

Current Health Event

Physical inactivity

WHO defines physical activity as “any bodily movement produced by skeletal muscles that requires energy expenditure” (*WHO*). Lack of physical activity or physical inactivity is a major public health concern, as it has been identified as the 4th leading risk factor for global mortality.

Editorial note:

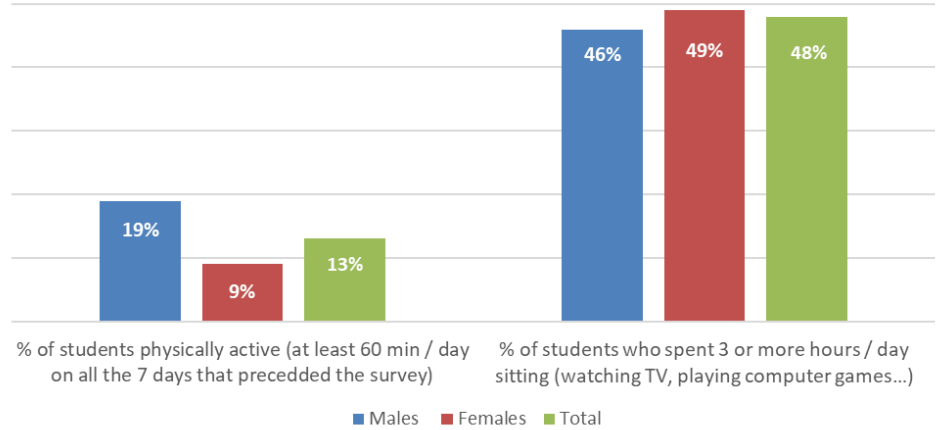
Physical activity is different from “exercise”, the latter is a subcategory of physical activity, which is structured, planned, and aims at improving the individual’s physical fitness. Physical activity includes exercise as well as other activities such as playing, working, active transportation, house chores and recreational activities.

WHO recommends adults aged 18 to 64 to do at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic physical activity throughout the week or do at least 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity throughout the week or an equivalent combination of moderate- and vigorous-intensity activity.

The lack of physical activity is a significant risk factor for noncommunicable diseases such as diabetes, stroke, etc. Worldwide, 81% school-going adolescents and 23% of adults are not active enough (*WHO, 2018*). Generally, women and girls are less active than men and boys, and older adults are less active than younger adults.

In Lebanon, a nationally representative survey, the Global school-based student health survey (GSHS), was conducted in 2016 in public and private schools and showed that physical activity was low in adolescents aged 13 to 17 years of age (*GSHS, 2017*) (figure 1). Almost 27% of students were not physically active for at least 60 minutes per day on any day during the past 7 days, a finding more witnessed in females and in

Figure 1: Data on physical activity amongst adolescents (GSHS, 2017)



public schools. In addition, around half of the students were doing sitting activities such as video games for 3 or more hours per day. At school, 41.3% of students did not attend weekly physical education classes during this school year. A comparison with the GSHS 2011, physical activity decreased between 2011 and 2016, with a significant drop in the percentage of students who were physically active at least 1 hour per day on 5 or more days (-31.6%).

Another nationally representative survey was conducted for adults (*WHO, 2016*) to estimate the prevalence of risk factors for non-communicable diseases. Physical activity was assessed, and it was found that two thirds (61%) of the population living in Lebanon (including Syrian refugees) did not meet WHO recommendations on physical activity.

Physical activity reduces the risk of heart diseases, hypertension, diabetes as well as various types of cancer such as colon cancer and breast cancer, as well as depression. Physical activity is also key to weight control and energy balance. Increasing physical activity is a key strategy for reducing the burden of non-communicable diseases, and contributing to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

WHO response

WHO launched a [global action plan on physical activity \(2018-2030\)](#) to help countries scale up policy actions to promote physical activity, with four objectives, to:

1. Create active societies
2. Create active environments
3. Create active people
4. Create active systems

Notifiable Diseases in Lebanon [Cumulative n° of cases among all Residents (among Syrians)] as of 14 December 2019				
Disease	2018	2019	Oct	Nov
Vaccine Preventable Diseases				
Polio	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)
AFP	88(33)	78(16)	5(2)	7(1)
Measles	952(156)	1062(101)	7(1)	12(1)
Mumps	121(41)	119(29)	10(1)	12(4)
Pertussis	64(26)	73(21)	8(0)	5(2)
Rabies	3(1)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)
Rubella	11(4)	27(9)	0(0)	0(0)
Tetanus	2(1)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)
Viral Hep. B	253(28)	273(35)	15(1)	18(0)
Other Notifiable Diseases				
Brucellosis	242(26)	218(32)	11(1)	8(1)
Cholera	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)
Hydatid cyst	8(2)	28(2)	2(0)	7(0)
Typhoid fever	237(4)	245(4)	22(0)	20(0)
Viral Hep. A	899(152)	417(109)	29(2)	18(0)
Other Notifiable Diseases				
Meningitis	420(82)	439(78)	34(7)	16(4)
Viral Hep. C	103(7)	75(5)	8(0)	7(0)