



# The Danish Physical Activity Report Card for Children and Youth

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2016

# ACTIVE HEALTHY KIDS DENMARK

The Danish Physical Activity Report Card provides a state of the nation report on how Denmark is performing when it comes to activity behaviors in children and young people and how various levels of government promote an active lifestyle in the same target group.

The aim of the Report Card is to provide accurate and updated knowledge and prompt political action on engaging children in physical activity from an early age.

## Report Card Development team

Development of The Danish Report Card was initiated and coordinated by the Research and Innovation Centre for Human Movement and Learning. The centre is a joint-venture between the University College Lillebaelt and The University of Southern Denmark (<http://fiibl.dk/inenglish/>).

The Report Card was developed by a Research Committee comprising 12 members.

The Report Card Research Committee encompasses a diverse range of researchers and professional experts working within the area of physical activity, health behaviors and policy development, so it represents different scientific perspectives and methodological backgrounds. The Danish Health Authority participated as observer in the committee and helped to identify relevant data.

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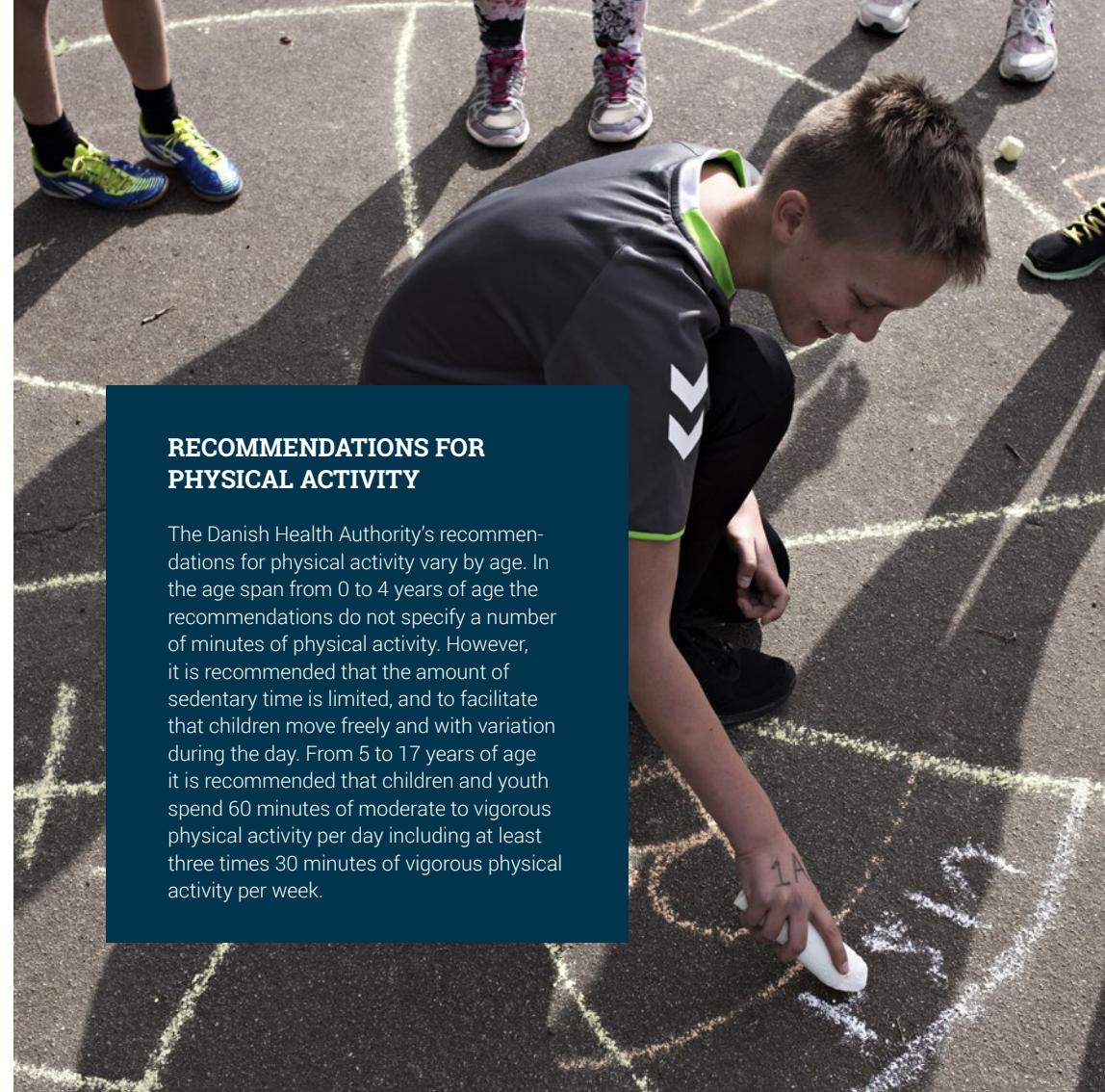




Table 1. Summary of the grades assigned to each indicator in the 2016 Danish Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth.

Indicator	Grades
Overall Physical Activity Levels	D+
Organized Sport Participation	A
Active Play	INC
Active Transportation	B
Sedentary Behaviors	INC
Family and Peers	INC
School	B
Community and the Built Environment	B+
Government Strategies and Investments	A-

*Note.* The grade for each indicator is based on the percentage of children and youth meeting a defined benchmark: A is 81% to 100%; B is 61% to 80%; C is 41% to 60%, D is 21% to 40%; F is 0% to 20%; INC is Incomplete data.



### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

The Danish Health Authority's recommendations for physical activity vary by age. In the age span from 0 to 4 years of age the recommendations do not specify a number of minutes of physical activity. However, it is recommended that the amount of sedentary time is limited, and to facilitate that children move freely and with variation during the day. From 5 to 17 years of age it is recommended that children and youth spend 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity per day including at least three times 30 minutes of vigorous physical activity per week.



## BACKGROUND

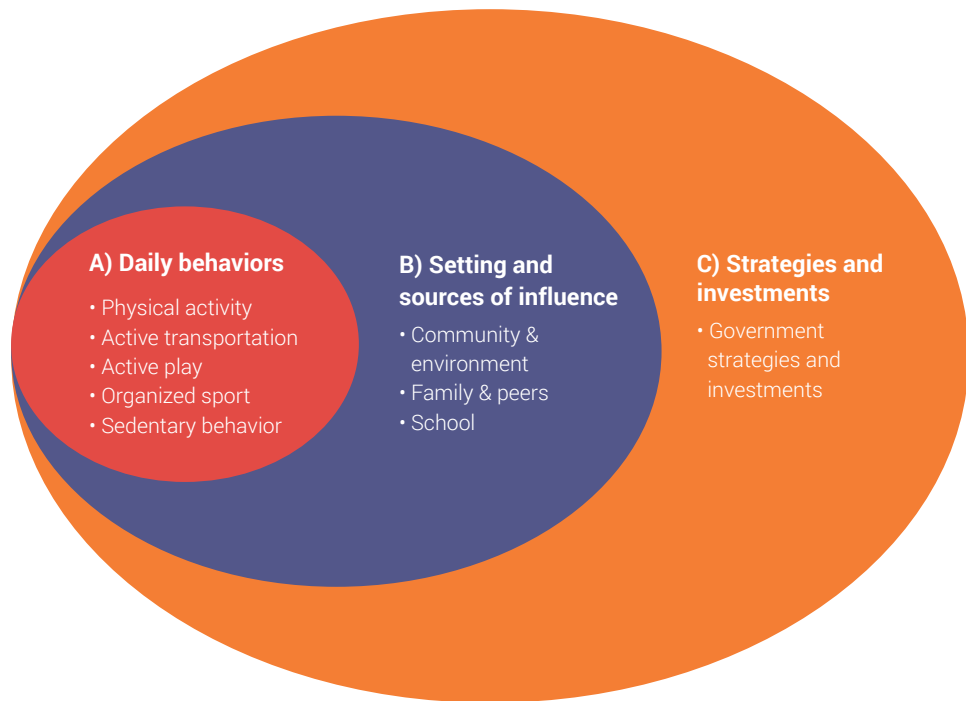
Despite the growing body of evidence which highlights the adverse health outcomes of sedentary behavior among children and youth, only about one in ten 11-15 year-olds achieve the recommended physical activity levels. Thus, there is a need to gather, evaluate and translate the best available evidence on how to facilitate physical activity in children and youth, to guide future practice and interventions, as well as policy and program development.

The Danish Physical Activity Report Card identifies and assesses nine indicators (Table 1). The Report Card is based on best

available research, health surveillance and other relevant monitoring data, policy and practice findings and expert consensus. The indicators include daily behaviors, settings and sources of influence, strategies and investments (Figure 1).

Visit [www.fiibl.dk](http://www.fiibl.dk) to download the full Danish Physical Activity Report Card for Children and Youth. Available at the beginning of 2017. The Full Report will include background on methodology and data sources with summaries of all key findings, charts, figures and a complete list of references.

**FIGURE 1. FACTORS INFLUENCING PHYSICAL ACTIVITY**



## THE NINE INDICATORS

### A) DAILY BEHAVIORS

#### PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

*This indicator describes the proportion of children and youth complying with the recommendations for physical activity.*

#### Key findings

**When physical activity is measured by subjective measures, e.g. questionnaire:**

- 13% of children aged 11-15 years meet the national recommendation of at least 60 minutes MVPA per day. Fewer girls (10%) than boys (17%) meet the recommendation.
- 18% of youth aged 15-20 years meet the physical activity recommendations; boys are more active than girls.

**When physical activity is measured by objective measures, e.g. accelerometer:**

- 41% of children aged 11-13 years meet the recommendation of at least

60 minutes of daily moderate to vigorous physical activity, whereas the corresponding percentage at age 13-15 is 24%.

- 78% of children at age 5 meet the recommendation of at least 60 minutes of daily moderate to vigorous physical activity.

#### ORGANIZED SPORT PARTICIPATION

*This indicator describes the proportion of children participating in organized sport.*

#### Key findings

- 83% of 7 to 15 year-olds in Denmark exercise or participate in organized sport or/and physical activity programs on a regular basis.
- 86% of children aged 7-15 report that they have been a member of a sport club within the last 12 months.





- The proportion of 7 to 15 year-olds participating in organized sport has remained relatively stable during the last decade.
- The self-reported participation in organized sport and physical activity is lower for the older age group (13 to 15 year-olds) compared to the two younger age groups (7 to 9 year-olds and 10 to 12 year-olds).
- The prevalence of self-reported sport participation is almost equal across gender.
- The sport active children participate in approximately 4.75 hours of sport per week.
- Children participate in fewer selected sport activities, but spend more time per activity than was the case just a few years ago.
- The proportion of children who participate in more than six hours of sport per week has risen from 22% in 1998 to 30% in 2011.

## **ACTIVE PLAY**

*This indicator describes the proportion of children and youth who participate in non-organised physical activity or unstructured play during leisure time.*

### **Key findings**

- 46% of 7 to 15 year-olds report that they are doing sport or exercise on their own.
- Doing sport and exercise on their own is more popular among boys (52%) than among girls (39%).
- The 13 to 15 year-olds are more likely (51%) to do unstructured and non-organized activities than the 7 to 12 year-olds (43-44%).
- The most popular unstructured and non-organized activities are cycling, fitness training, running, hiking, skateboarding and roller skating.

## ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION

*This indicator describes the percentage of children and youth who use active transportation (e.g. to get to school, park, leisure time activities, shops or a friend's house).*

### Key findings

- Approximately 7 in 10 children and adolescents attending public schools actively commute (walking, cycling, skateboard, child scooter or roller-skates) to and from school.
- The proportion of children who actively commute to and from school is higher among 10 to 15 year-olds (76.4% and 82.1%, respectively) than among 6 to 9 year-olds (52.4% and 55.4%, respectively).

## SEDENTARY BEHAVIORS

*This indicator pertains to the proportion of children complying with the recommendation for the amount of sedentary behavior. However, since the Danish Health Authority has not yet established recommendations for sedentary behavior, the indicator will describe the amount of sedentary behavior among children and youth.*

### Key findings

- During waking hours school-aged children accumulate an average of 8.2 hours per day being sedentary.
- 64% of Danish 11 to 15 year-olds accumulate more than 2 hours of screen time per day on weekdays and 81% on weekends.
- Among 11 to 15 year-olds, computers are used at least 2 hours per day by 56% and 61% on weekdays and weekends respectively.

## B) SETTING AND SOURCES OF INFLUENCE

### FAMILY AND PEERS

*This indicator describes the proportion of parents /peers who encourage their children /friends to participate in physical activity, and the proportion of parents who themselves meet the guidelines for physical activity.*

#### Key findings

- If both parents take part in sport, 91% of their children (among the 11-13 and 15 year-olds) do likewise.
- If one parent participates in sports 89% of their children (among the 11-13 and 15 year-olds) do likewise.
- If neither of the parents do sport, 79% of the children participate in sport.
- If the father participates in sport, 91% of the boys are also active. If the father does not participate in sport at all, 76% of boys participate.
- When children have parents who do not participate in sport, they are more likely not to participate in sport.

### SCHOOL

*This indicator describes the proportion of students who are taught by a physical education specialist, who are offered at least 150 minutes of physical education per week and have the facilities and equipment necessary for physical activities. It also describes the proportion of schools with an active school policy and opportunities for physical activity.*

#### Key findings

- Physical education lessons are compulsory from 1st to 9th grade (approximately aged 7-15 years). This ensures a minimum of 60-90 minutes of physical education every week.
- The Danish Education Act, updated in 2014, makes it compulsory for public schools to offer an average of 45 minutes of physical activity per school day.

- 27% of schoolteachers state that the provision of the 45 minutes of physical activity per day is fully implemented.
- 49% of the girls and 63% of the boys are physically active for a minimum of 45 minutes during a normal school day.
- 81% of schoolteachers who teach physical education are specialists within the field.
- 25% of the municipalities state that none of the schools in the municipality have a school policy for physical activity.
- 14% of the municipalities state that every school or nearly all schools have a policy for physical activity.

## COMMUNITY AND THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

*This indicator describes the proportion of children and parents that indicate that their community is doing a good job to prioritize and promote physical activity, and that the community has adequate facilities for physical activities (parks, playgrounds, bike lanes etc.).*

### Key findings

- Among the 7 to 15 year-olds, 88% state that their local community has suitable sports facilities. 91% of this group believes that the local community provides a good setting for physical activity.
- Facilities for sport, play and leisure time activities are unequally distributed geographically. The absolute number of facilities is higher in major Danish cities. However, children living in dense urban settings have lower accessibility to physical activity facilities per capita.
- The two most popular outdoor areas where children and youth spend time are sports facilities (51%) and in the garden (40%).
- 84 % are physically active when they are at a sports facility, 7% use the facility to hang out.

## C) STRATEGIES AND INVESTMENTS

### GOVERNMENT STRATEGIES AND INVESTMENTS

*This indicator relates to the evidence of leadership, political strategies and promotion at the governmental level to provide physical activity opportunities for all children and youth.*

#### Key findings

- Municipalities control about 85% of public expenditure in sports and leisure.
- National authorities and bodies conduct a number of public information campaigns every year to encourage children and youth to be physically active.
- Three pieces of legislation in particular are important for children's physical activity from an early age.
  - The Day-Care Act (covering children from 0 to 6 year-olds) specifies body and movement as one of six key learning themes.
  - The Education Act (covering primary

school children), stipulates that all children must be physically active for at least 45 minutes every day in school. The Education Act requires schools to seek cooperation with local sports and leisure organizations.

- The Act on Non-formal Education and Democratic Voluntary Activity calls for municipalities to support voluntary associations for children and young people under 25, including sports clubs. This legislation makes it mandatory to provide financial support for organized sport activities, to provide facilities and to subsidize rent in privately owned facilities.
- Physical exercise lessons are mandatory in the majority of secondary schools.
- Almost all municipalities have adopted a separate policy on sport related issues.
- Local authorities are obliged to provide safe travel routes to schools (e.g. via adequate bicycle paths).



*Denmark has well-developed policies on promoting physical activity among children and youth and ample facilities for active play and exercise. At the same time only a fraction of children and youth meet the national recommendations for physical activity.*

*It's time to take Physical Activity for Children and Youth seriously.*

Photos: Tobias Nicolai

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