



IS SPORT ENOUGH?



**ACTIVE HEALTHY KIDS
AUSTRALIA**

and young people:

their children and young people.

'IS SPORT ENOUGH?'

How many young Australians play sport?

Australia is a sporting nation and sport is an integral part of our national identity, which is reflected in the large number (64-85%)⁶⁻⁹ of Australian children and young people who participate in some form of organised sport or physical activity. When we look at sport participation since 1970 in Australia and overseas, we typically see increases in participation rates, especially in recent years³³⁻⁴⁰ (Figure 1). However, despite these participation rates, participation in other forms of physical activity (such as active transport and leisure time physical activity) that contribute to overall physical activity levels are low and declining.

Likewise, many Australian children and young people, even those who participate in sport and meet the recommended Australian physical activity guidelines, are engaging in levels of recreational electronic screen use and other sedentary behaviours that are likely to adversely affect their health, growth and development¹⁰⁻¹⁸.

While it is encouraging that a large number of children are obtaining some of their weekly physical activity from organised sport, we need to ask '*Is sport enough?*'. If we look at overall physical activity levels as well as physical fitness and obesity levels, then the answer is clearly no.

Benefits of sport participation

Participation in sport provides a wide range of benefits to children and young people that go beyond physical fitness alone^{19,20}. When they play sport, children are engaged with others and learn teamwork and negotiation skills; they develop self-discipline; they learn to work within the rules, regulations and etiquette of a social system; they develop decision-making skills; and they cumulatively acquire transferable motor skills, giving them a sense of movement competence and confidence.

How active are young Australians while playing sport?

It is important to understand that participation in sport does not necessarily mean that children and young people meet the recommended levels of physical activity, or that everyone has an equal exposure to sport.

Participation during a typical week, for most sporting commitments (which may only last for part of the year), will involve perhaps one or two training sessions and one competitive game. This equates to anywhere from three to six hours per week of scheduled time for physical activity.

During this time each week parents, coaches, club administrators, school staff and event organisers need to be aware of how much time children are being physically active. For example, during sports training many youngsters may spend a lot of time listening to instructions, waiting for a turn and standing around learning new skills or game tactics with the actual time on task and the intensity of the activity being minimal. It has been shown that less than 50% of time spent in organised sport is spent in moderate to vigorous physical activity (MVPA)²¹.

How can we increase physical activity levels through sport and other domains?

As a nation we need to make sure that we continually encourage our children and young people to actively participate in organised sport as it provides them with an outlet to be active and to acquire a host of physical, cognitive and social-emotional skills and benefits. Sports participation need not necessarily be competitive in nature, as competition may be discouraging for some children. We also need to ensure that the quality (intensity of activity) and quantity of activity is age appropriate²⁵.

In addition, it is imperative that we encourage, support and facilitate the incorporation of more physical activity throughout their everyday activities such as using active transport to and from school, sporting commitments or social engagements; providing opportunities to be active both indoors and outdoors in an unstructured environment at both school and home; participating in household chores where appropriate (e.g. gardening) and breaking up long periods of time that they are sedentary which includes limiting the amount of time that children and young people are engaged in electronic media (e.g. watching television, playing computer games). **The broad message is: Sport is not enough.**

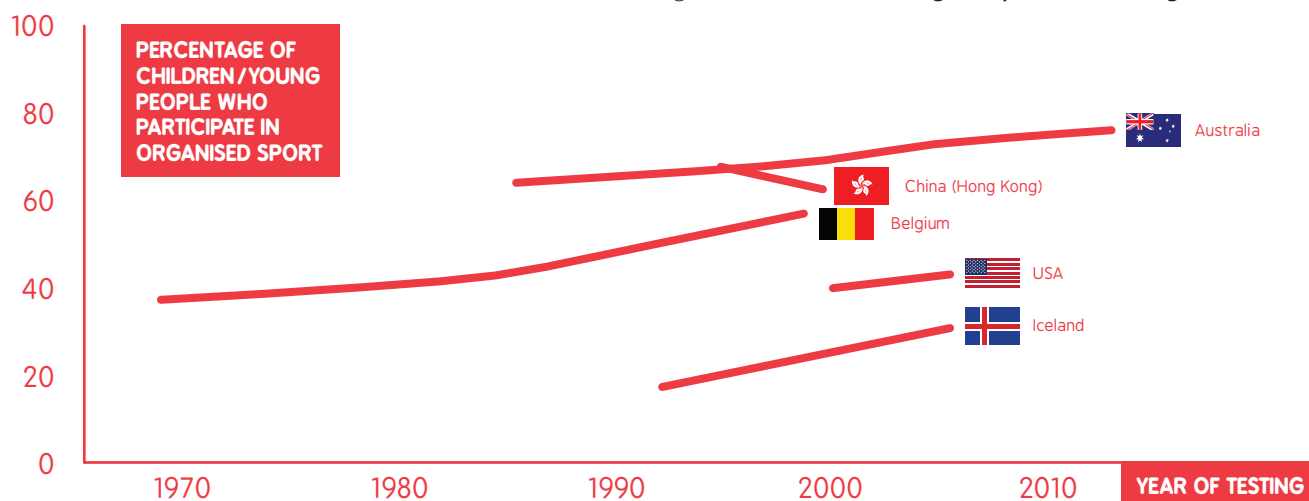


Figure 1.

Time trends in the percentage of children and young people who participate in organised sport years⁵⁻¹².

INDICATORS

The 2014 Active Healthy Kids Australia Physical Activity Report Card assigns letter grades to 12 different indicators that are grouped under four categories: Strategies and Investments (Government Strategies and Investments), Settings and Sources of Influence (Family and Peers, School and Community and the Built Environment), Physical Activity Behaviours that contribute to Overall Physical Activity Levels (Organised Sport and Physical Activity Participation, Physical Education and Physical Activity Participation in Schools, Active Play, Active Transportation and Sedentary Behaviours) and Traits (Aerobic Fitness and Movement Skills) (Figure 2).

- A** = Australia is succeeding with a majority of children and young people (81-100%);
B = Australia is succeeding with well over half of children and young people (61-80%);
C = Australia is succeeding with about half of children and young people (41-60%);
D = Australia is succeeding with some but less than half of children and young people (21-40%);
F = Australia is succeeding with very few children and young people (0-20%); or
Incomplete (INC) = Not enough available evidence to assign a grade to the indicator.

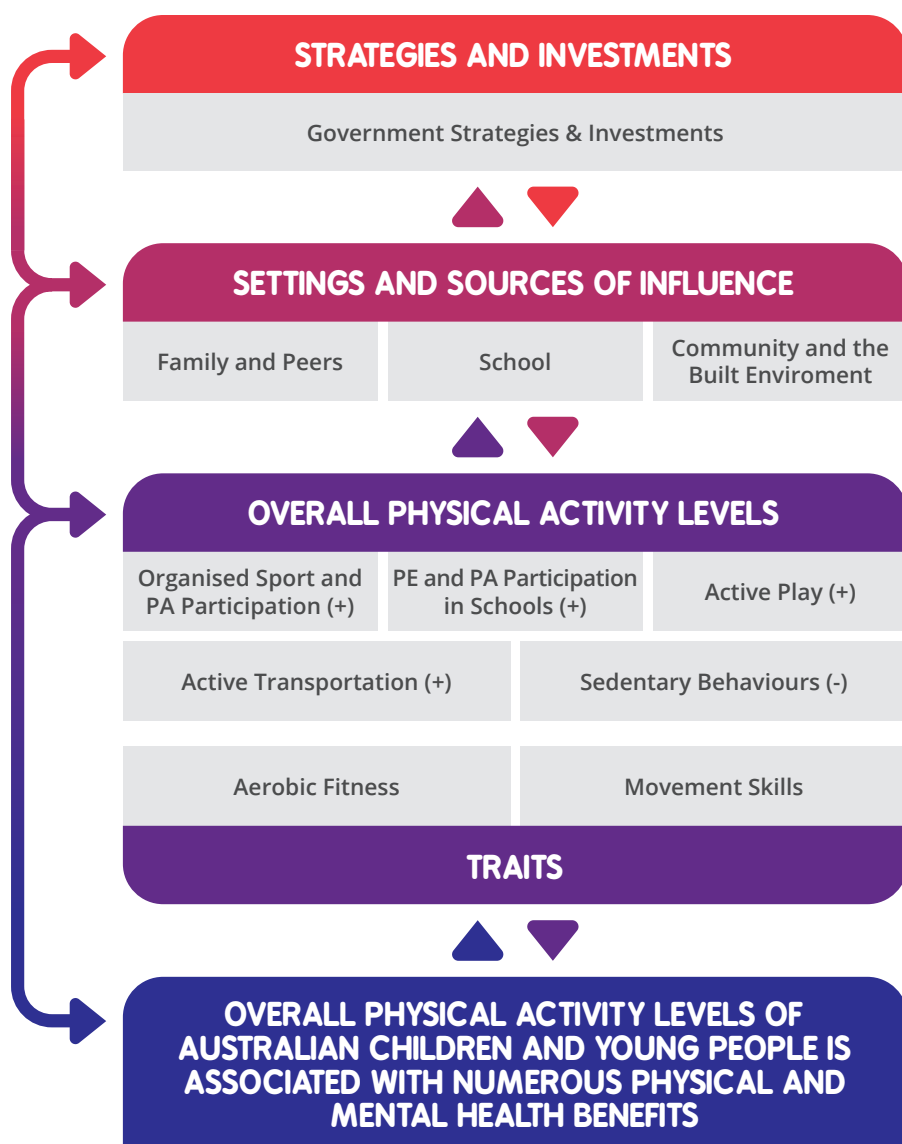


Figure 2.

Visual representation of the indicator categories.
 Adapted from the 2013 Active Healthy Kids Canada Physical Activity Report Card²³.
 Note, + = increases PA levels, - = decreases PA levels, PA = Physical Activity.

OVERALL PHYSICAL ACTIVITY LEVELS

D-

- + 19% of Australians aged 5-17 years⁶ and 15% of Australians aged 12-17 years⁹, meet the recommended Australian physical activity guidelines² of accumulating at least 60 minutes of MVPA every day of the week.
- + 17% of Australians aged 5-17 years are accumulating at least 12,000 steps per day⁶. It has been reported that 60 minutes of MVPA per day can be approximated to 12,000 steps per day for children and young people²⁴.
- + 72% of Australian parents report that their children aged 2-4 years meet the recommended Australian physical activity guidelines² by accumulating at least 180 minutes of physical activity each day⁶.

ORGANISED SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY PARTICIPATION

B-

- + 64% of Australians aged 5-17 years participated in organised sport or physical activity over the past 7 days⁶.
- + 66% of Australians aged 5-14 years participated in organised sport over the past 12 months⁷.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY PARTICIPATION IN SCHOOLS

INC

- + 71% of Australian secondary school students (aged 12-17 years) participated in at least 120 minutes of physical education at school per week during both summer and winter school terms⁹.
- + 78% of Australian secondary school students (aged 12-17 years) participated in physical education on two or more days per week during both summer and winter school terms⁹.

ACTIVE PLAY

INC

- + According to parents, 78% of Australians aged 5-17 years participated in non-organised physical activity over the past week⁶.
- + According to parents, Australians aged 2-4 years play outdoors an average of 174 minutes every day⁶.

ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION

D

- + 20% of secondary school students (aged 12-17 years) travel to and/or from school using active transport at least once per week⁹.
- + According to parents, 35% and 39% of primary school students, aged 6-7 and 11-12 years respectively, travel to and/or from school using active transport at least once per week⁸.

SEDENTARY BEHAVIOURS

D-

- + 26% of Australians aged 2-4 years meet the recommended Australian screen time guidelines² of accumulating no more than 1 hour per day⁶.
- + 29% of Australians aged 5-17 years meet the recommended Australian screen time guidelines² of accumulating no more than 2 hours per day⁶.
- + 20% of Australians aged 12-17 years meet the recommended Australian screen time guidelines² of accumulating no more than 2 hours per day⁹.



FAMILY AND PEERS – INFRASTRUCTURE, SUPPORT, PARENTAL /PEER BEHAVIOUR

C

- + According to parents, 16% of 2-4 year olds and 51% of 5-17 year olds have at least one screen-based device in their bedroom⁶.
- + 76% of Australians aged 12-17 years report they are receiving at least some form of encouragement to be physically active (at least once per week) from their parents⁹.
- + 43% of Australian adults, 30% of fathers and 22% of mothers are meeting the recommended Australian physical activity guidelines of being active on most, preferably all, days every week^{6, 8}.

SCHOOL – INFRASTRUCTURE, POLICIES AND PROGRAMMING

B-

- + 35% and 57% of secondary schools (urban and rural respectively) report having a specialist physical education teacher who delivers physical education classes, but there was no indication of the level of qualification attained²².
- + 64% of primary schools and 51% of secondary schools report providing at least 120 and 80 minutes of physical education per week respectively^{8, 22}.
- + A high proportion of primary and secondary (rural and urban) schools report having physical activity facilities on school grounds and that their physical activity facilities/equipment are available to students during school hours (including recess and lunch)^{9, 22}.

COMMUNITY AND THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT – INFRASTRUCTURE, POLICIES, PROGRAMS, SAFETY

A-

- + 87% of Australians aged 12-17 years and 84% of parents report having a playground that they/ their children can access near to their home^{8, 9}.
- + According to 75% of parents, heavy or problematic traffic is not a concern near to their child's school neighbourhood⁸.

GOVERNMENT STRATEGIES AND INVESTMENTS

C+

- + There have been a number of Australian Government initiatives, programs and partnerships that have been established with the aim of improving the overall physical activity levels of the Australian population¹¹⁹⁻¹²⁴.
- + There has been outstanding commitment from non-government organisations, such as the National Heart Foundation of Australia and the Australian Cancer Council, to improve the health of Australians including children and young people through various initiatives that aim to increase physical activity participation (e.g. Jump Rope for Heart).
- + Australia does not currently have a national physical activity policy that would enforce the need for a national physical activity plan. This could potentially be a stand-alone document or be integrated within existing policies (e.g. policies addressing health promotion).
- + There have been large amounts of funding provided by the Australian Sports Foundation (ASF) and Australian Sports Commission (ASC) to various sporting organisations, institutions, programs and initiatives over the past five years¹²⁶. While this is a substantial contribution, the same type of commitment is needed for physical activity participation for Australian children and young people with the aim of increasing overall physical activity levels.





AEROBIC FITNESS INC

- + Australians aged 8-15 years have below average aerobic fitness relative to norm-referenced international standards, with young Australians ranked in the 31st percentile (range: 22nd to 40th percentile) relative to their age- and sex-matched international peers^{22, 129}.
- + 65% of Australian children and young people have a 'healthy' level of aerobic fitness associated with reduced cardiometabolic risk²².

MOVEMENT SKILLS INC

- + Grade 6 Australian girls are doing quite poorly with their locomotor (proportion of girls showing at least competent ability – sprint: 44%; vertical jump: 42%; side gallop: 81%; and leap 35%) and object-control (proportion of girls showing at least competent ability – kick: 15%; over-arm throw: 19%; and catch: 58%) competency²².
- + Grade 6 Australian boys are doing quite poorly with their locomotor (proportion of boys showing at least competent ability – sprint: 48%; vertical jump: 43%; side gallop: 73%; and leap 18%) competency, however their object-control competency is somewhat better (proportion of boys showing at least competent ability – kick: 59%; over-arm throw: 58%; and catch: 72%)²².

METHODOLOGY, DETAILED FINDINGS AND OTHER RESOURCES

The Active Healthy Kids Australia Physical Activity Report Card for Children and Young People was developed using data from a number of national and state-based surveys. The Research Working Group evaluated all data to determine the grades to assign to each indicator based upon established benchmarks.

The long form of this Report Card describes in detail: the data sources used to assign grades; the methodology and processes employed; informative tables and figures; and complete references. To download the long- and short-form of the Report Card visit: activehealthykidsaustralia.com.au

The National Heart Foundation of Australia is the primary strategic and endorsing partner of Active Healthy Kids Australia, assisting in the development and communication of the *2014 Active Healthy Kids Australia Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Young People*.



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