

Results from Australia's 2018 Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth

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Introduction

A decades worth of high quality surveillance sources have consistently shown that Australian kids are not meeting the physical activity (PA) guidelines of at least 60 min moderate-to-vigorous PA (MVPA) each day of the week.¹ This is concerning because physical inactivity is associated with a myriad of unfavourable health outcomes. This paper will summarise the results from the 2018 Active Healthy Kids Australia (AHKA) PA Report Card, with the assigned grades based upon representative national and state/territory-based data sources (see Figure 1 for 2018 Report Card cover).

Methods

AHKA is a collaboration consisting of 13 PA and health researchers from Australia, who are responsible for collating, synthesising and evaluating data that are then used to assign grades to 12 indicators using pre-determined metrics and benchmarks.

The 2018 AHKA Report Card assigned grades to 10 Global Matrix 3.0 indicators and two additional indicators, that collectively fall under one of four categories: PA Behaviours (Overall Physical Activity, Organized Sport Participation, Active Play, Active Transportation, Sedentary Behavior, PA in School); Settings and Sources of Influence (Family and Peers, School, Community and the Built Environment); Strategies and Investments (Government Strategies and Investments); and Traits (Physical Fitness, Movement Skills).

The 2018 Report Card synthesised the best available Australian data. Only nationally or state/territory representative data from 2013 onwards were utilised, with nationally representative data taking precedence when available. Data sources included: *National* — ABS National Health Survey (2014/15)²; AusPlay (2016/17)³; Australian Child Health Poll (2017)⁴; Longitudinal Study of Australian Children (2015-17)⁵; National Secondary Students' Diet and Activity Survey (2012/13).⁶ *State/Territory* — ACT Year 6 PA & Nutrition Survey (ACTPANS) (2015)⁷; Australian

Secondary Students' Alcohol and Drug Survey (ASSAD) (2014)⁸; NSW Child Health Survey (2015/16)⁹ & Secondary Schools Health Behaviour Survey (2014)¹⁰; Queensland Child Preventive Survey (2018)¹¹; SA Monitoring & Surveillance Survey (2016/17)¹²; NSW Schools PA & Nutrition Survey (2015)¹³; VIC Child Health & Wellbeing Survey (2013)¹⁴ & Student Health & Wellbeing Survey (2016).¹⁵ See Table 1 for the grades and rationales for each of the 2018 Report Card indicators.



Figure 1 — Australia's 2018 Report Card cover.

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Table 1 Grades and rationales for Australia's 2018 Report Card

Indicator	Grade	Rationale
Overall Physical Activity	D-	Self-report data show 18% of 12-17 y olds ⁶ ; 6-22% of 15-17 y olds ^{2,3} ; and 15-41% of 5-17 y olds ^{7-13,15} accumulate 60 mins of MVPA every day (or on average) in the past week.
Organized Sport Participation	B-	Self/parent-report data show that 73% of 5-14 y olds participate in organised sport once per week ³ ; 81% of 10-11 y olds and 53% of 14-15 year olds participate in organised sport regularly (i.e., at least once per week over a whole sporting season or school term) ⁵ ; and 89% of 12-17 y olds ⁶ participate in organized sport at least once over a 12 month period.
Physical Activity in School*	B	Time-use-diaries show for 11-12 y olds, the chance of a randomly chosen child on a randomly chosen school day getting at least 30 min of MVPA at school is 70%. ⁵
Active Play	INC	Self-report data show 16% of 12-17 y olds participate in at least 2 hours of non-organised PA per day ⁶ ; and 7-21% of 12-17 y olds engage in various non-organised activities for more than 2 hours on an average school day.
Active Transportation	D+	Self/parent-report data show 43% of 12-17 y olds, ^{6,8} 37% of primary students ^{7,9,11,13,14} and 36% of secondary students ⁸ use active transport as their usual mode to get to school.
Sedentary Behaviours	D-	Self/parent-report data show 14% of 12-17 y olds engage in ≤2 hours of screen-based recreation every day ⁶ ; and 32% of 6-17y olds engage in ≤2 hours of screen-based recreation when at home on a typical day. ⁴
Family and Peers	C+	Self/parent-report data show 60-80% of primary and 28-45% of secondary students have screen-free bed-time routines/rules or screen-free sleep-time ^{4,13} ; 60-74% of primary and 22-48% of secondary students have limits placed on screen use ^{4,13} ; 54-75% of 12 17 y olds, ⁶ 61-82% of primary and secondary students ^{7,8} and 54% of secondary students ⁸ receive some form of encouragement from their parents and/or peers to be active; and 25-32% of parents meet the national physical activity guidelines. ⁵
School	B+	Teacher-report data show that 75% of 10-11 y olds and 98% of 14-15 y olds have access to a Physical Education teacher ⁵ ; parent/teacher-report data show 66% of students aged 10-11 y ⁵ and 43% (on average) of grades 8, 9 and 10 students ⁶ receive ≥120 minutes of Physical Education per week; a high proportion of primary and secondary schools/ students have access to various physical activity facilities/equipment during school hours (on average 82% have access to various facilities/equipment) ^{5,6,13} ; and teacher-report data show 82% of secondary schools allocate at least 60 minutes for students to be active at recess and lunch. ⁶
Community and Environment	A-	Parent-report data show that: 76% of 10-11 and 14-15 y olds are not faced with heavy or problem traffic in their home or school neighborhood, 75% have access to good roads and footpaths and 76% have access to public transport in their neighborhood ⁵ ; and 77-86% of 10-17 y olds have a park or playground near their home and 66-71% live in a safe neighborhood. ⁵
Government	D	Since the 2016 Report Card we acknowledge that there is evidence of both positive and negative leadership and financial commitment from the different levels of government. This has led to no notable progress in policy making and implementation and no sustained commitment to getting more Australian kids active.
Physical Fitness	D+	Objectively measured cardio-respiratory and muscular fitness data show children aged 9–15 y fall in the 35th %ile relative to international and European norms (mean [95%CI]: 35 [29–41]). ¹³
Movement Skills*	D+	Objectively measured movement skill data show 36% of girls and 41% of boys in Grade 6 demonstrate mastery in locomotor movement skills, with 25% and 54% respectively demonstrating mastery in object-control movement skills. ¹³

*Indicates grades that were not included in the Global Matrix 3.0.

Results and Discussion

Australia is fortunate with regards to the number of PA data sources available at national and state/territory levels; however, further investigation is required to address remaining gaps. Specifically, high quality national data for Active Play and PA in Schools is required to assign grades and have more confidence in the grades assigned; national data that explore PA for the early years are also lacking; and ongoing collection cycles are needed. More consistent and thorough national data collection efforts are needed to further our understanding of PA in the Australian context.

Conclusion

The 2018 AHKA Report Card shows that, despite living in a country advantaged by good schools, programs, facilities and spaces, Australian children and youth do not move enough, lack movement skill mastery, and compare poorly to their international peers when it comes to physical fitness. Stronger strategic

commitment from government is required at all levels to drive a cultural shift to see Aussie kids moving more every day.

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