

# ACTIVE HEALTHY KIDS ZIMBABWE



# 2018

## REPORT Card



Physical Activity and Nutritional Status  
of school aged children in Zimbabwe:  
current research evidence and  
policy implications

# Physical Activity and the Nutritional status of school-aged children in Zimbabwe: current research evidence and policy implications

This is only a **Summary Report**: the full report can be downloaded for free at: [www.activehealthykidszimbabwe.com](http://www.activehealthykidszimbabwe.com)

## Introduction

The global escalation and transition of lifestyle behaviours such as insufficient physical activity, sedentari-ness and the consumption of energy dense diets predispose children and youth to early and ongoing risks for non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes and certain cancers. The World Health Organization reports that NCDs are now the leading cause of death worldwide, and that nearly 80% of these deaths occur in low-to-middle income countries. Research evidence suggests that insufficient physical activity, sedentary behaviour and the consumption of energy dense diets have been increasing among school-aged-children. Recent survey data from 105 countries showed that over 80% of 13-15-year-old children and youth do not meet the recommended 60 minutes of daily moderate-to vigorous-intensity physical.



## ■ The Zimbabwe Report Card

The 2018 Zimbabwe Report Card builds, and expands on the findings from the 2016 Report Card. It summarizes the best available research evidence and policy information, providing the most comprehensive synthesis and appraisal of physical activity levels and the nutritional status of Zimbabwean children and youth. The Zimbabwe Report Card borrows from initiatives in Canada and elsewhere in Africa, and assigns grades to key indicators of nutritional status and physical activity such as participation in organized sports, active play, school, family, community and the built environment, policy etc. among children and youth. Collectively, the graded indicators shed some light on how Zimbabwe is doing as a country to promote physical activity and healthy eating among children and youth. The development and authorship of this report card was partly inspired by results from the first and second Global Summits on Physical Activity of Children and the Active Healthy Kids Global Alliance ([www.activehealthykids.org](http://www.activehealthykids.org)), a global network of researchers and stakeholders with interests in the promotion of healthy and active lifestyles for children and youth around the globe. The full report can be downloaded from [www.activehealthykidszimbabwe.com](http://www.activehealthykidszimbabwe.com).

## ■ The Indicators and Grading Criteria

Letter grades ranging from 'A' to 'F' or 'incomplete' were assigned to 12 key indicators of physical activity, related behaviours, and their setting and sources of influence and the nutritional status for Zimbabwean children and youth. Due to limited research, only a handful of studies were available for use in developing the 2018 Report Card. The indicators included in this report card are for: Overall Physical Activity, Organized Sport Participation, Active Play, Active Transportation, Sedentary Behaviours, School Environment, Family and Peers, Community and the Built Environment, Non-governmental Strategies and Investments, Governmental Policies, Strategies and Investments, Fitness, and Nutritional Status. Published and unpublished research articles (without restrictions on when they were conducted or published), policy documents and materials from non-governmental organizations were used to inform the allocation of grades. The letter grades and their interpretation are: A (81-100%): succeeding with a large majority of Zimbabwean children and youth; B (61-80%): succeeding with well over half of children and youth; C (41-60%): succeeding with about half of children and youth; D (21-40%): succeeding with less than half, but some, children and youth; F (0-20%): succeeding with very few children and youth; Incomplete: not enough information available for grading.



Indicator	Grade	Key Findings
Overall physical activity	C+	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Survey data from approximately 4000 primary school students aged between 8 and 16 years, showed that 59% of them met the recommended 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity per day<sup>33</sup></li> <li>On average, boys accumulated more moderate-vigorous physical activity than girls</li> <li>A greater proportion of the children attending rural schools met the recommended daily physical activity guidelines than those attending urban schools<sup>33</sup></li> <li>A study of 320 preschoolers in the capital city of Harare showed that 67% participated in 'unquantified' average to high physical activity<sup>34</sup></li> <li>There is need for caution when interpreting the meaning of these data because they are based on self or parent/caregiver-reports, which may be subject to under or over reporting</li> </ul>
Organized sport and physical activity	B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sixty seven percent of children and youth surveyed participated in sporting activities such as football, tennis or swim<sup>33</sup></li> <li>More boys (75%) than girls (59%) reported having participated in sports<sup>33</sup></li> <li>Participation in organized sport did not differ by <sup>33</sup></li> <li>Another smaller study reported that a group of healthy 6-14 year olds spent an average of 2.5 hours playing sports<sup>35</sup></li> </ul>
Active outdoor Play	D+	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Approximately 35% of the Zimbabwean children reported spending at least an hour playing outside<sup>23</sup></li> <li>Only 29% of girls compared to 41% of boys reported spending at least 1 hour per day playing outside<sup>23</sup></li> <li>Almost half (49%) of the children and youth reported that they spend less than 1 hour per day playing outside<sup>23</sup></li> </ul>

Active transportation	A-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A little over 80% of Zimbabwean children and youth aged 8-16 years old, used active transport to and from school<sup>33</sup></li> <li>• Active transport use was highest (83%) in Manicaland Province, and lowest (77%) in Harare Province<sup>36</sup>, while more rural school children used active transportation than their urban counterparts<sup>33</sup></li> <li>• A surprisingly high proportion of children preferred to be driven to and from school if they had a choice<sup>33</sup></li> <li>• A study of preschoolers in Harare showed that a greater proportion (57%) used motorized transport compared to 43% who were reported to walk to preschool<sup>34</sup></li> </ul>
Sedentary behaviours	B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A substantial proportion (75%) of children and youth spent 2 or less hours in sedentary behaviours per day<sup>33</sup></li> <li>• The most commonly reported sedentary behaviours were watching television and playing electronic video games<sup>33</sup></li> <li>• A greater proportion (45%) of children attending rural schools did not watch television at all compared to only 17% attending urban schools<sup>33</sup></li> <li>• Almost a quarter of 3-5-year-old preschoolers watched between 2-3 hours of television the previous day<sup>34</sup></li> </ul>
Physical Fitness	INC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There were insufficient data to enable the Working Group to assign a grade for this indicator</li> <li>• Available data from the study by Makaza and others<sup>33</sup> relied on methodology that was not comparable.</li> <li>• Results from a small study of elite athletes<sup>39</sup>, could not be used to grade this indicator because it was not representative</li> </ul>

Nutritional Status	B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A recent national survey, show that close to one third (27%) of Zimbabwean children under the age of five were stunted while 6% were overweight<sup>45</sup></li> <li>Muderedzwa and Matsungu<sup>47</sup> reported approximately 4%, 6% and 7% of stunting, wasting and overweight respectively among 9-14-year-old children in Harare, Zimbabwe</li> <li>Sibanda and colleagues <sup>48</sup> found 5% stunting, 5% wasting, 3.3% underweight and 1.7% overweight among 5-11-year old children in Gwanda district</li> </ul>
School environment	C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This indicator was graded mostly based on the new curriculum, expert opinion and consensus</li> <li>Physical education (PE) is now mandated and examinable in primary and secondary schools, but there is no systematic surveillance or enforcement mechanism for adherence to PE syllabi</li> <li>There are neither data on types and serviceability of infrastructure nor PE teacher to student ratios</li> </ul>
Family and peers	INC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Although anecdotal evidence seems to suggest family and peer influence on key indicators of children's physical activity, there were insufficient data to accurately grade this indicator</li> </ul>
Community and environment	D	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Largely graded based on expert opinion and consensus</li> <li>Recreational parks are only available in some major urban centres, the majority of them are in derelict and unsafe conditions</li> <li>No policies or procedures exist to deal with the parks' state of disrepair</li> </ul>
Government strategies and investments	C-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The government has a national policy which mandates inter-ministerial collaboration for the promotion of mass participation in physical activity</li> <li>The Sports and Recreation Commission established by a government statute, is charged with establishing and maintain recreational facilities etc.</li> <li>At present, there is no evidence of direct resource allocation for practical implementation of the policies</li> </ul>

Non-governmental strategies and investments	INC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• There were insufficient data to accurately grade this indicator</li><li>• Only one corporation, Nestle Zimbabwe, partners with the National Association of Primary School Headmasters in the Nestle Kids Athletics Physical Activity Program to promote active healthy living among primary school-children</li></ul>
Note: Full citation details are provided in the long form Report Card		





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