Results From China’s 2018 Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth

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Introduction

Regular physical activity (PA) is beneficial to young people’s health and development.1 Recently regional and national surveillance data show that only a few Chinese young people meet the guideline of at least 60 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous intensity PA daily.2,3 There are nearly 200 million Chinese schoolchildren, yet few studies have provided nationally representative and internationally comparable evidence on their PA.4 Thus, the purpose of this paper is to report the results of the inaugural China’s Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth.

Methods

The Chinese Report Card Team developed the national surveillance protocol for China’s 2018 Report Card on the basis of Shanghai’s (China) 2016 Report Card2 using the Physical Activity and Fitness in China—The Youth Study (PAFCTYS), conducted from October to December in 2016 and coordinated by the Ministry of Education of China.5,6 The PAFCTYS used a three-stage stratified cluster sampling design to sample a nationally representative group of schoolchildren among schools from 22 provinces, 4 municipalities, 5 autonomous regions, and Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps (an independent division within Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region), in Mainland China. Detailed information regarding the sampling can be found elsewhere.3

The data from PAFCTYS included a representative sample of Chinese school-aged children (N = 125,281, boys: 49.6%, aged 9-17 years). Self-report questionnaires were completed by the sampled students, their parents/guardians, and physical education teacher (n = 1398) from each sampled school. In addition, physical fitness was assessed in the sampled students.7,8 Thus, the 10 core physical activity indicators that are common to the Global Matrix 3.0 (Overall Physical Activity, Organized Sport Participation, Active Play, Active Transportation, Sedentary Behavior, Physical Fitness, Family and Peers, School, Community and Environment, and Government) are covered.

Results and Discussion

The advantage of this inaugural 2018 China Report Card (front cover presented in Figure 1) is that the results are based on nationally representative surveillance data from all over mainland China. Therefore, the results of all 10 indicators (Table 1) are able to demonstrate the general situation of PA and sedentary behaviors and the social context of those behaviors as well as the physical fitness of Chinese children and adolescents.

Compared with Shanghai’s 2016 Report Card,2 we found that for indicators regarding PA behaviors, such as Organized Sport Participation (China: D-; Shanghai: F), Active Play (China: D+; Shanghai: D-), and Active Transportation (China: C+; Shanghai: C-) are better on the national level than in Shanghai. Meanwhile, indicators regarding the social context, such as School (China: D+; Shanghai: B+), Family and Peers (China: D+; Shanghai: B), Community and Environment (China: F; Shanghai: D+), and Government (China: F; Shanghai: D) are poorer on the national level than in Shanghai. Nevertheless, a grade of F was assigned for Overall PA and Sedentary Behavior on both the national level and

Figure 1 — China’s 2018 Report Card cover.
in Shanghai due to the small proportion of young people in China meeting the PA or sedentary behavior recommendations.

**Conclusion**

Levels of PA and sedentary behavior of Chinese youth were low and below the recommended guidelines. Interventions and policies at the community and environment level should be encouraged to promote PA and reduce sedentary behavior. In addition, national policies on young people’s PA should be advocated widely to ensure the policies can be transferred into actions.

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**References**