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By: **Express News Service** | Shimla | Updated: January 14, 2021 8:50:19 pm

Himachal Pradesh has the highest proportion of physically active older women in the country, according to a nationwide survey on the health of the elderly.

Around 87 per cent women aged 45 and above in the hill state are physically active, which means they are engaged in moderate or vigorous physical activity for a given amount of time each week, according to the Longitudinal Ageing Study in India (LASI) Wave I, 2017-18, released by the Union health ministry last week.

This proportion was the highest in the country, with the national average being around 69 per cent. Other states/UTs which reported a high proportion of physically active older women include Dadra and Nagar Haveli (86 per cent), Karnataka (84 per cent) and Puducherry (81 per cent).

The study, which covered over 72,000 individuals and their spouses across the country, found that among adults aged 45 and above, women are comparatively more physically active than men. Around 60 per cent older men in India were found to be physically active, with this ratio being the highest in Assam (79 per cent) followed by Himachal (77 per cent) and Nagaland (76 per cent).

The survey used WHO recommendations for classifying people as physically active or inactive, which means that an individual engaged in moderate physical activity for at least 150 minutes per week or vigorous physical activity for at least 75 minutes per week or an equivalent combination of moderate and vigorous activity was termed physically active.

“For moderate physical activity, respondents were asked about their engagement in moderately energetic activities such as cleaning house, washing clothes, fetching water, drawing water from a well, gardening, walking at a moderate pace, bicycling at a regular pace, and floor or stretching exercises. For vigorous activity, they were asked about their involvement in running or jogging, swimming, going to a health centre/gym, cycling, digging with a spade or shovel, heavy lifting, chopping, farm work, fast bicycling, and cycling with loads,” the study said.

It found that more than three-fourths of older adults (45 years and above) are physically active in Himachal, Assam, Karnataka, Jharkhand, Puducherry, and Nagaland.

On the other hand, the prevalence of physical inactivity among older adults was found to be high in Mizoram, Delhi, Haryana, Arunachal Pradesh and Telangana.

Physical activity is essential to optimum health and well-being, the study said. “Regular physical activity is beneficial in many ways because it reduces the risk of non-communicable diseases such as ischaemic heart disease, hypertension, stroke, diabetes, cancer, dementia, and depression. Additionally, it also prevents overweight and obesity and can improve mental health and musculoskeletal problems (osteoarthritis, osteoporosis), and help to achieve healthy aging,” it recommended.