

Results from The Sweden Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth 2016

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Background & aim

A combination of low physical activity and large amounts of sedentary behaviour are related to unfavorable health outcomes. The compilation of this data is vital for policy makers, researchers and various stakeholders in order to assess problem areas and intervene in appropriate ways.

The aim of this work is to review and compile the most recent, available literature on physical activity for children and youth in Sweden.

Methods

The Active Healthy Kids Swedish working group was established in 2015 to review current literature on physical activity for Swedish children and youth. Nationally representative surveys and individual studies between 2005-2015 were included, and eleven physical activity and health indicators (Table 1) were graded using the Active Healthy Kids Canada grading system.

Key findings

- Less than half of Swedish children and adolescents reached the recommendation of 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity per day
- Sedentary time was too high among all age groups
- Participation in organized sport was high, especially among 8-11 year old boys
- Almost 60% of Swedish children have less than 2 km to school, allowing active transportation
- Few children reached the recommendation of 500 g of fruit and vegetables per day
- The prevalence of overweight and obesity has decreased, but it is still far too high

Conclusion

Overall physical activity is too low and sedentary behavior is too high for almost all age groups investigated. This report card shows that national level policies as well as some features of the built environment are favorable in promoting physical activity in children and adolescents.

Areas where action is needed

A more specific recommendation for sedentary behavior would be helpful in order to appropriately assess Swedish children. Sweden also needs to use objective measures in national level surveillance and create strategies to increase participation and completion rates. There is also a need for more national data on supportive environments for active transportation for children. The two indicators, active play and family and peers represented two areas in which gaps in the research were found, and where research needs to be performed. Finally, even though many policies exist, further work needs to be conducted to also implement and evaluate these.

Table 1. Grades according to physical activity indicator in the 2016 Sweden Report Card on physical activity for children and youth.

INDICATOR	GRADE
Overall Physical Activity	D
Organized Sport Participation	B+
Active Play	INC
Active Transportation	C+
Sedentary Behaviour ¹	C
Family & Peers	INC
School	C+
Community & the Built Environment	B
Government Strategies & Investments	B
Diet	C-
Obesity	D

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. A plus (+) or minus (-) was assigned if an indicator was not clearly within a defined letter value.

¹The sedentary behaviour indicator is based on screen time

