REVIEW

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Physical and sports activity of Russians: trends and developments over 20 years (analytical review)

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ABSTRACT

In the 21st century, the Government of the Russian Federation made important decisions related to healthy lifestyle of the population and the development of physical education and sports (PES). The review of sociological studies of physical and sports activities of Russian citizens is of interest considering the results of mass sports development in Russia.

The aim of this review is to trace the trends of PES popularity among Russians for over two decades and the variation of Russian citizens' opinions on the creation of conditions for such activities. We analyzed various surveys and scientific papers from the RSCI database on the topic (n=43) using the traditional data review and collation method. The calculations were made using IBM SPSS Statistics 26.

Surveys from 2006 to 2018 showed a positive trend in the popularity of PES among Russians. Respondents more often noted that there were sports facilities at their place of residence. Recent studies have shown that the citizens are increasingly satisfied with the conditions created for physical and sports activities. However, they have not identified any positive trends in the popularity of such activities or the use of relative facilities.

To further involve Russians in physical and sports activities, it is important to raise awareness of the population, publicize expert opinions on human physical activity, address specific motives that encourage people to engage in physical and sports activities and the reasons for refusing to do so in various demographic groups. The wishes of citizens in relation to construction of new sports facilities shall be linked to their capabilities, including free time and financial resources to pay for attractive sports services. Comprehensive research into these issues and analysis of statistics on the provision of sports and fitness services may be the basis for a policy of providing benefits to encourage Russians to engage in physical and sports activities, and adjusting the standards for providing sports facilities to the population.

Keywords: physical activity; popularity of physical education and sports; monitoring; policy; healthy lifestyle.

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Физкультурно-спортивная активность россиян: задачи повышения и динамика за 20 лет (аналитический обзор)

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АННОТАЦИЯ

В XXI в. в Российской Федерации приняты важные решения по формированию здорового образа жизни населения и развитию физической культуры и спорта (ФКС). Анализ социологических исследований о физкультурно-спортивной активности россиян представляет интерес с точки зрения достигнутых результатов в развитии массового спорта в России.

Цель обзора — проследить динамику распространённости занятий ФКС среди россиян за два десятилетия и динамику мнений российских граждан о создании условий для таких занятий. Посредством метода классического анализа и обобщения информации проанализированы результаты различных социологических опросов и научные публикации по теме из базы данных Российского индекса научного цитирования (n=43). Для расчётов использовалась программа IBM SPSS Statistics 26.

Опросы 2006–2018 гг. выявили положительную тенденцию в распространённости занятий ФКС среди россиян. Респонденты стали чаще отмечать наличие спортивных объектов по месту своего жительства. Исследования последних лет показывают растущую удовлетворённость граждан созданными условиями для занятий ФКС, но не выявляют положительной динамики в распространённости таких занятий и в использовании мест для них.

Для дальнейшего вовлечения россиян в занятия ФКС важно проводить просветительскую работу среди населения, освещать рекомендации специалистов относительно физической активности человека, учитывать особенности мотивов, побуждающих к занятиям ФКС, и причины отказа от них в различных социально-демографических группах. Пожелания граждан относительно строительства новых спортивных объектов необходимо связывать с их возможностями, включая свободное время и финансовые ресурсы по оплате привлекательных спортивных услуг. Комплексные исследования этих вопросов и анализ статистики получения спортивно-оздоровительных услуг могут стать основой для политики предоставления льгот, стимулирующих физкультурно-спортивную активность россиян, и для корректировки норм обеспеченности населения спортивными объектами.

Ключевые слова: физическая активность; распространённость занятий физкультурой и спортом; мониторинг; политика; здоровый образ жизни.

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INTRODUCTION

The term *diseases of civilization* refers to noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) such as malignant neoplasms, chronic respiratory diseases, diabetes mellitus, and cardiovascular diseases. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), NCDs now account for nearly 75% of all annual deaths [1]. NCDs have become the leading cause of temporary and long-term disability, as well as mortality, both in the Russian Federation and globally.[1] One of the contributing factors to the growing prevalence of NCDs is insufficient physical activity. In 2000, the 53rd World Health Assembly called on WHO Member States to emphasize the essential role of government policy in addressing NCDs, including efforts to promote physical activity among the population [2]. WHO reports indicate that 30 minutes of regular moderate-intensity physical activity reduces the risk of NCDs [3]. WHO has endorsed action plans for NCD[2] prevention and physical activity promotion.[3] Physical activity, according to WHO, refers to all movement. Guidelines have been established regarding the recommended duration and intensity of aerobic and anaerobic (strength)physical activity for various population groups [4]. WHO monitors the implementation of these guidelines through physical activity-related policies and assessments of population-level physical activity engagement [5]. At national and regional levels, strategies are being developed to increase physical activity. The Physical Activity Strategy for the WHO European Region 2016–2025 notes that 6 out of 10 individuals aged ⩾15 years in the European Union either never participate in physical education or sports, or do so infrequently; moreover, more than half rarely or never engage in other forms of physical activity [6]. The issue of creating environments that promote physical activity is being actively studied. One of the priority areas of the WHO European Healthy Cities Network project is the development of urban planning and transportation policies that support health, including conditions created to promote physical activity [7]. The Russian Federation joined this project in 2006.

In the Russian Federation, the promotion and development of a healthy lifestyle among the population has become a key component of efforts to combat NCDs. Sociological and medico-social studies examine physical activity and sport-related behaviors across the general population and various sociodemographic groups in the context of health and healthy lifestyle. These studies analyze physical activity levels and types [8], the influence of residential infrastructure on physical activity [9], trends in physical exercise and sports participation [10–12], quantitative characteristics of such engagement [13], satisfaction with conditions for physical activity and sport [14, 15], and the sports activity of specific professional groups [16]. The results of large-scale population surveys allow assessing the effectiveness of strategies for developing mass sports in the Russian Federation and can serve as a guide for adjusting existing plans.

AIM

The study aimed analyze the various monitoring results that reflect trends in participation in physical activity and sport among the Russian population, as well as their views on the availability of conditions for such activities.

METHODS

A classical approach to information analysis and synthesis was applied. Data from several waves of the Russia Longitudinal Monitoring Survey (RLMS) to monitor the economic and health impact were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics, version 26. Documents were selected in accordance with the paper subject. The analysis was conducted in 2024.

RESULTS

Social Policy in Mass Sports

The issue of population engagement in physical activity and sport has remained relevant since the Soviet Union era. By the late 1980s, more than two-thirds of the population did not regularly participate in physical activity and sport.[4] By the early 2000s, 70% of the Russians were not involved in physical activity, and the prevalence of physical inactivity among school-aged children reached 80%.[5] By the end of the first decade of the 21st century, 85% of the Russians were not systematically engaged in physical activity

[1] Order of the Ministry of Health of the Russian Federation No. 8 *On Approval of the Strategy for Promoting a Healthy Lifestyle, Prevention and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases for the Period Until 2025,* dated January 15, 2020. Available from: https://www.garant.ru/products/ipo/prime/doc/73421912/?ysclid=lwom5ewwmn45616087 Accessed May 27, 2024.

[2] Global Action Plan of the World Health Organization for the Prevention and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases for 2013–2020. Geneva: WHO Document Production Services; 2013. Available at: https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789241506236 Accessed May 27, 2024.

[3] Global Action Plan of WHO on Physical Activity 2018–2030: More Active People for a Healthier World. World Health Organization; 2018. Available at: https://web.archive.org/web/20201020215108/https://www.who.int/ncds/prevention/physical-activity/global-action-plan-2018-2030/ru/ Accessed May 27, 2024.

[4] Order of the Ministry of Health of the USSR No. 770 *On the Improvement of Hygienic Education of the Population and the Promotion of a Healthy Lifestyle,* dated October 14, 1988. Available at: https://e-ecolog.ru/docs/6M2ua-L8vK1iqsjduXF-D Accessed May 20, 2024.

[5] Concept of Public Health Protection in the Russian Federation for the Period Until 2005, dated August 31, 2000. No. 1202-r. Available at: https://normativ.kontur.ru/document?moduleId=1&documentId=40313 Accessed May 20, 2024.

and sport.[6] To regulate relations in the field of physical activity, sports, and public health, respective laws were adopted.[7, 8] The Ministry of Health of the Russian Federation is working toward increasing the proportion of citizens leading a healthy lifestyle and regularly participating in physical activity and sport in accordance with the approved strategy.[9] The term *individuals systematically engaged in physical activity and sport*, as defined in official documents, refers to persons who independently or in an organized format participate in general physical training or sports for at least the following weekly durations: 75 minutes for individuals aged 3–5 years, 90 minutes for those aged 6–15 years, 125 minutes for those aged 16–29 years, 115 minutes for those aged 30–59 years, and 90 minutes for those aged 60–90 years.[10] These thresholds differ from guidelines for physical activity in healthy individuals, which specify both the duration and intensity of physical activity [17].

State programs for the development of physical activity and sport, coordinated by the Ministry of Sport of the Russian Federation, have included the modernization of the physical education system, the promotion of mass sports, and the development and increased accessibility of infrastructure. The promotion of mass sports has been carried out under the Federal Target Program Development of Physical Activity and Sport in the Russian Federation for 2006–2015[11] and the State Program of the Russian Federation Development of Physical Activity and Sport.[12] As a result of the Federal Target Program, a reduction in health care expenditures related to temporary disability from all causes was expected by 2015. Simultaneously, an increase in citizens' per capita spending on physical activity and sport was regarded as an indicator of evolving attitudes toward physical activity and personal health.

In 2009, the Strategy for the Development of Physical Activity and Sport in the Russian Federation for the Period Until 2020 was adopted,[6] followed by the Strategy for the Development of Physical Activity and Sport in the Russian Federation for the Period Until 2030[13] (hereinafter, Strategy until 2030), adopted in 2020. The issues related to the promotion of a healthy lifestyle and the development of physical activity and sport have also been addressed in documents shaping demographic policy. The national project Demography, adopted in 2018 for the period 2019–2024, includes the federal project Sport is the Norm of Life.[14] Thus, over the past two decades, key decisions have been made to support the promotion of a healthy lifestyle and the development of physical activity and sport. The adopted documents contain specific target indicators, the most important of which is the proportion of citizens regularly engaged in physical activity and sport. The Strategy until 2030 consolidates the results of previously established objectives. Taking into account the volume of data accumulated through sociological monitoring of mass sports development policy, it would be interesting to analyze these data in order to assess the outcomes.

Trends in Engagement in Physical Activity and Sport Based on Survey Results

The Russian Public Opinion Research Center and the Public Opinion Foundation conducted surveys among Russian citizens prior to the adoption of strategic documents related to the development of mass sports (2006–2007, 2013, and 2017–2019).[11, 12, 13] Therefore, this article analyzes data starting from 2006. Taking into account that various physical activity guidelines specify the recommended weekly duration of exercise, where indicators allow, this analysis focuses on the proportion of individuals engaged in physical activity

[6] Resolution of Government of the Russian Federation No. 1101-r *Strategy for the Development of Physical Culture and Sports in the Russian Federation for the Period Until 2020,* dated August 7, 2009. Available at: https://www.garant.ru/products/ipo/prime/doc/96059/ Accessed May 20, 2024.

[7] Federal Law No. 329-FZ *On Physical Activity and Sport in the Russian Federation,* dated December 4, 2007. Available at: https://base.garant.ru/12157560/?ysclid=lxcxwu7e4s587323769 Accessed May 20, 2024.

[8] Federal Law No. 323-FZ *On the Fundamentals of Health Protection of Citizens in the Russian Federation,* dated November 21, 2011. Available at: https://base.garant.ru/12191967/?ysclid=lxcy1xqrnu957983878 Accessed May 20, 2024.

[9] Order of the Ministry of Health of the Russian Federation No. 8 *On Approval of the Strategy for the Formation of a Healthy Lifestyle, Prevention, and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases for the Period Until 2025,* dated January 15, 2020. Available at: https://www.garant.ru/products/ipo/prime/doc/73421912/ Accessed May 20, 2024.

[10] Order of the Federal State Statistics Service No. 172 *On Approval of the Federal Statistical Observation Form with Instructions for its Completion for the Organization by the Ministry of Sport of the Russian Federation of Federal Statistical Observation in the Field of Physical Activity and Sport,* dated March 27, 2019. Available at: https://www.garant.ru/products/ipo/prime/doc/72107142/ Accessed May 20, 2024.

[11] Resolution of the Government of the Russian Federation No. 7 *On the Federal Target Program Development of Physical Activity and Sports in the Russian Federation for 2006–2015* (as amended and supplemented), dated January 11, 2006. Available at: https://base.garant.ru/189071/ Accessed May 20, 2024.

[12] Resolution of the Government of the Russian Federation No. 302 *On Approval of the State Program of the Russian Federation: Development of Physical Activity and Sport,* dated April 15, 2014. Available at: https://base.garant.ru/77707843/ Accessed May 20, 2024.

[13] Decree of the Government of the Russian Federation No. 3081-r *On Approval of the Strategy for the Development of Physical Activity and Sport in the Russian Federation for the Period Until 2030,* dated November 24, 2020. Available at: https://www.garant.ru/products/ipo/prime/doc/74866492/ Accessed May 20, 2024.

[14] Passport of the National Project Demography. Available at: http://static.government.ru/media/files/Z4OMjDgCaeohKWaA0psu6lCekd3hwx2m.pdf Accessed May 20, 2024.

and sport at least once a week. The proportion of respondents indicating "never participate in physical activity and sport" also provides an informative insight into the state of mass sports.

The surveys differed in methods, instruments, and age ranges of the samples. The Russian Public Opinion Research Center, the Public Opinion Foundation, and the Levada Center surveyed individuals aged 18 years and older, whereas the Federal State Statistics Service (Rosstat) included individuals aged 15 years and older, and the RLMS surveyed individuals aged 14 years and older (for this article, data from the RLMS were recalculated for the age group of 15 years and older). The trends in participation in physical activity and sport are key for the subsequent analysis.

According to the Russian Public Opinion Research Center, from 2006 to 2018, the proportion of individuals engaged in physical activity and sport at least once a week increased by 29% (from 20% to 49%), whereas the proportion of non-participants declined by 18% (from 57% to 39%). The wording of the questions changed over time, potentially affecting the results: in 2006, respondents were asked about engagement in sports, whereas from 2013 onward, the questions focused on physical activity and sport [18, 19].

According to the Public Opinion Foundation, from 2007 to 2017, the proportion of individuals exercising at least once a week increased by 10% (from 31% to 41%), the proportion of those reporting their non-participation decreased by 6% (from 59% to 53%). The questions were modified as well: in 2007, respondents were asked about participation in physical activity and sport, whereas in 2017, the wording was expanded to include "morning exercises" [20, 21].

According to Rosstat, between 2013 and 2018, the proportion of respondents reporting engagement in morning exercise increased by 2.6% (from 19.6% to 22.2%). In 2018, the survey item was expanded to include evening exercise. Over the same period, the proportion of individuals participating in physical activity and sport during their leisure time decreased by 1.1% (from 28.3% to 27.2%). Among those engaged in physical activity and sport, the proportion reporting regular participation—defined as two to three times per week or more—increased by 6% (from 61.6% to 67.6%). In both 2013 and 2018, 82.5% and 83.7% of respondents, respectively, reported spending one hour or more per week on physical activity and sport, including morning exercises, group classes, active games, and other forms of physical activity [22, 23].

A distinctive feature of the surveys conducted by the RLMS and the Levada Center is the use of indicators that account for the intensity of physical activity. According to the Levada Center, in 2022, compared with 2011, the proportion of respondents engaged in physical activity and sport for at least 20 minutes until sweating or increased breathing "daily" or "several times a week" rose by 9% (from 25% to 34%). Over the same period, the proportion of those who reported "never" engaging in such activity declined by 6% (from 47% to 41%). An increased activity was observed across all age groups [24].

The RLMS indicators integrate frequency, duration, and intensity of activity. Positive trends in participation in physical activity and sport among Russian citizens have been observed since the 1990s [10]. According to survey waves from 2006 to 2021, the proportion of those not engaged in such activities declined by 9.2% (from 77.0% to 67.8%). The proportion of individuals exercising daily for less than 30 minutes and those performing light exercises for relaxation less than three times per week has notably increased. The RLMS also monitors various forms of sports activity [11]. According to the 2006 and 2021 survey waves, the proportion of respondents using exercise machines at least 12 times in the past year increased from 3.6% to 6.3%.

Thus, various monitoring efforts have documented a positive trend in the prevalence of participation in physical activity and sport. The Rosstat data show minimal changes. However, they indicate an increase in physical activity among those who already participate in such activities. The most pronounced growth in participation was reported by the Russian Public Opinion Research Center, partly due to the low baseline level of sports activity in 2006.

The next stage of research is related to sociological monitoring of the implementation of the Strategy through 2030. In nationwide surveys conducted since 2019 by the Russian State University of Physical Education, Sport, Youth and Tourism in collaboration with several sociological organizations, all forms of participation in physical activity and sport among the population, including children (independent, organized, paid, and other forms, including mandatory school-based activities), are taken into account. According to the obtained data, in 2023, the level of participation among the individuals aged 6–29 years and those aged ⩾60 years was lower than in 2021–2022. Among the individuals aged 30–59 years, the decline was insignificant. In 2023, 87.6% of the Russians aged 13–17 years engaged in physical activity and sport, 69.0% of those aged 18–24 years, 57.3% of those aged 25–29 years, 59.4% of those aged 30–59 years, and 42.1% of those aged 60 years or older [25].

Since 2020, Rosstat has been providing separate data on individuals participating in physical activity and sport independently and in organized forms. The indicators used did not demonstrate a positive trend from 2020 to 2023. Specifically, in 2020, 24.8% of men and 22.5% of women participated in such activities independently, compared with 21.4% and 19.1%, respectively, in 2023. The proportion of those participating in organized forms was lower [26].

According to the data from the Russian Public Opinion Research Center for 2018 and 2023, 49% of the respondents reported participation in physical activity and sport at least once a week [19], indicating no change over the five-year period. The lack of positive changes in participation in physical activity and sport in recent years is most likely associated with the COVID-19 pandemic and, subsequently, the start of the special military operation in 2022.

Availability and Satisfaction with Facilities for Physical Activity and Sport

Over the past two decades, the number of sports facilities in the country has increased substantially. Between 2005 and 2022, the total number rose 1.6-fold, from 221,508 to 353,494 [27, 28]. The development targets for mass sports infrastructure are guided by standards for the provision of sports facilities. In 2020, this indicator was at 55% of the target level and was expected to increase to 60% by 2024 [29].

Russian citizens note the changes taking place. In 2018, compared with 2006, there was a marked increase in the proportion of respondents who reported the availability of various sports facilities near their homes (within a 10–15-minute walk), particularly between 2013 and 2018. In 2006, the presence of a stadium was reported by 33% of the Russians, compared with 34% in 2013 and 47% in 2018; a sports club or gym by 19%, 27%, and 47%, respectively; a courtyard sports ground by 22%, 28%, and 43%; and a swimming pool by 13%, 20%, and 33%. Other types of facilities were also mentioned more frequently. The proportion of respondents reporting the absence of nearby sports facilities declined from 34% in 2006 to 11% in 2018 [30]. Between 2011 and 2019, the proportion of citizens who considered the availability of sports facilities and equipped areas for physical activity and sport in their locality to be sufficient increased by 17%, from 25% to 42%. The disparity between large and small localities has narrowed over time. In 2011, 35% of residents of cities with over one million inhabitants and 20% of those in small towns and urban-type settlements reported sufficient availability of places for physical activity and sport. By 2019, 45% of respondents in cities with over one million people, 41% in small towns, and 34% in urban-type settlements considered the availability of sports facilities in their locality to be sufficient. The highest rates were observed in Moscow and Saint Petersburg (55%) [20, 31].

The Strategy through 2030 includes a target indicator for the level of public satisfaction with the conditions created for participation in physical activity and sport, set at 70% by 2030. Satisfaction, as a subjective measure, depends on multiple factors. It may be influenced by discussion in media, assessment of the state of the social sphere in general, expectations regarding sports infrastructure, and the organization and equipment of physical activity venues, among other factors. In 2019, 66% of the Russians reported that the conditions for participation in physical activity and sport at their place of residence rather met their needs than not. Satisfaction levels were higher among the individuals aged 13–29 years (78%) and lower among the parents of children and adolescents aged 3–12 years (over 50%) [31].

Since 2020, satisfaction with the conditions for participation in physical activity and sport has been monitored by 10 parameters. The Russians were least satisfied with the cost of participation in physical activity and sport, and this indicator declined in 2023 compared with 2022. A composite index of public satisfaction with the conditions created for physical activity and sport is calculated based on these 10 parameters. From 2020 to 2023, this index increased from 53% to 63.9%. Satisfaction was higher among individuals with high income compared with those with low income. One of the 10 parameters used to assess satisfaction is the number of physical fitness and sports facilities in the respondent's residential area [32]. In this regard, preferences for the types of sports facilities and grounds that the respondents would like to have close to their homes are also evaluated. The respondents aged 30–59 years were significantly more likely than those in the 13–29-year age group to report that they have everything they need. Swimming pools and sports grounds with exercise equipment were the most frequently mentioned in the responses. Among the respondents aged 13–29 years, 22.1% expressed a desire to have outdoor workout grounds near their homes, whereas only 6.9% of non-participants reported a wish to use such equipment (respondents could select up to five types of physical activities) [25]. It is likely that some respondents who do not want to exercise but support the installation of outdoor workout grounds consider the benefit for others, whereas some of those already engaged in physical activity may prefer to have workout spots in close vicinity. Residents of capital cities were also surveyed regarding conditions for physical activity and sports. In 2019, satisfaction with the city's provision of sports facilities and institutions was high: 41.1% of the Moscow residents reported being generally satisfied, and 27.2% were rather satisfied. The most positively rated facilities in residential districts were swimming pools (61.9% satisfied, 13.7% rather satisfied) and courtyard sports grounds (58.9% satisfied, 16.5% rather satisfied). At the same time, swimming pools ranked first among the sports facility's residents believed the city needed most (41.1%), followed by courtyard sports grounds (29.9%) [15]. However, the expressed demand for new sports facilities does not necessarily mean that the respondents are ready to use them once they are built. Lack of time may become a barrier, and the intention to engage in physical activity may be indefinitely postponed. Furthermore, it is essential to consider such a limiting factor as the population's ability to pay for sports services. Physical activity and sport is an economic sector, and its employees provide corresponding services. Experts from the Accounts Chamber analyzed the financial accessibility of sports activities. It turned out that in 2019, swimming without a coach was unaffordable for 56% of the population, gym workouts for 60%, and coached sessions for 75% and 80%, respectively. The report concluded that "without a substantial increase in the financial accessibility of physical fitness and wellness services, it will be impossible to increase the number of individuals regularly engaged in mass sports" [33].

Among the responses of capital city residents regarding factors hindering health maintenance and a healthy

lifestyle, the lack of physical activity and sport facilities ranked second to last. Only 3% of the Moscow residents reported this factor, whereas 22% mentioned the high cost of memberships to sports clubs and gyms (the respondents were able to select three out of 12 options). Physical activity and sport infrastructure represents only one component of the systemic conditions necessary for a healthy lifestyle. Among the proposed development priorities for the capital (the respondents were able to select three out of seven options), only 8% of the residents supported increasing the number of physical activity and sport facilities, whereas 29% identified the affordability of physical activity and sport services, and 14% supported the creation of outdoor walking areas (parks, public gardens) [34]. Thus, the residents of Moscow more frequently reported the affordability of physical activity and sport services and the availability of walking areas than the need to increase the number of physical activity and sport facilities. The survey provided insight into the context of a comfortable urban environment, perceived health risks, and health-promoting factors. Stricter monitoring of the environmental situation and the quality of food products sold in stores were most frequently cited. Environmental conditions are particularly important for outdoor sports activities.

The concept of a place for physical activity and sport is broad. The main indicator of whether such places meet the population's needs is their actual use. Rosstat monitors the situation. From 2020 to 2023, approximately one-quarter of the respondents indicated the absence of such places for exercises and sport. The majority reported that facilities were available but not used (55.7% in 2020, 59.2% in 2023). The proportion of those who stated that facilities were not accessible was extremely low (peaking at 1.5% in 2021). The highest rate of facility use was reported in 2021 (12.5%). Moreover, the proportion of such responses decreases with age [26].

The non-use of exercise and sports facilities is attributable not only to the fact that a significant portion of the population does not engage in physical activity, but also to the widespread practice of exercising at home, which undoubtedly is important for health. In 2023, among the individuals who participated in exercise or sports activity at least once to three times per month (54%), 54% reported exercising independently at home (67% among those aged ≥60 years); 43% exercised independently at stadiums, sports grounds, gyms, or swimming pools; 13% exercised in fitness clubs under the supervision of a trainer or instructor; and 12% participated in sports clubs, teams, or swimming pools also under the guidance of a trainer or instructor. Younger individuals are more likely to use sports facilities and professional training services. With age, the proportion of those seeking assistance from a trainer declines substantially [19]. The data reflect individuals who are active at least once per month. However, it is important to note that regular activity has a more substantial impact on health.

Tasks for Further Promotion of Exercise and Sports to Improve Population Health

The Strategy through 2030, adopted in 2020, defines target indicators for increasing the proportion of the population systematically engaged in exercise and sports. As noted above, for different age groups, systematic participation is defined by a specific amount of weekly physical activity. The proportion of systematically engaged in exercise and sports is expected to increase from 83.9% to 90% in the 3–29-year age group; from 28.9% to 70% among women aged 30–54 years and men aged 30–59 years; and from 11.7% to 45% among women aged 55–79 years and men aged 60–79 years. Thus, a significant increase is anticipated in the proportion of systematically active individuals aged 30 years and older.

A 2019 survey showed that in the 30–59-year age group, 36% were systematically engaged in physical activity and sport, 19% participated irregularly, and the remaining respondents did not participate at all; in the 60 years and older group, the figures were 27% and 27%, respectively [31]. In 2023, 41% of respondents aged 60 years and older reported participation in physical activity and sport at least once per week [19]. It should be emphasized that the target indicator for the 60–79-year age group can be achieved if the proportion of individuals engaged in physical activity and sport increases to 45%, with a daily exercise duration of 13 min.

Surveys indicate that poor health is more frequently reported as a barrier to physical activity among individuals aged 60 years and older than in younger age groups. Among the people aged 60 years and older, there is a higher proportion of those who do not participate in physical activity and sport and also of those who exercise daily—25% (compared with 18% in the overall sample) [19]. In this group, 80% of respondents identified health maintenance and promotion as the primary reason for exercising, compared with47% among those aged 18–24 years [35]. If older adults without contraindications to physical activity are provided with informational brochures in medical facilities or through regional programs aimed at extending active longevity (implemented under the federal project Older Generation) 14, including information on reducing the risk of NCDs through regular short-duration exercise, a list of exercises, and links to relevant websites or television programs, they are likely to respond positively.

Tasks related to further engagement of the Russians in mass sport require targeted measures that take into account attitudes toward participation in mass sport among different population groups. Participation in physical activity and sport is influenced by sex, age, education level, occupation, income level, and type of settlement. Higher levels of activity are reported among men, younger individuals, and urban residents. The proportion of those engaged in physical activity and sport increases with higher education and income levels [23]. Individuals with higher income are

more likely to use paid sport services than those with lower income [36]. Indicators of physical activity and sport among various sociodemographic groups should be interpreted in the context of their overall physical activity levels. Medical and social studies show that higher levels of physical activity are more often observed among rural residents compared with urban residents and are more common among those without higher education, which is associated with the nature of their occupational workload. However, recreational physical activity is more prevalent among individuals with higher education, which, according to researchers, may indicate higher health literacy and a responsible attitude toward one's health [8].

There is a broad consensus among the Russians regarding the benefits of physical activity and sport. The goal of strengthening health was reported by more than 80% of the respondents across all age groups. However, with age, perceptions of the purpose of physical activity and sport tend to shift. The proportion of individuals who participate in such activity for enjoyment (derived from physical movement), leisure, social interaction, psychological relief, and maintaining physical fitness decreases with age [23].

The reasons hindering engagement in physical exercises and sport have been extensively studied. The respondents aged 13–29 and 30–59 years more frequently than older adults (aged 60 years and older) reported lack of time, heavy workload at work and home, and the high cost of gym memberships or personal training services as barriers to participation. Adolescents and young adults also more often mention fatigue from daily routines, as well as other interests and hobbies [31]. Engagement in physical activity requires self-discipline and the willingness to give up passive forms of leisure. An analysis of trends in reasons for not participating in physical activity and sport shows that since 2006, the most frequently reported reason has been lack of time. In 2023, this was reported by 40% of those who did not engage in physical activity or did so only a few times a year (the respondents were able to select up to three out of ten options). A considerable proportion of respondents reported lack of willpower (22%) and absence of perceived need (20%). The lack of sports facilities or venues near their place of residence (12%) and insufficient financial resources for participation (10%) were less frequently mentioned. Compared with 2006, poor health was cited more often in 2023 (36% vs. 18%) [19].

The prevalence of participation in physical activity and sport declines after the age of 24 years, that is, after completing formal education. Among individuals aged 18–24 years, the largest proportion (45% compared with 22% in the overall population) reported participation in physical activity two to three times per week. After graduation, this proportion decreases to 28% in the 25–34-year age group [19]. A culture of active leisure should be instilled from childhood. Public health experts have developed recommendations on children's use of computers. Parents may benefit from informational leaflets containing these recommendations, sets of exercises for active breaks, and links to websites offering guided instructions. The personal example of older family members performing such exercises is especially important.

Taking into account that a portion of the Russian population either does not participate in physical activity and sport or does so for insufficient time to achieve a meaningful health benefit, it is necessary to more actively disseminate expert recommendations on increasing physical activity and emphasize the importance of regular exercise for well-being and performance. There is a need for broader public awareness campaigns about physical activity programs that are suitable for self-monitoring and easily integrated into daily routines. Walking can also yield health benefits, with the level of exertion depending on the duration, distance, and individual physical capacity.

Those who are interested in physical activity may be encouraged by the emergence of new sports facilities and services in their residential area, provided they are financially accessible. Expanding opportunities for participation in physical activity and sport can be supported by the development of free, publicly accessible spaces for such activity, which is particularly important for young people and socioeconomically disadvantaged groups. As stated by the Ministry of Sport, "The number of urban and recreational infrastructure facilities is at its lowest level of development, although the availability and quality of such facilities largely determine the extent of public involvement in physical activity" [37]. Policies aimed at increasing physical activity through exercises and sports pursue not only humanitarian, but also economic goals, namely, reducing healthcare expenditures associated with diseases linked to insufficient physical activity. Therefore, programs designed to facilitate participation in physical activity and sport, including those implemented in outdoor settings, should also be evaluated based on their outcomes. In cases of low attendance, efforts should focus on promoting the culture of use and educating the public about the health benefits of various forms of physical activity. To support health-oriented outdoor exercise, it is important to locate sports facilities in areas with favorable environmental conditions and to promote the use of free, safe websites offering guidance on how to use outdoor exercise equipment.

As part of the Healthy Cities of Russia competition, it would be advisable to prioritize programs that promote physical activity through the development of outdoor sports infrastructure and to disseminate examples of successful practices.

CONCLUSION

The studies have identified a positive trend in the prevalence of physical activity and sports participation among the Russians from 2006 to 2018. Respondents increasingly

reported the presence of sports facilities in their residential areas. In recent years, satisfaction with the conditions created for such activity has grown; however, there has been no corresponding increase in actual participation or in the use of available facilities.

Although lack of financial resources is not the primary reason for refusing participation in exercises and sports, limited purchasing power remains a barrier to accessing paid sport services. Levels of sports activity are higher among individuals with high income compared with those with low income.

Russian's suggestions regarding the construction of new sports facilities do not necessarily reflect a willingness to use them. Citizens' preferences should be interpreted in the context of their intentions and capabilities to participate in physical activity, including the availability of free time and the financial means to pay for desirable services. Comprehensive research on these issues, along with the analysis of statistics on the use of sports and recreation services, may serve as a foundation for policies on benefits that promote participation in physical activity and sport among the Russians, as well as for the adjustment of standards governing access to sports facilities.

With regard to participation in physical activity and sports, the population can be divided into three groups. Those who participate in such activities regularly, those who do so irregularly, and those who do not participate at all. When promoting exercises and sports, it is important to inform the population about expert recommendations regarding regular physical activity, its combinations, and the cumulative health benefits of incorporating movement into daily routines.

The development of accessible outdoor spaces for exercises and sports activities is underway. It is necessary to study the population's readiness and actual practices of using these spaces. It is advisable to introduce high school students to the use of outdoor workout facilities and to provide information on how physical activity affects the body, how to determine appropriate levels of exertion, how to exercise safely, and other relevant issues.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

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