



State Comptroller of Israel | Local Government
Audit Report | 2023

Social Audit

Recreational Sports in Local Authorities – Planning and Investment



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Background

Physical activity has a significant positive impact on people, makes people feel good, contributes to the prevention of obesity and various chronic diseases, and improves the physical and mental state of healthy people and those suffering from health problems at any age. Besides its obvious health benefits, physical activity enhances social cohesion, advance education and culture, bridge between populations and between different ethnic groups, and reduces social gaps.

Recreational sports are defined as residents' physical activity in their spare time, not in an organized framework as defined by law. These include independent sports activities, guided sports activities in classes or groups, and various events, such as marches, races, swimming, various competitions, festivals, navigations, and bicycle trips. Recreational Sports is the largest sports branch in Israel and worldwide – both in the number of people engaging in it and the variety of sports included therein.



Key Figures

**USD 27
billion**

the annual global economic cost estimate of medical care for people due to lack of sufficient physical activity, according to the World Health Organization

**150–300
minutes**

the recommended weekly duration of moderate-intensity aerobic activity for adults, according to the World Health Organization

about 50%

of Israeli adults engaged in regular physical activity (at least twice a week, regularly, and no less than 30 minutes continuously) in 2021, according to the Israel Recreational Sports Association survey

66%

the average rate of the examined local authorities' residents who claimed to be engaged in sports at least once a week

**only
22%**

the examined authorities' residents rate who believed that their local authority encourages them to engage in physical activity to a large extent

**only NIS
1.2–9.7**

the average annual support per resident for recreational sport activities within the support for the examined local authorities in 2018–2021

**only
7%–30%**

the rate of base support for the local authorities' recreational sports and the initiatives within it out of the recreational sports expenditures in 2021

0.07

the average number of sports halls per 1,000 people in non-Jewish local authorities (noted in the Authorities' Questionnaire), compared to 0.21 in Jewish local authorities




Audit Actions

 From May to November 2022, the State Comptroller's Office examined various aspects of the local authorities promoting recreational sports within their jurisdiction in 2018–2022. Among other things, the audit examined the bodies involved in the promotion of recreational sports in Israel; Master and strategic planning for the promotion of recreational sports; The local authorities' investments in recreational sports; Use of the sports infrastructures in the local authorities and the adaption of these infrastructures to the needs of the residents. The examination was carried out in seven local authorities: the **Beit Shemesh, Hadera, Tirat Carmel, and Kiryat Yam** Municipalities, the **Kafr Qara** and **Pardes Hanna-Karkur** Local Authorities and the **Lower Galilee** Regional Council (the authorities examined). Since many recreational sports activities in the examined authorities are carried out through community centers or municipal associations, they were audited for this report.

The audit included a State Comptroller's Office questionnaire sent to 50 additional local authorities (the Authorities' Questionnaire) to analyze the organizational structure of their sports departments, the patterns of recreational sports activities, and how the local authority keeps in contact with the public. Completion examinations were conducted at the Ministry of Culture and Sports, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, and Planning Administration at the Ministry of Interior and the Center for Local Government. Furthermore, a public participation process was carried out among a sample of the residents of the examined local authorities to map their attitudes and their degree of satisfaction with recreational sports in the local authorities (the Residents' Attitudes Survey).

Key Findings




 **Promoting Recreational Sports by the Sports Administration at the Ministry of Culture and Sports** – in the strategic plan for sports prepared by the Sports Administration in April 2021, no responsible party was determined to develop and promote recreational sports in Israel. It was further found that the only area (out of four main areas of concern) with a direct impact on recreational sports was sport facilities, including a goal of providing an adapted response in recreational sports facilities for all populations as well as success metrics on the degree of dispersion of the sport facilities in the country. The strategic plan contained no action plans, goals, or success metrics for promoting recreational sports.





- 📌 The Support to the Local Authorities' Recreational Sports out of the Total Supports of the Sports Administration** – it was found that the total support budget allocated by the Sports Administration in 2019–2021 increased by about 29% (from about NIS 389.5 million to about NIS 504 million), while the budget for the Local Authorities' Recreational Sports, which is the Sports Administration's main budgetary support for recreational sports activities in the local authorities, increased in those years at only about 9.5% (from about NIS 52.8 million to about NIS 57.8 million). It was also found that the Local Authorities' Recreational Sports share of the Sports Administration's total support decreased from 13.6% in 2019 to 11.5% in 2021.
- 📌 The "Efshari Bari" (Healthy Possible) Program** – as part of the national program for promoting an active and healthy lifestyle approved by the government in November 2011 (under the brand name "Efshari Bari"), the Ministry of Health issued a call to local authorities to join the program and receive support for carrying out plans and activities for the promotion of health within the program. It was found that among the examined authorities, the **Hadera** and **Kiryat Yam** Municipalities, the **Pardes Hanna-Karkur** Local Authority, and the **Lower Galilee** Regional Council are not program members. It was also found that about 70% of the local authorities had not joined the program by the audit completion.
- 📌 "Healthy Cities" Network at the Center for Local Government** – it was raised that 47% of the local authorities that responded to the Authorities' Questionnaire (23 out of 49) are not members of the "Healthy Cities" network and that 23% of them (11 local authorities) are not aware of the network's activities. Among the examined authorities, the **Hadera** and **Kiryat Yam** Municipalities, the **Kafr Qara** and **Pardes Hanna-Karkur** Local Authorities, and the **Lower Galilee** Regional Council are not members of the "Healthy Cities" network.
- 📌 The Frequency of Engaging in Sports Activities in the Examined Local Authorities** – the analysis of the Residents' Attitudes Survey raised that 66% of all respondents in the examined local authorities attested that they engage in sports activities at least once a week and that the most common sports activity was walking; 21% answered that they engage in sports less frequently; And 12% responded that they do not engage in sports activities at all. Differences were found in the frequency of engaging in sports activities between the authorities: while in **Pardes Hanna-Karkur**, 76% of the respondents stated that they engage in sports activities at least once a week, and only 7% answered that they do not engage in sports activities at all, in **Kafr Qara** only 45% of the respondents stated that they engage in sports at least once a week, and 30% of them do not engage in sports activities at all.
- 📌 The Local Authorities as an Encouraging Factor for Engaging in Recreational Sports** – a considerable gap was found between the local authorities' perception of themselves as promoting the practice of recreational sports (meaning that the authorities



rated themselves in the Authorities' Questionnaire with a score of 4 or higher out of 5, in response to a question about their viewpoint of these issues), and the perspective of the residents in the examined local authorities who believed that the authorities do not encourage and organize recreational sports activities: 78% of the respondents estimated that their local authority's efforts to encourage the residents to engage in physical activity as moderate (39%) and minor (39%), and 22% of the respondents estimated that their local authority encourages its residents to engage in physical activity to a great extent. It was found that 41% were not very satisfied with the range of sports activities organized by the local authority, 27% were moderately satisfied, and only 12% were greatly satisfied with the range of sports activities organized by their local authorities. The residents' satisfaction with the range of organized activities offered was meager, especially in the **Beit Shemesh** and **Tirat Carmel** Municipalities and the **Pardes Hanna-Karkur** Local Authority.

 **Master Plans for Sports in the Examined Local Authorities** – it was raised that the **Kiryat Yam** Municipality prepared a draft master plan for sports but did not complete it and that the **Kafr Qara** Local Authority did not have a master plan for sports. In the master plans for sports of the examined authorities – **Beit Shemesh**, **Lower Galilee**, **Hadera**, **Tirat Carmel**, **Pardes Hanna-Karkur**, and **Kiryat Yam** – goals were set for the promotion of recreational sports and the development of sports facilities. However, objectives derived from goals for promoting recreational sports were only partially described in the master plans for sports of the **Hadera** Municipality, the **Pardes Hanna-Karkur** Local Authority, and the **Lower Galilee** Regional Council. In addition, the **Tirat Carmel** and **Kiryat Yam** Municipalities did not define in their master plans objectives derived from goals for developing sports facilities.

 **The Outline Plans of the Examined Authorities** – it was raised that the guidelines of the Planning Administration for public space design do not include clear instructions on recreational sports and maintaining a healthy lifestyle. Moreover, the **Kafr Qara** and **Pardes Hanna-Karkur** Local Authorities and the **Lower Galilee** Regional Council have no detailed planning guidelines for creating a space to engage in recreational sports and maintain a healthy lifestyle.

 **The Support for the Recreational Sports in the Examined Local Authorities** – it was raised that the Sports Administration's average annual support per resident through the components of the local authorities' recreational sports in 2018–2021 in the examined authorities ranges from NIS 1.2 to NIS 9.7 per resident. The support per resident in the **Beit Shemesh** Municipality (whose socio-economic cluster is 2) was NIS 1.2; In the **Pardes Hanna-Karkur** Local Authority (whose socio-economic cluster is 7) – NIS 1.7; And in the **Lower Galilee** Regional Council (whose socio-economic cluster is 7) the support per resident was NIS 9.7. Hence, there is no correlation between the budget per resident in a local authority and the authority's socio-economic index, and the criteria for distributing support funds within the local authorities' recreational sports do not reduce the gaps between the local authorities. Moreover, the rate of support



provided via the base support or the local authorities recreational sport and the initiatives within it is low. It ranges from 7% in the **Hadera, Lower Galilee, and Pardes Hanna-Karkur** Local Authorities to 30% in **Beit Shemesh**. In practice, the main budgetary source for financing recreational sports activities and initiatives in it is the local authority and the other bodies operating within its jurisdiction. Given the above, there is concern that a local authority whose budget does not allow budgeting for non-obligated areas determined by law will be unable to provide its residents with recreational sports activities and events.



Distribution of Recreational Sports Infrastructure in the Local Authorities –

the mapping conducted in the local authorities of **Beit Shemesh, Hadera, Kafr Qara, and Kiryat Yam** as part of the audit indicates the difference in the number, variety, and layout of the sports facilities in the local authorities and the lack of facilities in some of them. In **Beit Shemesh**, considerable gaps were found between the old neighborhoods in the north of the city and the new neighborhoods in the south of the city, where three basketball courts were located for about 67,000 people. The examination also raised that the number of sports halls in the city is a third of the number recommended in the Guide for Allocating Areas for Public Purposes (0.06 halls on average per 1,000 people compared to 0.18) and that the number of sports fields is about half the number recommended (0.16 sports fields on average per 1,000 people compared to 0.32). The number of swimming pools in the city is a quarter of the number recommended (0.01 pools on average per 1,000 people compared to 0.04); A lack of sports halls was found in **Hadera**, where currently the average number of sports halls in the city is about half the number recommended in the guide (0.13 halls on average per 1,000 people compared to 0.22). There is also a lack of swimming pools in the city; In **Kafr Qara**, there is a general lack of sports halls and sports fields. The number of sports fields in **Kafr Qara** is 0.30 per 1,000 people – about 55% of their recommended number (0.55 fields per 1,000 people).



Establishment of Sports Facilities and Use Thereof –

it was raised that there are barriers to the realization of support received by local authorities for establishing sports facilities. For example, in calls for bids for the establishment of sports facilities, the support does not include development, planning, and supervision costs, nor does it include the annual maintenance cost once the facility has been established. Moreover, the **Beit Shemesh, Tirat Carmel, and Kiryat Yam** Municipalities, the **Kafr Qara** Local Authority, and the **Lower Galilee** Regional Council have not established a procedure for their residents' use of their sports halls and facilities.



Existence of Policy and Planning Documents – the State Comptroller's Office commends their policy and planning documents, such as the documents prepared by the **Tirat Carmel** and **Kiryat Yam** Municipalities, providing them with policy and



implementation tools and enabling the development of public spaces that promote and maintain a healthy lifestyle.

The Development of Sports Infrastructure in Kiryat Yam – the State Comptroller's Office commends the **Kiryat Yam** Municipality for its efforts in developing the sports infrastructure within its jurisdiction, thus encouraging its residents to engage in physical activity and maintain a healthy lifestyle.

Key Recommendations

- 💡 It is recommended that the Ministry of Culture and Sports integrate action plans, goals, and success metrics into the strategic plan for sports, which strives to achieve the national goal of promoting a culture of recreational sports and physical activity among all residents of the country, along with the promotion of competitive sports.
- 💡 It is recommended that the Ministry of Culture and Sports examine the budgeting of various sports to encourage the advancement of the national goals it has set for itself, including increasing the number of people engaging in recreational sports. It is also recommended that the Ministry of Culture and Sports, whose national goals include promoting a culture of physical activity as an essential component of a healthy lifestyle among the residents of Israel, examine the budgeting of the support to local authorities' recreational sports to assist local authorities requiring such help to a greater extent.
- 💡 It is recommended that all the local authorities that do not participate in the "Efshari Bari" (Healthy Possible) program – including **Lower Galilee**, **Hadera**, **Pardes Hanna-Karkur**, and **Kiryat Yam** – meet the conditions for their participation so that they can join it. It is also recommended that the above authorities and the **Kafr Qara** Local Authority cooperate with the "Healthy Cities" network to promote a healthy lifestyle and encourage physical activity among their residents.
- 💡 It is recommended that **Kiryat Yam** Municipality complete the draft master plan for sports and publish it and that the **Kafr Qara** Local Authority prepare and publish a master plan for sports.
- 💡 It is recommended that the **Kafr Qara** Local Authority and the **Lower Galilee** Regional Council include in their future outline plans instructions ensuring the needs of the public in recreational sports to create public spaces that promotes the practice of recreational sports and the maintenance of a healthy lifestyle – all according to the guidelines of the Planning and Building Law.
- 💡 It is recommended that the **Beit Shemesh** and **Hadera** Municipalities and the **Kafr Qara** Local Authority conduct a comprehensive review of the sports facilities within their jurisdiction and fulfill the needs of the existing and future population in the local authority

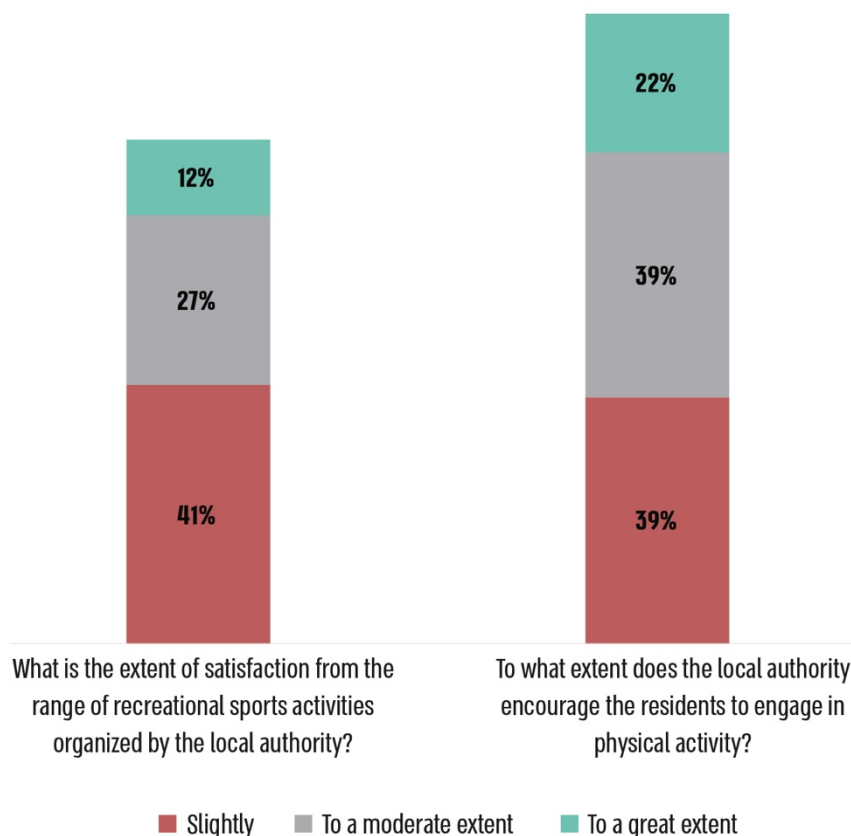


by including sports facilities and appropriate infrastructures in new outline plans and urban renewal plans, according to the recommendations of the Guide for Allocating Areas for Public Purposes.



It is recommended that the **Beit Shemesh, Tirat Carmel, and Kiryat Yam** Municipalities, the **Kafr Qara** Local Authority, and the **Lower Galilee** Regional Council establish a procedure for the use of sports halls or any other sports facilities that they rent out or allow free use of. It is recommended that this procedure includes equitable criteria that will define the process and the manner of use and rental of the sports facilities and that the local authorities publish the procedure to their residents.

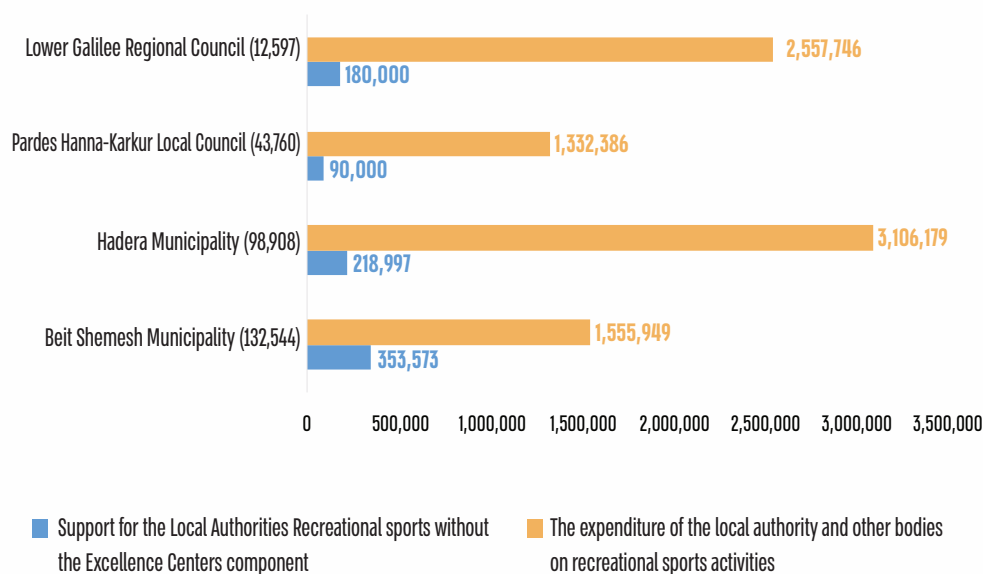
The Residents' Perceiving of the Local Authority as Encouraging and Organizing Sports Activities



Source: Residents' Attitudes Survey, 2022.



The Rate of the Base Support for Local Authorities' Recreational Sport, Initiatives and Expenditures 2021 (in NIS)



According to information from the local authorities of Beit Shemesh, Lower Galilee, Hadera, and Pardes Hanna-Karkur, from the additional bodies that were examined in the said authorities and from the Ministry of Culture and Sports data, processed by the State Comptroller's Office.



Summary

The local authorities can considerably influence the health of their residents in terms of physical activity and maintaining a healthy lifestyle, both through planning the public space within their jurisdiction and through investment in and organization of recreational sports activities. The audit findings raise that although government ministries and other bodies have initiated programs and provided support for the promotion of recreational sports in the local authorities, there is no integrating body responsible for regulating it at the national level, with the power to instruct the local authorities on how they should act, according to a long-term strategic plan, with clear standards and measurable goals. As a result, the local authorities promote recreational sports according to their economic capabilities and the priorities they set for themselves, even though they consider this a matter of great importance for the benefit of the residents.

It is recommended that the relevant parties – including the Ministry of Culture and Sports, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education, and representatives of the local authorities – consider establishing a coordinating or central body that will formulate a comprehensive and long-term national policy for the promotion of recreational sports among the residents of Israel, to increase the number of residents active in sports and for their health and well-being. It is further recommended that in the absence of a national policy and strategy for the promotion of recreational sports, the local authorities use their planning tools to encourage an active and healthy lifestyle among their residents, examine the needs and desires of the residents to make optimal decisions in the organization of recreational sports activities and investment in sports facilities according to orderly plans they will adopt. It is further recommended that the local authorities publish information about the sports facilities in their area to their residents and allow them to use these facilities equitably and according to precise criteria.