

Overview

**MOVEMENT IS LIFE:
SPORTS AND PHYSICAL
ACTIVITIES FOR EVERYONE**

National Human Development Report
2017



*Empowered lives.
Resilient nations.*



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Programa das Nações Unidas para o Desenvolvimento – PNUD

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The intrinsic value of sports and physical activities (SPAs) is already well-established, just like their relation to good health, sociability, cognition, productivity, and quality of life as a whole. Even so, most people are not involved with these practices. This National Human Development Report assumes that SPAs have the potential to enrich our lives and increase the freedom of choice of every individual—they are rights, not duties. As a result, we strongly advocate for governments to adopt public policies consistent with the importance of SPAs for human development, as well as prescribe similar initiatives for the private sector and civil society organizations.

While not ignoring the large variety of SPAs that have to do with transportation, domestic work, and work activities, this report focuses on activities that take place in one's spare time, in the context of leisure, and traces their relation to human development. One should understand that the character of liberty, which is central to the concept of human development,

is expressed in its most effective form through activities practiced in one's free time; these activities should also be understood as part of the social rights of each and every citizen.

In this way, the report categorizes *sports and physical activities* as the following: activities that demand significant involvement of the body, as well as movement or physical effort that are performed predominantly without economically productive objectives, granting various values and meanings (often overlapping) linked to dimensions of health, physical aptitude, competition, sociability, fun, risk and excitement, catharsis, relaxation, and physical beauty, among others¹.

The analyses conducted from the data available about the practice and organization of SPAs in Brazil led this report to propose six central principles for organizing action in the area so as to increase and refine the involvement of people in SPAs:

1. SPAs are a dimension of human development when the decision to perform them has, at its base, a free and conscious decision that is not limited by a lack of free time, material and financial resources, and/or opportunities.

Moving is a valuable ability for human development and is expressed by means of various operations (walking, dancing, playing sports, playing, riding bikes, etc.) with different meanings for people in their lives. Everyone has the potential to move and perform SPAs; therefore, this capacity should be guaranteed and enriched during one's entire life so that everyone develops this potential and benefits from it (with agency) to give their lives more worth and quality.

There is a multiplicity of SPA activities, as well as of meanings attributed to these activities by people. Without looking to establish a hierarchical relation between more utilitarian reasons (such as health benefits) and personal environment reasons (such as pleasure), this report argues for the importance of building the objective and symbolic conditions for SPAs to be accessible to everyone for a wide variety of reasons. SPAs should therefore be effectively treated as choices, as autonomous as is possible.

Three conditions are understood as being central to defining the degree of liberty present in people's choices regarding the practice of SPAs. The first of them is time, that is, the direct relation between being able to choose one of these activities and the free time available to do it. Second, the necessity of material and financial conditions for the practice of SPAs also stands out. The availability of resources, in order to benefit from either private options or the availability of public material conditions (which range from sports equipment to lighting and public security), is indispensable for participating in SPAs. The third has a symbolic and cultural character: the value of being active is intrinsically related to local cultural dynamics, which impact—and many times limit—the types of SPAs that people see as valuable activities. The idea here is that the value of certain practices is determined by an individual's free and conscious decision, affected as little as possible by cultural or media imposition.

2. Policies that promote SPAs, and strategies to improve and refine participation in them, should be elaborated and implemented from a perspective of the right to access SPAs and the responsibility for the current situation. They should come from a perspective of what is intended for the future, and be shared between the population, the public sector, private initiatives, and the third sector.

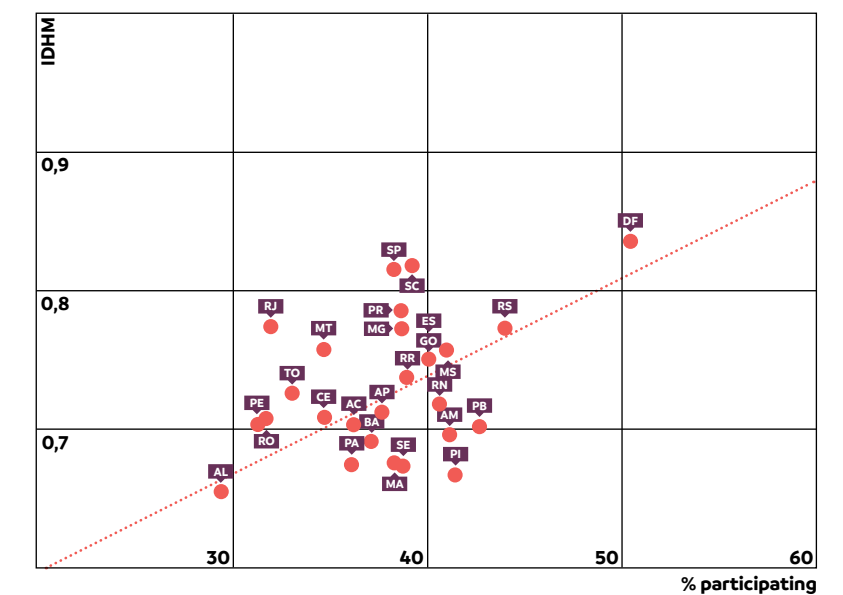
Public policies are society's principal tool to influence the creation of capabilities. Existing policies in various areas, during periods of both crisis and stability, can increase or reduce the opportunities on offer for people choosing the type of life they want and value. In addition to governments, civil society through NGOs, community associations, unions, religious groups, indigenous organizations, business associations, and professional associations, among others also intervene in the choice and implementation of new courses of public action.

For SPAs, it is no different: policies and initiatives from a wide variety of actors should coincide with the way services and opportunities are offered to people. The organization of the National Conferences of Sports in 2004, 2006, and 2010, is an example of an initiative that built a space of public dialogue for the discussion of sports-related policies. The participation of all interested parties allowed for the creation of virtuous cycles of development anchored in a respect for diversity and social justice.

The distinctive characteristic of initiatives based on a focus on human development is recognizing the multi-dimensionality of human life and, in accordance with this, promoting the search for well-being in all aspects simultaneously. As a result, new SPAs policies and initiatives should include, in the name of multi-dimensionality, sectors traditionally associated with human development (health, education, economics), and other relevant sectors (security, environment, human rights, etc.), as well as the question of popular participation in decision-making processes.

One simple way to advocate for the implementation of public policies and other initiatives about sports and physical activities is to show their clear returns in terms of human development indicators. The link between participating in sports and physical activities and the human development of the Brazilian population can be seen in the relation between the percentage of the population that participates in SPAs and states' Municipal Human Development Index (MHDI). Positive variations can be seen between the percentage of the population that participates in SPAs and MHDI: as the percentage of the population that participates in sports and physical activities in Brazilian states increases, those states' MHDI does as well.

GRAPH RE.1 Percentage of the population that participates in sports and physical activities and the Municipal Human Development Index (MHDI) of Brazilian states in 2015

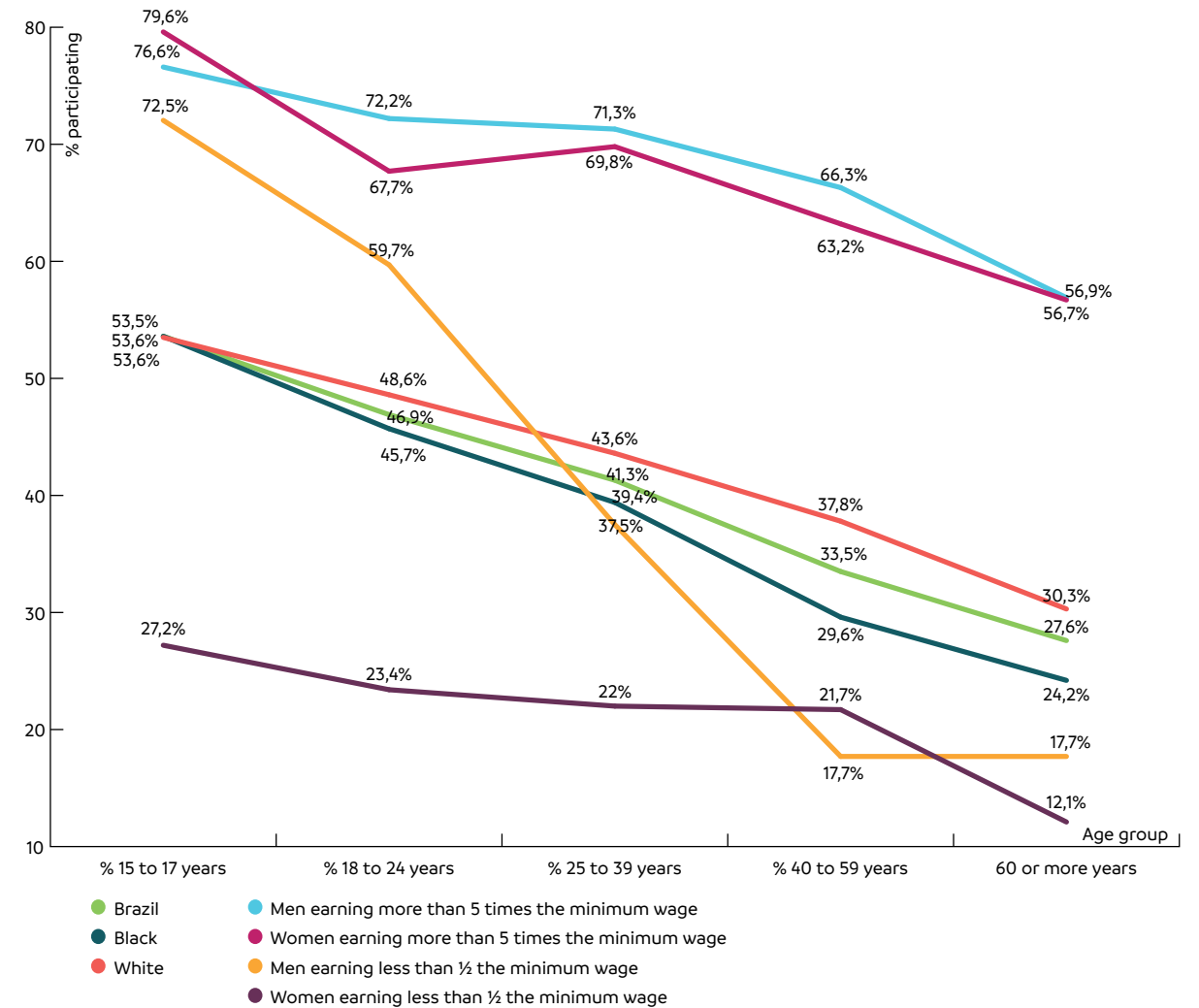


3. The existing framework of inequity in Brazil in regard to access to SPAs should provide an opportunity to adopt measures that increase and refine participation in SPAs, especially among less-advantaged groups.

Even though it is complex to come up with one percentage to measure how many people participate in SPAs in Brazil (because figures can vary significantly depending on the parameters used, such as the frequency of participation, reference period, quantity of time, etc.), it is possible to draw one general conclusion: the percentage is low, around 30% or less. In addition, existing disparities in Brazil in terms of race, gender, economic situation, level of education, etc. are also reflected in the problem of accessing SPAs in the country. Characteristics like being young, male, white, and of high educational and socioeconomic levels are frequently linked to higher levels of participation in SPAs, whereas characteristics such as being elderly, female, black, and of low educational and socioeconomic levels are frequently linked to lower levels of participation.

As a result, there exist clear relationships between the possibility of a person participating in SPAs and the social group to which he/she belongs, segmented by indicators such as sex, race, age, education, monthly household *per capita* income and combinations thereof. These indicators, in different forms and proportions, affect the possibility of participating in SPAs as much as the frequency of participation, the way in which that participation happens, and the motivations that lead to it. The data analyzed reinforce the understanding that participating in SPAs is not restricted only to the sphere of individual decision-making, but is also a product of how society structures collective life. This means that advising individuals to participate more in SPAs, without creative effective opportunities for them to engage in them or addressing the social conditioners that limit their involvement, will encounter great difficulties in changing the situation.

GRAPH RE.2 Profile of participants in sports and physical activities, in Brazil



Source: National Sample Survey of Households (PNAD, 2015).

4. It is necessary to broaden the understanding of SPAs as a tool for improving health: the focus should be on promoting health, and not just on treating or preventing diseases. Cooperation between the level of individual choice and the level of collective choice should guarantee this new mode of operation.

SPAs have traditionally been understood as an important strategy for preventing and treating diseases. There is significant scientific evidence of the positive relationship between participating in SPAs and bone, mental, neurological, and cardiovascular health, and more recently, with cognitive performance as well². Estimates show that around 5% of premature deaths in the country are derived from physical inactivity. Studies also analyze the impact on the productivity of people and public spending on health. In 2013, 15% of the Unified Health System's (SUS) costs for hospitalizations were calculated to have been attributable to physical inactivity³.

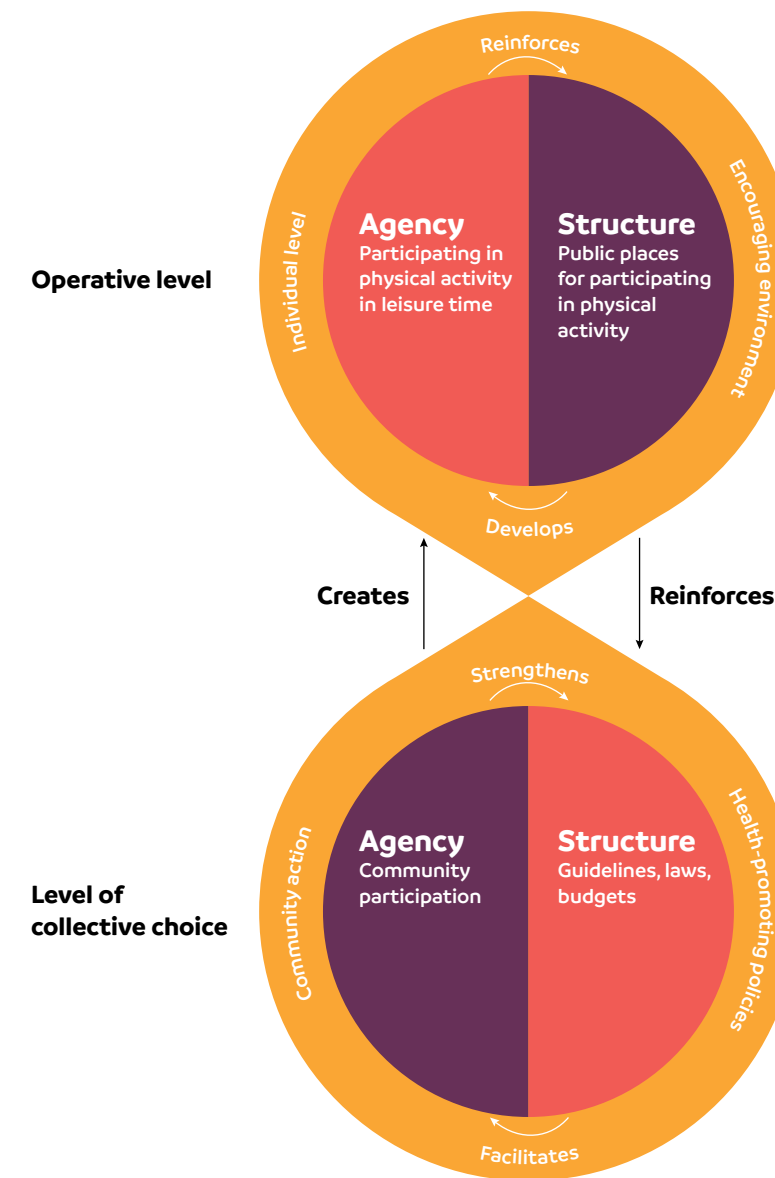
Consequently, this report recognizes the undeniable links between SPAs and health and understands that it is necessary to strengthen and broaden the understanding of their roles in this area. To do this, we propose focusing on the promotion of health, and not only the treatment and prevention of diseases. We understand health from a systemic perspective, relating the promotion of SPAs and health in inter-connected and dynamic processes that mutually reinforce one another.

As a result, to make it possible to reach our objective of increasing the number of participants in SPAs, it is necessary to think about policies at the levels of agency (the capacity of individuals to act) and structure (a collection of rules and resources that is produced by the agency of individuals). In other words, policies should not only be focused on elements related to agency (participating in SPAs, community participation, etc.), but also on those related to structure (places in which one can participate in SPAs, laws, budgets, etc.) so that individual and collective behavior can act together to promote health.

Maintaining our focus on encouraging the involvement of the population with SPAs, this report presents some possible strategies for doing so. These strategies are generally organized within three main approaches:

- *Informational and mass-media campaigns:* strategies to change community attitudes and knowledge levels through mass-media campaigns (messages and advertisements in newspapers, radio, and television) or messages to incentivize participation in SPAs in strategic environments, such as schools and workplaces.
- *Behavioral and social:* strategies to teach abilities to change and maintain behaviors (such as individual counseling) and creating social and organizational environments that facilitate these changes (such as planning goals for the adoption of healthy behavior in the school community).
- *Environmental and community-focused policies:* multiple strategies for decision-making that look to improve the accessibility, convenience, and security of places for performing SPAs, allied with actions of a physical, organizational, and educational character (for example, inter-sectoral coordination, physical changes in the environments for performing SPAs and the encouragement of educational strategies for the improvement of aspects such as accessibility and security).

FIGURE RE.1 Example of promoting sports and physical activities for health, as inter-connected and dynamic processes Fonte: adaptado de Rütten e Gelius, 2011.



Source: Adapted from Rutten and Gelius, 2011

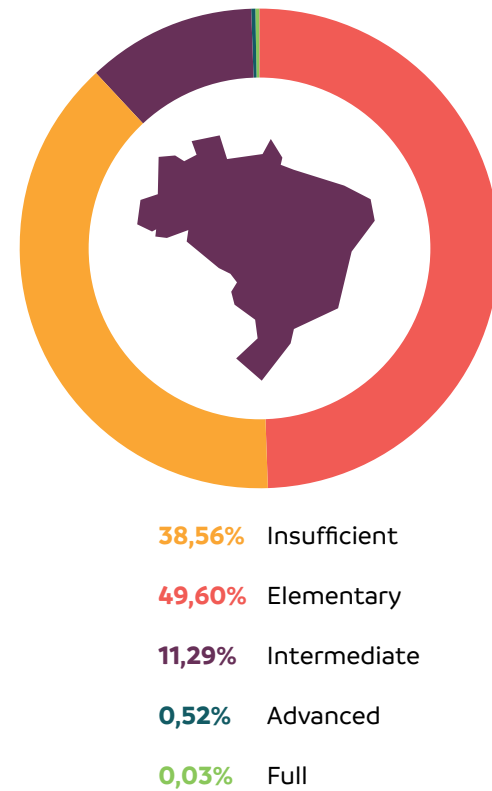
5. Schools need to become Active Schools so that students have significant and pleasant experiences that are capable of making them SPAs participants for their entire lives.

Schools have a central role in building the knowledge and habits of the population regarding SPAs. Therefore, it will only be possible to increase and refine the involvement of the population with SPAs if there is a different approach in schools. This report presents an Active School proposal that is based in the problematization of the distribution of time in school, as well as the architectural and furniture arrangements of school spaces, the rules of conduct in schools, and the relevance of SPAs to the human development of students.

The proposition of Active Schools, defended from a perspective of human development, has to do with making the school a place in which *movement* is understood as a *valuable human ability* in people's lives. Therefore, it should be established as a central *opportunity* to be guaranteed in school life. In order for this to happen, it should permeate all routines, time, and space so that people have the freedom to be active on the way to their full level of human development.

Looking to make the situation in the Brazilian school system more concrete, this report proposes a Scale of Active Schools (EEA) to measure the quality of "being active" of schools. The scale ranges from the *Insufficient* level, which characterizes schools with very precarious conditions for the promotion of SPAs, to the *Full* level, which characterizes schools with a culture and infrastructure instituted in the value and promotion of SPAs. Among the various results shown by the scale, as well as the analysis of national studies on the subject, it stands out that only 0.55% of Brazilian schools can be considered Active Schools (at the *Full* and *Advanced* levels), while 38.56% of schools are at the *Insufficient* level.

GRAPH RE.3 Distribution of public and private schools in Brazil on the Scale of Active Schools



Source: UNDP-INEP, 2017, about Active Schools

To address this situation, this report emphasizes that: 1) there exists a vital latent condition—that children and young people are active—which is a very useful jumping-off point for thinking about how to give opportunities for more movement in schools; and 2) many adaptations can be made in school architecture in order to help increase the possibilities of movement.

Talking about Active Schools does imply talking only about normative aspects, changing laws and rules, and physical education in schools. In order to build an Active School, one must advocate in favor of SPAs for the entire school community (administrators, teachers, staff, students, families) both inside and outside the school, using the following basic tenets:

- Encouraging and celebrating movement in the school as an expression of individuality and a way to build social relations.
- Considering the daily necessities of physical activity for children and young people given the evidence of its relation to health, well-being, and development.
- Promoting the experience and learning of and about SPAs in order to permit the autonomy and liberty of the school community in regard to individual and social performance about practices regarding the body in one's life and community.
- Guaranteeing the democratic participation of the school community in the effort to make the school more active.

6. A new vision for the National Sports system is necessary — one that invests in improving conditions so that everyone can always participate whenever they choose to do so.

The Brazilian population understands that the public authorities must invest in SPAs⁴. The focus, however, should be the population in general and not only high-performance sports. There is still, in the public sector, a widely disseminated idea that investment in high-performance sports, through the emergence of “sports heroes”, incentivizes the population in general to participate in SPAs. Evidently, sports heroes are inspirations for many people, not only to take up new forms of sports, but also in terms of discipline, willpower, and overcoming adversity. They are subjects of pride and sometimes make a difference because, in some cases, people began to participate in sports in which they had not before, widening their repertoire. This vision, however, must be widened toward a new National System of Sports that recognizes that encouraging high-performance sports and promoting sports and physical activities for everyone have different logics, but must be treated in an integrated and complementary way, without one taking precedence over the other.

In general, public investment does not have, as an objective, reducing the inequality in access to SPAs among social groups. On the contrary, it tends to worsen it. Traditionally, most public investment has been concentrated in young people, men, and in people who are already involved in sports (athletes), while the sectors that most need the support of the public authorities are those who receive the least of it, such as is the case with the elderly, women, and non-athletes. The current National System of Sports (SND), whose mission is to promote participation in high-performance sports, receives almost all public resources that are directed towards SPAs, even though it represents only 7.6% of the total Brazilian population that participates in SPAs.

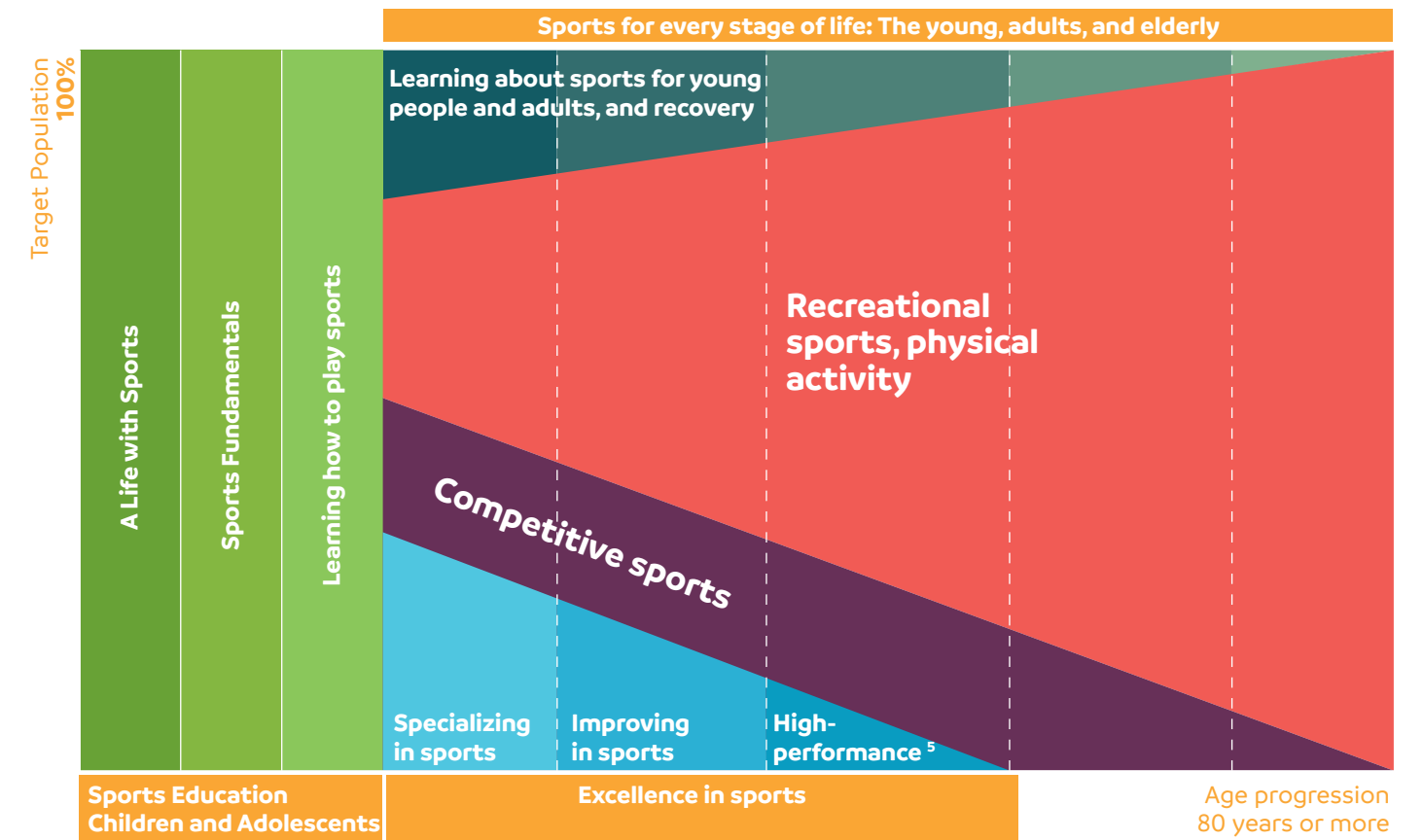
As a result, and in accordance with the National Conferences of Sports, this report advocates for the country to build a new National System of Sports that is composed of an open and decentralized structure that allows for the implementation of intersectoral policies to encourage SPAs. This system must furthermore guarantee the existence of democratic mechanisms of participation, with robust practices of monitoring, evaluation, transparency and social control.

The strengthening of the National System of Sports is seen as a necessary element for guaranteeing the right to sports, as exhibited in the Federal Constitution, whose determination is that public encouragement should be principally directed toward the educational practice of sports. The Constitution also values the encouragement of leisure as a form of social promotion, and given this, strengthens the importance of participative sports, with actions directed at people’s entire life cycles, allowing for a variety of activities. From this perspective, encouraging sports should hinge on its most democratic manifestation, which satisfactorily attends to the needs of the population, improving their conditions of life, whether through school or leisure activities.

Since September 2015, when the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with its 17 Objectives of Sustainable Development (ODS), was launched, the world has had a new milestone for global development.

This report sees SPAs as being part of this agenda, whether as a central element for reaching Objective 3 (Health and Well-being), or as an instrument to help reach other objectives, such as those related to education, social inequality, culture, leisure, or even basic necessities and social protection. As a result, increasing and

FIGURE RE.2 Vision of the New National Sports System Sports for every stage of life: The young, adults, and elderly



Source: Ministry of Sports. Proposal of the National System of Sports, 2015.

refining participation in SPAs could be fundamental for promoting the ODS, just as promoting the ODS could be decisive for increasing and refining the involvement of people with SPAs.

In this situation, with changes that become necessary on both the global and national level, the SPAs can and should increasingly become the object of both reflection and actions planned from the perspective of human development. It is fundamental for people to be able to get involved, through a free and conscious decision, with activities that they have every reason to value, thereby increasing their capabilities and possibilities of choice.

NOTAS

- 1 As such, occupational sporting and physical activities conducted by athletes and other professionals, as well as domestic employees, are not the object of reflection for this report.
- 2 REZENDE et al., 2015.
- 3 BIELEMANN et al., 2015.
- 4 BGE, 2017.
- 5 In the current system, all investments are concentrated in this light blue section.



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