

DATA AT A GLANCE

Modest Sex Differences in Insufficient Physical Activity in Asia Pacific

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Due to its potent role in human morbidities and mortalities, insufficient physical activity (IPA) is considered a serious public health problem that demands serious attention and solution. Knowledge of the categories of persons with IPA is strategic to enable the delivery of health services to those who need them most. As a biosocial structure, sex—being male and female, since it helps shape and sustain human behavior—is an important lens with which to examine IPA. Among persons aged 18+ years, we probed the percentage of IPA among females and males and the percentage difference between the sexes. Table 1 presents the data from 25 selected Asia-Pacific countries.

Among females aged 18+ years, between 3.7% and 58.0% have IPA. There are 15 countries where at least 20% of females are found with IPA, and among these countries, Malaysia (58.0%), New Zealand (43.7%), and Bangladesh (43.4%) have the highest prevalence. Among males aged 18+ years, between 4.5% and 46.7% have IPA. There are 12 of the 25 countries where at least 20% of the males have IPA, with Malaysia (46.7%), New Zealand (35.8%), and Japan (31.1%) having the highest prevalence.

The sex differences in IPA are evident. Specifically, IPA is found to be higher among females than in males in 22 out of the 25 sampled countries. The gaps in these 22 countries widely vary, from 0.8% to 33.2%. A closer scrutiny of these differences suggests that the prevalence of a serious gap, where the disparity is 10% or higher, is limited to only five countries, namely, Bangladesh (33.2%), Laos (11.3%), Malaysia (11.3%), Pakistan (11.5%), and Sri Lanka (13%). In assessing the IPA in the Asia Pacific, particularly when making decisions on targeted risk-reduction interventions, sex may be used as a pathway but only in the case of a few countries. Overall, IPA is found as common for both sexes.

Table 1. Percentage of Persons Aged 18+ Years with IPA, by Sex and Sex Difference

Country	Female	Male	Sex Difference
Australia	27.6	20.1	7.5
Bangladesh	43.4	10.2	33.2
Bhutan	11.8	5.7	6.1
Cambodia	10.9	9.7	1.2
China	25.6	22.5	3.1
India	16.1	10.8	5.3
Indonesia	22.0	25.5	-3.5
Japan	36.5	31.1	5.4
Kazakhstan	21.0	20.2	0.8
Laos	16.0	4.7	11.3
Malaysia	58.0	46.7	11.3
Mongolia	23.2	19.6	3.6
Myanmar	11.6	8.3	3.3
Nepal	3.7	4.5	-0.8
New Zealand	43.7	35.8	7.9
Pakistan	31.7	20.2	11.5
Papua New Guinea	17.5	11.8	5.7
Philippines	18.6	13.1	5.5
South Korea	37.9	28.9	9.0
Russian Federation	8.8	10.2	-1.4
Singapore	35.3	30.9	4.4
Sri Lanka	30.3	17.3	13.0
Thailand	16.7	12.9	3.8
Turkey	37.5	28.1	9.4
Vietnam	25.8	22.1	3.7

Reference

World Health Organization. (2016). Prevalence of insufficient physical activity among adults: Data by country. *Global Health Observatory Data Repository*. Retrieved from <https://goo.gl/XK3NDt>