



The Swedish Market

Sport articles



**Open Trade
Gate Sweden**
National Board of Trade



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Introduction

Purpose and scope of the study

This report was commissioned by **the National Board of Trade Sweden/Open Trade Gate Sweden** to screen the Swedish market for sports equipment. It provides information on market size and development over time, consumer trends, import requirements and much more. The report places Sweden in the European context, a large market with more than 450 mil. consumers.

There are uniform rules and regulations for imported goods entering the European Union (EU) market that apply for all 27 member states and affiliated markets (EEA). While the report is focused on Sweden, most of the information is relevant for exporting to the EU and EEA market as well.

The findings of this study rely on a combination of quantitative and qualitative analysis. The former includes statistics on bilateral trade, market and consumer trends in Sweden, the EU and EEA countries relevant for the sports equipment market. The information has been gathered from public and private datasets. In addition, the conclusions and suggestions rely on qualitative interviews with a selection of key players in the Swedish sports equipment market.

The sports equipment industry – key terms

The global sports equipment market is divided into several segments based on product and activity type. The main segments are ball sports, adventure sports, fitness, golf, winter sports, and other sports equipment, including archery, billiards, bowling, wheel sports, pogo sticks, and indoor games. The largest market share is held by ball sports.¹

This study does not include footwear or apparel but focuses on other relevant types of sports equipment. Product categories used in this study are listed in the table below:

- Toys, games and sports requisites; parts and accessories thereof, such as equipment for general physical exercise, gymnastics, athletics, other sports (including table-tennis) or out-door games (golf); swimming pools and paddling pools, water-skis and water-sports equipment, snow-skis and other snow-ski equipment (HS95)
- Arms, ammunition and accessories; includes firearms, revolvers, pistols, military weapons, sports guns, swords, cutlasses, bayonets and the like (HS93)
- Bags/trainer bags (HS42)

The list of sporting goods that are traded internationally contains the equipment necessary for doing sports (e.g. skis or balls), clothing (e.g. swimwear or footwear) and some articles that can be used for sport and leisure activities (e.g. boats and water sports equipment, bicycles or fishing equipment).

¹ Sports Equipment Market. Persistence Market Research. www.persistencemarketresearch.com/market-research/sports-equipments-market.asp

The Swedish market for sport articles

Brief background and facts about the Swedish sport equipment sector

Sports and physical activities are a vital part of the Swedish lifestyle. Sweden has won a total of 661 Olympic medals, winter and summer games combined, and ranks in 8th place globally for the number of medals.²

Table 1. Swedish olympic medals

Games	Gold	Silver	Bronze	Total	Rank
Summer Olympics	148	176	179	503	13
Winter Olympics	57	46	55	158	7
Total	205	222	234	661	8

Sweden also has one of the highest levels of fitness penetration in the region. In 2019, 21.6% of the population had membership in fitness and health clubs, up from 21.4% in 2017.³ 2 out of 3 Swedes claim they exercise 150 minutes a week, and about 40% exercise 5 hours a week in an intensity that they become short of breath and sweaty.⁴ The most diligent exercisers are among the younger population (16–44).⁵

Similarly to the rest of Europe, the sports equipment market in Sweden is segmented according to sports types: ball sports equipment, adventure sports equipment, fishing equipment, golf equipment, racket sports equipment, winter sports equipment, specialist footwear and all other sports-dedicated equipment. Gym equipment is also included in the sports equipment market. Smart watches and nutrition supplements however, are not.

The Scandinavian sports equipment retail market had total revenues of 4.57 billion EUR in 2020, with a growth rate of 3.5% between 2016 and 2020.⁶ The growth is the result of several trends, such as population and economic growth and an increasing fitness penetration rate (number of fitness clubs and membership). In addition, there is still a high level of lifestyle-related disorders (diseases caused by a lack of physical activity, unhealthy eating and/or substance abuse) among the population. The government and private sector are actively trying to improve the situation, by for example promoting active & healthy lifestyles, providing sports equipment and rehabilitation centres.

² www.sok.se

³ www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/es/Documents/acerca-de-deloitte/Deloitte-ES-TMT-Europe-an-Health-Fitness-Market-2019.pdf

⁴ idrottsstatistik.se/motion-och-fysisk-aktivitet/fysisk-aktivitet/#hlsotrend-bland-ungdomar

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Sports Equipment Retail in Scandinavia - Market summary, competitive analysis and forecast to 2025. Reportlinker. 01.01.2021, available at www.marketline.com/

Trade and imports

This chapter looks at both EU and Swedish trade of sports equipment over the past 5 years. As a member of the EU, Sweden is part of the Single market and also trades with other EU countries. In fact, a large part of Swedish imports of sports goods come from trade hubs in Germany and the Netherlands. In order to view the Swedish market in context, information is first provided of EU-level trade, followed by an overview of Swedish imports and exports.

EU27 trade in sports equipment

In 2019, the EU-27's trade in sporting goods with the rest of the world was valued at EUR 11.87 billion, including EUR 5.94 billion of imports and EUR 5.93 billion of exports.⁷

Table 2. EU trade in sporting goods⁸

	2019		2014 2019
	Imports	Trade balance	Average annual rate of change (%)
	€ million		Imports
Balls	316.4	-245.3	0.3
Bicycles	942.6	-574.9	3.3
Boats & water sports equipment	3 905.3	2 811.9	14.5
Fishing equipment	422.1	-307.2	5
Golf equipment	201.5	-177.7	1.9
Gymnastic, athletic, swimming equipment	2 441.6	-1 108.8	6.6
Parachutes	67.1	-18.6	4.7
Racket sport equipment	140.9	-90.5	2.9
Skates	128.1	-100.3	-2.5
Skis and related equipment	239.7	408.2	4.5
Sporting shotguns	62	303.6	5.4
TOTAL	8 867.3	900.3	7.1

Both imports and exports have significantly increased since 2014; in relative terms, exports recorded a higher growth than imports (9.4% average annual growth against 7.1%), corresponding to an increase by EUR 4.74 billion for exports against EUR 4.66 billion for imports.

The most demanded sporting goods in the EU are 'boats and water sport equipment': the category had both the highest relative and absolute increase, growing in five years by 1.9 billion (97% of 2014 value). 'Skates' was the only category recording a decrease (-12 %) in imports between 2014 and 2019.

7 The figures presented for the entire European Union (EU-27) exclude intra-EU-27 trade. In other words, the EU-27 as a whole is deemed to be one entity for which internal exchanges (between the Member States) are not counted. In turn, the EU-27 Member States data refers to trade with any other country, whether an EU-27 Member State or not.

8 ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=International_trade_in_sporting_goods

The largest individual importers of sporting equipment are Germany (EUR 5.4 billion in 2019), the Netherlands (EUR 4.5 billion in 2019) and France (EUR 4.0 billion in 2019). The Netherlands and Belgium also feature a high volume of trade, but this is due to the so-called 'Rotterdam effect' - non-community goods that transit to the EU market through big ports at the external border.

Swedish trade in sports equipment

In 2019, Sweden imported a total €945.9 million worth of sporting goods, up from €697.8 million in 2014. In the same time period, exports of sports equipment grew from €288.8 million to €398 million. The average annual change rate (2014-2019) was 6.6% for exports and 6.4% for imports. Some of the most imported product categories in 2019 were gymnastic, athletic and swimming equipment, boats and water sports equipment as well as bicycles.

Table 3. Swedish imports of sporting equipment

Swedish imports of sporting equipment								
	Total	Boats and water sport equipment	Gymnastic, athletic and swimming equipment	Bicycles	Balls	Skis and related equipment	Fishing equipment	Other
	€ million	% of total sporting imports/exports						
Imports	946	14.4	24.9	10.2	1.6	3.3	5.7	8.3
Exports	398	20.6	31.4	4.7	0.2	2.6	5.5	10.5
Trade balance	-548							

The largest exporter of sporting equipment to Sweden is China, exporting €290.5 million worth of goods in 2020. Top product categories imported from China included equipment for general physical exercise, gymnastics, athletics, other sports (table tennis) or outdoor games, swimming pools and paddling pools (HS9506). Tricycles, scooters and wheeled equipment were also popular (HS9503).

Other top exporters include Germany, Netherlands and Denmark - top European suppliers and hubs for sports equipment & goods⁹. Among the former, German exports to Sweden have grown the most, from €63 million in 2016 to €203.4 million in 2020¹⁰.

⁹ ITC trade map: www.trademap.org/Index.aspx

¹⁰ ITC trade map: www.trademap.org/Index.aspx

Table 4. Top exporters of sports equipment to Sweden

Top exporters of sports equipment to Sweden, in € million					
Product category: HS95*					
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
China	203.4	211.7	241.8	295.1	290.5
Germany	63.0	74.5	79.5	142.7	203.4
Netherlands	40.5	50.3	56.3	59.9	120.2
Denmark	154.7	171.3	146.9	91.5	91.3

*Toys, games and sports requisites

Table 5. Exports to Sweden by product category

Exports to Sweden by product category (2020) in € million			
	China	Germany	Netherlands
HS9506*	124.6	22.8	37.1
HS9503**	110.8	19	19.5

*Articles and equipment for general physical exercise, gymnastics, athletics, other sports (incl. table tennis) or outdoor games, swimming pools and paddling pools

** Tricycles, scooters, pedal cars and similar wheeled toys; dolls' carriages; dolls; other toys; reduced-size ('scale') models, similar recreational models; puzzles of all kinds

Products that have potential on the Swedish market (most imported and/or highest level of growth)

The Swedish Sports research council conducted a nation-wide survey in 2016, inquiring about sports and exercise activities among the population, from ages 6-80 years old. They found that the most popular sports and exercise activities by the number of practitioners were walking, running and strength training.¹¹ Football is the only team sport that compares in popularity.¹²

52% of Swedes stated that they exercise outdoors and in parks, followed by in a gym or in a sports hall (44%). 34% of people exercise at home, 32% while commuting (cycling, walking) and 13% do sports at the workplace.¹³ Only 9% go to a sports union facility.¹⁴

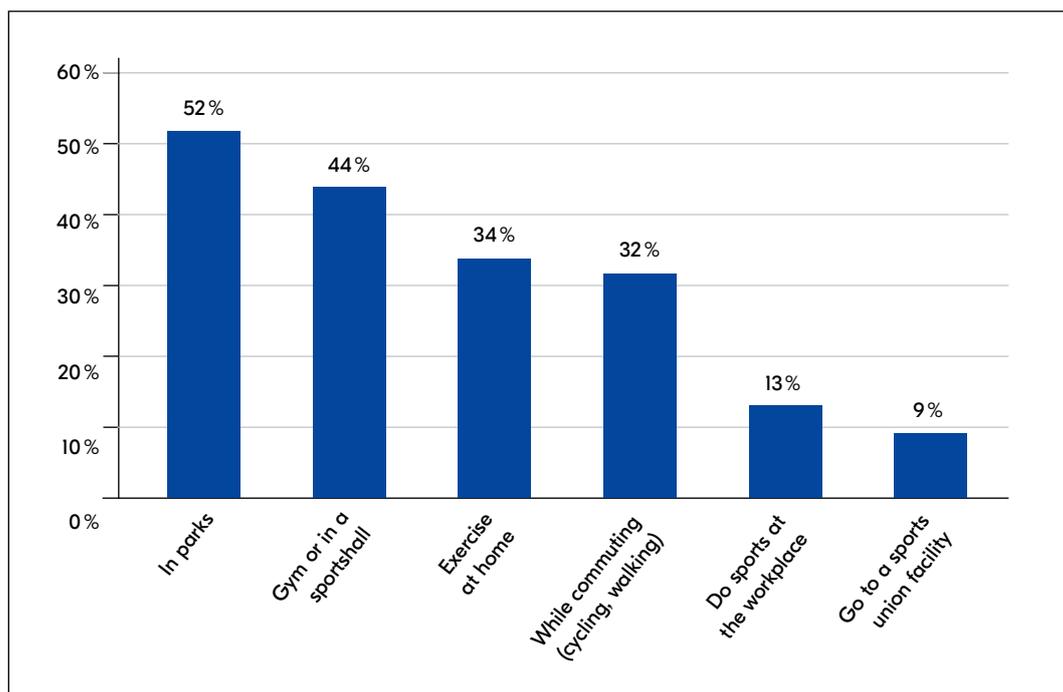
11 Ibid

12 idrottsstatistik.se/motion-och-fysisk-aktivitet/fysisk-aktivitet/#promenader-den-populraste-motions-aktiviteten

13 2018 statistics: idrottsstatistik.se/motion-och-fysisk-aktivitet/anlaggningar/

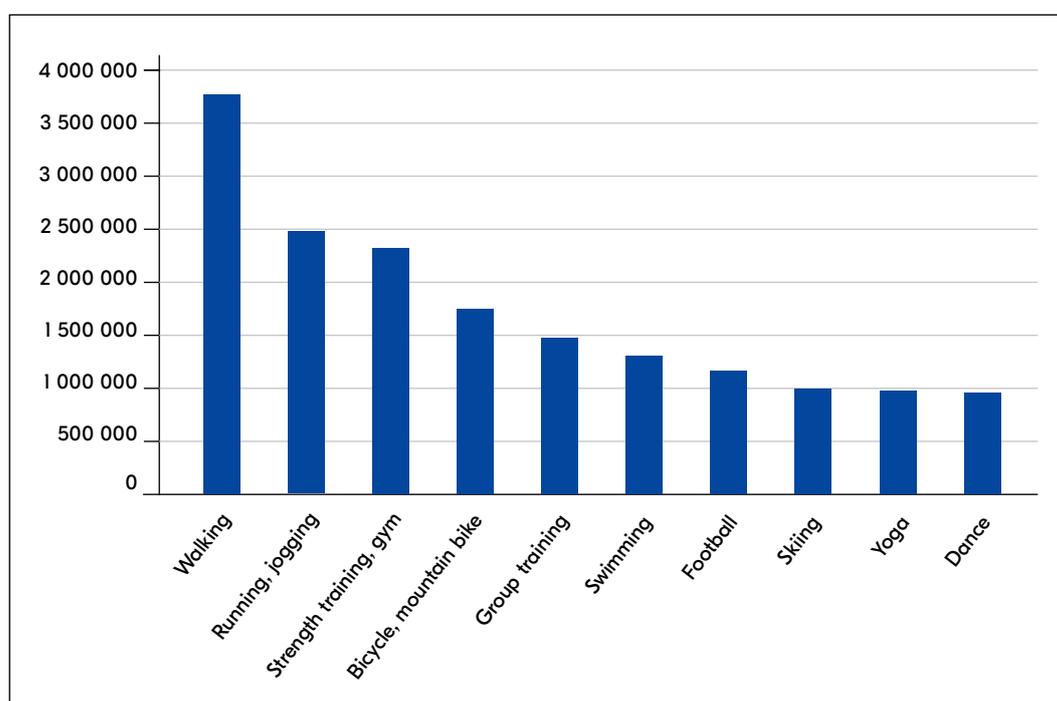
14 Ibid

Figure 1. Exercise choice in Sweden



According to one industry expert interviewed by the study team, outdoor activities such as biking and skiing, snowboarding, kayaking, water paddling, and others, have been growing in popularity for a while. “The trend was growing even before the COVID-19 pandemic, actually in all of Europe and the Americas. Since the pandemic... we see an extra boom in those areas,” he said.

Figure 2. Activity by number of practitioners (2016)



According to the number of registered athletes in the country, twelve sports stand out as the most popular in Sweden. The 12 largest sports in Sweden have more than 3 million registered members. Football is ranked No.1 with 607.5 thousand athletes.¹⁶

Table 6. The largest sports in Sweden by most registered athletes

Rank	Biggest sports	Number of members 2019
1	Football	607,500
2	Golf	538,962
3	Athletics	469,200
4	Gymnastics	265,100
5	Floorball	256,215
6	Swimming	191,100
7	Shooter	182,120
8	Ice Hockey	179,654
9	Motorsport	162,250
10	Handball	157,980
11	Equestrian	154,067
12	Martial Arts	128,460

Football also ranks first among courses offered in Swedish sports clubs across the country.¹⁷ In 2019, a total 25 194 football training sessions were organised for 243 016 participants.¹⁸

Table 7. Training event statistics

	Event		Study hours		Participants	
	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019	2020
Football	25 194	20 014	413 916	315 993	243 016	187 160
Equestrian	15 159	12 941	214 077	194 661	133 705	113 039
Golf	8 031	6 302	85 672	73 746	64 920	47 653
Ice hockey	5 999	4 505	104 509	79 407	55 067	43 367

16 Sports in Sweden. 2021. Sport Lobby. sportlobby.se/ovrigt/storsta-sporten-i-sverige

17 The numbers refer to all ages and levels in Sweden, from beginners to professional, seasonal and one-time events

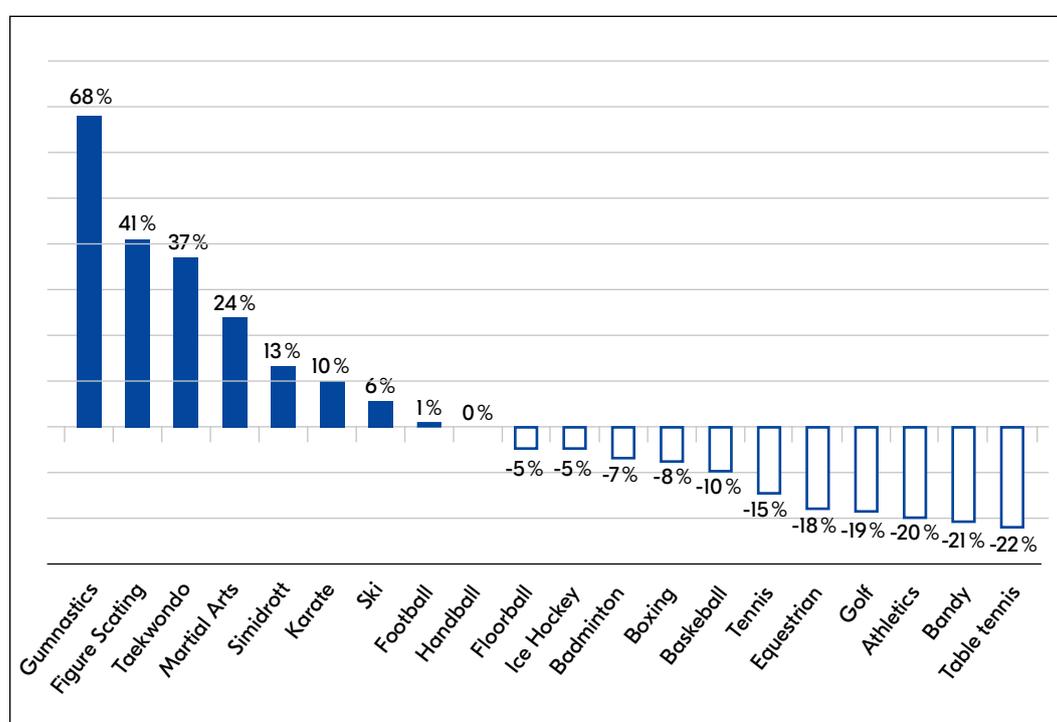
18 www.rf.se/globalassets/riksidrottsforbundet/nya-dokument/nya-dokumentbanken/idrottsrorelsen-i-siffror/2020-idrotten-i-siffror---sisu.pdf?w=900&h=700

That said, several major shifts are taking place in the field of sports.

Historically, the sports movement in Sweden has been organized through public sports clubs and sporting unions. Almost 3.5 million of Sweden's 10 million inhabitants are currently members of sports clubs (as competitors, coaches, supporters, managers, etc.) and around 2.45 million of these compete regularly. However, membership in publicly organized sports unions has been declining over the past decade, giving way to other, self-organized and private forms of training¹⁹.

For one, team sports have been declining in popularity, losing out to individual sports²⁰. More and more young people are interested in gymnastics or figure skating or martial arts. Traditional favourites such as football and handball are seeing fewer new members each year²¹.

Figure 3. Participation in sports activities, 7–20 yrs (2010–2018)



Recent surveys have found a shift in the motivation to do sports: instead of skill and competitive achievements (14%), the majority of people today exercise for personal health (83% in 2020) and to achieve better shape (72% in 2020)²².

The COVID-19 pandemic restrictions have accelerated the shifts towards outdoor and individual sports and also pushed more people to exercise at home. As a result, 2020 and 2021 have seen increases in the sales of equipment such as dumbbells and weights, rubber bands, training mats, equipment for hiking, running & track training, smart watches & other gadgets. One sports company active in one of the aforementioned areas told the study team that there has been a dramatic increase in interest in outdoors sports equipment since the pandemic began²³.

19 idrottsstatistik.se/foreningsidrott/idrottsutveckling-over-tid/#individuella-idrotter-vxer-mest

20 idrottsstatistik.se/foreningsidrott/idrottsutveckling-over-tid/#individuella-idrotter-vxer-mest

21 idrottsstatistik.se/foreningsidrott/idrottsutveckling-over-tid/

22 idrottsstatistik.se/motion-och-fysisk-aktivitet/motiv-och-hinder/

23 Interviews

Studies such as Mckinsey, indicate that these shifts are here to stay for the long term, rather than short-term pandemic effects²⁴.

Another interesting survey by the Swedish Sports Confederation found that more than 50% Swedish municipalities do not have enough sports facilities and equipment to meet the local demand²⁵.

Based on this data, the types of products & equipment with most potential on the market are related to outdoor fitness and individual training - walking sticks, outdoor gym equipment, rubber bands, ropes, weights etc. On the other hand, the unmet demand mentioned by municipalities (sponsors of public sports facilities), there could be opportunities in supplying equipment to sports union halls, schools and others. Football and handball, the two traditional favourites, have a continued market, but also established suppliers and supply chain. Several interviews with industry experts also mentioned golf as growing in popularity in recent years, especially outdoor fields, as well as ice hockey.

Statistics regarding sales in the Swedish market

The total revenues of the largest sporting goods retailers around the world stretched a slight increase of one percent in 2020 - both in dollars and in local currencies - going up to a level of €94.5 billion. On the other hand, the pandemic year saw big winners and big losers, depending on the ability to keep selling via online channels after consumer shopping in physical stores dwindled. For some, acquisitions boosted their sales - a trend boosted by the decision of several big and small brands to sell directly to consumers.

Europe was the worst-performing region in 2020, with local retailers seeing their sales drop by an average 5 percent. The poor performance is the direct result of strict and extended store closures imposed by local governments in response to Covid. 2021 has seen some recovery, but still not reaching pre-pandemic levels.

Sweden sports goods sales

In 2019, a total of 353 companies were active in the Swedish industry for sports goods, generating approximately €80.2 million in turnover and holding €80.5 million in total assets²⁶. These figures represented a drop from 2016, in which companies sector made €125 million in revenues and held €190 million in total assets²⁷. Thus, it appears that the traditional sports goods industry has been experiencing a gradual decline over the past 5 years.

Pending pandemic restrictions, sales dropped by almost 5% in physical stores across the sector²⁸. While the industry tried to recuperate, by switching to online sales (e-commerce rose by almost 44% per cent), overall market growth was still a mere 0.4% (see table 7)²⁹.

24 Sporting goods 2021: The next normal for an industry in flux, www.mckinsey.com/industries/retail/our-insights/sporting-goods-2021-the-next-normal-for-an-industry-in-flux

25 A survey carried out among local municipalities across Sweden regarding the demand and supply of sports facilities as well as equipment. See more at: www.rf.se/globalassets/riksidrottsforbundet/nya-dokument/kommunundersokning/kommunundersokning-2020/rfs-kommunundersokning-2020-rapport.pdf

26 www.statistikdatabasen.scb.se/pxweb/en/ssd/START__NV__NV0109__NV0109L/BasfaktaFEngso7/table/tableViewLayout1/

27 www.statistikdatabasen.scb.se/pxweb/en/ssd/START__NV__NV0109__NV0109L/BasfaktaFEngso7/table/tableViewLayout1/

28 www.sgieurope.com/market-statistics/the-swedish-sports-market-grew-by-65-in-q3/93005.article

29 hui.se/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Sportindex-Q3-2021.pdf

2021 has seen significant recovery, with the sporting goods market rising by 6.5 percent at the retail level in the third quarter of 2021 compared to the year-ago period. Sales at physical stores went up by 4.1 percent and e-commerce continued to grow at an impressive rate of 21.9 percent, continuing a trend already observed in previous quarters and accounting for 13 percent of the major retailers' sales³⁰

Table 8. Sales of sports goods physical store vs online

Sales of sports goods physical store vs online, 2020 2021			
	Total sales (entire store stock & e-commerce)	Physical store	E-commerce
Q3 2021	6.50%	4.10%	21.90%
2020 total	0.40%	-4.90%	43.70%

The recovery in 2021 is due to several positive factors, such as a return to schools, offices and re-opening of sports clubs. That said, major disruptions in production and logistics still had a negative impact and led to a shortage of products in some sectors. For example, there was a growing interest in cycling and demand for bicycles, but COVID-19 disruptions led to a shortage of bicycles and spare parts. As a result, sales in the sector dropped by -6.5% in the third quarter of 2021. The situation demands increased resilience from the supply chain.

There is also a visible impact on the lifting of restrictions on various market segments. For example, between July and September 2021, sales of football team clothing and boots saw a sudden peak in sales by approximately 20%, coinciding with the easing of regulations on team sports and gatherings³¹.

Looking at different product categories, sports equipment made up 31% of sales, clothing 44% and shoes 25% in 2020 (table 8). Sports equipment grew the most in 2020, by a total 6.8%, but has fared poorly in Q3 this year³².

Table 9. Sales of sports goods by category

Sales of sports goods by category, 2020 21			
	Clothing	Shoes	Equipment
Q3 2021	11.50%	10%	-6.50%
2020 total	-3.40%	-0.20%	6.80%
Share of total sales 2020	44%	25%	31%

30 www.sgieurope.com/market-statistics/the-swedish-sports-market-grew-by-65-in-q3/93005.article

31 hui.se/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Sportindex-Q3-2021.pdf

32 hui.se/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Sportindex-Q3-2021.pdf

Looking ahead, however, the future is still clouded by concern regarding whether the supply side will be able to absorb consumer demand. Trade is affected by a worldwide shortage of raw materials, especially in electronics, as well as major shipping issues. The corona pandemic has caused major disruptions and imbalances in global supply chains, among other things, led to shortage of ships and equipment, delays and sharply increased shipping prices. These problems are expected to persist for large parts of 2022 and will affect both the supply and the prices of goods.

Average spending on sports

Swedes spend about SEK 8,800 per person and year on sports and exercise, according to a survey by the Swedish Sports Confederation (2019 est.), of which approximately SEK 2000 is spent on membership fees and SEK 1300 on equipment (excluding apparel and shoes).³³

Table 10. Average spending on sports and exercise per person, ages 6–80 yrs (2019), in SEK

Membership fees	2 000
Sports trips	2 000
Equipment	1 300
Clothes and shoes	1 300
Sports media	500
Games and betting	500
Tickets	400
Other Fees	800

Residents of larger towns tend to spend more on sports and exercise, compared to residents of smaller communities. In large cities (more than 200,000 inhabitants), the cost of membership and training fees is on average SEK 2,400 per year. In communities with a maximum of 10,000 inhabitants, it is SEK 700³⁴.

³³ idrottsstatistik.se/ekonomi-och-etik/kostnader-for-idrott/

³⁴ idrottsstatistik.se/ekonomi-och-etik/kostnader-for-idrott/

The Market structure

The main players by market share

There are around 353 companies active in the industry for sports goods (2019)³⁵. The key players and their market share vary in each market segment, depending on the type of sports.

Largely, the companies active in the sector are one of two types:

i) Large multinational retail chains that sell various types of sports equipment. This includes both local and/or international chains. Their customers are mostly amateurs - anyone interested in sports - including individual practitioners, families and groups. These companies may also sell to more advanced sports practitioners and athletes, but will not have all the equipment and niche products required for professional sports, at least no more than 1-2 brands. The top retailers include [Sportamore](#), [Stadium](#), [XXL](#), [Decathlon](#), [Intersport](#). The retailers are clear market leaders in terms of size and revenue. In 2018, the three most popular online stores in the segment sports and outdoor generated a combined 72.234.355 EUR in net sales.

Table 11. Largest retailers

Store	Address	Net sales (2018)
Sportamore	sportamore.se	41,170,019
XXL	xxl.se	20,276,455
Stadium	stadium.se	12,342,190

ii) Specialised sports stores for advanced and professional sports. Usually smaller in size, these stores focus on several market segments (1-5 sports fields usually) and sell equipment and niche products for particular sports and well-known brands in that field. The main customers are advanced practitioners and professional athletes, including groups, individuals and organisations. The sports stores will usually lead the market in specific sports fields. For example, in the case of floorball, a definite industry leader is the company “Salming”. According to data from 2020, the company’s operating revenue was 9.838.371 EUR³⁶. The company provides both equipment and apparel for not only floorball, but also hockey, running, etc³⁷. In the field of floorball and its equipment technology, Salming is considered as not only a Swedish, but a worldwide leader, therefore people of various countries are very interested in its products.

Specialised stores can also focus on different categories, such as outdoor sports. [SGN Sports Group](#) manages branded concept stores for Team Sportia, one of Sweden’s leading outdoor training chains. In its 55 stores across the country, the store offers equipment for running, active leisure, cycling, ice hockey and other types of outdoor training.

35 www.statistikdatabasen.scb.se/pxweb/en/ssd/START__NV__NV0109__NV0109L/BasfaktaFEngso7/table/tableViewLayout1/

36 Salming Sports AB. Turnover (2020). Orbis

37 About Salming. salming.com/sv-se/varumärke/om-salming;

Major importers and distributors

The major distribution centres for imported consumer goods in Sweden are located in Stockholm, Gothenburg, and Malmo. Sporting equipment and goods are traded in all three locations at varying volumes. As mentioned in chapter 1.2, sports goods arrive into Swedish port cities from China as well as European trade hubs in Germany, Netherlands and Denmark.

- Stockholm is the capital and the business centre of the country, responsible for around 50% of goods consumption in the country. It is a key entry point for goods intended for the Swedish market. Most Swedish industrial and commercial associations, as well as large corporations have their headquarters in Stockholm (table 6). In fact, more than half of the companies present in the Nordics on the Forbes Global 2000 list have decided to locate their main Nordic contact-point in Stockholm³⁸.

Table 12. Headquarters in the Nordics that belong to companies on the Forbes Global 2000 list in the year 2019

Metropolitan region	Number of HQs overall	Global HQs	Share of overall HQs in Nordics	Share of Global HQs in Nordics	Native share of HQs in the region
Stockholm	156	23	54%	40%	15%
Greater Copenhagen	70	11	24%	19%	17%
Helsinki	22	10	8%	17%	45%
Oslo	15	6	5%	10%	40%
Gothenburg	13	3	5%	5%	23%
Other Nordic areas	12	5	4%	9%	33%
Nordics	288	58	100%	100%	20%

- Gothenburg, Sweden's second largest city, is the nation's foremost port for international shipping as well as the largest port in Scandinavia. Located on the southwestern coast, Gothenburg is also the centre of a fast-growing industrial complex representing a wide spectrum of manufactured products - Volvo, Frauenthal Gnotec Group, W.L. Gore & Associates, etc. The Port of Gothenburg is not only Scandinavia's largest; it is also Northern Europe's main port for export, handling more than 40 million tonnes of goods annually (2016 figures).
- Malmo and Helsingborg are located at the southern tip of the country, a short distance from neighbouring Denmark. Both cities are important ports for Swedish shipping to continental Europe. The Copenhagen Malmo Port (CMP) handles a wide range of cargoes that include consumer goods, grain, liquid bulk, aviation fuel, automobiles, building materials and scrap metal. The port is also a major contributor to the city of Malmo, the third largest in Sweden³⁹.

³⁸ www.investstockholm.com/globalassets/invest/reports/hq_report_2020.pdf

³⁹ Sweden - Country commercial guide. International Trade Administration. 2021. www.trade.gov/country-commercial-guides/sweden-distribution-sales-channels

Foreign exporters have several options to enter the Swedish market. The most common - and most recommended - way is through local agents or distributors. Having a local partner that truly knows the market and helps navigate the legal and practical hurdles will save time and valuable resources.

The distribution system in Sweden is well-structured and efficient. Most private sector importers and traders in Sweden are members of the [Swedish Trade Federation \(Svensk Handel\)](#). The federation has approximately 10 000 member firms active in retail and wholesale trade.

A list of sports equipment importers can be found below:

Company	Country	Product code	Web
Birgma International SA	Sweden	HS 9506	birgma.com
Sport & fritid grossisten	Sweden	HS 9506	www.sport-fritid.nu
LekoHoj AB	Sweden	HS 9506	lekohoj.se
KGM AB	Sweden	HS 9506	www.kgmab.se
Sportprodukter Karlstad AB	Sweden	HS 9506	www.sportprodukter.net
Scan Trade Scandinavia AB	Sweden	HS 9506	scantrade.se
Malmsten AB	Sweden	HS 9506	malmsten.com/en
Casall Professional AB	Sweden	HS 9506	www.casall.com
Puma Nordic AB	Sweden	HS 9506	about.puma.com
Global Sports Scandinavia AB	Sweden	HS 9506	www.globalsport.se

Considering the size of the market, most agents and distributors will prefer exclusivity, only then being willing to invest the effort and resources to develop a market position & building brand awareness⁴⁰.

⁴⁰ Gothenburg Industrial Real Estate Information. Prologis. 2021. www.prologis.se/en/industrial-logistics-warehouse-space/europe/sweden/gothenburg-industrial-real-estate-information.

Keep up with the trends

Key changes on the sports market such as the rise of individual sports, popularity of outdoors activities and exercising at home have already been discussed in chapter 1.3. There are, however, some additional trends that are expected to impact consumer preferences in sports and purchases of sports equipment.

Millennials⁴¹, born between 1980 and 2000, are the largest segment of Sweden's working population today. This generation has a lot of money, but they spend it differently than their parents. Millennial consumers can be described as "**international**" - speaking English and interested/ aware of the world, "**quality-driven**" - uncompromising on the quality of products and willing to pay premium prices for high-quality products, "**informed**" - research the products and brands they purchase from (origin, value chain), and "**value- and experience-driven**" - seeking to gain unique experiences and values such as health, personal development, community, convenience and betterment of the world⁴².

Luxury consumption and status gadgets are not of interest to them. Instead, this generation seeks after experiences, and a number of core products such as clothing and electronic aids. "Unique" experiences in restaurants, entertainment, socialising opportunities, travel and adventure rank high on the priority list⁴³. Millennial consumers spend more time **shopping online**. Alongside groceries, sports equipment has been the top sales item for online shoppers for several years⁴⁴.

Millennials are known to be impulsive buyers, but also highly sensitive to price. They travel on budget and seek out bargains where possible.

- **Health & community**⁴⁵. Health is a key value to this generation, much more than their parents. They are willing to invest more time and money to attain that value. Millennials and generation Z are currently the most active fitness and gym goers. They also exercise at home and tend to be aware of healthy dietary and nutrition. However, they also have some demands: the industry's traditional offerings of exercise machines and treadmills are no longer enough. Customers demand a seamless, connected fitness/ sports experience. Sports must fit their lifestyle and enable them to work out on their terms. For example - it is important not only to train, but to achieve a healthy work-life balance. This means a demand for opportunities to train at home. Companies and clubs that provide a wide range of training options - to mix and match - and accommodate those needs, i.e., through virtual training options, are winning over others. That said, for many fitness and sports have become a point of social interaction and a sense of belonging. Training with friends, fitness or yoga dates are increasingly popular.
- **Sustainability**. Swedes have long been known for their care for the environment, but in recent years climate change and the impact of industry consumerism on climate and health have become increasingly important. There is a growing group of consumers

41 www.svenskhandel.se/globalassets/dokument/aktuellt-och-opinion/rapporter-och-foldrar/shoppingturism/dagens-och-morgondagens-shoppingturist.pdf

42 storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/0a001359776042eba70b6b198dce1fda; and santandertrade.com/en/portal/analyse-markets/sweden/reaching-the-consumers; and www.forbes.com/sites/dennis-mitzner/2018/11/11/sweden-a-land-of-consumer-conservatism/?sh=7d3ffad8695e

43 www.svenskhandel.se/globalassets/dokument/aktuellt-och-opinion/rapporter-och-foldrar/shoppingturism/dagens-och-morgondagens-shoppingturist.pdf

44 scb.se/en/finding-statistics/statistics-by-subject-area/living-conditions/living-conditions/ict-usage-in-households-and-by-individuals/pong/statistical-news/ict-usage-by-individuals-2016/

45 www.lesmills.com/clubs-and-facilities/research-insights/audience-insights/generation-active-the-80-your-club-cant-ignore/; fitnews.dk/artikler/millennials/

on the market that value health and sustainability as part of their lifestyle. One movement, known internationally as LOHAS, encourages its members to only buy products that have a sustainable value chain. They advise consumers to acquire information about the source, quality and materials of products, prefer sustainable packaging and to reduce waste. Fair production and trade are very important. Around 40% of Swedish consumers can be categorised as LOHAS⁴⁶.

Technology is evolving into the sports industry and the market is experiencing increased demand for goods related to sports technology products and connected devices. Particularly if it supports other values, such as protecting the environment or health. The electric bicycle is a good example. It is used also as a way of commuting, adapted to a broad range of users and saves the environment. An industry expert in an interview revealed that biking as a means of transportation is booming. Currently, the e-bike market is rapidly growing, and has been for several years now. The pandemic boosted interest and sales even more. Technology is also becoming more important with products such as sport watches, GPS, heart rate monitors, wearable technology and cameras.

There is also more **sophisticated demand for a wider range of specialised products** among consumers. The new generation of amateur, professional and aspiring athletes has affected the traditional market for such merchandise through its strong purchasing power and preferences for high quality. The demand for sports retail merchandise changes depending on the time of the year.

Alternative marketplaces for second hand goods, sharing economy and clothing and equipment rental have also increased in popularity. There is, however, uncertainty regarding the size of the second-hand market and the extent to which it replaces trade in the traditional retail market.

46 www.lohas.se/about-lohas/

Live up to the requirements

While information of the standards and certification that are relevant for the sporting goods industry is unattainable, it is possible to highlight several that are preferred by Swedish importers of sports equipment. The standards and certifications are closely related to the health, safety and environmental protection sphere.

 One of these certificates that Swedish importers of the physiotherapeutic and rehabilitation sector, related to sporting goods such as cardio & fitness equipment, look for is the CE certification. This certification is important not only for the importers, as it provides a solid confirmation of the product's capabilities of satisfying legislative requirements to be sold, but also important for the Swedish consumers, as they look for this certification in order to confirm that the product has met EU health, safety, and environmental requirements. As mentioned previously, this is especially important in the rehabilitation sector, as a substantial part of the sector includes professional athletes.

If the fitness products fall into the scope of one of 25 CE directives, the product must be CE marked. All CE Marking directives can be found [here](#).



An important standard that is preferred by the Swedish importers of sports goods is the ISO (International Organizations for Standardization) standard. As this standard ensures the quality, safety, and efficiency of products, the standard is very much interested by importers of outdoor sports goods and their accessories.



Another important standard that is preferred by the Swedish importers of sports goods is the DIN (Deutsches Institut für Normung) standard. The DIN standard is also preferred by importers of outdoor sports goods and their accessories.



And last but not least, Swedish importers of sports goods also favour the TÜV (Technischer Überwachungsverein) standard. As with the previously mentioned standards, TÜV also serves as a valuable sign of quality and safety assurance. The standard is also heavily popular by importers of the outdoor sports goods and their accessories.

- When it comes to importing fitness products into the EU from external markets, the leading safety standard to consider is the General Product Safety Directive (GPSD). The GPSD aims to ensure that products imported or sold in the EU are safe and proper-functioning for the consumers. The GPSD establishes health and safety requirements for many consumer products, including fitness equipment. GPSD testing is often not mandatory for fitness products, but it is recommended to build trust among partners and consumers. The aspect of safety is essential for fitness equipment, considering the potential dangers and harm to the users that come with many sports. Importers and vendors in Europe commonly demand third party GPSD testing to ensure product safety. Failure to comply with the GPSD could result in a heavy fine or prosecution. Therefore, it is advisable for importers to comply with the requirements listed under [EN 957](#).
- REACH regulates all imported products, including fitness products, shipped into the European Union. REACH sets limits to certain hazardous substances in fitness products, such as metal coating. Testing for REACH is carried out by specific companies, including SGS, TUV, and Intertek. These provide comprehensive testing services for REACH compliance including conformity assessment, lab testing, and certification. It is advisable for manufacturers to book lab testing already before production, in order to ensure compliance with REACH at an early stage.

- When importing fitness products to the European Union, importers also need to comply with the packaging compliance requirements under Directive 94/62/EC.

Determine your logistics solution

The sporting goods industry is moving towards more agile supply chains, overcoming challenges to ensure enough inventory to meet demand, at the same time without holding too many products. Direct-to-consumer model, especially e-commerce, is expected to require shorter lead times and more automated supply chains.

What does the logistics chain look like?

For sports equipment distributors and retailers, it is essential to use supply chain management to avoid stockouts, manage seasonal peaks, and stay in the game. Retailers can't afford to carry too much stock, because next season an item will be out of style and demand will be minimal. They also can't afford to hold too little inventory, because demand will rise and they will miss out on sales.

The primary challenge of the sporting goods industry is planning and forecasting to ensure enough inventory to meet demand, without holding too many products. Success requires understanding—and managing—the ebb and flow of market demand. It also requires knowing the best channels for products, how to work with retailers and suppliers for the most efficient results, and how to handle product order patterns, delivery schedules, inventory turns, and receipts.⁴⁷

Exporters and producers should try to build long-term reliable relationships and cooperation with buyers. This is especially important considering the recent disruptions in supply chains and changing production capacities in different seasons & circumstances. Good communication and flexibility are vital, as well as the ability for fast delivery within a short notice. In addition, sports articles must meet the quality standards of the market, which in Sweden are considerably high. Proof of safety and health are demanded by buyers and sellers alike.

Last, but not least the exporter must comply with International Codes of Conduct, meaning that the use of child labour is not allowed. Potential buyers and auditors may wish to inspect a new business entering the market.

⁴⁷ Sporting goods logistics keeping the ball rolling, www.inboundlogistics.com/cms/article/sporting-goods-logistics-keeping-the-ball-rolling/

Find a business partner

How do buyers typically find trade partners in the Swedish market?

According to experts in the export consulting industry when it comes to choosing a new supplier, Swedish retailers evaluate products based on many criteria, e.g., is it produced taking in consideration the environment, all safety requirements, in correspondence to fair working conditions, naming competitive price, and transportation that is friendly to the environment by reducing CO₂ emissions. Swedish buyers conduct thorough investigations when they take in a new supplier. For example, they investigate the references of potential suppliers from other buyers or check the reputation of the company in terms of previous cooperation, as well as, product safety issues.

Swedish buyers find business partners in several ways. Firstly, by attending industry trade fairs. Participation in a trade fair is a long-term investment and expensive marketing campaign; therefore, it is essential to choose the right industry event and denote the aim for each trade fair participation. It is important to denote the type of participation in the trade fair - just as an attendant of the fair which visits the stands of potential buyers, participation with a stand with a group of other companies or developing one's own stand to which to invite potential buyers. The best alternative for trade fair attendance will depend on your budget and the purpose of your participation..

Secondly, participation in B2B matchmaking events is another way to meet potential buyers. This is a more focused and concentrated marketing activity which can be organised by governmental agencies and associations. Depending on the organiser of the B2B matchmaking event, the programme can include individual B2B meetings. This is a great opportunity to directly meet potential buyers who have already had a chance to look into the cooperation offer or product and the business meeting could be more detailed.

Thirdly, individual partner search, by denoting your target market and potential partners in the market, is one of the most successful ways to find business partners. It gives the chance to directly communicate with the buyer and agree upon individual cooperation possibilities and unique offers. When entering the export market, it is not always the end client that can be addressed. It is advised to look into partners who could represent the company in the market as a local player, given additional unique selling points like knowing the language, the market culture, the market players and competitors.

Finally, different digital solutions, starting from a professional website, attendance in different organisations or networking events and solutions, like B2B platforms (marketplaces) where buyers and sellers get connected is a tool that can help attract the attention of potential business partners.

To conclude, it is important to understand that Swedish buyers are interested in long-term relationships and cooperation that is built on trust, quality and mutual understanding and benefit. The relationship between both sides must be based on clear and mutual agreements that are supported by qualitative and precise deliveries, taking into consideration the necessary quality measurements, a responsible attitude to environment and time constraints.

Sector specific trade fairs

Below you will find upcoming fairs related to the sports industry.

Table 13. Upcoming trade fairs in Sweden related to sports industry

Name of the exhibition	Related industries	City, Country	Website	Description
BÅTMÄSSAN - GÖTEBORG BOAT SHOW	Boating, sailing & water sports	Göteborg, Sweden	batmassan.se	International Boat Show
EUROHORSE	Equestrian sports	Göteborg, Sweden	eurohorse.se	Equestrian Fair. Everything for the Horse and Rider
ALT FÖR SJÖN	Boating, sailing & water sports	Stockholm, Sweden	www.alltforsjon.se	Stockholm International Boat Show
SPORTFISKE MÄSSAN	Hunting & fishing Sports	Jönköping, Sweden	www.sportfiskemas-san.se	Angling and Fly Fishing Show
ELMIA GAMES FAIR	Hunting & fishing Sports Toys & games Family - children & adolescents	Jönköping, Sweden	www.elmia.se/en/gamefair/	Hunting, Hound, Fishing and Game Preservation
ELMIA PARK	Equipments for amenity areas Arboriculture – horticulture Urban equipment & engineering Sports	Jönköping, Sweden	www.elmia.se/en/park	Nordic Trade Fair on Green Areas and Outdoor Environments

Table 14 lists upcoming industry fairs in Nordics and Europe

Table 14. Upcoming trade fairs in Nordics and Europe related to sports industry

Name of the exhibition	Related industries	City, Country	Website	Description
SIØEN FOR ALLE	Boating, sailing & water sports Sports	Lillestrøm, Norway	www.sjoenforalle.no	Norwegian international boat show
MC-MESSEN	Bike - Motorcycles Sports	Lillestrøm, Norway	www.mcmessen.no	International motorcycle exhibition in Norway
GYMTEC	Fitness - Wellness Sports	Tampere, Finland	www.liikuntapaik-kamessut.fi	Trade fair for fitness training
VE NE BAT - HELSINKI INTERNATIONAL BOAT SHOW	Boating, sailing & water sports Sports	Helsinki, Finland	vene.messukeskus.com/?lang=en	Helsinki international boat show
OUTDOOR FINLAND 2022	Tourism - Travel Fashion - Clothing Sports	Helsinki, Finland	messukeskus.com/?lang=en	Adventure sports show
BICYCLE 2022	Bike - Motorcycles Sports	Helsinki, Finland	goexpo.messukeskus.com/?lang=en	Bicycle exhibition
GO EXPO 2022	Bike - Motorcycles Sports Fitness - Wellness	Helsinki, Finland	messukeskus.com/?lang=en	Bicycle, fitness & exercise and golf fair
GOLF FINLAND 2022	Sports Equipment for amenity areas	Helsinki, Finland	goexpo.messukeskus.com/?lang=en	Golf fair
HELSINKI HORSE FAIR 2022	Horse, pony and donkey Sports	Helsinki, Finland	goexpohorse.messukeskus.com/?lang=en	Horse event for all horse enthusiasts and professionals
HORSES 2022	Horse, pony and donkey Sports	Tampere, Finland	www.hevosmessut.fi/	Horse fair
GO EXPO WINTER 2022	Sports Fashion - Clothing	Helsinki, Finland	goexpowinter.messukeskus.com	The largest winter sport fair in the nordic countries
HORSE & RIDER 2022	Horse, pony and donkey Sports	Herning, Denmark	www.hestogrytter.dk	Equestrian sports exhibition
POLAREXPO FISHING & HUNTING 2022	Fishing - Commercial marine professionals Food processing industries Hunting & Fishing Sports	Ilulissat, Greenland (Denmark)	www.polar-fish.net/dk	The largest event of the year for everyone interested in the Greenlandic fishing and hunting industries
ANGLING RIGA 2022	Hunting & Fishing Sports Tourism - Travel	Riga, Latvia	www.btl.lv/outdoor/	Fishing tackle and accessories
BALTIC BOAT SHOW 2022	Boating, sailing & water sports Sports	Riga, Latvia	www.btl.lv/outdoor/	Exhibition of boats and yachts
FITNESS RIGA - ATPUTA UN SPORTS 2022	Fitness - Wellness Sports	Riga, Latvia	www.btl.lv/outdoor/	Sport and fitness clubs and equipment. Food supplements, sportswear
HUNTING & FISHING RIGA 2022	Hunting & fishing Sports	Riga, Latvia	www.btl.lv/outdoor/	International exhibition for hunting, game management and hunters' outfit
MOTORCYCLE 2022	Bikes - Motorcycles Sports	Riga, Latvia	www.btl.lv/outdoor	Exhibition of motorcycles and biking accessories

OUTDOOR RIGA 2022	Sports Hunting & fishing Boating, sailing & water sports	Riga, Latvia	www.btl.lv/outdoor	International trade show for outdoor adventure and recreational activities
VELO - ATPUTA UN SPORTS 2022	Bikes - Motorcycles Sports	Riga, Latvia	www.btl.lv/outdoor	Bicycles, outfit and accessories
ADVENTUR 2022	Tourism - Travel Family - Childs & adolescents Sports	Vilnius, Lithuania	www.litexpo.lt	International tourism, leisure and sports exhibition
BOAT & RECREATION TALLINN 2022	Boating, sailing & water sports Sports	Tallinn, Estonia	www.meremess.ee/eng/	Boat & recreation show

Conclusions

The research as well as interviews conducted as part of this project confirm that in the next few years, the sports equipment industry will be defined by the growth of individual sports, outdoor activities and home exercise and outdoor sports. These trends began before the COVID-19 pandemic, but have accelerated in recent years. The popularity of sports such as walking, running, strength training and cycling have grown significantly. Team sports, especially football, still rank high in participation compared to other types of sports, but have been seeing fewer new members join the clubs over the last decade.

Therefore, the types of products and equipment with most potential on the Swedish market are related to outdoor fitness and individual training, ranging from hiking equipment to track racing, cycling and outdoor gyms. In order to determine the supply, demand and prices of specific niche markets, a separate investigative study is recommended as there are variations in each.

However, it should be taken into account that the sports goods industry as a whole, like many others, is still trying to fill shortages created by the COVID-19 pandemic and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future. The worldwide shortage of raw materials, especially in electronics, shipping issues and other disruptions in global supply chains, are affecting the supply and prices of goods.

That said, interest in sports and related spending is likely to increase in the coming years, particularly among residents of larger towns and communities. Moreover, there could be opportunities to work with public sector vendors, and supply equipment for municipalities (sponsors of public sports facilities), sports union halls, schools and others.

When it comes to market players, each segment and niche varies slightly. However, as a general rule, it is recommended for new exporters to enter the market through local agents or distributors. While e-commerce is booming and many international brands have started selling directly to end-consumers as a result of the pandemic, building brand/product awareness among local consumers (and partners) is most effective through local agents. Swedish consumers are generally well-researched customers that like to know their products and suppliers before buying a new product. Moreover, they prefer to “buy Swedish”. Building trust among consumers will be difficult without local help.

In addition, the market for sports equipment is small and already features a number of Swedish companies/brands that are well-established and valued both on local and regional markets. The reputation and position of these companies and their products will be difficult to compete with, and may require a lowering of price.

Recommendations for exporters from developing economies

In order to find a buyer or business partner in Sweden these are some of the key elements:

- **Research** your desired buyer in order to understand their and the market needs.
- **Communicate**, get in contact and do not wait until the buyer finds you – you need them not the other way around.
- Be **trustworthy/honest** – in Sweden one of the most important successful cooperation keys is mutual trust.
- It is important to remember that long-term cooperation requires **persistence and patience** as the process can be time consuming and demanding.

Also, consider that reducing environmental impact, taking care of waste and developing its physical and mental impact are the main sustainability topics in Sweden. Scandinavian companies seriously consider environmental and sustainability issues as well as the mental health of the planet when it comes to choosing cooperation partners.