

Half Of Indians Physically Unfit Lancet Study

Why In News

- **Half the adult Indian population** does not meet the **World Health Organisation's** (WHO) guidelines on sufficient physical activity, according to new data published in the Lancet Global Health. **More women** (57 per cent) than men (42 per cent men) are physically inactive. Most alarmingly, the prevalence of **insufficient physical activity** among Indian adults has risen sharply from 22.3 per cent in 2000 to 49.4 per cent in 2022.
- This means unchecked, **60 per cent of our population** would be unfit by 2030 and at risk of disease from not doing enough physical activity.



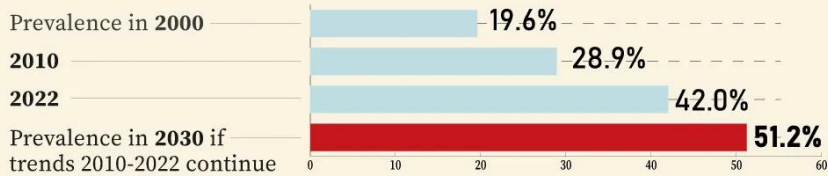
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Why Is This Study Significant

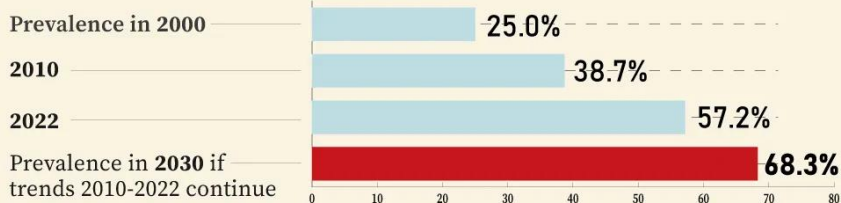
- WHO recommends at least **150 to 300 minutes of moderate aerobic activity** per week (or equivalent vigorous activity) for all adults. **Insufficient physical activity** is defined as not **doing 150 minutes of moderate-intensity activity, 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity activity**, or an equivalent combination per week.
- **According to the WHO**, physical inactivity puts adults at greater risk of **cardiovascular diseases** such as heart attacks and strokes, Type 2 diabetes, dementia and cancers of the breast and colon.



Prevalence of insufficient physical activity among men (above 18)



Prevalence of insufficient physical activity among women (above 18)



- **India has the 12th highest prevalence** of insufficient physical activity among 195 countries. Worldwide, nearly one third (31 per cent) of adults – approximately **1.8 billion people** – did not meet the recommended levels of physical activity in 2022.

Non-Communicable Diseases



Cardiovascular Diseases



Diabetes



Chronic Respiratory Diseases



Cancer

- “This is because of many factors, including changes in work patterns (move towards more sedentary work), changes in the environment, convenient transportation modes and changes in leisure time activities (that is more screen based/sedentary activities),” said Dr Rüdiger Krech, Director of Health Promotion at WHO.
- **The highest rates of physical inactivity** were observed in the high-income Asia-Pacific region (48 per cent) and South Asia (45 per cent) with levels of inactivity in other regions ranging from 28 per cent in high-income Western countries to 14 per cent in Oceania.

Why Should Indians Be Concerned

- **Indians are genetically more prone** to developing non-communicable diseases like heart disease and diabetes at least a decade earlier than others. “Lack of physical activity means that you are just **aggravating your existing risk factors**.”



- The WHO goals were set to reduce risk of heart disease, diabetes, obesity and **some types of cancer while improving** mental health and a stronger immune system,” said Dr K Srinath Reddy, public health expert and top cardiologist.
- **“But delayed urbanisation and industrialisation** in some parts of the world have led to a sedentary and comfortable lifestyle, particularly South Asia (including India),” he added.

Why Are Women More Physically Inactive Than Men

- Dr Reddy pointed out that several studies within India had also shown low levels of physical activity among women, **who wrongly believe** that household chores are a good form of physical exercise. Then there are cultural barriers. “Inactivity is most evident in middle aged urban women,” he said. **Indian women are doing worse than neighbouring** Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal, says the study.

