SUAVA

Sistema Universal de Apoio à Vida Ativa

PRR | C01-i09

2024

DIAGNOSIS OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND SPORTS PRACTICE IN PORTUGAL

SHORT VERSION

PRR Plano de Recuperação e Resiliência
REPÚBLICA PORTUGUESA
Financiado pela União Europeia NextGenerationEU
INSTITUTO PORTUGUÊS DO DESPORTO E JUVENTUDE

Título: Diagnosis of Physical Activity and Sports Practice in Portugal - Short Version

Editor: Instituto Português do Desporto e da Juventude, I.P.

Authors:

Faculdade de Motricidade Humana, Universidade de Lisboa

Inês R. Correia, Gil B. Rosa, Ana V. Bernardino, Juliana Lameiro, Mariana Lameiro, Martim Pires, André Vieira, Estela Oliveira, Fátima Baptista, Helena Santa-Clara, Analiza M. Silva, Luís B. Sardinha, João P. Magalhães

Instituto Português do Desporto e Juventude, I. P.

Sílvia Saiote, Ana Rita Fernandes, Carla Ribeiro

Coordination: SUAVA – Sistema Universal de Apoio à Vida Ativa do IPDJ, I. P.

ISBN: 978-989-8330-55-0

Suggested citation: Correia IC, Rosa GB, Bernardino AV, Saiote S, Fernandes AR, Ribeiro C, Lameiro J, Lameiro M, Pires M, Vieira A, Oliveira E, Baptista F, Santa-Clara H, Silva AM, Sardinha LB, Magalhães, JP. Diagnóstico da Prática de Atividade Física e Desportiva em Portugal. Instituto Português do Desporto e Juventude, I. P., 2025. ISBN: 978-989-8330-55-0. Available at: https://apptiva.ipdj.gov.pt/relatorios/

The information provided in this documents was prepared within the scope of the Resilience and Recovery Plan (PRR) RE-CO1-i09 – Sistema Universal de Apoio à Vida (SUAVA), with a study carried out as part of the SUAVA National Campaing by the Faculdade de Motricidade Humana – Universidade de Lisboa (FMH-UL) in collaboration with the Instituto Português do Desporto e Juventude (IPDJ, I.P.). This report presents the diagnosis of physical and sports activity in Portugal between January 1, 2019 and July 12, 2024, in which a review of information sources at the national level was carried out, as well as a comparison of the results obtained in other countries.

Funding: The SUAVA project is funded by the Resilience and Recovery Plan (CO1-i09), coordinated by the IPDJ, I.P.

1. Executive Summary

This document is a reduced version of the report "Diagnosis of the practice of physical activity and sports in Portugal" and it aimed to systematize the information on the practice of physical activity and sports in Portugal, including a collection of information sources at the national level, as well as a comparison of the results obtained with other countries. In order to facilitate this process, the comparison was made with the European Union, but also with Sweden and Finland, since they were considered the reference countries, as they were the ones that according to 2022 Eurobarometer, reported the highest levels of physical activity and sports practice in the European Union.

The report analyzed the issues related to: a) levels of physical activity and sports, b) the type of physical activity and sports carried out by the population, c) the barriers and motivations for physical activity practice, d) locations where physical activity is practiced, e) the population's level of knowledge about physical activity, f) physical activity incentives and best practices, g) the determinants of physical activity and sports, h) and physical activity and environmental sustainability, and i) a final section dedicated to the report's main conclusions. The analysis of the information was focused on governmental or non-governmental organizations, which included a representative sample of the national and/or regional population up to NUTS III level. Data obtained and focused on responses during the Covid-19 pandemic were not considered, as they were a transitory confounding factor and are not a reliable representation of the physical activity level of populations at the time of this report.

The information provided in this document was prepared by the Faculdade de Motricidade Humana - Universidade de Lisboa, in order to carry out a comparative diagnostic analysis of the practice of physical activity and sports in Portugal, with the aim of supporting decision-making for stakeholders in the various areas of interest and for the implementation of SUAVA ("Sistema Universal de Apoio à Vida Ativa"). The SUAVA Project is an investment supported by the Recovery and Resilience Plan (CO1-i09) and is the responsibility of the "Instituto Português do Desporto e Juventude" (IPDJ).

2. INTRODUCTION

In 2022 the World Health Organization (WHO) published the first global report on the impact of physical inactivity, highlighting that between 2020 and 2030, approximately 500 million people would be at risk of developing chronic non-communicable diseases solely attributable to physical inactivity[1]. According to the WHO, and while accounting for a scenario of stabilization in the prevalence of physical inactivity, it is estimated that the development of diseases attributed to the lack of regular physical activity will represent an increase in global public spending of around 25 billion euros per year[1]. In Portugal, the most recent estimates show that the direct costs attributed to cancer, hypertension, type 2 diabetes, stroke, coronary artery disease, and depression will represent an estimated annual cost of 240 million euros by 2030[2].

Given the current situation, public health policies focused on increasing levels of physical activity are considered effective strategies for reducing the costs and impact of chronic non-communicable diseases and mental health problems. The WHO Global Action Plan for Physical Activity 2018-2030 has set a target of reducing physical inactivity by 15% by 2030[1]. More precisely, the plan aims to create active societies, environments, people, and systems through 20 policy actions that fall within the global guidelines of the ecological model for health[1].

To respond to this urgent need, SUAVA was conceived in Portugal as a system integrated into the Portuguese PRR, whose main mission is to implement a national campaign and build a technological platform to promote physical activity and meet the challenge of placing Portugal among the 15 most physically active countries in the European Union (currently in 27th place, according to self-reported 2022 Eurobarometer indicators[3]), namely by extending school sports to the community, encouraging active commuting and sports in a family context, and encouraging physical activity in the workplace. However, it is important to note that while considering objective measures such as movement sensors, Portugal has values like those observed in the small number of European countries that have a similar monitoring system. SUAVA is based on the WHO guidelines for physical activity (Appendix 1) and on a transtheoretical model that includes policies and practices to support behavior change[4] specially aimed to increase citizens' literacy about the benefits of regular physical activity, while encouraging the adoption of more active lifestyles. In addition, the technological platform integrates various features within the ecological model for health (i.e., individual, social, physical, and political)[5], such as informing citizens about their level of physical activity, monitoring their progress, implementing incentive policies, and using gamification strategies and personalized benefits to promote a healthier lifestyle.

3. SUMMARY OF MAIN RESULTS

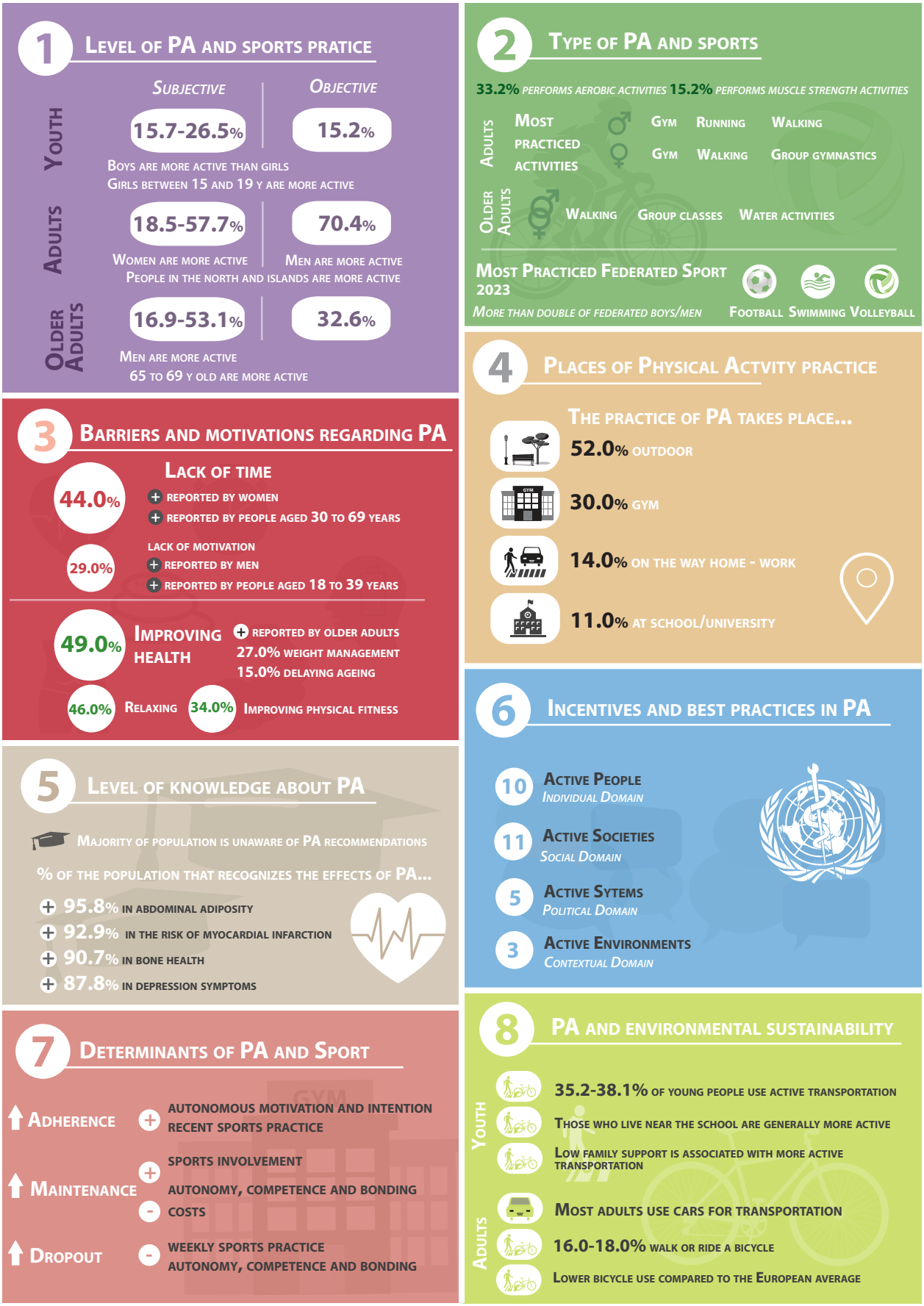

Figure 1 - Dimensions of analysis on the physical activity of the Portuguese population: identification of the main characteristics associated with the practice of physical activity and sports participation.

Figure 1 illustrates the summarized information of the different dimensions analyzed in this reduced version of the "Diagnosis of the Practice of Physical and Sports Activity in Portugal 2024" report . In short, the various dimensions analyzed regarding the practice of physical activity and sports in Portugal provide crucial information to support decision-making by stakeholders, especially in the implementation of national campaings.

To facilitate the interpretation of the results, the key messages for each of the dimensions of analysis of physical activity in the Portuguese population can be found bellow.

The Faculdade de Motricidade Humana - Universidade de Lisboa is exclusively responsible for the veracity and authenticity of the data presented, as well as the full content of the work.

Population level of physical activity and sports

- Information on the level of physical activity and sports in Portugal comes from different monitoring systems with different physical activity assessment instruments, thereby limiting the ability to determine the percentage of physically active people.
- Despite these limitations and regardless of the methodology used, the percentage of Portuguese youth who comply with physical activity recommendations is low, particularly for females. Compared to the European Union, Sweden, and Finland, the percentage of Portuguese youth who comply with physical activity recommendations is lower.
- Additionally, the evidence suggests a higher percentage of physically active adults compared to other age groups. In this case, women tend to be more physically active using subjective methods, while the nor -thern region and the islands have the highest prevalence of compliance with the physical activity recommendations.
- For comparative purposes, it should be noted that, depending on the physical activity assessment method used, the conclusions may be different. Based on the 2022 Eurobarometer, the levels of compliance with the physical activity recommendations are substantially lower for Portuguese adults than the average for the European Union, Sweden, and Finland. However, analysis of objective assessment data using accelerometry reveals that compliance with physical activity recommendations is similar between Portugal and Sweden.
- Regarding Portuguese older adults, the prevalence of compliance with physical activity recommendations is lower among females. Furthermore, as one progresses within this age group, there is a gradual decrease in compliance with physical activity recommendations between the age of 70 and the 85 years old. Given the European Union average and the data presented by Sweden, Portuguese older adults have lower levels of physical activity.

Type of physical activity and sports

- Regarding the type of physical activity and sports, more than twice as many boys/men participate in federated sports in Portugal when compared to girls/women, with football, swimming, and volleyball being the main sporting activities.
- As for the main physical activities reported in adulthood, gym activities stand out as the most frequent for both sexes, followed by running and walking, for men and women, respectively.
- Regarding older adults, walking, group classes, and water activities were the preferred activities.

Barriers and motivations for physical activity pra and sporty

- Although the main reported barriers to physical activity include lack of time, motivation, and interest, the prevalence of these barriers varies depending on age and gender. Women and people over 30 mention lack of time as the main limitation for practicing physical activity.
- In turn, men and people aged 18-39y most often reported a lack of motivation/interest in practicing as the main barrier. Additionally, having an illness or fear of contracting an injury were two other commonly mentioned barriers.
- On the other hand, the need to improve health and physical condition, the ability to enjoy moments of relaxation and fun and to increase self-esteem were the main motivations reported for practicing physical activity.

Locations for practicing physical activity

- The Portuguese population reports outdoor locations as their favorite place for practicing physical activity or sports. Gyms appear as the second most common place for practicing physical activity, followed by commuting (i.e., home, work, school), and within a school/university context.

Population knowledge level on physical activity

- Although the portuguese population is able to recognize and list several physical activity health benefits, the level of knowledge on WHO recommendations is relatively low (2.4%).

Physical activity incentives and best practices

- The WHO's 2018-2030 Global Action plan aims to reduce, by 2030, the prevalence of physical inactivity by around 15% in the adult population, focusing on a systematic approach to policies that promote active environments, societies, systems, and people.
- This report highlights 29 policies/initiatives focused on improving and increasing the practice of physical activity and sports, including the Diabetes in Motion, #BeActive, Follow the Whistle, the National Sports Information System, and the Sports Facilities Rehabilitation Program.

Physical activity and sports determinants

- Previous history of physical activity and sports practicing, as well as a greater autonomous motivation and engagement, are considered important factors to increase adherence to physical activity practice, particularly those carried out in a gym setting.
- Physical activity and sports maintenance is positively reinforced by sports involvement, the perception of autonomy, competence, and social bond. Furthermore, the reduced cost of physical activity and sports is associated with a greater maintenance.
- On the other hand, reduced weekly sports practice, weak autonomy, and a reduced sense of competence and connection is related with physical activity and sports dropout.

Physical activity and environmental sustainability

- The environmental sustainability associated with active commuting varies depending on the age group, in which approximately one third of youth in Portugal uses active transportation in their daily commutes.
- In youth, socioeconomic status is a factor that influences the use of active transportation. In contrast, the majority of adults use their car as their main means of transport (66.0%) and only 16.0-18.0% walk or cycle.

Additional information can be found in the full version of the report at the website of the Instituto Português do Desporto e Juventude (https://apptiva.ipdj.gov.pt/estudo/).