



SWEDEN

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY FACTSHEET 2021

Total population: **10.38 m**

Median age: **40.5 years**

GDP per capita: **42 650 €**

Life expectancy, males: **80.7 years**

Life expectancy, females: **84.2 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 the [WHO Guidelines on physical activity and sedentary behaviour](#) (2020), adapted to the Swedish context, and were implemented in 2021. The overall message of the guidelines is that every movement counts.



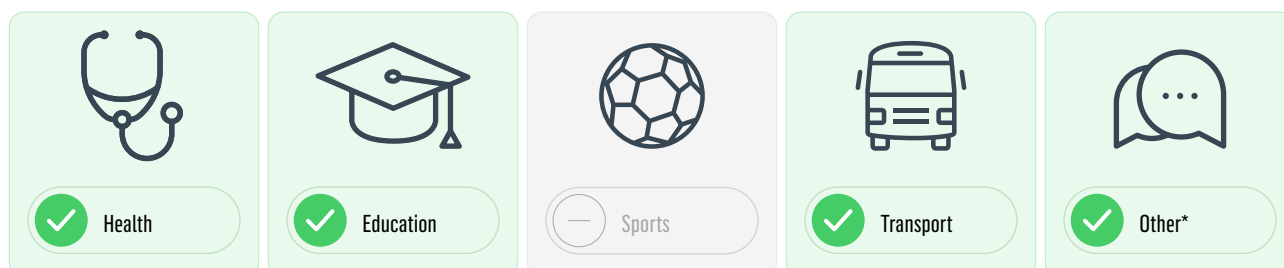
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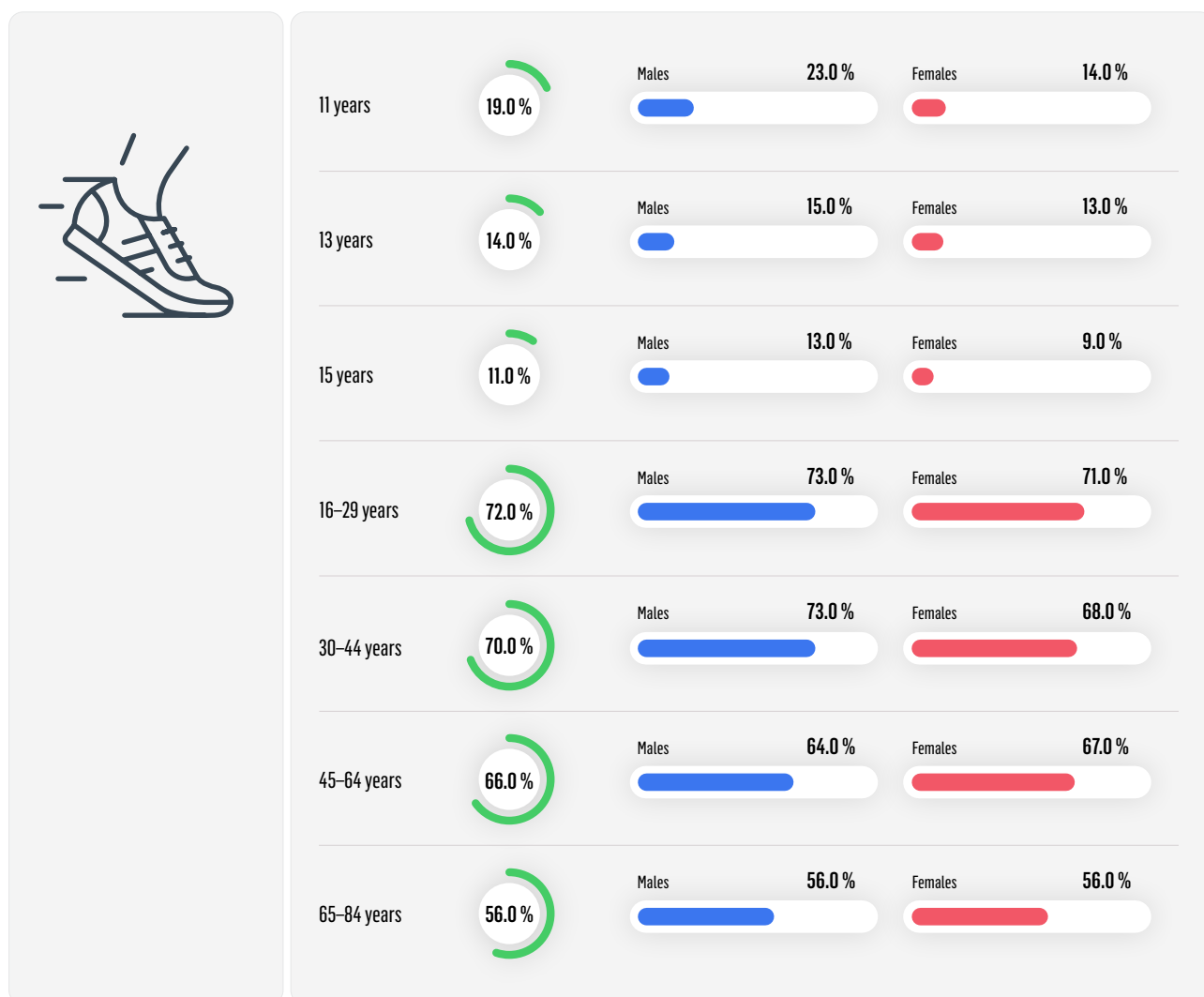
Monitoring and surveillance of physical activity

SECTORS WITH SURVEILLANCE SYSTEMS



*Health and living conditions

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 through the [National Public Health Survey](#) in 2020.



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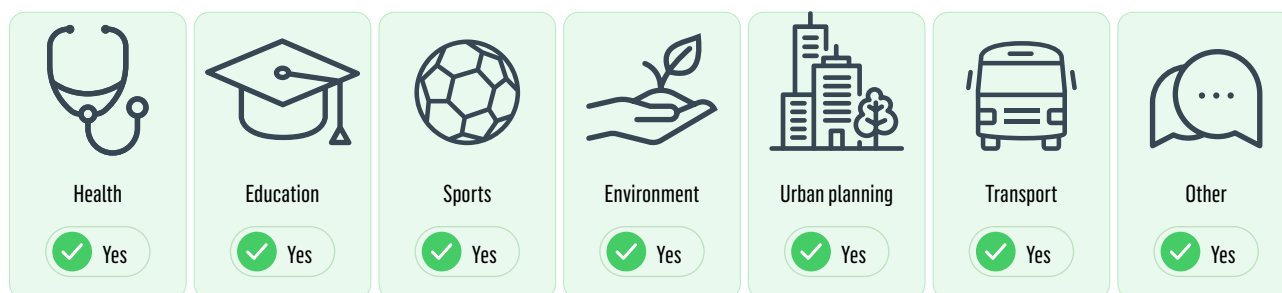


National government coordination mechanism and leadership in the promotion of physical activity

The [Public Health Agency of Sweden](#) coordinates the Swedish working group on HEPA, established in 2017, which has created stronger national awareness and coordination for better HEPA. Sweden also has other Government coordination mechanisms, such as the [National Cycling Council](#), led by the Swedish Transport Administration; the network for coordinating the [Outdoor Recreation Policy of the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency](#); and the cooperation forum [Council for Sustainable Cities](#), which implements the Government's policy for sustainable urban development.

Funding for the promotion of physical activity for health

FUNDING FOR THE PROMOTION OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY FOR HEALTH



Policy response



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

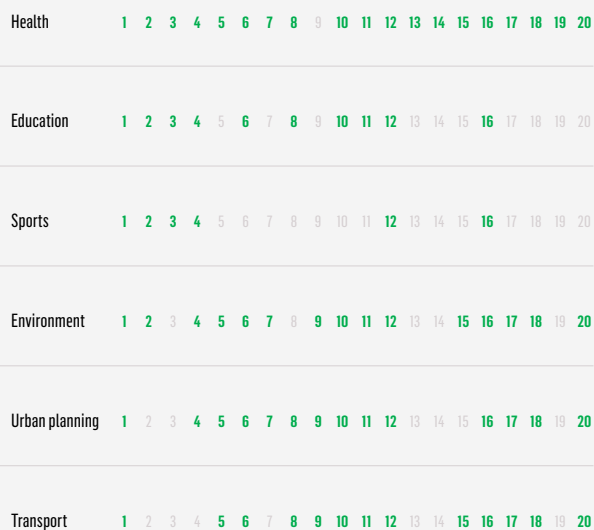
- 1 NATIONAL PUBLIC HEALTH POLICY
- 2 EDUCATION ACT
- 3 REGULATION ON GOVERNMENT GRANTS FOR SPORTS ACTIVITIES
- 4 STRATEGY 2025 FOR SWEDISH SPORTS
- 5 PLANNING AND BUILDING ACT 2010
- 6 GUIDELINES FOR SCHOOLS AND PRESCHOOLS – ARCHITECTURE AND OUTDOOR ENVIRONMENT
- 7 NATIONAL GUIDELINES FOR GREEN STRUCTURE PLANNING
- 8 NATIONAL BOARD OF HOUSING, BUILDING AND PLANNING
- 9 STRATEGY FOR LIVING CITIES – POLICY FOR SUSTAINABLE URBAN DEVELOPMENT (2018)
- 10 OUTDOOR RECREATION POLICY (2012)
- 11 SWEDEN'S ENVIRONMENTAL OBJECTIVES 1999 (16TH VERSION IN 2005)
- 12 AGENDA 2030 – PLAN TO STIMULATE WORK IN SWEDEN
- 13 NATIONAL GUIDELINES FOR THE PREVENTION AND TREATMENT OF UNHEALTHY LIVING HABITS
- 14 NATIONAL GUIDELINES ON PREVENTION OF CHRONIC DISEASES
- 15 TRANSPORT POLICY GOALS
- 16 NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR INCREASED AND SAFE CYCLING
- 17 REQUIREMENTS FOR ROAD AND STREET DESIGN
- 18 TRAFFIC FOR AN ATTRACTIVE CITY
- 19 ACT ON IMPRISONMENT 2010 (SWEDISH CODE OF STATUTES 610)
- 20 GUIDELINES ON MUNICIPAL OUTDOOR LIFE PLANNING

TOTAL NUMBER OF POLICIES

20



SECTORS INVOLVED IN THE DESIGN OF THE POLICY/ACTION PLAN





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POPULATION GROUPS TARGETED BY EACH POLICY

General population	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Children < 5	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Children and adolescents (5–17)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Adults	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Older adults (≥ 65)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Frail/elderly (≥ 85)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
People with disabilities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
People with chronic diseases	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Pregnant women	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Breastfeeding women	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Low socio-economic groups	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Ethnic minorities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Deprived of liberty	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Migrants	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Unemployed people	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20

POLICY HIGHLIGHTS

4 Strategy 2025 for Swedish Sports. The Strategy provides a new approach to sport, with opportunities to engage children, young people, adults and the elderly in local and elite sports throughout their lives. It emphasizes joy and development rather than just results. One of the goals is to make sports associations more welcoming to people, regardless of their age, sports performance, financial means or social background. Sports unions and associations have agreed on a common vision to maintain a physically active population by updating and reviewing their programmes, training and competition structures to attain the Strategy’s 2025 objectives for all citizens to reach their full potential.

6 Guidelines for schools and preschools – architecture and outdoor environment. The aim is to create sustainable, accessible school and preschool environments that promote learning, physical activity and well-being and to build environments that promote play and an inclusive meeting place for the whole community, with the design of schoolyards and sports facilities that meet the need of different ages and promote exercise by children and young people, such as large free spaces for playing and dancing, benches and trails for commuting to school on foot or by bicycle. Students, teachers and other school members are involved in planning, construction and management of the building and the outdoor environment.

13 National guidelines for the prevention and treatment of unhealthy lifestyles. These guidelines provide scientifically based measures for behavioural changes for people with unhealthy lifestyles to prevent premature deaths and promote mental health and well-being for all ages. It supports patients in changing behaviour that is detrimental to health, such as tobacco and alcohol use, unhealthy diets and insufficient physical activity. The current guidelines focus on physical activity. The National Board of Health and Welfare continues to support implementation of the guidelines during 2018–2021 in all Sweden’s municipalities and county councils. The national guidelines are reviewed and updated regularly.

SUCCESS STORY



The aim of the **Swedish Outdoor Recreational Policy** is to increase opportunities for people to be out in nature and exercise outdoors. A guide has been developed for municipal officials and county administrative boards to implement the plan, which highlights the central role of municipalities in managing outdoor life through planning, land ownership, management and business development, and also to increase understanding about outdoor spaces and their relation to attaining public health and environment goals and the 2030 Agenda.



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Increasing access to exercise facilities for socially disadvantaged groups

The aim of [Sports for newly arrived immigrants \(Nyanlända\)](#) is to provide the conditions for newly arrived girls, boys, women and men who have been granted a residency permission in Sweden to engage in sports. The Sports Movement offers activities and a basic introduction to the community for new arrivals, primarily through district sports federations and associations. Efforts should be made throughout the country. The initiative has resulted in greater integration of new immigrants into ordinary activities.

Counselling on physical activity and exercise prescription

The [National Board of Health and Welfare](#) provides guidelines on the prevention of and treatment for unhealthy lifestyles. The purpose of the guidelines is to both stimulate use of measures shown scientifically to be effective and provide a basis for open, systematic health-care priorities. Recommendations include advice to adults at particular risk who are insufficiently physically active. An example of counselling on physical activity in Sweden is Physical Activity on Prescription (FaR®).

HEALTH PROFESSIONALS WHO ARE TRAINED IN HEALTH-ENHANCING PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

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

*E.g., health therapists,
occupational therapists



SUCCESS STORY

The Swedish [Physical Activity on Prescription \(PAP-S\)](#) model is being implemented in nine other European countries within the project European Physical Activity on Prescription (EUPAP), funded by the European Union's Health Programme (2014–2020). The objectives are promotion of good health and prevention of noncommunicable diseases through country-specific programmes for PAP in health services.

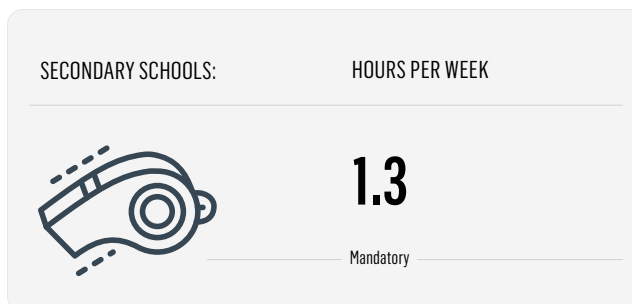


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Physical education in schools



Training in physical activity and health (e.g., health effects, determinants, effective interventions) is mandatory in the graduate curriculum of physical education teachers, who in Sweden are referred to as “subject teachers” of “sport and health”. The Swedish Schools Inspectorate audits various aspects of the quality of schools and education, irregularly and in a few schools. Audits of the quality of physical education for health were conducted in 2010, 2012 and 2018; the quality is also evaluated in research.

PROMOTION OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IN SCHOOLS



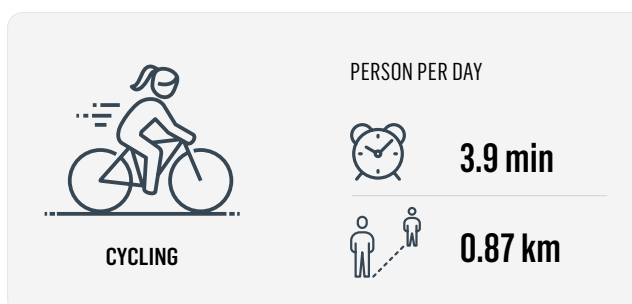
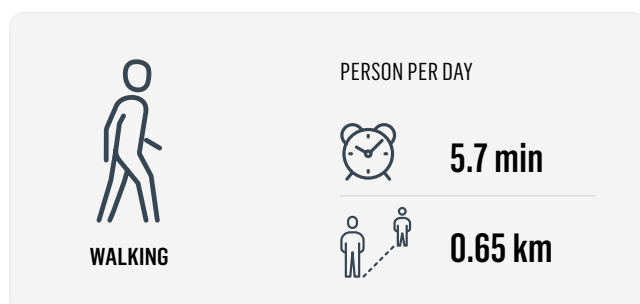
Promotion of daily physical activity in various forms and outdoors is included in the curricula of all Swedish schools. The Swedish National Agency for Education and others provide teaching materials to stimulate various daily physical activities. In 2018, the Swedish Sports Confederation was commissioned by the Government to invest in “more movement in school”. The aim is to improve public health, well-being and school results and is targeted to children in grades 0–6 and especially those who are least active.

Extracurricular sports and other physical activities are organized mainly by sports clubs, which are subsidized by Government grants and taxes to promote equal opportunities for all children.

A **national cycling strategy** has been in place since 2016 to increase safe cycling. The aim is to stimulate sustainable solutions in public transport, walking and cycling and to contribute to a sustainable society with a high quality of life, less environmental impact and better public health.

National travel survey

The [Swedish National Travel survey](#), conducted by Transport Analysis, measures people’s daily travel, the dates and times on which they travel, the modes of transport used and the purposes of trips.





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Infrastructure for leisure-time physical activity

National guidance on the infrastructure for leisure-time physical activity was prepared by the Swedish Board for Public Health (Folkhälsoinstitutet) for 2006–2008. This resulted in guidelines and reports on infrastructure such as the form of the built environment, access to bicycle and walking lanes and the special requirements of children, the elderly and disabled people. Other national agencies have since developed specific guidelines, and regional and local work has been done to support planning and increase recreation in natural and cultural environments. In 2018, a Strategy for Living Cities and a Policy for Sustainable Urban Development were established.

In Swedish culture, nature is viewed as an important arena for physical activity. It is therefore important to keep natural environments available to the population. The 10 national objectives of the outdoor recreation policy include cooperation to increase the status of outdoor recreation in society. As a result, more local, regional and national actions are taken to promote outdoor recreation, such as by urban planning, protection of nature, measures to increase access, education and research and practical activities for different groups, such as children, new arrivals and decision-makers.


► <http://www.swedishepa.se/Environmental-objectives-and-cooperation/Swedish-environmental-work/Work-areas/Outdoor-recreation/>

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 **National Cycling Strategy** comprises five areas of action: increase the role of bicycle traffic in community planning, increase the focus on groups of cyclists, promote a more functional, user-friendly infrastructure, encourage safe bicycle traffic and conduct research for innovations.



SUCCESS STORY

Physical activity and wellness activities offered by an employer to all employees, which are "simpler and cheaper" are tax free. The employer chooses whether to offer this incentive, which they then fund, in order to encourage employees to engage in physical activity. Possible activities are listed by the Tax Agency and include gymnastics, strength training, spinning, dancing and racket sports and regular team sports such as volleyball, soccer and ice hockey. The offer is either in the form of a "nature benefit" or a "health-care grant". In order for the allowance to be covered by the rules on tax exemption, the same amount and conditions must apply to all staff equally.

► <https://www.skatteverket.se/privat/skatter/arbeteochinkomst/formaner/personalvardmotionochfriskvard.4.7459477810df5bccdd4800014540.html>



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Community-based interventions for older adults



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



Since 2020, the Sports Movement has a 2-year assignment from the Government to support sports and physical activity for the elderly. The support will allow associations and unions to develop activities to ensure that more people aged ≥ 65 years live an active life and to reduce loneliness. The support is an initiative of the Swedish Sports Confederation, which with certain nongovernmental organizations, called for strengthening physical activity and improving the health of the elderly.

In March 2021, two complementary training courses were launched by the National Board of Health and Welfare. The first was a systematic falls prevention operation conducted by teams. The courses were addressed to senior executives, managers and business developers in health and social care. The second course was on healthy living habits for the elderly, which trained support professionals in health and social care in healthy food, use of alcohol, tobacco and medical drugs and meaningful activities, with a strong focus on physical activity.

National awareness-raising campaign on physical activity

The Government has appointed a national committee for 2020–2023 to promote physical activity, increase awareness of the benefits and strengthen the current structure.

MEDIA USED IN NATIONAL CAMPAIGNS

Television	Radio	Newspapers	Social media	Public events	Public figures	Other
Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	



SUCCESS STORY

2021 is designated as the **Year of Outdoor Life** in Sweden. The aim of the campaign Air is Free (Luften är fri) is to increase awareness of the value of outdoor life and the right of public access, to persuade more people to try outdoor life and to continue in the long term.