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

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Introduction

Research demonstrates that almost half of children and youth in India do not meet recommended guidelines for physical activity and sedentary behaviour. The 2016 India Report Card identified several gaps in evidence, including nationally representative data on active living and contextual indicators such as “Active Play” and “Family and Peers.” With India’s youth projected to be a major proportion of the world’s workforce, evaluating active living in India has implications for the world economy. The 2018 Report Card addresses evidence gaps identified in 2016 using peer-reviewed and grey literature, as well as primary data obtained through key partners.

Methods

A systematic search of peer-reviewed and grey literature from 2010-2018 was conducted for 10 indicators: overall physical activity, organized sport participation, active play, active transportation, sedentary behavior, family and peers, school, community and the built environment, government strategies and investments, and physical fitness. Data sources included one national survey, several state (i.e., province) and city-level surveys, as well as primary data from ongoing longitudinal state-level surveys. Relevant grey literature, including government reports and school board policies, were also reviewed during the grading process. Peer-reviewed data were appraised based on representativeness, sample size, data quality, and timeliness (i.e., recentness of data). Grey literature was appraised based on comprehensiveness, validity of the sources cited, and representativeness. Nationally representative data were given a higher weightage, followed by published data, unpublished raw data, and grey literature. Each indicator was assessed against parameters provided by Active Healthy Kids Global Alliance, and grades were assigned based on team consensus using the standardized rubric.

Results and Discussion

The 2018 India Report Card (Figure 1) addressed most of the gaps in evidence identified by the 2016 Report Card; however, it reiterated the need for nationally representative active living research, and renewed government strategies and investments to facilitate active living among children and youth. Although a major proportion of the children and youth in India appear to participate in active transportation, they are not meeting recommended physical activity and sedentary behaviour guidelines. Table 1 provides a summary of the grades. Physical activity type and levels varied significantly across the intersection of gender and socioeconomic status, with girls belonging to lower socioeconomic status having the greatest disadvantage due to cultural and safety perceptions. Based on the grades assigned to “Family and Peers” (D), “Community and Built Environment” (D), and “Government” (D), the active living challenges faced by Indian children and youth could be attributed to lack of adequate political, social, and physical environmental support. The 2018 India Report Card recommends the institution of a nationally representative survey to accurately capture all active living indicators of children and youth in India. Active Healthy Kids India has been established to obtain nationally
representative data, and advocate for investments to improve active living among children and youth in India.

**Conclusion**

The 2018 India Report Card shows that although the vast majority of children and youth in India are not accumulating recommended levels of physical activity, there are encouraging signs of their participation in active transportation and active play—a phenomenon that needs to be explored further to facilitate more physical activity.

**References**