

# Physical activity in Switzerland: key facts and policies



The World Health Organization's (WHO) Global Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases calls for a 10% reduction in physical inactivity by 2025. To achieve this target, the Physical Activity Strategy for the WHO European Region and the EU Council Recommendation on promoting health-enhancing physical activity call upon all countries to develop intersectoral strategies to address insufficient physical activity across the life course and across all sectors.

The promotion of physical activity is beneficial for noncommunicable diseases such as type 2 diabetes, stroke, cardiovascular diseases, cancers, and poor mental health. It also has positive effects in many other policy areas, for example: by promoting social inclusion; by contributing to reducing air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions; reducing congestion; by promoting a healthy workforce; and through effective return on investments in sectors such as transport and tourism.

This document presents key information on the physical activity policy situation in Switzerland. It is based on a wider policy audit using the HEPA Policy Audit Tool (PAT) of the WHO/Europe.

[www.euro.who.int/hepatat](http://www.euro.who.int/hepatat)

**Summary: In Switzerland, there are several policies that address physical activity promotion across a range of sectors, as recommended by the WHO.**

#### Authors and institutions

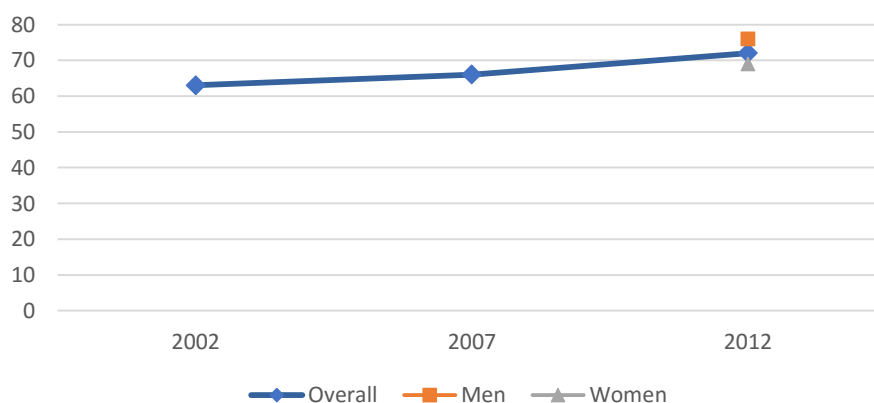
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## Population levels of physical activity

% of Swiss adult population meeting physical activity recommendations



Since 2002, the proportion of the Swiss adult population (15 yrs and older) meeting physical activity recommendations has increased by about 1% per year. In 2012, 76% of the men and 69% of the women met the recommendations.

Source: Swiss Health Survey  
Method: Telephone questionnaire, based on IPAQ short

# 1. Institutions

## The main government ministries with an active role in the promotion of Health-Enhancing Physical Activity

**Federal Office of Sports FOSPO:** responsible for all sports-related dossiers at the national level. In HEPA promotion the main activity is the program Youth and Sports.

**Federal Office of Public Health FOPH:** Along with the cantons responsible for public health in Switzerland and for developing national health policy.

**Federal Roads Office FEDRO:** responsible road infrastructure and private road transport. The FEDRO has a section responsible for active transport (i.e. cycling, walking).

**Federal Office of the Environment FOEN:** the federal government's center of environmental expertise. It is also responsible for the national climate and energy strategy.

**Federal Office of Spatial Development ARE:** the federal government's specialist authority on issues concerning spatial development, mobility policy and sustainable development.

**Health promotion Switzerland:** a private foundation supported by the cantons and a yearly premium collected as part of the mandatory individual health insurance.

	Agencies providing leadership for HEPA promotion	Mechanisms to ensure cross-sector collaboration regarding the delivery of HEPA policy
On the national level	<p><b>Federal Office of Sports FOSPO</b> Has a broad legal basis which includes also HEPA promotion, but currently focuses more on sports in the classic sense (and elite sports)</p> <p><b>Federal Office of Public Health FOPH, Health Promotion Switzerland, the Swiss Conference of the Health Directors of the Cantons</b> Shared leadership for NCD strategy, including HEPA promotion; while the FOPH does not have a legal basis for national health policy, the other two partners do.</p>	<p>There are a number of informal, voluntary exchange platforms but no officially established or legally binding mechanisms for cross-sectoral collaboration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Federal Coordination group for active transportation (Bundeskoordination Langsamverkehr), led by the Federal Roads Office FEDRO.</li> <li>- Model projects for sustainable spatial development (Modellvorhaben "Nachhaltige Raumentwicklung 2014-2018"), led by ARE</li> <li>- Coordination office for sustainable transport (Koordinationsstelle für nachhaltige Mobilität), led by the Swiss Federal Office of Energy FOE.</li> </ul>
On the sub-national level	<p><b>Authorities in cantons and cities</b> have the mandate for health promotion, sports promotion, urban planning, transport planning and education</p> <p>There are <b>coordinating mechanisms</b> (so-called "Conferences") for the members of governments of the cantons <u>within</u> the respective sectors (e.g. public transport, health, etc).</p>	<p>Network hepa.ch Switzerland: voluntary exchange platform for actors at the cantonal and community (as well as national) level</p> <p>"Sports coordinators" in municipalities aiming at developing "local sports and physical activity networks", mainly to coordinate the use of sports infrastructure and to support sporting events.</p>

## Professional network or system linking and/or supporting professionals interested or currently working in physical activity or related areas

The network hepa.ch at the Federal Office of Sports is active since 1999; its continuation is one of the measures of the national NCD-strategy (section 2 below). Currently, it has 120 member institutions, mainly from the sports and health sectors, NGOs (health and sports) and the private (fitness) industry.

Main activities of the network are an annual meeting, issuing and disseminating the national recommendations on physical activity and health and the dissemination of reports and communication material

## Funding specifically allocated or “ring-fenced” for the delivery of physical activity related policy or action plans

Sector	At national level	(recurring)	Amount (€)	At sub-national level	(recurring)	Amount (€)
Health	Yes (plus new health insurance premium*)	✓	€7.1 mio.	Yes	✓	At least €6.2 mio.
Sport/Recreation	Yes (Youth & Sport)	✓	€92 mio.	Yes (estimation*)	✓	ca. €460 mio.
Education	No	✗		Yes	✓	unknown
Transport	Yes	✓	At least €54mio.	Yes	✓	unknown
Environment	No	✗		No	✗	
Urban Design/Planning	No	✗		No	✗	
Social cohesion	No	✗		No	✗	

Possible answers: ✓ Recurring ✗ Not Recurring ? Don't know

\*see full HEPA PAT for details, [www.panh.ch/hepaeurope/materials/hepa\\_pat\\_files/hepa\\_pat\\_files.htm](http://www.panh.ch/hepaeurope/materials/hepa_pat_files/hepa_pat_files.htm)



## 2. Policies & key actions

Current [key policy documents](#), legislation, strategies or action plans which outline the intention to increase national levels of physical activity

Sector	Key policies*	Web-Link
Health	<b>Federal Health Insurance Law</b> Published in 1996 as a national law	<a href="#">Web-Link</a>
	<b>National Strategy for the Prevention of Non-communicable Diseases (NCD) and corresponding Action Plan, 2017-2024</b> Published in 2016 by the Federal Office of Public Health and the Swiss Conference of the Health Directors of the Cantons	<a href="#">Web-Link</a>
Sports	<b>Federal Law on the Promotion of Gymnastics and Sport</b> Published in 1972 and revised in 2012, as a national law	<a href="#">Web-Link</a>
Transport	<b>Federal Law on Walking and Hiking Paths</b> Published in 1985 as a national law	<a href="#">Web-Link</a>
Environment	<b>Freedom to roam-article 699, Swiss civil code</b> Published in 1907 as a national law	<a href="#">Web-Link</a>

\* A detailed version of the policy list can be found in the full HEPA PAT at [www.panh.ch/hepaeurope/materials/hepa\\_pat\\_files/hepa\\_pat\\_files.htm](http://www.panh.ch/hepaeurope/materials/hepa_pat_files/hepa_pat_files.htm)

## Settings that are included for the delivery of specific HEPA actions\*



● Included    ○ Not included

\* Referring to the full list of policy documents which can be found in the corresponding PAT at [www.panh.ch/hepaeurope/materials/hepa\\_pat\\_files/hepa\\_pat\\_files.htm](http://www.panh.ch/hepaeurope/materials/hepa_pat_files/hepa_pat_files.htm)

## Population groups that are included for the delivery of specific HEPA actions\*

Groups					
Early years	✓	Workforce/employees	✓	People with disabilities	✗
Children/young people	✓	Women	✗	Clinical populations/chronic disease	✗
Older adults	✓	Sedentary/the least active	✗	Low socio-economic groups	✗
Indigenous people	✗	Migrant populations	✗	Families	✗
General population	✓	Other (please specify):			

\* Referring to the full list of policy documents which can be found in the full HEPA at [www.panh.ch/hepaeurope/materials/hepa\\_pat\\_files/hepa\\_pat\\_files.htm](http://www.panh.ch/hepaeurope/materials/hepa_pat_files/hepa_pat_files.htm)

## 3. Recommendations, goals and surveillance

### National recommendations on physical activity and health and on reducing sedentary behaviour\*

	Early years (pre-school age)	Children and young people (school-age)	Adults	Older adults	People with disabilities
Physical activity and health	<a href="#">Web-Link</a>	<a href="#">Web-Link</a>	<a href="#">Web-Link</a>	<a href="#">Web-Link</a>	not existing
Reducing sedentary behaviour	not existing	not existing	not existing	not existing	not existing

\* For more information on the content of the recommendations see the full version of the PAT at [www.panh.ch/hepaeurope/materials/hepa\\_pat\\_files/hepa\\_pat\\_files.htm](http://www.panh.ch/hepaeurope/materials/hepa_pat_files/hepa_pat_files.htm)

### National goals and targets for population prevalence of physical activity

Neither the NCD strategy nor the draft of the Sports for all Concept contain a national target on physical activity. According to the corresponding NCD Action Plan quantified targets shall be developed until 2018.

The Sustainable Development Strategy 2016-2019 lists a quantified physical activity target: "The proportion of the resident population which does not take enough exercise is 10% lower than in 2015". It is not indicated whether this is an absolute or a relative decrease.

## Other goals and targets that relate to physical activity promotion

There are a number of cities that implement “city initiatives” (Städteinitiativen) for more sustainable transport. The initiatives in the cities set targets for transport modes: some a reduction of motorized transport, some an increase in walking and cycling. The city of Zurich for example voted for the initiative in a public poll in 2011. The adopted target is an absolute reduction of car traffic by 10% by 2021 (and related increase of the mode share of public transport, walking and cycling); it is legally binding.

## Main surveillance and monitoring systems

Age group	Type	Details
Early years (pre-school age)	None	None
Children and young people (school-age)	Self-report	<b>Health Behaviour in School Aged Children HBSC</b> Frequency: 4 years, starting 2001/02
Children and young people (school-age)	Self-report	<b>Sport Switzerland</b> Frequency: 6 years, starting in 2008
Children and young people (school-age)	Accelerometry	<b>SOPHYA</b> Frequency: 1x so far, starting in 2014/15
Adults	Self-report	<b>Swiss Health Survey</b> Frequency: 5 years, starting in 1992 (since 2002 allowing reference to the national HEPA recommendations)
Adults	Self-report	<b>Sport Switzerland</b> Frequency: 6-8 years, starting in 2000
Older adults	See Adults	See Adults

## 4. Successes and challenges

### Areas of greatest progress and greatest challenge in national HEPA promotion in recent years

#### Successes

1. **Increase of physical activity in adults of about 1% per year** between 2002 and 2012. This increase is based on self-reported data, and some social desirability cannot be excluded. However, it is not likely that the entire increase is attributable to this phenomenon.
2. Engagement of the **cantonal and community level, NGOs and the private sector**, even without a strong lead of the national level.
3. **Health as a co-benefit of the promotion of walking and cycling** is increasingly recognized as an argument with important stakeholders.

#### Challenges

1. There is **no legal basis for the health sector to act on the prevention of non-communicable diseases on the national level** (due to rejection of the national prevention law in 2012 by the national parliament).
2. There is a **legal basis for the sports sector**. However, in recent years the Federal Office of Sports FOSPO – apart from the legally binding investments into youth + sports – has invested **little resources in HEPA promotion** in a broader sense. The FOSPO is not part of the lead of the NCD-Strategy.
3. With few exceptions, there is a **lack of sustained investment** into action programs and strategies, oftentimes **regardless of encouraging evaluation results**.