Finland Works", coordinated by the Prime Minister's Office, which supports the activities and resilience of people and society in crisis situations. The Ministry of Education and Culture and the Prime Minister's Office are responsible for organizing the campaign.

#### 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 type="checkbox"/> |



#### SUCCESS STORY

The purpose of the [Finland Forward project](#) coordinated by the Prime Minister's Office is to support the ability of people and society to cope with crises and to strengthen psychological resilience through communication. The goal is to offer emotional support, strengthen people's confidence in their ability to manage their lives, help build trust among communities and create a channel for assistance and support. The Finland Forward communications campaign was launched in spring 2020 and will continue until the end of 2022. The project and actions will proceed based on the progress of the crisis and are being developed continuously. Our activities are based on research knowledge and data and continuous monitoring of the situation. We collaborate across administrative boundaries and support national and regional cooperation aiming to tackle the COVID-19 crisis. The Strategic Communications Team at the Prime Minister's Office is responsible for the Finland forward communications package.