

A new study reveals the level of physical activity and sport per European country

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From left to right, the experts Antonio Monleón-Getino (Faculty of Biology, University of Barcelona) and Daniel Ríos (Sales Upper Secondary School in Viladecans, Barcelona).

Sweden, Finland and Denmark are the European countries that do more sport on a regular basis, according to a study published in the *Open*

Access Library Journal by an international collaborative of researchers. According to the study, people in Portugal, Italy, Spain and especially Greece, are listed below the European average regarding the indicators on population and sport.

Sedentarism and lack of physical activity is increasingly common in western [countries](#). According to the World Health Organization (WHO), the lack of physical activity is the fourth greatest risk factor in global mortality, and the main cause of more than 21 percent of breast and colon cancers, 27 percent of diabetes cases and around 30 percent of [coronary heart disease](#) cases.

The new study published in *Open Access Library* covers general aspects of physical activity and does not focus on any sport in particular. It is based on the multivariate analysis of data from around 27,000 people from 27 European countries according to the information published by the Eurobarometer of the European Commission on the practice of sport by people over 15. For each analysed country, the experts analyse the practice of physical exercise and sport of their inhabitants, who are listed in four categories: the ones who never play sport, barely play, occasionally play, and regularly play sport.

Physical activity in Europe: A new inequality map?

"Once we analysed the regularity with which people do sport in 27 countries of the European Union, we saw that Nordic countries, Sweden, Finland and Denmark, play sport more regularly," says Daniel Ríos, lecturer of secondary education at the Sales High School.

After Sweden, Finland and Denmark, the countries with best indicators of physical activity are Slovenia, the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, Germany, the United Kingdom and France. The lower levels in physical activity were recorded in Bulgaria and Greece.

"As a conclusion," says Daniel Ríos, "we think educational and economical levels of these countries are highly related to the practice of [physical activity](#) and sport of the people." This scientific study describes how the regular practice of sport and exercise is related to adults involved in educational activities, and with a high level of satisfaction with their economic status and career profile.

In the case of Spain, "the level of sport practice is co-related with socioeconomic status, as it was seen in the Survey of Sporting Habits in Spain 2015. The survey, carried out in the National Statistics Plan 2013-2016 by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport; the Senior Council for Sports and the National Institute of Statistics, aimed to bring the main indicators of sporting habits and practices of people from all the country," says Antonio Monleón-Getino, from the University of Barcelona.

A multivariate statistical technique with great analytical power

The study uses a multidimensional scaling method (MDS) to represent the series of variables of the 27 European countries and a country with an average value (which would be the average of the countries that comprise the European Union).

According to professor Daniel Ríos, "The MDS method tries to show in a Euclidean space, with few dimensions, the proximities or distances between a set of objects— countries, in this case. This technique combines a great capacity to reduce data with high a high graphic potential and represent them in a space with few dimensions (two or three)."

"The MDS is very interesting because it complements other multivariate

techniques (factor analysis, cluster, etc.) and allows resolving complex multivariate data collections where the relation between variables is defined with statistical proximity or distance. In this article, as a methodological novelty, the Bhattacharyya distance is applied to calculate the distance between countries," the authors write.

More information: Daniel Ríos et al. A Graphical Classification of European Countries According to Physical Activity Level of Its Citizens, *OALib* (2016). [DOI: 10.4236/oalib.1103195](https://doi.org/10.4236/oalib.1103195)

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