

## Press release

*For immediate release*

6 September 2018

### Lack of physical activity is a threat to global health

More than a quarter (1.4 billion) of the world's adult population were insufficiently active in 2016, putting them at greater risk of cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, dementia, and some cancers, according to the [first study to estimate global physical activity trends over time](#). The study was undertaken by researchers from the World Health Organization (WHO) and published in *The Lancet Global Health* journal.

The study also found:

- No improvement in global levels of physical activity since 2001
- Worldwide, around 1 in 3 women and 1 in 4 men do not do enough physical activity to stay healthy
- Levels of insufficient physical activity are more than twice as high in high-income countries compared to low-income countries, and increased by 5% in high-income countries between 2001 and 2016
- The highest rates of insufficient activity in 2016 were found in adults in Kuwait, American Samoa, Saudi Arabia, and Iraq where more than half of all adults were insufficiently active. Comparatively, around 40% of adults in the USA, 36% in the UK, and 14% in China were insufficiently active.
- The countries with the lowest levels of insufficient physical activity in 2016 were Uganda and Mozambique (6% each).

WCPT President Emma K Stokes said: 'We all know how important physical activity and exercise is for our individual physical health. This study shows how a lack of physical activity is taking its toll on global health. The WHO's [Global Action Plan on Physical Activity](#) sets out 20 policy areas to create more active societies by improving the spaces where people can be physically active and by increasing the opportunities for people to be more active.'

'Physical therapists have a key role to play in increasing people's levels of physical activity, and contributing to improvements in global health.'

**Contact** Mia Lockner on [mlockner@wcpt.org](mailto:mlockner@wcpt.org)

**Twitter** [@WCPT1951](#)

**Facebook** [@WCPT1951](#)

WCPT Secretariat • Victoria Charity Centre • 11 Belgrave Road • London SW1V 1RB • UK  
T +44 (0)20 7931 6465 • F +44 (0)20 7931 6494 • [info@wcpt.org](mailto:info@wcpt.org) • [www.wcpt.org](http://www.wcpt.org)



# Press release

**Website**      <https://www.wcpt.org/>

## EDITOR'S NOTES

### About physical therapy

Physical therapists (also known as physiotherapists) are experts in developing and maintaining people's ability to move and function throughout their lives. With an advanced understanding of how the body moves and what keeps it from moving well, they promote wellness, mobility and independence. They treat and prevent many problems caused by pain, illness, disability and disease, sport and work related injuries, ageing and inactivity.

Physical therapists are educated over several years, giving them a full knowledge of the body's systems and the skills to treat a wide range of problems. This education is usually university-based, at a level that allows physical therapists to practise independently. Continuing education ensures that they keep up to date with the latest advances in research and practice. Many physical therapists are engaged in research themselves.

### About WCPT

WCPT is the profession's global body representing over 450,000 physical therapists/physiotherapists from member organisations in 112 countries. More information: [www.wcpt.org](http://www.wcpt.org).



**World Confederation  
for Physical Therapy**