Results from Germany’s 2018 Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth

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**Introduction**

Even though positive health effects of regular physical activity (PA) are well known, national and international surveillance data show that PA is the “pill not taken”. This leads to widespread negative health and economic consequences. The 2018 German Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth provides a comprehensive evaluation of PA levels in different domains and correlated indicators using the Active Healthy Kids Canada (AHKC) grading framework. The Report Card aims to evaluate and benchmark the national PA promotion efforts in children and youth in Germany with the ultimate aim to raise awareness for the promotion of PA. The purpose of this contribution is to summarize the results of the 2018 German Report Card (Figure 1).

**Methods**

The 2018 German Report Card evaluates population-based levels of PA in different domains and the presence and implementation of strategies for promoting PA identified by an expert panel. The 10 core PA indicators that are common to the Global Matrix 3.0 and belong to one of three categories were included: Daily Behaviors (Overall Physical Activity, Organized Sport Participation, Active Play, Active Transportation, Sedentary Behaviors, Physical Fitness), Settings and Sources of Influence (Family and Peers, School, Community and Environment), and Strategies and Investments (Government).

Sources included national surveys, peer-reviewed literature, and government and non-government reports. The Report Card 2018 was developed by the Research Work Group (RWG), based on the Canadian model and consisted of 12 researchers from 7 universities and two research institutes, who are authors of this manuscript. The RWG had a wide presentation of researchers and experts in PA, health behaviours, and represented different scientific perspectives and methodological background. The RWG assigned grades (ie, A, B, C, D, F, or INC (incomplete)) to the 10 Report Card indicators using the benchmarks provided by the AHKC.

**Results and Discussion**

For Germany, the expert panel assigned good grades (eg, B+, B-) for most indicators relating to Setting and Sources of Influence with the exception of the Government indicator, which was assigned an incomplete grade (Table 1). Nevertheless, most children and youth in Germany failed to meet the World Health Organization (WHO) recommendation for PA and engaged in high levels of sedentary

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behaviours (SB) despite the favourable condition within the relevant settings.\textsuperscript{1–3} Therefore, we assigned poor grades for most behavioural indicators (Overall PA, SB, Active Play and Active Transportation) with the exception of Organized Sport Participation.

We were not able to assign grades for two indicators – Physical Fitness, Government – due to insufficient evidence. Even though many studies exist that assessed child and youth physical fitness in Germany, no overall data aggregation and analysis has been carried out according to the AHKC benchmarks. Additionally, evaluations regarding the reach and effectiveness of government policies to promote PA do not exist.

### Conclusion

The proportion of German children and youth meeting the WHO recommended levels of PA and with screen time below two hours daily is low even though the Settings and Sources of Influence are favourable in promoting PA levels. Despite high membership rates in sport clubs, this alone does not appear to lead to sufficiently high PA levels. The fact that no overall government policy exists to promote PA in children and adolescents signals a need for further actions from government that facilitates PA and creates environments that support healthy active living among German children and youth. Furthermore, the differences existing in girls’ and boys’ PA levels call for intervention programmes that lower this gap and that further explore the similarities and differences in sex/gender groups.

### References

