



FINLAND'S
REPORT CARD
2022

Physical Activity for Children and Youth



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0-17-YEAR-OLDS

1,041,500



CHILDREN WITH A FOREIGN BACKGROUND (0-17 Y)

100,750

Children in early childhood education



EARLY EDUCATION UNITS

3,617

CHILDREN

271,900

5%

of 0-5-year-olds require intensified or special support

10%

of children in pre-primary education require intensified or special support

Children in basic education



PRIMARY AND LOWER SECONDARY SCHOOLS

2,130

PUPILS

548,100

12%

of pupils in basic education receive intensified support

9%

of pupils in basic education receive special support

SPECIAL EDUCATION SCHOOLS

61

PUPILS

3,500

Adolescents in upper secondary education



GENERAL UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOLS

335

STUDENTS

114,300

VOCATIONAL SCHOOLS

82

STUDENTS

208,700

SPECIAL VOCATIONAL COLLEGES

6

STUDENTS

5,750



MUNICIPALITIES

309

SPORT FACILITIES

40,000



SPORTS ACADEMIES

19

LOWER SECONDARY SCHOOL ATHLETES

10,400

PARA-ATHLETES

84

UPPER SECONDARY ATHLETES

6,700



SPORTS CLUBS

7,570

GOVERNMENT APPROPRIATIONS FOR THE PROVISION OF SPORTS IN 2019



€159,300,000



FINLAND'S REPORT CARD 2022

Promoting physical activity for all children and youth is the responsibility of everyone

Finland's Report Card 2022 is a compilation of recent research results on the status and promotion of physical activity among children and adolescents. Physical activity for children and adolescents consists of several different parts throughout the day, and it is strongly connected to everyday routines, social networks and the living environment. Through the latest research results, the Report Card sheds light on the state of physical activity of children and adolescents, as well as how it can be promoted in Finland.

Earlier versions of Finland's Report Card were produced in 2014¹, 2016² and 2018³. Finland's Report Card 2022 was prepared by five research institutions. The work group (p. 57) included Finnish specialists from different fields, working on research, policy or practices related to physical activity among children and adolescents. LIKES Research Centre for Physical Activity and Health coordinated the compilation process. The Report Card work is part of the international Active Healthy Kids Global Alliance. A summary of the physical activity of children and adolescents in 60 countries will be published in October 2022.

In the Report Card, physical activity and its promotion is examined and presented through 10 indicators. The different indicators were assessed by a group of specialists according to international instructions. The physical activity behaviour results are presented in four age groups: preschool-aged children, pupils in primary school, pupils in lower secondary school, and students.

The journey towards an equal physical activity culture is still in progress, and there is a clear need for information about physical activity behaviour in different groups. In addition to age, the Report Card results are examined according to gender, disability and foreign background. In addition to population-level trends, it is important to identify groups that are in a particularly vulnerable position. Nearly one in five children and adolescents have a disability that makes everyday life and physical activity more difficult. The results for children and adolescents with disabilities are presented and evaluated inclusively and more extensively than in previous Report Cards.

The challenge of insufficient physical activity cannot be solved only by promoting participation in organised sports and physical activity; attention must also be paid to everyday activity. It is important to ensure that children and adolescents who most often participate in organised physical activity have a diverse range of physical activity and sufficient everyday activity in order to balance the entity. For those who are least active, it is important to increase physical activity gradually while simultaneously reducing and arranging breaks in sedentary behaviours. The most recent Finnish physical activity recommendations no longer use the concept of screen time – which is difficult to define – because the use of digital devices as part of everyday life and studying has increased enormously. Breaks in sedentary behaviours and their replacement with moderate intensity physical activity are recommended for children and adolescents.

The entire society is responsible for promoting the health and physical activity of children and adolescents, and this requires multidisciplinary cooperation between different operators. In practice, the decisions and actions of all administrative branches influence the population's engagement in sports and physical activity. The effects of decision-making can be seen concretely in the everyday lives of children. The work group encourages decision-makers at all levels and environments – nationally, regionally, in municipalities, educational institutes, hobbies and families – to facilitate physical activity for children and youth and eliminate barriers to it.



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD (2016)^{4,5}

- ▶ A child needs at least three hours of physical activity with varying intensity levels every day, comprising two hours of light physical activity and brisk outdoor activities and one hour of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity.
- ▶ Physical activity is characteristic of children, which is why sedentary periods should not last longer than an hour; even shorter periods of inactivity should be broken up with something that the child finds enjoyable.
- ▶ A child should practise basic motor skills every day in a variety of ways and environments, in all seasons of the year.

RECOMMENDATION ON PHYSICAL ACTIVITY FOR CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS AGED 7–17 YEARS (2021)⁶

- ▶ All children and adolescents aged 7–17 years should be physically active in a versatile, brisk and strenuous manner for at least 60 minutes a day in a way that suits the individual, considering their age.
- ▶ Excessive and prolonged sedentary behaviours should be avoided.
- ▶ Vigorous endurance-type activity and physical activity that strengthens muscles and bones should be performed at least three days a week.
- ▶ Attention should also be paid to flexibility.

The national recommendations are in line with the World Health Organisation (WHO) recommendations on physical activity for children under the age of 5 (2019)⁷ and those for children and adolescents aged 5–17 (2020)⁸.

DEFINITIONS⁶

Physical activity includes all kinds of physical activity, such as play and games, physical activity and sports, exercise during the school day, physical activity during free time independently or in connection with hobbies or as part of housework, and active transportation from one place to another. Physical activity covers all voluntary physical activity of the muscles which increases energy consumption. Exercise is part of physical activity.

Exercise is a voluntary muscle function controlled by the nervous system which increases energy consumption. Exercise is aimed at predetermined goals and physical performances contributing to them as well as experiences gained from the activities.

Moderate physical activity refers to physical activity during which the heart rate rises and breathing becomes faster at least to a certain degree. Brisk walking, cycling or wheelchair racing are examples of such physical activity. Vigorous physical activity refers to physical activity during which the heart rate increases and breathing becomes considerably faster. Moderate-to-vigorous physical activity include both moderate and vigorous activities.

RECOMMENDATION ON PHYSICAL ACTIVITY FOR CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS AGED 7–17 YEARS (2021)

At least 60 MINUTES of moderate to vigorous physical activity A DAY

Recommendation on physical activity for children and adolescents aged 7-17 years

STAY ENERGETIC
Take breaks during prolonged sedentary periods.

IMPROVE ENDURANCE
Increase your heart rate and frequency of breathing. 3 times a week

STRENGTHEN YOUR MUSCLES AND BONES
Remember flexibility, balance and agility. 3 times a week

INCREASE WELLNESS
Move whenever you can. Supplement your sports activities with everyday physical activity.

RECOVER FROM THE DAY
Get enough sleep. Give time for your brain to structure thoughts and form new ones.

UKK Institute

FINLAND'S REPORT CARD 2022

The work group evaluated the evidence and assigned grades for 10 indicators related to physical activity and its promotion among Finnish children and adolescents, corresponding to a five-grade scale used by the Active Healthy Kids Global Alliance (from A = best to F = poorest). Grade 'A' means that the indicator in question is realised almost perfectly (80–100%), while 'F' means that the indicator is realised poorly (0–19%).

01 Overall physical activity

02 Organised sports participation

03 Active play

04 Active transportation

05 Family and peers

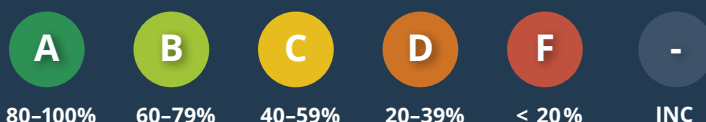
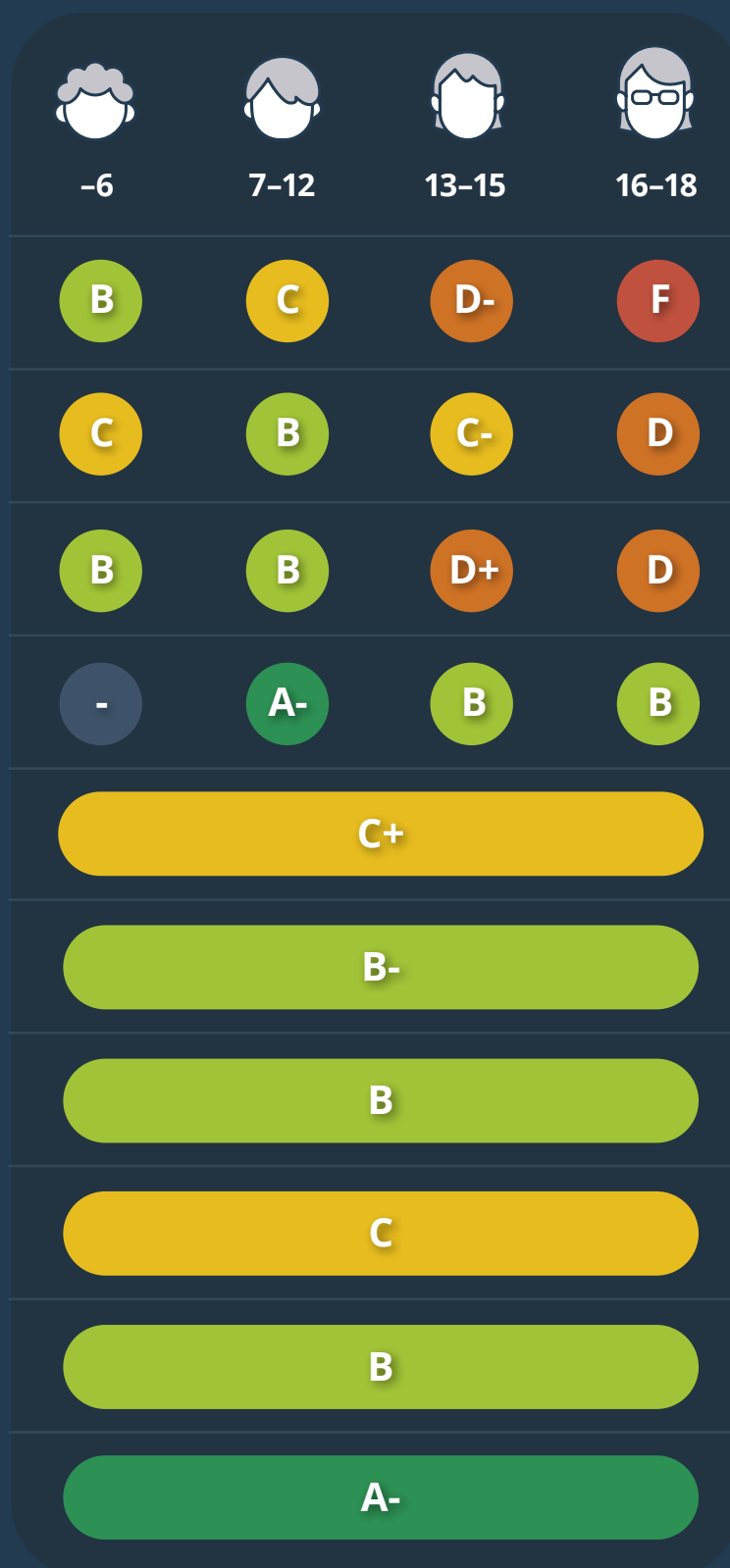
06 Early childhood education

07 Basic education

08 Upper secondary and vocational education

09 Community and the built environment

10 Government strategies and investments



PHYSICAL ACTIVITY FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH, AND ITS PROMOTION

Overall physical activity



Family and peers

Educational institutions facilitating physical activity

Community and the built environment

Government strategies and investments

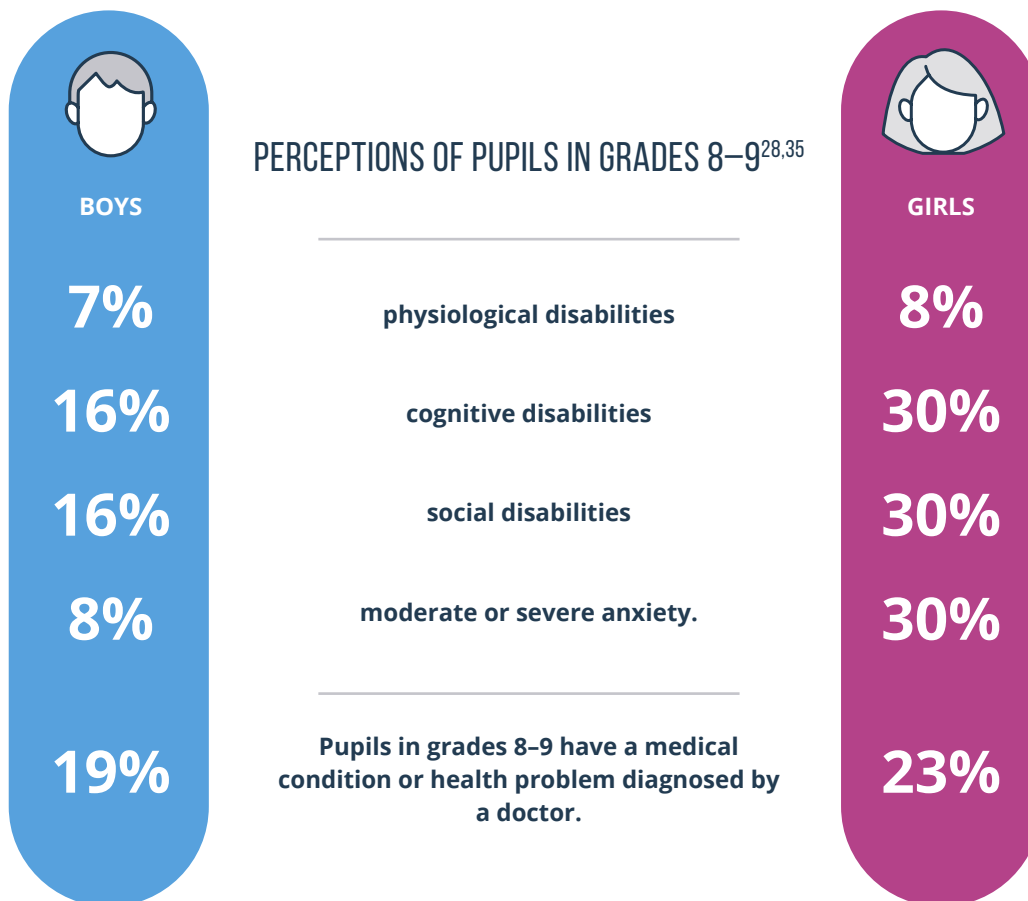


EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

All children and adolescents should have equitable opportunities to participate in physical activities regardless of their age, gender or sexual orientation, state of health, disability, ethnic background, culture, place of residence, family or the family's financial situation. The purpose of the Non-discrimination Act⁹ is to promote equality and prevent discrimination. Provisions concerning the prevention of discrimination based on gender and the promotion of gender equality are included in the Act on Equality between Women and Men¹⁰. The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)¹¹ ratified by Finland and the Convention on the Rights of the Child require that children and adolescents with disabilities are taken into account as equals in all services offered by society. A greater understanding of inequality may also provide additional information on the phenomenon of sedentary behaviours¹².

Approximately 15–20% of children and adolescents have disabilities that make their everyday lives more difficult. The number of children and adolescents with disabilities varies in different studies, partly due to the fact that disability and functional difficulty are defined and classified in very different ways. Measurement of disabilities is often based on an international battery of questions¹³, in which children and adolescents are asked how much difficulty they have. The results can be examined as classifications of functional difficulty or as a disability group in which children and adolescents report that they have at least a lot of difficulty in some area of functional capacity.

In Finland, the primary aim is to arrange teaching in mainstream education groups at the pupil's local school. Therefore, children or adolescents who require support can attend the school determined by their place of residence. Of pupils in basic education, 12% received intensified and 9% special support in the autumn of 2019¹⁴. Two thirds of those receiving special support studied entirely in mainstream education groups. However, Finland still has 61 special education schools, where 7% of the pupils receiving special support are studying. No statistical data is available on learning support provided at the secondary



level. Finland has six special vocational colleges¹⁵, which are intended for students who require special support in their vocational studies. Grounds for special support may arise from disability, learning difficulties, mental or physical health problems or social difficulties.

Equality and non-discrimination in the Report Card

The Report Card results are presented according to the biologically defined sex or the gender (boys, girls) reported by the respondent. Non-discrimination is addressed in a crosscutting manner in each chapter. Children and adolescents with a reported functional difficulty, disability or a foreign background are an inclusive part of population studies and national surveys, so they are included in the results for the population. The results for children and adolescents with a functional difficulty or disability or a foreign background are also examined as a separate group. Children and adolescents are classified as having a foreign background if both parents or the only known parent were born abroad¹⁶.

Disabilities are classified in the Report Card in following manner:

- Children and adolescents or guardians report at least a lot of difficulty in some area of functional capacity:
 - physiological difficulties (seeing, hearing, walking)
 - cognitive difficulties (remembering, learning, concentrating)
 - social difficulties (controlling own behaviour, accepting changes in routines, making friends)
 - psychological difficulties (feeling low, irritation or nervousness almost daily).
- School Health Promotion Study results are presented for those who report moderate or severe anxiety based on the Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD7) measure.
- FinChildren survey results for 4-year-olds are reported by guardians, their children with to long-term illnesses or health problems diagnosed by a physician (12% of children).
- Sampling of pupils studying in special educational settings (special schools and classes) were implemented in the LIITU study, and the results are presented as a separate group in the Report Card. The study used easy-to-read language and illustrated questionnaires for children and adolescents who have various special needs¹⁷.



A wheelchair symbol represents all disabilities in the Report Card.

VIEWS OF YOUNG PEOPLE CONCERNING INCLUSION – TOGETHER OR SEPARATELY?^{18,19,20}

When 10–29-year-olds were asked whether physical activity should take place together or separately, nearly one third feel that girls and boys should be active together. One fifth preferred division based on gender. 80% of 13–17-year-olds with a reported functional difficulty consider that girls and boys should be active together and only 14% are in favour of separate groups.

One quarter of all young people, and one third of those with disabilities, would prefer inclusive groups in which children and adolescents with and without disabilities are active together. 28% of young people and 25% of those with disabilities are in favour of separate physical activity.

Half of young people feel that those with a foreign background and those of Finnish background should engage in physical activity together rather than separately, and 7% say that physical activity should preferably take place separately. Only a few per cent of young people with disabilities feel that those with a foreign background (5%) or who belong to a gender and sexual minority (3%) should engage in physical activity separately.

Two thirds of those under the age of 19 who have a functional difficulty are interested in participating in organised physical activity in a sports club with others. The majority of young people see sports club activities that are open to everyone as an opportunity for a broader range of activities than those available in special groups.





DEALING WITH SUPPLY AND DEMAND CHALLENGES IN PHYSICAL ACTIVITY FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

The Finnish Paralympic Committee coordinates the PAPAI programme. The goal of the PAPAI programme is to help children and adolescents with disabilities to find a physical activity hobby. Each child or young person gets their own personal adapted physical activity instructor (PAPAI), who draws up an experimental plan and guides them into a suitable hobby.

The PAPAIs are students from the fields of physical education, leisure-time or rehabilitation from around 20 educational institutes throughout Finland. Children and adolescents with special needs aged 6–23 can apply for the Valtti programme. Priority is given to children and adolescents who don't yet have a physical hobby of their own. In practice, however, the family's place of residence and the number of students applying for the programme determine whether a PAPAI can be found for the applicant.

Individual hobby experiments have been carried out in the Valtti programme since 2016, with an average of 200 participants in nearly 100 localities each year. Almost half of respondents to the feedback survey found a hobby through the Valtti programme and estimated that their physical activity increased during the programme. The three most popular physical hobbies were swimming, floorball, and

horse riding. Many other participants received ideas and support for their hobbies.

The keys to successful activities are providing the child with an assistant for support during the hobby or when getting there as well as transportation services to reach the venue. Another important element is allowing the child to decide what they want to try and for the experiment to be enjoyable. The Valtti programme encourages the families to take part in hobbies where the child's peers are also active.

The programme has demonstrated that children with disabilities have difficulty finding suitable physical hobbies without tailored assistance and encouragement. In addition to a lack of adapted hobby options, a shortage of disability services for the family can prevent a child from finding a hobby.

The goal of the Avoimet ovet (Open doors) project (2020–2023) is to find solutions to this problem. The programme provides sports clubs with support for including members of special needs groups in their activities. The pilot clubs are participating in a development process supported by the Finnish Paralympic Committee, sports federations and regional physical activity organisations. The clubs also engage in sparring activities with each other. The project has examined the current status of the clubs, and ideas and tools for the clubs have been compiled on a separate website.


01 OVERALL PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Overall physical activity includes all activities accumulated throughout the day, such as hobbies, unorganised physical activity and play, physical education (PE) and everyday physical activity. According to the recommendation, preschool-aged children should be physically active for three hours every day, and one hour of this should be moderate-to-vigorous physical activity (MVPA). The recommendation for 7–17-year-old children and adolescents is at least one hour of MVPA every day. The amount of physical activity decreases steadily with age. This chapter presents the results in relation to the one-hour MVPA recommendation.

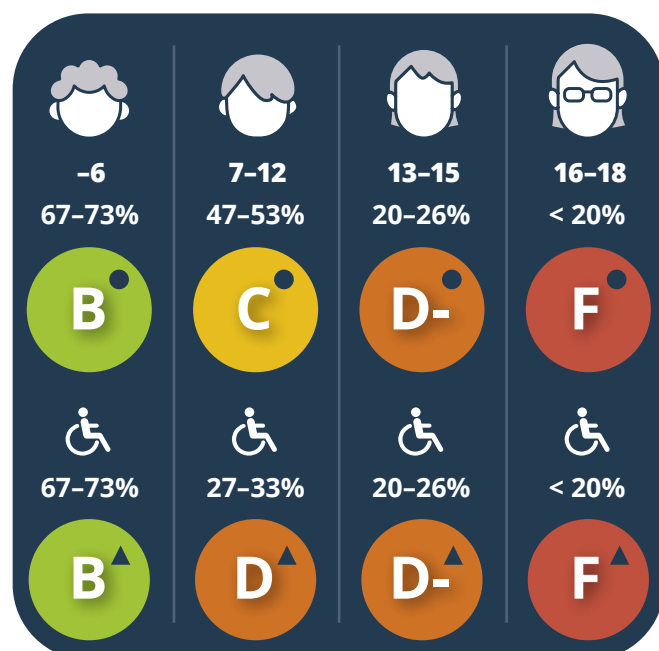
The research used a variety of methods to measure physical activity: accelerometer measurements and surveys of the parents and the children themselves. The different measurement and analysis methods produced slightly different results. The same method must always be used for monitoring and comparison.

It should be noted that accelerometer-measured data is not available for children and adolescents with disabilities or a foreign background. The surveys show that daily physical activity is low particularly among girls with a foreign background and children and adolescents with disabilities. Physical activity level is even lower if a child or adolescent reports difficulties in several areas of functional limitation.^{20, 21, 22}

% of children and adolescents who engage in at least 60 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity (MVPA) a day.

 A wheelchair symbol represents all disabilities.

- : based on accelerometer measurements and self-evaluation
- ▲ : based on self-evaluation



THE GRADE IS BASED ON THE FOLLOWING RESULTS:

Preschool-aged children

When measured with an accelerometer, the proportion of children who get at least one hour of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity per day during the measurement period is 67% of 4–6-year-olds (77% of boys, 58% of girls)²³ and 71% of 3–6-year-olds²⁴. Nearly all 4–6-year-olds (95%) are physically active for at least three hours per day when light, moderate and vigorous physical activity is included in the evaluation²³.

According to the FinChildren survey, 74% of the parents of 4-year-olds estimated that their children (77% of boys, 70% of girls) are at least moderately active around the home for over an hour each day²⁵. Of those 4-year-olds who have a long-term illness or health problem diagnosed by a doctor, 71% are active around the home for more than an hour each day²⁶.

Primary school pupils

Based on accelerometer measurements, 71% of 7-year-old children (79% of boys, 62% of girls), 54% of 9-year-olds (66% of boys, 44% of girls), and 41% of 11-year-olds (46% of boys, 38% of girls) get at least one hour of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity each day²⁷.

According to the School Health Promotion study, 43% of pupils in grades 4–5 (47% of boys, 39% of girls) get one hour of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity per day²⁸. Of those pupils in grades 4–5 who have a physiological or cognitive

disability, 30% (33% of boys, 24% of girls) are physically active for one hour per day²⁹.

In the LIITU study, 44% of 7-year-old children (45% of boys, 43% of girls), 45% of 9-year-olds (52% of boys, 40% of girls), and 43% of 11-year-olds (46% of boys, 40% of girls) report that they get at least one hour of physical activity per day³⁰. With regard to 11-year-olds, 33% (40% of boys, 20% of girls) of those with physiological or cognitive disabilities and 32% of those with social disabilities (36% of boys, 26% of girls) are physically active for at least one hour per day³¹. Of 7–10-year-olds studying in special educational settings, 35% of boys and 25% of girls meet the recommendation for daily physical activity. The corresponding numbers for 11–12-year-olds are 31% of boys and 37% of girls³².

According to the Health Behaviour in School-aged Children study, 45% of 11-year-old children (52% of boys, 38% of girls) meet the recommendation by being physically active for one hour per day^{33,34}.

Pupils in lower secondary school

When measured with an accelerometer, 19% of 13-year-olds (24% of boys, 15% of girls) and 10% of 15-year-olds (16% of boys, 6% of girls) are physically active for at least one hour per day²⁷.

According to the School Health Promotion study, 24% of pupils in grades 8–9 (29% of boys, 20% of girls) meet the recommendation by getting one hour of physical activity per day²⁸. The corresponding figure for pupils in grades 8–9 who have physiological or cognitive disabilities is 19% (23% of boys, 17% of girls). A total of 17% of pupils (19% of boys, 15% of girls) in grades 8–9 with social disabilities and 18% (23% of boys, 17% of girls) with moderate or severe anxiety meet the recommendation for physical activity³⁵.

In the LIITU study 32% of 13-year-olds (35% of boys, 29% of girls) and 19% of 15-year-olds (23% of boys, 15% of girls) report that they are physically active for at least one hour each day³⁰. 27% of 13-year-olds with physiological or cognitive disabilities (22% of boys, 31% of girls) and 15% of 15-year-olds (11% of boys, 18% of girls) are physically active for at least one hour per day. The corresponding share for pupils with social disabilities is 22% for 13-year-olds (21% of boys, 23% of girls) and 11% for 15-year-olds (13% of boys, 9% of girls).³¹ Of 13–14-year-olds studying in special educational settings, 21% of boys and 30% of girls³² get at least one hour of physical activity per day while 18% of 15-year-olds (18% of boys, 17% of girls) are active for at least one hour per day³⁶.

According to the Health Behaviour in School-aged Children study, 28% of 13-year-olds (33% of boys, 24% of girls) and 17% of 15-year-olds (22% of boys, 12% of girls) meet the recommendation for physical activity^{33,34}.

Students

Based on accelerometer measurements, 3% of general upper secondary students (4% of boys, 2% of girls) achieve the recommended minimum of one hour of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity every day³⁷ and 22% on average during the measurement period³⁸.

In the School Health Promotion study, 18% of general upper secondary students (22% of boys, 14% of girls) and 15% of vocational students (17% of boys, 13% of girls) report that they are physically active for one hour every week²⁸. With regard to students with moderate or severe anxiety, 11% of general upper secondary students (13% of boys, 11% of girls) and 15% of vocational students (16% of boys, 11% of girls) are physically active for at least one hour per day. For students with social disabilities, the corresponding numbers are 10% for general upper secondary students (13% of boys, 11% of girls) and 12% for vocational students (13% of boys, 11% of girls). For students with physiological or cognitive disabilities, 12% of general upper secondary students (15% of boys, 11% of girls) and 12% of vocational students (16% of boys, 11% of girls) meet the recommendation for physical activity.³⁵

In the LIITU study, 14% of general upper secondary students (18% of boys, 11% of girls) and 13% of vocational students (14% of boys, 13% of girls) are physically active for at least one hour every week^{39,40}. For students with reported disabilities, the corresponding share is 11% for general upper secondary students (13% of boys, 10% of girls) and 9% for vocational students²².

Of special vocational students, 20% are active for at least one hour every day while 17% of boys and 18% of girls with serious disabilities get at least one hour of physical activity per day²².

In total, 16% of pupils in grades 8–9 and upper secondary students who belong to gender minorities are physically active for at least one hour per day. The corresponding share for pupils and students who belong to sexual minorities is 12%⁴¹.

Children and adolescents with a foreign background

According to the guardians of children with a foreign background, 73% of 4-year-olds are at least moderately active around the home for more than one hour each day²⁶. When measured with an accelerometer, 37% of grade 4–5 pupils with a foreign background (39% of boys, 35% of girls) and 24% of grade 8–9 pupils with a foreign background (27% of boys, 20% of girls) are physically active for one hour per day. A total of 32% of general upper secondary students (23% of boys, 17% of girls) and 20% of vocational students (23% of boys, 12% of girls) report that they are physically active for one hour each day.³⁵



PHYSICALLY LEAST ACTIVE CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS

Those children and adolescents who are least active need the most support for physical activity. Traditional actions to promote physical activity rarely work on the most inactive children and adolescents. This target group requires special attention, such as tailored physical activity counselling. Physical activity during the school day is very important for the most inactive pupils. The group with reported disabilities includes many children and adolescents who engage in very little physical activity.



BOYS

27%
37%
40%

22%
33%
30%

39%
48%
44%

Participate in physical activity that causes them to feel out of breath for a maximum of one hour per week in their free time^{28,35}

Pupils in grades 8-9
physiological or cognitive disabilities
pupils with a foreign background

General upper secondary students
physiological or cognitive disabilities
pupils with a foreign background

Vocational students
physiological or cognitive disabilities
pupils with a foreign background



GIRLS

29%
40%
49%

29%
38%
52%

47%
54%
58%

THE PHYSICALLY LEAST ACTIVE ADOLESCENTS REQUIRE SPECIAL ATTENTION



Engage in unorganised physical activity or sports once a month at most³⁵



SOME ADOLESCENTS RARELY ENGAGE IN UNORGANISED PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

BOYS

16%
24%
28%
27%

Pupils in grades 8–9
physiological or cognitive disabilities
social disabilities
pupils with a foreign background

10%
18%
21%
17%

General upper secondary students
physiological or cognitive disabilities
social disabilities
pupils with a foreign background

23%
30%
33%
25%

Vocational students
physiological or cognitive disabilities
social disabilities
pupils with a foreign background

GIRLS

16%
23%
24%
28%

12%
18%
19%
25%

24%
30%
32%
31%

Of adolescents aged under 18 with disabilities, 23% report that they do not engage in any unorganised physical activity²⁰.

Barriers to physical activity experienced by the least active^{31,40}

PC = physiological or cognitive disabilities

S = social disabilities

		PC	S
11–15-year-olds			
	I think physical activity is important, but I just don't feel like doing it	74%	84%
66%			
	I'm not an active type of person	74%	74%
63%			
	School physical education doesn't motivate me	81%	82%
62%			
	I don't have time for physical activity	67%	73%
60%			
	I'm bad at physical activity	74%	76%
59%			
Upper secondary students			
	I think physical activity is important, but I just don't feel like doing it	82%	87%
83%			
	I'm not an active type of person	72%	76%
76%			
	School physical education doesn't motivate me	73%	79%
69%			
	I don't have time for physical activity	74%	72%
69%			
	I'm bad at physical activity	72%	76%
65%			

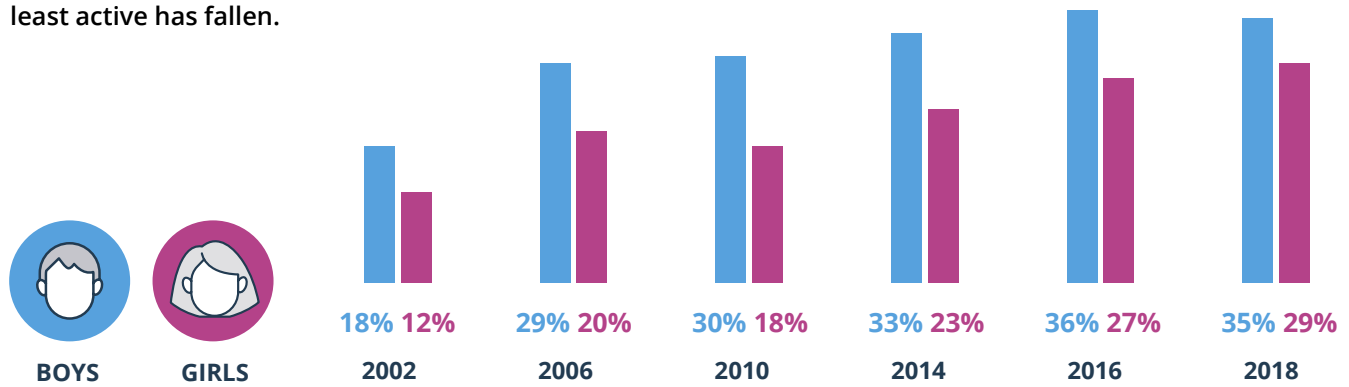
WHAT PREVENTS ADOLESCENTS FROM BEING ACTIVE?

The physically least active adolescents experience more barriers than those who are more physically active. Girls are more likely to report nearly all barriers than boys^{42,43}. The barriers reported by the least active adolescents are mostly personal.

Children and adolescents with disabilities report that the barriers to their activity are a lack of adapted groups (49%), not having a friend (39%), assistant (32%), transportation (22%) or person to accompany them (11%), as well as sport facilities that are located too far away (22%)²⁰.

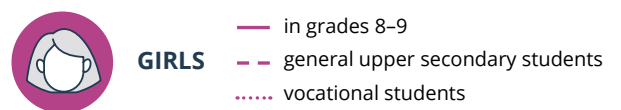
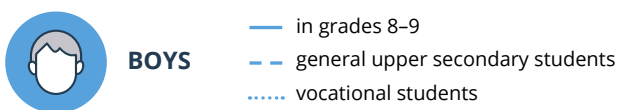
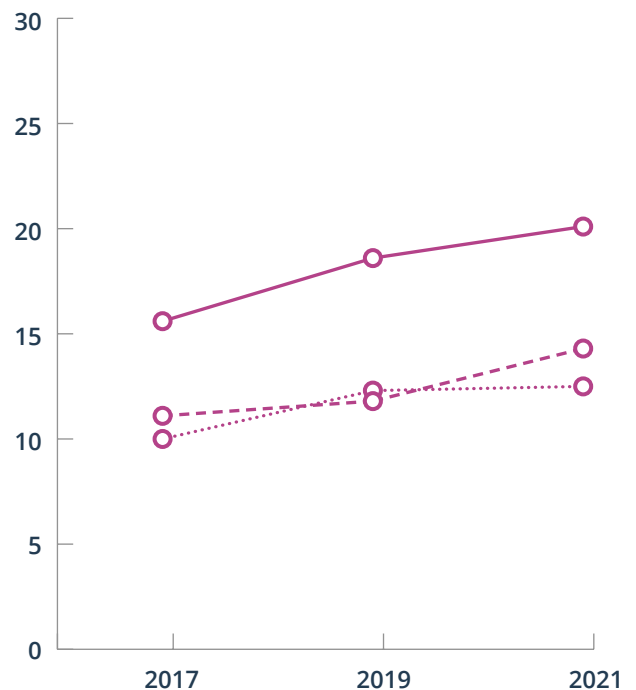
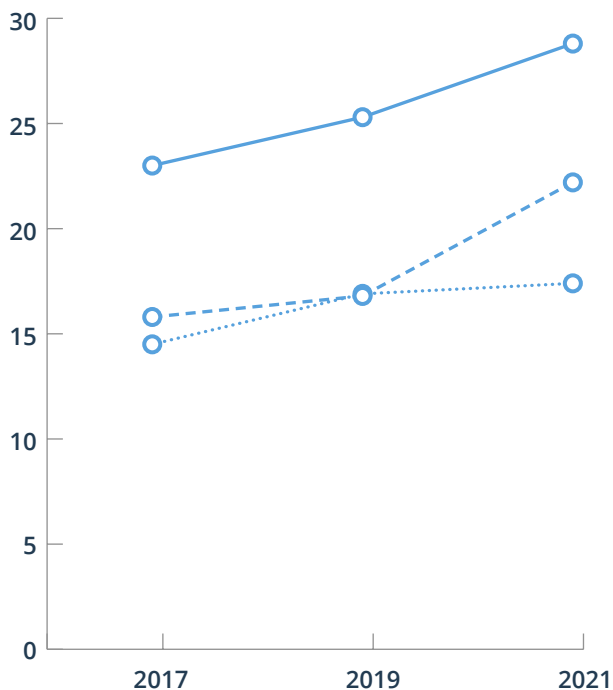
CHANGES IN PHYSICAL ACTIVITY DURING THE 2000S

Positive development during the 2000s can be seen in Finland in terms of physical activity levels. The proportion of children and adolescents who meet the physical activity recommendations has risen and the share of those who are physically least active has fallen.



The proportion of 11–15-year-olds meeting the physical activity recommendations (%) in 2002–2018

(HBSC 2002–2014, LIITU 2016–2018)

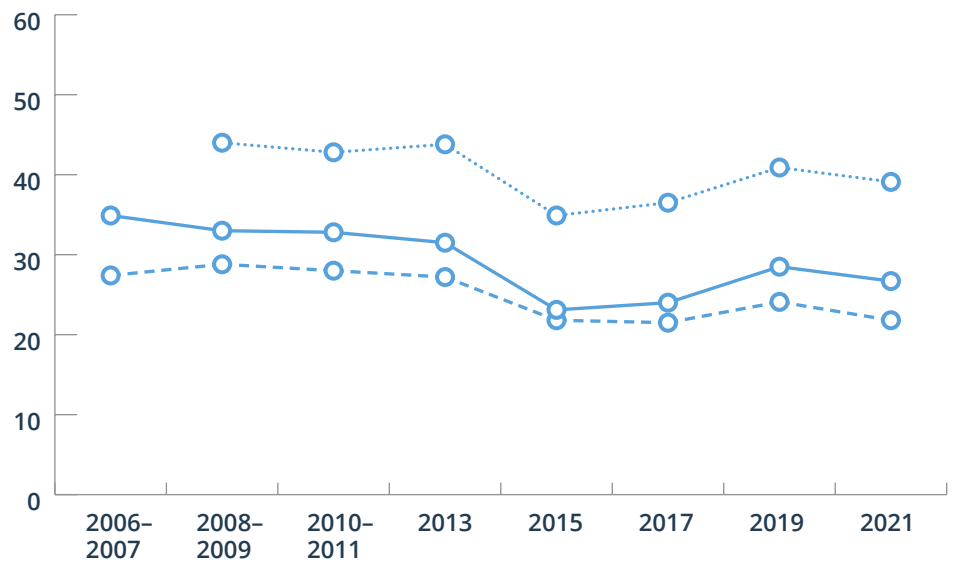


Adolescents who meet the recommendation for physical activity, or are active for at least an hour a day (%)²⁸



PHYSICALLY LEAST ACTIVE ADOLESCENTS (%)²⁸

According to the School Health Promotion study, the proportions of physically least active lower secondary students, general upper secondary students and vocational students decreased in 2006–2021. These young people report that they are physically active in their free time no more than one hour per week.



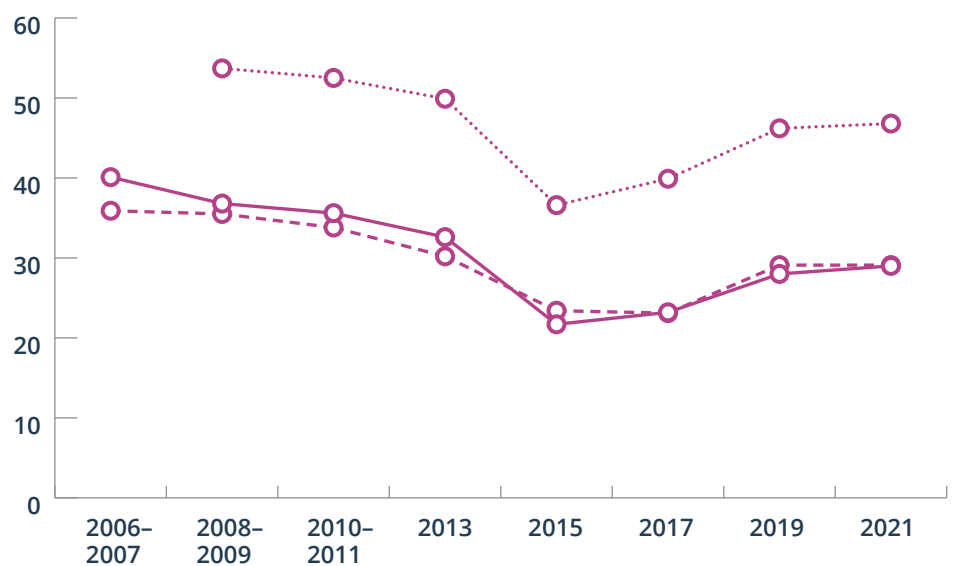
BOYS

- in grades 8-9
- - general upper secondary students
- ⋯ vocational students



GIRLS

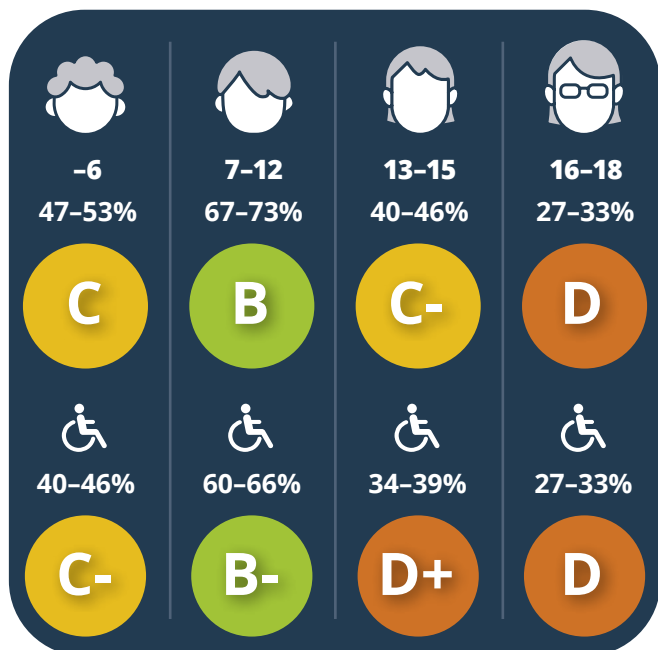
- in grades 8-9
- - general upper secondary students
- ⋯ vocational students



02 ORGANISED SPORTS PARTICIPATION

Participation in organised physical activities and sports play a significant role in daily physical activity for a portion of Finnish children and adolescents. Organised physical activity and sports refer to sports hobbies organised by clubs, municipalities, associations, businesses or similar entities.

% of children and adolescents who participate in organised sports activities or other organised physical activity.



THE GRADE IS BASED ON THE FOLLOWING RESULTS:

Preschool-aged children

Guardians report that 43% of 4-year-olds (38% of boys, 48% of girls) take part in organised children's physical activity on a weekly basis⁴⁴. Of those 4-year-olds who have a long-term illness or health problem, 41% participate in organised activities on a weekly basis²⁶. Approximately half (51%) of the guardians of 4-6-year-olds report that their child participates in some kind of organised physical activity⁴⁵.

In order to make age comparisons possible, organised sports participation for preschool-aged children is monitored in studies even though it is recommended that most of the physical activity for the youngest children should come from active play and outdoor activity.

Primary school pupils

According to guardians, 71% of pupils in grades 4-5 (69% of boys, 72% of girls) participate in organised physical activity and sports. The corresponding share for children and adolescents for whom guardians report physiological and cognitive disabilities is 71% (70% of boys, 72% of girls) and 72% for those with social disabilities (71% of boys, 73% of girls).⁴⁶

A total of 61% of 11-year-olds (60% of boys, 62% of girls) take part in practices organised by a sports club³⁴. 67% of 9-year-olds (69% of boys, 65% of girls) and 71% of 11-year-olds (70% of boys, 72% of girls) participate in organised physical activity and sports in a sports club^{47,31}. With regard to 11-year-olds with physiological or cognitive disabilities, 61% (65% of boys, 54% of girls) and 32% of those with social disabilities (61% of boys, 52% of girls) participate in organised physical activity and sports in a sports club³¹. 44% of 11-year-olds studying in special educational settings (44% of boys, 47% of girls) report that they take part in organised physical activity and sports in a sports club³⁶.

Pupils in lower secondary school

A total of 47% of students in grades 8–9 (44% of boys and 47% of girls) participate in organised physical activity and sports on at least a weekly basis²⁸. With regard to pupils in grades 8–9 with physiological or cognitive disabilities, 38% (37% of boys, 38% of girls) and 36% of those with social disabilities (33% of boys, 37% of girls) take part in organised physical activity and sports on a weekly basis³⁵. 45% of 13-year-olds (44% of boys, 47% of girls) and 37% of 15-year-olds (36% of boys, 38% of girls) participate in practices organised by a sports club³⁴.

58% of 13-year-olds (59% of boys, 57% of girls) and 44% of 15-year-olds (46% of boys, 42% of girls) participate in organised physical activity and sports in a sports club^{47,31}. With regard to 13-year-olds with physiological or cognitive disabilities, 49% (59% of boys, 50% of girls) and 34% of those with social disabilities (30% of boys, 37% of girls) participate in organised physical activity and sports. 33% of 15-year-olds with physiological or cognitive disabilities (46% of boys, 38% of girls) and 31% of those with social disabilities (32% of boys, 30% of girls) engage in physical activity and sports in a sports club.³¹ Of those studying in special educational settings, 32% of 13–15-year-olds (33% of boys, 29% of girls) take part in sports or other hobby groups³⁶.

Students

37% of general upper secondary students (37% of boys and girls) and 21% of vocational students (23% of boys, 18% of girls) take part in organised physical activity every week²⁸. With regard to general upper secondary students, 36% (37% of boys, 38% of girls) with physiological or cognitive disabilities and 17% of those with social disabilities (19% of boys, 15% of girls) take part in organised physical activity and sports on a weekly basis. The corresponding share for students with social disabilities is 28% (26% of boys, 29% of girls) for general upper secondary students and 12% for vocational students (16% of boys, 14% of girls).³⁵

A total of 36% of general upper secondary students (38% of boys, 36% of girls) take part in physical activity or sports in a sports club^{48,40}. 31% of general upper secondary students (30% of boys, 31% of girls with physiological or cognitive disabilities and 33% (43% of boys, 24% of girls) of vocational students take part in physical activity or sports in a sports club⁴⁰. 31% of students in special vocational colleges (32% of men, 31% of women) participate in physical activity or sports in a sports club⁴⁹.

Children and adolescents with a foreign background

Guardians of children with a foreign background report that 42% of 4-year-olds²⁶ and 66% of pupils in grades 4–5 (70% of boys, 61% of girls) take part in organised physical activity on a weekly basis⁴⁶. 44% of pupils in grades 8–9 (49% of boys, 39% of girls), 28% of general upper secondary students (37% of boys, 21% of girls) and 28% of vocational students (35% of boys, 17% of girls) participate in organised physical activity on a weekly basis³⁵.

JYVÄSKYLÄ COOPERATES WITH SPORTS CLUBS AND OTHER OPERATORS TO OFFER PHYSICAL ACTIVITY FREE OF CHARGE

The City of Jyväskylä offers physical activity for children, adolescents and families free of charge. The LiikuntaVeturi and LiikuntaLaturi activities are being implemented in cooperation with local sports clubs and other operators.

The LiikuntaVeturi and LiikuntaLaturi programmes offer more than 10 different physical activity sessions each week in different parts of Jyväskylä. The activities are free of charge. LiikuntaVeturi organises activities for 9–12-year-olds and families and LiikuntaLaturi for 13–19-year-olds.

“The main goal is allow participants to experience the joy of physical activity with friends and families. We’re trying to reach the physically least active children, but active members of sport clubs are also involved in LiikuntaVeturi activities,” says **Kati Siitari**, a special needs physical activity instructor in the LiikuntaVeturi programme.

“The focus of LiikuntaLaturi is to get young people moving and make participation as easy as possible for them. Participation doesn’t involve a commitment, and the young people can try different activities according to their schedules,” says **Alejandro Ylönen**, a physical activity instructor in the LiikuntaLaturi programme.

The LiikuntaVeturi and LiikuntaLaturi activities are based on accessibility and the fact that they are free of charge. Activities are organised in different parts of the city in order to make them accessible to everyone.

“Families have thanked us for ensuring that children have the chance to participate in a hobby even when their financial situation is tight,” explains Siitari.

Cooperation with clubs ensures competent instructors

Instructors run most of the LiikuntaVeturi and LiikuntaLaturi activities. The range of sports is wide, which is made possible by cooperation with sports clubs and other operators, such as sports centres. Sports club cooperation is important in terms of the level of activities: competent instructors bring their knowledge and skills to the activity.

“Cooperation with the clubs is vital to finding instructors. The city’s Sport Services department runs some groups, but clubs are responsible for the majority of the activities. Our instructors may not have the necessary skills, especially with regard to smaller sports, so we need people from the clubs,” says Ylönen.

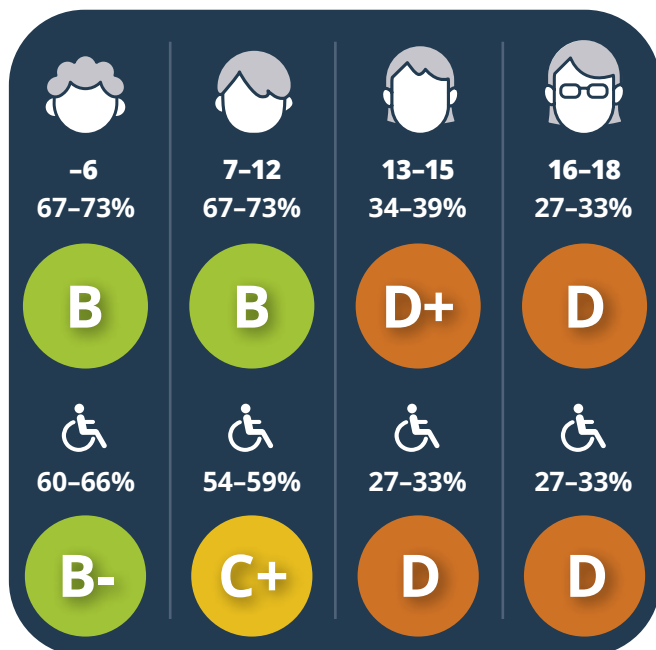
“Many children have told us that they became enthusiastic about a sport through our activities and have since joined a club. This means that the cooperation is also beneficial for the clubs,” says Siitari.

03 ACTIVE PLAY



Active play refers to uninstructed physical activity or play that can be engaged in alone or with friends or family members. Active play includes all kinds of unorganised physical activity during free time, such as cycling, skateboarding, jumping on a trampoline and jogging. This chapter examines unorganised active play outside early childhood education and school hours.

% of children and adolescents engaging in unorganised physical activity in their free time nearly every day.



THE GRADE IS BASED ON THE FOLLOWING RESULTS:

Preschool-aged children

According to parents, 70% of 4-6-year-olds are active outdoors for at least half an hour on weekdays. On weekends, 43% are active outdoors for more than two hours a day.⁴⁵

On average, 2-6-year-olds get 1.3 hours of outdoor activity on weekdays and 1.8 hours on weekend days. Boys get slightly more outdoor activity than girls (1.47 hours for boys, 1.31 hours for girls).⁵⁰

According to parents, 70% of 4-year-olds (68% of boys, 71% of girls) use play and physical activity facilities weekly⁴⁴. 61% of 4-year-olds who have a disability and 70% of children who have a long-term illness or health problem use play and physical activity facilities on a weekly basis²⁶.

Primary school pupils

70% of 9-year-olds (70% of boys, 70% of girls) and 58% of 11-year-olds (56% of boys, 60% of girls) participate in unorganised physical activity in their free time at least four times per week. The corresponding share for 11-year-olds with physiological or cognitive disabilities is 47% (48% of boys, 45% of girls) and 47% (39% of boys, 57% of girls) for those with social disabilities.³¹

According to guardians, 76% of pupils in grades 4-5 (77% of boys, 74% of girls) use physical activity facilities on a weekly basis. The corresponding share for pupils in grades 4-5 with physiological or cognitive disabilities is 67% (67% of boys, 66% of girls) and 47% of those with social disabilities.⁴⁶

Pupils in lower secondary school

38% of pupils in grades 8-9 (41% of boys, 35% of girls) report that they participate in unorganised physical activity in their free time nearly every day. The corresponding share for pupils with physiological or cognitive disabilities is 31% (34% of boys, 29% of girls) and 29% for those with social

disabilities (31% of boys, 29% of girls). 31% of pupils in grades 8–9 with moderate or severe anxiety (33% of boys, 31% of girls) participate in unorganised physical activity nearly every day.³⁵

43% of 13-year-olds (43% of boys, 44% of girls) and 27% of 15-year-olds (29% of boys, 25% of girls) participate in unorganised physical activity in their free time at least four times a week³¹.

28% of 13–17-year-olds with disabilities (32% of boys, 23% of girls) report that they mostly participate in unorganised physical activity. However, unorganised physical activity is less common than organised physical activity among pupils with reported disabilities. Pupils with physiological (50% vs. 25%), cognitive (50% vs. 27%), and social disabilities (45% vs. 40%) report that they participate in more organised than unorganised physical activity.¹⁹

Students

41% of general upper secondary students (47% of boys, 37% of girls) and 30% of vocational students (32% of boys, 28% of girls) take part in unorganised physical activity in their free time nearly every day. The corresponding share for general upper secondary students with physiological or cognitive disabilities is 33% (39% of boys, 31% of girls) and 24% for vocational students (31% of boys, 29% of girls). 33% of general upper secondary students (35% of boys, 32% of girls) and 24% of vocational students (26% of boys, 22% of girls) with social disabilities report that they participate in unorganised physical activity nearly every day. For general upper secondary students with moderate or severe anxiety, the corresponding share is 34% (38% of boys, 33% of girls) and 24% for vocational students (29% of boys, 23% of girls).³⁵

31% of general upper secondary students (32% of boys, 30% of girls) engage in unorganised physical activity at least four times per week. The corresponding share for students with physiological or cognitive disabilities is 24% (23% of boys, 24% of girls) and 27% for those with social disabilities (44% of boys, 29% of girls).⁴⁰

Children and adolescents with a foreign background

According to guardians, 85% of 4-year-olds have used play and physical activity facilities weekly²⁶. According to guardians, 80% of pupils in grades 4–5 (84% of boys, 76% of girls) use physical activity facilities on a weekly basis and 47% (52% of boys, 42% of girls) nearly every day⁴⁶.

32% of pupils in grades 8–9 (37% of boys, 27% of girls), 32% of general upper secondary students (41% of boys, 25% of girls), and 33% of vocational students (37% of boys, 26% of girls) participate in unstructured sports or physical activity nearly every day³⁵.

DISC GOLF COURSES THAT ARE FREE OF CHARGE AND BUILT CLOSE TO PEOPLE ARE VERY POPULAR IN JYVÄSKYLÄ

The popularity of disc golf has increased among children and adolescents throughout the country. The City of Jyväskylä supports unstructured disc golf by investing in the accessibility of courses and making them free of charge.

The popularity of disc golf is visible as increased user numbers at the courses in Jyväskylä. The city has several disc golf courses that can be used free of charge. They are maintained by disc golf clubs and the City of Jyväskylä. The sport is a suitable unstructured hobby for many children and adolescents, because it doesn't cost a lot to start playing.

"Jyväskylä has ensured that there are courses in different parts of the city, so that as many children and adolescents as possible can easily participate in this activity. The courses that are easy to get to are very busy. The courses that are free of charge are especially popular," says **Sami Talvensola**, the City of Jyväskylä's project coordinator and chair of Jyväskylän Liitokiekkoilijat (the local disc golf club).

Courses in connection with schools

In Jyväskylä, several disc golf courses have been built in connection with schools, and students can play during their recess breaks. The city has a neighbourhood school policy, so courses built in the vicinity of schools are also close to the homes of many children and adolescents.

"Jyväskylä has easier school courses that encourage young people to start the sport. The schools can also borrow disc golf equipment, such as baskets and discs, from the School on the Move equipment loan service. This also increases opportunities to participate in the sport at schools which are not close to a course."

Courses for players of all skill levels

Players of different skill levels were taken into consideration when designing the courses in Jyväskylä. A "star hole" has been built in conjunction with the Lohikoski disc golf course. It is only 10 metres long and has an accessible tee pad. This means that it is also suitable for early childhood education groups or people with disabilities.

"An easier 18-hole course has been built in Seppälänkangas for people who find full-length courses too long or difficult," says Talvensola.



04 ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION

Active transportation refers to commuting everyday distances with muscle power, most often on foot or by bike. Active transportation to school, hobby activities and meeting their friends form a significant portion of children and adolescents' daily physical activity. The largest amount of research information has been accumulated regarding active school commutes. More information is needed about active transportation on other trips.

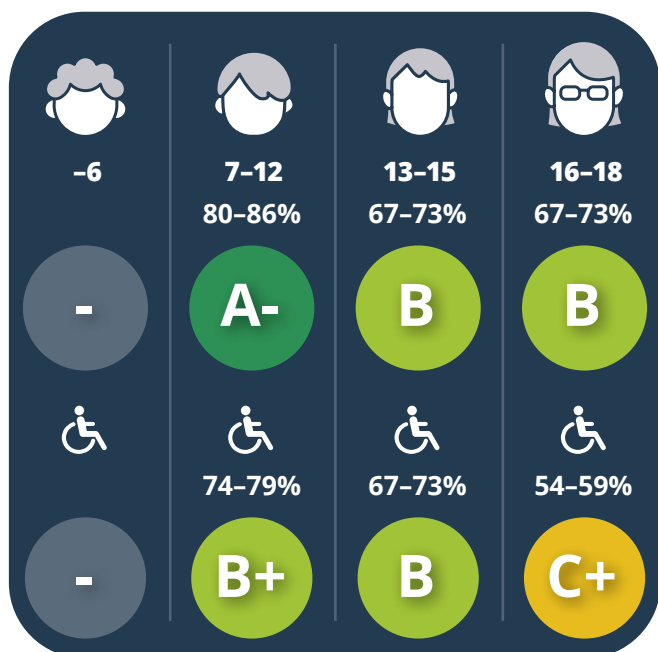
The distance between home and school affects the choice of transportation. School commutes lengthen with age: 84% of primary school pupils, 64% of lower secondary school pupils and 56% of general upper secondary students live within 5 km of their school^{51,52}. A longer school commute

can include active transportation, for example, if children or adolescents walk to a stop when using public transport⁵³.

Active transportation is less common in the winter than in spring and autumn. Many get a ride in the winter and lose the benefits of active transportation to school. Many pupils and students also switch from biking to walking, and this is especially the case with girls. In Finland, the potential for increasing active commuting to school seems greatest in the winter.⁵⁴

The best opportunities for schools to promote active transportation to encourage walking and biking and teach the skills needed in traffic. These challenges can be addressed through cooperation between the school, parents' association and parents. The promotion of active transportation by schools requires cooperation and a wide-ranging cross-administrative approach in municipalities and at the government level.⁵⁵

% of children and adolescents (who live less than 5 km from school) who make their commute to school actively either on foot or by bike.



THE GRADE IS BASED ON THE FOLLOWING RESULTS:

Preschool-aged children

The JOYPAM study produced information on the active transportation of preschool-aged children, but this area was not evaluated in Finland's Report Card because the results were based on a sample of only five municipalities. There is no information available for children with disabilities. The JOYPAM study revealed that 75% of 4-6-year-olds live less than two kilometres from their day-care centre. 25% of children make this journey on foot and 17% by bike all year round. The time of year particularly affects the prevalence of biking: 30% of children commute by bike in the summer, 21% in the autumn and spring, and only 1% in the winter. Some of the children who commute by bike switch to walking in the winter, because 30% commute on foot in the winter.⁴⁵

Primary school pupils

80% of 9-year-olds (81% of boys, 79% of girls) and 82% of 11-year-olds (81% of boys, 82% of girls) actively commute to school if the distance to the school is less than 5 km⁵¹. The corresponding share for 11-year-olds with disabilities is 77% (75% of boys, 80% of girls)³¹.



Pupils in lower secondary school

80% of 13-year-olds (84% of boys, 77% of girls) and 58% of 15-year-olds (54% of boys, 62% of girls) actively commute to school if the distance to the school is less than 5 km⁵¹. The corresponding shares for pupils with disabilities are 78% for 13-year-olds (82% of boys, 76% of girls) and 65% for 15-year-olds (61% of boys, 68% of girls)³¹.

Students

72% of general upper secondary students (71% of boys, 73% of girls) actively commute to school if the distance is no more than 5 kilometres⁵². 53% of general upper secondary students with physiological or cognitive disabilities (58% of boys, 51% of girls) and 61% of those with social disabilities (66% of boys, 59% of girls) actively commute to school if the distance is no more than 5 kilometres⁴⁰.

There is no research information available about active transportation among vocational students. With regard to students in special vocational colleges, 55% of those with physiological or cognitive disabilities (51% of boys, 53% of girls), 56% of those with social disabilities (50% of boys, 59% of girls), and 57% of those with psychological disabilities (51% of boys, 61% of girls) actively commute to school if the distance is no more than 5 kilometres⁴⁹.

ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION TO HOBBIES

Information about active transportation to hobbies is only available for preschool-aged children. The JOYPAM study examined active transportation to hobbies among 4–6-year-olds. Compared to daycare centre trips, the distances to hobbies are longer: 45% of children live more than 5 km from their hobby and 28% of children are a maximum of two kilometres from their hobby. The majority of these children (78%) make this trip by car or bus. 9% of guardians report that their child walks and 5% report that their child bikes to their hobby.⁴⁵

SPARRING HELPS KALAJOKI MOVE TOWARDS MORE SUSTAINABLE SCHOOL COMMUTES

The City of Kalajoki participated in the Fiksusti kouluun (Active way to School) pilot project, which implemented assessments of conditions, mode of travel surveys and network-style cooperation to promote sustainable school commutes. Fiksusti kouluun is a joint programme of LIKES Research Centre for Physical Activity and Health and the Network of Finnish Cycling Municipalities (Pyöräilykuntien verkosto) to promote physical activity on the way to school. It works in cooperation with the Schools on the Move programme.

Kalajoki is a well-known tourism area with long distances between different places and poor public transport connections. Schools are located dozens of kilometres from each other and school commutes are long. Many pupils are within the scope of school transportation.

Promoting smarter school commutes has become a topic of interest for the City of Kalajoki in recent years. The city has implemented the Viiden tähden koulureitit (Five-star school routes) project, and a school network reform is also in the planning stage. Sports facility construction where the goals of active and sustainable school commutes go hand in hand is also being planned.

Under the guidance of Fiksusti kouluun programme experts, mode of transport surveys and assessments of conditions were performed at two schools. Monitoring of transportation methods revealed development needs in the environment around Raumankari Comprehensive School. The city is now developing school routes in the area in cooperation with the traffic and planning departments.

A bicycle maintenance building that can be used all year round is being built in conjunction with the traffic park at Merenoja Comprehensive School. The facilities provide cyclists with a dressing room and space for maintaining and storing bikes. This decision has improved versatile use of school facilities. As a diverse service centre, it is important for the school to serve as a hub for sustainable transportation.

The City of Kalajoki's strategic target in all its activities is to promote an active lifestyle and ecological transportation.

SEDENTARY BEHAVIOURS

Sedentary behaviours refer to the waking time spent sitting or in a physically passive manner. Longer periods of sedentary time are linked to poorer health. Time spent in front of TV and computer screens has a stronger link to poor health than sedentary behaviours in general. Based on research, it is not possible to set a specific time limit for the amount of harmful sedentary time. The evidence concerning the health benefits of physical activity is indisputable. Partially replacing excessive sedentary time with moderate-to-vigorous physical activity promotes health. In general, it is recommended that children and adolescents avoid excessive and prolonged sedentary behaviours.^{6,8}

SEDENTARY TIME MEASURED WITH AN ACCELEROMETER

Preschool-aged children

With the exception of night-time sleep, 4–6-year-olds accumulated an average of nearly 10 hours of sedentary time during the entire day (9 h 30 min for boys, 9 h 42 min for girls). This time includes naps during the day, meals and other quiet activities where the child stays still.²³

Pupils in primary and lower secondary school

Sedentary time increases with age. Children and adolescents spend an average of 7 hours and 17 minutes sitting or lying down during waking hours. This time is 6 hours for 7-year-olds, 6 hours 52 minutes for 9-year-olds, 7 hours 35 minutes, for 11-year-olds, 8 hours 23 minutes for 11-year-olds, and 8 hours 55 minutes for 15-year-olds. Boys spend slightly more time sitting or lying down than girls during waking time.²⁷

Students

General upper secondary students spend nearly 10 hours per day sitting or lying down during waking time. Boys spend slightly more time sitting or lying down than girls during waking time (10 h 8 min vs. 9 h 52 min).³⁷

There is no research data about sedentary time measured with an accelerometer available for children and adolescents with disabilities.

USE OF DIGITAL DEVICES AND PLAYING

Preschool-aged children

2–6-year-olds use digital devices for an average of 1.6 hours per day on weekdays and 2.2 hours per day on weekend days. There are no differences between boys and girls. Use of digital devices increases with age.⁵⁰ One in five (22%) 4–6-year-olds use digital devices for around two hours or more per day on weekdays and 73% on weekend days⁴⁵.

There is no research data available for preschool-aged children with disabilities.

Pupils in primary and lower secondary school

Pupils in comprehensive school were asked how many days a week they accumulate over two hours of screen time per day. 5% reported that this did not happen on any days, 16% reported that it happened on 1–2 days per week, and 24% reported that it happened on 3–4 days per week. 55% stated that they accumulated more than two hours of screen time on 5–7 days per week. The share of respondents increased with age: 40% of 9-year-olds (44% of boys, 35% of girls), 54% of 11-year-olds (57% of boys, 51% of girls), 66% of 13-year-olds (65% of boys, 67% of girls), and 74% of 15-year-olds (74% of boys and girls).^{30,31} 11–15-year-olds with disabilities clearly accumulated more screen time²¹.

3% of 11–15-year-olds studying in special educational settings (3% of boys and girls) report that they do not accumulate more than two hours of screen time on any day of the week, and 86% (87% of boys, 83% of girls) say that they accumulate more than two hours of screen time on 5–7 days per week³⁶.

37% of pupils in grades 8–9 (51% of boys, 24% of girls) report that they play digital games nearly every day in their free time³⁵.

Students

For students, playing digital games is a fairly common hobby during free time, and it is more popular among boys than girls. Outside school hours, 31% of general upper secondary students (50% of boys, 18% of girls) and 36% of vocational students (45% of boys, 23% of girls) play almost every day.³⁵

Slightly over half of general upper secondary students (52%) report playing games. Nearly one fifth of these (18%) report that they spend more than 5 but less than 11 hours playing per week. Nearly one fifth (18%, 40% of men, 4% of women) report that they spend more than 11 hours playing per week.⁵⁶

No comparable research data about playing is available for vocational students. 73% of those studying in special vocational colleges (87% of boys, 49% of girls) report that they play games. 17% of girls and boys report that they spend more than 5 but less than 11 hours playing per week. Nearly half (46%, 52% of boys, 27% of girls) spend more than 11 hours playing games per week. One third (34% of boys, 17% of girls) report that they play for at least 21 hours per week.⁴⁹



E-SPORTS PROFESSIONALS INVEST IN PHYSICALLY ACTIVE ROUTINES

Electronic sports, also known as Esports, is one of the fastest growing sports in the world. Esports is a competitive sport played in team or individual format with a computer or game console.

Esports is a competitive sport in which success requires a diverse range of skills.

“The ability to concentrate fully on the moment and set goals are key skills for an Esports athlete. Social, visual and fine motor skills are essential skills, and the same applies to reflecting on personal performance and work, says **Otto Takala**, Vice President of the Finnish Esports Federation (SEUL).

Esports is focusing an growing amount of attention on supporting the skills required in the sport through active everyday choices. A link has been observed between Esports performance and physical activity,

and players who are in good physical condition are best able to concentrate on intensive activity.

“I believe that physical activity plays a major role in Esports, and its significance will continue to increase in the future. The requirements have become more diverse as the sport has grown, and mere playing is no longer enough to guarantee success. For example, physical activity plays a big role in terms of stress tolerance.”

A physically active everyday life supports ergonomics and coping

Coaching focuses attention on maintaining well-being and the ability to cope. This means active routines that affect areas such as ergonomics, alertness, stress relief and recovery.

“The Esports operating environment is very similar to today’s working life, where people spend a lot of time sitting at a screen. The two areas share

many elements and health-related requirements, which create the need for systematic activity and physical training,” says Takala.

Like other top athletes, the day-to-day life of a professional player is a full-time job and it’s important for players to ensure their recovery.

“My recovery from training sessions and competitions consists of physical activity and relaxation that is suitable for me, such as walking or jogging at a low heart rate, muscle care, and hobbies and socialising with relatives and friends, which takes my mind off playing,” says **Joel “jelo” Lentonen**, a professional player on the SJ Esports CS:Go team.

“We also receive assistance related to personal psychological and physical development from our team’s support crew,” says Lentonen.

PHYSICAL FUNCTIONAL CAPACITY AND OVERWEIGHT



Researchers on a global scale are concerned about the deterioration of functional capacity and the increased prevalence of overweight and obesity in children and adolescents. In terms of physical functional capacity, the ability of children and adolescents to be active at an intense level for longer periods of time has decreased over the past 30 years⁵⁷. The prevalence of overweight among Finnish children and adolescents has increased significantly over the past decade^{58,59}.

Monitoring physical functional capacity and weight and height make it possible to anticipate societal challenges. Early intervention to prevent excessive weight gain is easier than treating obesity, so the support that children, adolescents and families receive in preventing obesity is very important. Healthy nutrition and sufficient and regular physical activity are key elements in preventing excessive weight gain.⁶⁰ Physical functional capacity can be improved during growth and development by means of physical activity.

Physical functional capacity refers to the body's functional ability to perform tasks that require physical effort and the targets set for it⁶¹. It is a person's ability to move under their own muscle power, do hobbies and handle everyday routines. Physical fitness attributes, such as endurance, strength, speed and flexibility as well as basic motor skills and sensory motor skills, are the foundation for physical functional capacity.

The prevalence of overweight can be assessed using a body mass index calculated on the basis of weight and height. Children have different body proportions than adults, so a children's body mass index (ISO-BMI) is calculated for 2–18-year-olds. The result for a child of normal weight is 17–25, and a body mass index of over 25 can indicate that a child may be overweight. Researchers have observed that when body mass index increases rapidly with age, physical activity also decreases more than normal⁶².

This chapter examines the state of physical functional capacity and prevalence of overweight in children and adolescents. In addition to normative assessment, this chapter highlights the perceptions that children and

adolescents have concerning their physical functional capacity and weight. Perceptions of suitable weight and a high level of physical competence are linked to greater physical activity^{63,64}.

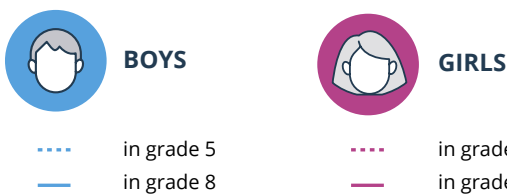
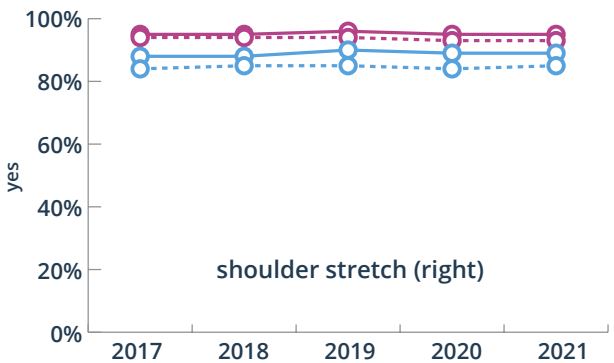
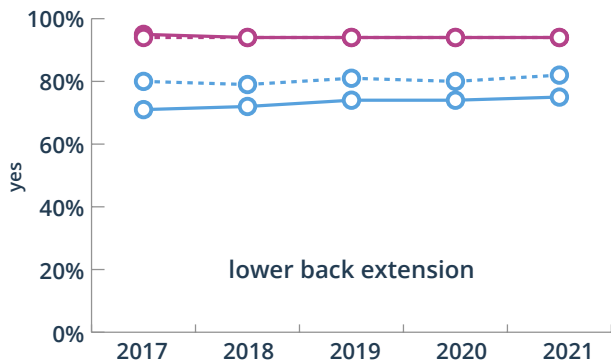
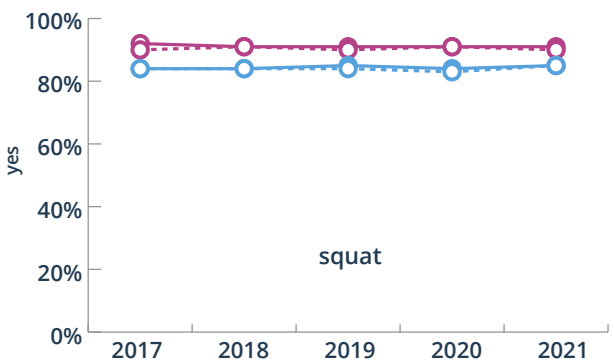
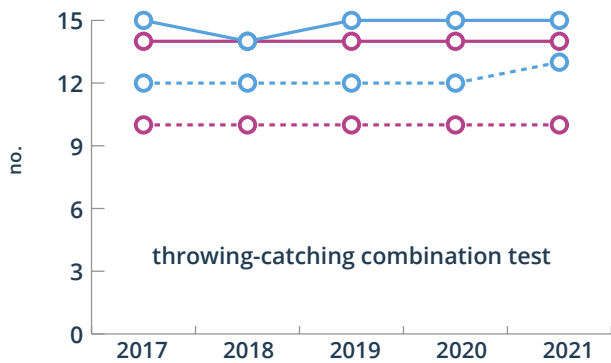
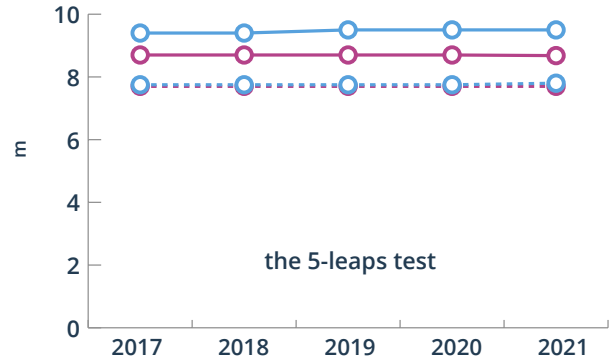
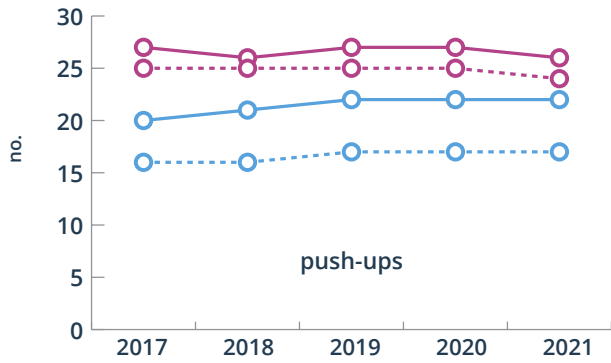
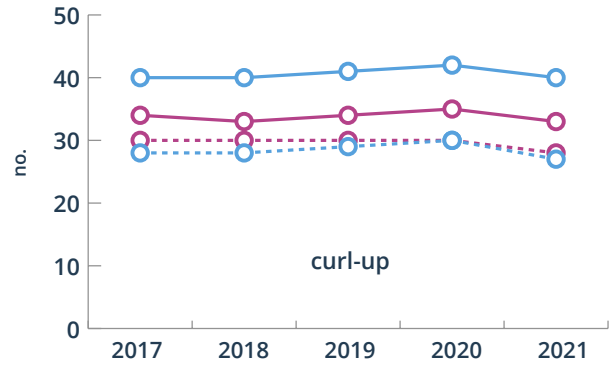
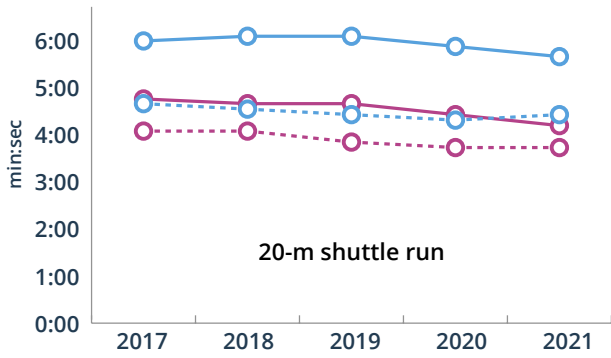
MONITORING PHYSICAL FUNCTIONAL CAPACITY

In Finland, monitoring of physical functional capacity among children and adolescents is at a good international level in certain age groups. Finnish basic education uses the Move! monitoring system for physical functional capacity, which provides national, regional and school-specific information⁶⁵. In terms of preschool-aged children, a measurement entity has been developed to monitor the physical activity and motor skills of 4–6-year-olds at the population level⁶⁶. There is no monitoring information available for upper secondary students. The state of physical functional capacity at the end of adolescence can be assessed on the basis of data from the Finnish Defence Forces⁶⁷.

Move! monitoring system for physical functional capacity

The Move! monitoring system for physical functional capacity is an internationally unique national measurement and feedback system intended for pupils in grades 5 and 8. The main purpose of the system is to encourage pupils to independently maintain their physical functional capacity.⁶⁸ Schools use the Move! measurement results in physical education teaching in schools and in the extensive health check-up performed on pupils. The results can be utilised in the central government, regions and municipalities to plan, monitor and evaluate well-being measures. Move! measurements can be carried out in an adapted manner for pupils with long-term or permanent impairment or disabilities⁶⁹.

Five years of monitoring show that the motor skills of children and adolescents have remained stable, core muscle endurance has decreased slightly during the past year, and there is annual variation in terms of flexibility. Cardiorespiratory endurance has deteriorated among pupils in grade 8.⁶⁸







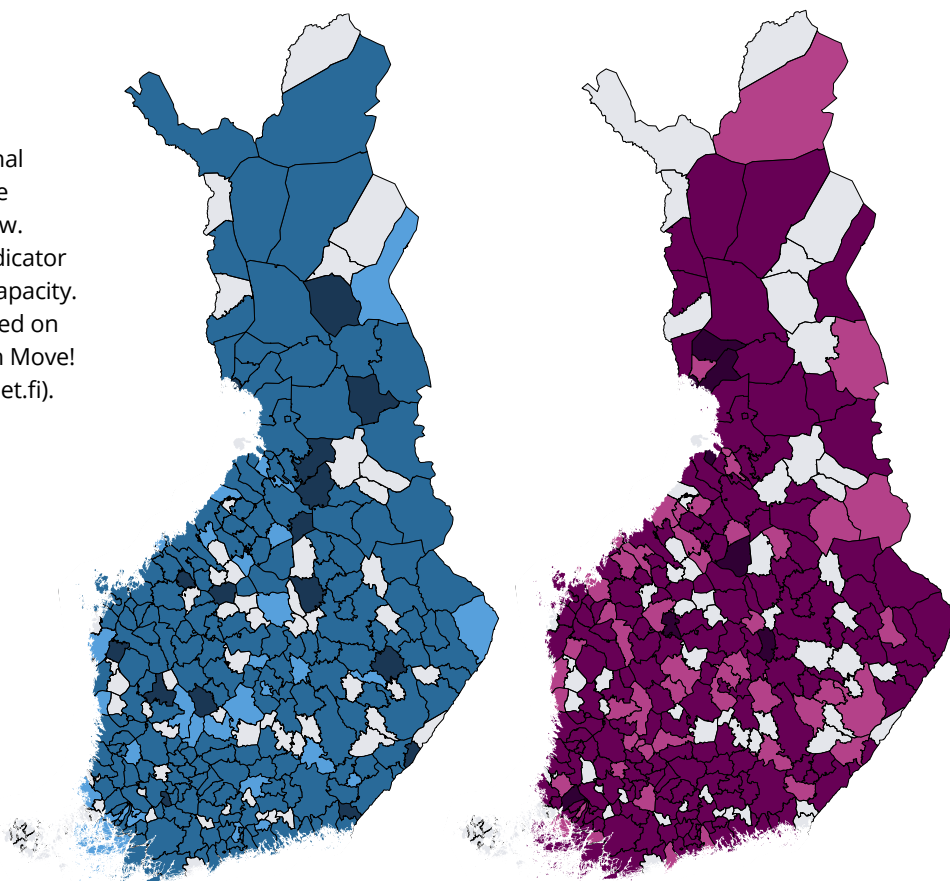
National physical functional capacity trends according to Move! measurement sections in 2017–2021⁶⁸

PREVALENCE OF POOR PHYSICAL FUNCTIONAL CAPACITY (%) IN THE MUNICIPALITY IN 2021

Regional changes in the physical functional capacity of children in adolescents can be monitored by measurement section (www.liikuntaindikaattorit.fi) or by using the indicator that describes poor physical functional capacity. Poor physical functional capacity is defined on the basis of the overall scores received in Move! measurements (score ≤ 15) (www.sotkanet.fi).

The map describes the prevalence of poor physical functional capacity among grade 8 pupils. The darker the colour, the poorer the situation.

-  In comparison to the default value, the municipality has significantly more pupils with poor physical functional capacity (> 66%).
-  In comparison to the default value, the municipality has more pupils with poor physical functional capacity (33–66%).
-  In comparison to the default value, the municipality has the same amount of pupils with poor physical functional capacity (< 33%).
-  Data missing.



BOYS IN GRADE 8

GIRLS IN GRADE 8

CITY COOPERATION LOOKS FOR GOOD PRACTICES TO PROMOTE PHYSICAL FUNCTIONAL CAPACITY

The City of Oulu uses the Move! results in a multidisciplinary manner and is coordinating a joint project involving large cities. The aim is to share proven operating models for promoting the physical functional capacity of children and adolescents at different levels.

The objective of the project coordinated by Oulu is to collect, create and develop practices related to Move! measurements in cooperation across administrative sectors that involves different professional groups. The joint project includes the cities of Helsinki, Espoo, Vantaa, Turku, Tampere, and Jyväskylä.

“During the project, we noticed that Move! is a very good tool for cooperating across administrative sectors,” says **Kati Grekula**, Physical Activity Coordinator for the City of Oulu.

The Move! measurement results serve as a tool for supporting the ability to cope, well-being and learning among children and adolescents. The cities participating in the joint project are assessing methods of applying the results at different levels.

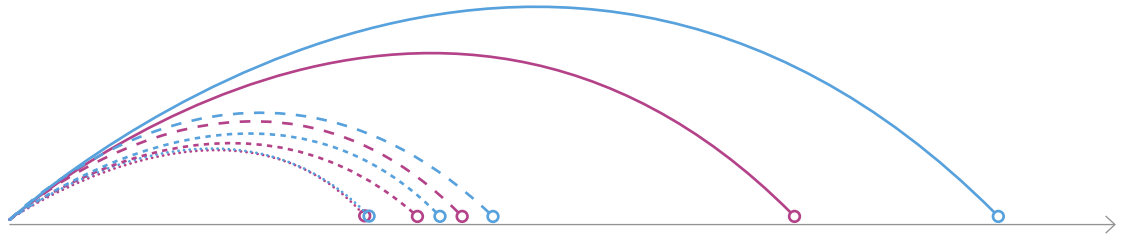
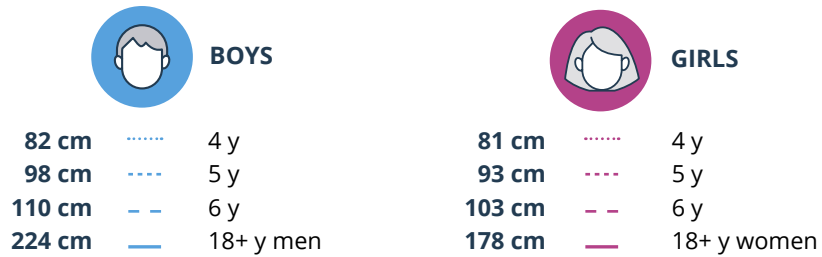
“For example, the results can be used during the health check-ups performed at schools. At the school level, teachers can utilise them in physical education and also in classroom teaching, where it’s important to identify, for example, challenges related to motor skills.

At the municipal and national level, Move! is a tool for knowledge-based management. The results will be used when planning, monitoring and evaluation of well-being measures at the national, regional and local levels. Schools and cities can also compare results with the regional and national levels.

The purpose of the joint project is to provide multidisciplinary operators in different parts of Finland with established operating methods to support pupils’ opportunities to develop their physical functional capacity.

“Another aim is to establish and disseminate proven practices for use in other cities. This means that the cities won’t need to consider the implementation of each phase separately,” says Grekula.

**Standing long jump
(movement skills and power)
in different population
groups^{71,67}**



Motor skills in preschool-aged children

Basic motor skills make independent activity possible. Delays in the motor development of children are monitored at almost all child health clinics in Finland using the Lene neurological assessment for 3–6-year-olds. The Lene assessment evaluates whether a child's motor skills correspond to their age, are slightly delayed or clearly/exceptionally delayed.⁷⁰

The JOYPAM research and development project, PIILO in Finnish (2019–2021) compiled and developed a set of population-level methods for monitoring joy of motion, physical activity and motor skills in young children. Motor skills measurements include balance skills (static and dynamic balance), movement skills (standing long jump, skipping, and hopping on one foot), manipulative skills (throwing and catching a ball) and body awareness (the ability to cross the body's midline). The JOYPAM project developed pedagogical tools for guardians and early education personnel to support children's motor skills development.⁶⁶

The JOYPAM project showed that the motor skills of 4–6-year-olds improve with age. There are also gender differences, with boys being better than girls in all areas except static balance, in which girls were better than boys.⁷¹ Measured according to standing long jump, the movement skills of 6-year-old girls and boys are better than average when compared to European reference values⁷².

Based on estimates by guardians who responded to the JOYPAM study, 6% of children have some quality that complicates or interferes with their physical activity or movement. Early childhood education personnel estimate that this applies to 7% of children⁶⁶. According to the FinChildren study, early childhood education personnel reported that they were concerned about the motor skills of up to 14% of 4-year-olds²⁵.

The Finnish Defence Forces

Male conscripts and women in voluntary military service (approximately 19–20-year olds) participate

in cardiorespiratory endurance and muscular fitness measurements during their service. In 2021, 15,791–18,098 men and 780–961 women participated in the measurements⁶⁷. Monitoring data on cardiorespiratory endurance is available for conscripts since 1975 and on muscular fitness since 1982. During the monitoring period, both cardiorespiratory endurance and muscular fitness has deteriorated.

Finnish Defence Forces measurements assess the similar prerequisites for physical functional capacity as in younger age groups. Running speed, movement skills and power all develop with age. Although gender differences are small in childhood, physical functional capacity develops more strongly in boys than girls during puberty. Young men have better results in physical functional capacity measurements than young women.

Perceptions that children and adolescents have concerning their own physical competence and physical skills

Although some areas of physical functional capacity have deteriorated over the duration of monitoring, children and adolescents consider themselves physically competent and fit. The majority of preschool-aged children believe they are good at motor skills or physical activity. The competence is on a higher level among younger children than older children^{73,66}. Girls are more likely than boys to consider themselves competent in movement skills while boys are more likely than girls to consider themselves good at ball handling skills⁷³.

Among students at the upper secondary level, perceived competence is at a good level in cardiorespiratory endurance, strength, speed, flexibility and physical skills (3.6 on a scale of 1–5) and is higher in boys than girls (3.7 in boys, 3.4 in girls)⁶⁴. The physical competence of students with disabilities did not differ from other upper secondary students (average 3.6, 3.8 for boys, 3.4 for girls)⁴⁰. 62% of students in special vocational colleges (66% of boys, 55% of girls) consider their own physical fitness to be good or excellent⁴⁹.



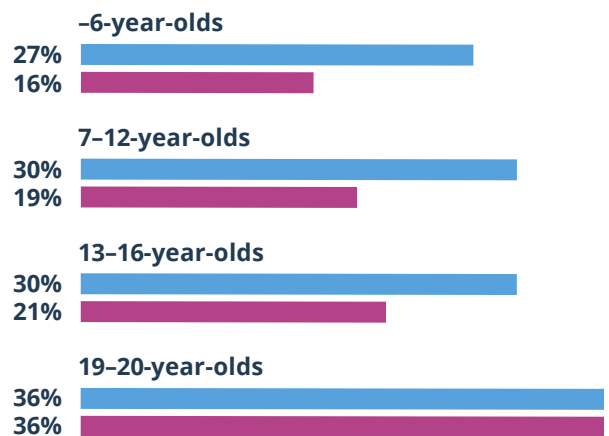
MONITORING OF WEIGHT AND HEIGHT INFORMATION

The development of the body weight and height of preschool-aged children and primary school pupils is monitored regularly in healthcare⁷⁴. Monitoring information about the weight and height of pupils in basic education and upper secondary students is obtained from population surveys. The height and weight of conscripts and women in voluntary military service are measured during their service. It should be noted that being underweight and overweight are both harmful in terms of health.

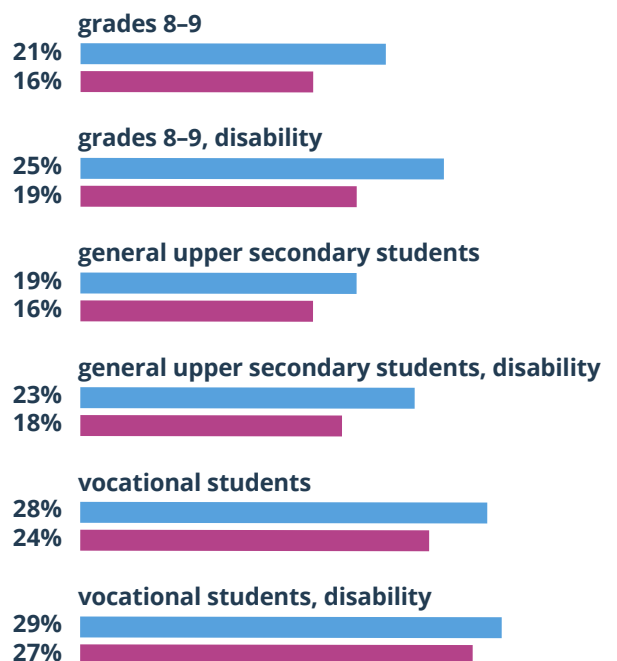
Overweight among children and adolescents increases with age, and measurements show that overweight is more common than self-reported information would indicate. Boys are more likely to be overweight than girls. In 2020, more than one in four 2–16 year-old boys (29%) and nearly one in five girls (18%) were overweight or obese based on measured data⁷⁵. Based on survey studies, overweight among upper secondary students was more common in vocational students than in general upper secondary students²⁸. Young people who have physiological or cognitive disabilities are more likely to be overweight than their peers³⁵.

The share of overweight students has increased particularly rapidly among girls studying in vocational schools (THL 2021)²⁸. Finnish Defence Forces statistics show that the average height of conscripts has remained the same, but average weight has increased by 7.3 kg during 1993–2020⁶⁷.

MEASURED

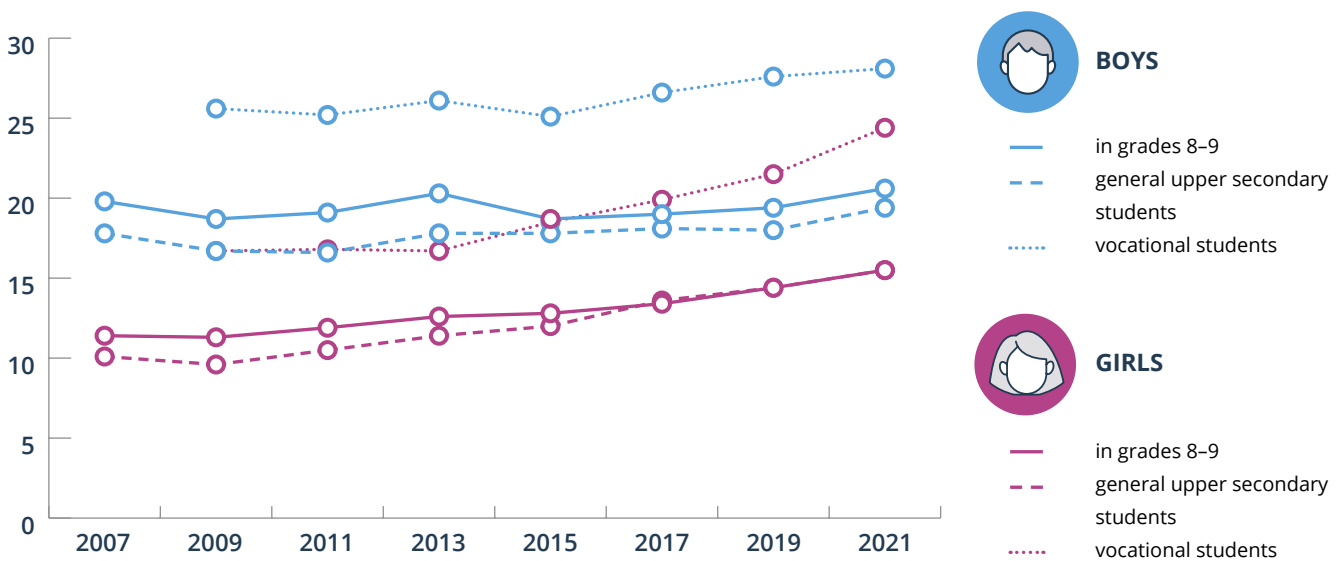


SELF-REPORTED



■ BOYS ■ GIRLS

Prevalence of overweight in different population groups based on measured and self-reported height and weight^{74,28,35,67}



Prevalence of overweight in different population groups based on self-reported height and weight in 2007-2021²⁸

Perceptions of children and adolescents concerning their own weight

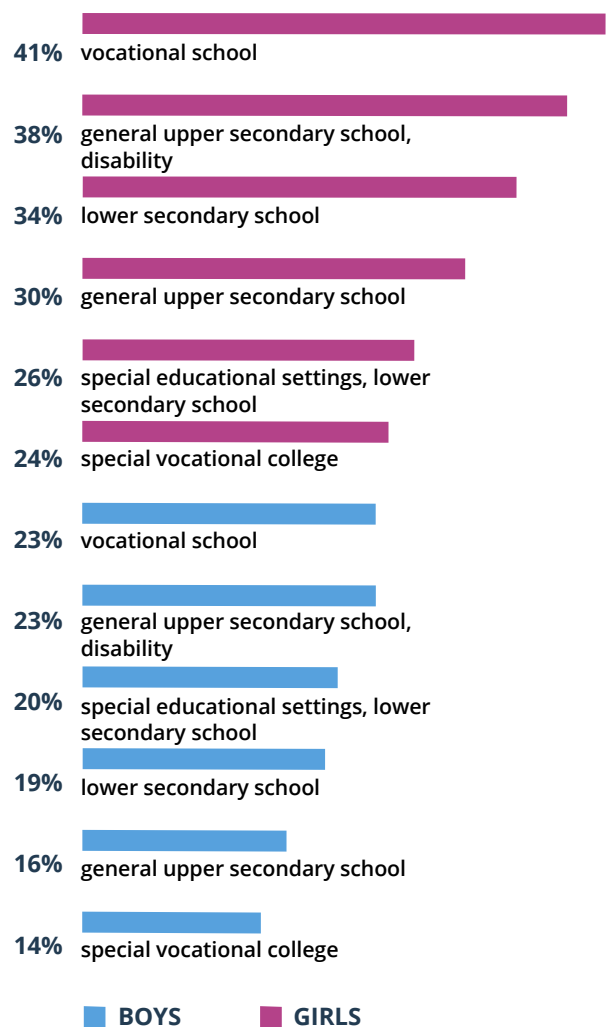
In contrast to the prevalence of overweight, girls are more likely than boys to consider themselves overweight or too fat. Adolescents with disabilities who study in mainstream education are more likely to consider themselves overweight. Students in special vocational colleges are less likely to consider themselves overweight³⁵.

27% of pupils in grades 8-9 (19% of boys, 34% of girls) consider themselves overweight³⁵. 22% of 11-15-year-olds studying in special education schools (20% of boys, 26% of girls) consider themselves too fat³⁶.

24% of general upper secondary students (15% of boys, 30% of girls) and 34% of those with disabilities (23% of boys, 38% of girls) consider themselves overweight. 30% of vocational students (23% of boys, 41% of girls) consider themselves overweight.³⁵ On the other hand, only 17% of those studying in special vocational colleges (14% of boys, 24% of girls) consider themselves too fat⁴⁹.

Children and adolescents with a foreign background

Young people with a foreign background are more likely to consider themselves clearly overweight in comparison to the native population. 26% of boys and 41% of girls in grades 8-9 considered themselves overweight. Of general upper secondary students, 25% of boys and 39% of girls consider themselves overweight, while the corresponding shares for vocational students are 28% of boys and 44% of girls.³⁵



Adolescents who consider themselves overweight or too fat (%)^{35,36,49}

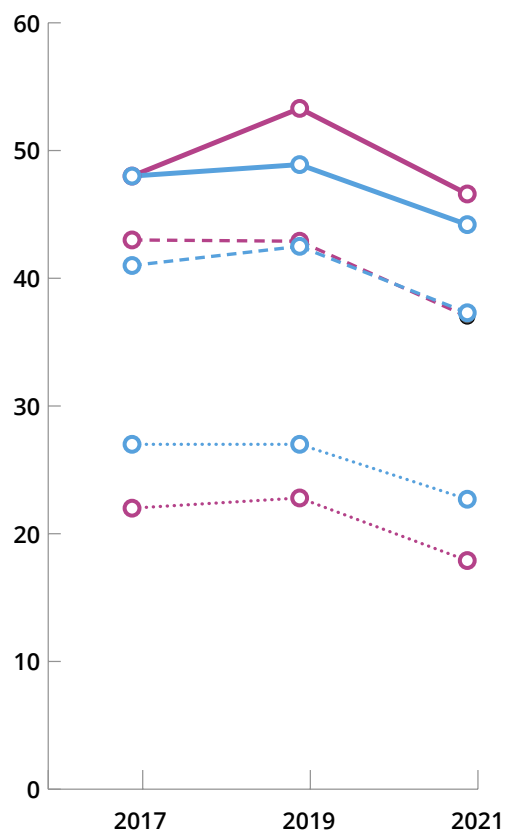
EFFECTS OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON THE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND FUNCTIONAL CAPACITY OF CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS

The physical activity of children and adolescents decreased during the coronavirus pandemic when schools were in distance learning and hobbies were interrupted. Based on accelerometer measurements, pupils in basic education accumulated approximately 1,000–3,000 less steps per day in spring 2020 than in spring 2018⁷⁶. The difference was significant on weekdays, but not visible on weekends. It appears that this change is explained by reduced physical activity at school and during school commutes, in particular. The pandemic seems to have increased polarisation in physical activity rates among young people or the division of young people into those who are highly active and those who are the least physically active. Physical activity declined more among adolescents with disabilities.^{76,77} 51% of adolescents with disabilities reported that they engaged in less physical activity during the coronavirus pandemic²⁰.

There was no evidence to suggest that the pandemic had a significant impact on the functional capacity of children and adolescents at the national level. Move! monitoring system measurements showed that the cardiorespiratory endurance of adolescents continued the deterioration observed in earlier years⁶⁸. The prevalence of overweight 14–16-year-olds increased by 1.0% in boys and 1.7% in girls between 2019 and 2021, in comparison to the average change of 0.3% in boys and 0.8% in girls during the past

CHANGES IN ORGANISED AND UNORGANISED PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IN 2017–2021

Proportion of children and adolescents who engage in organised physical activity in 2017–2021 (%)
(School Health Promotion study 2017, 2019, 2021)



BOYS

- in grades 8–9
- - - general upper secondary students
- vocational students



GIRLS

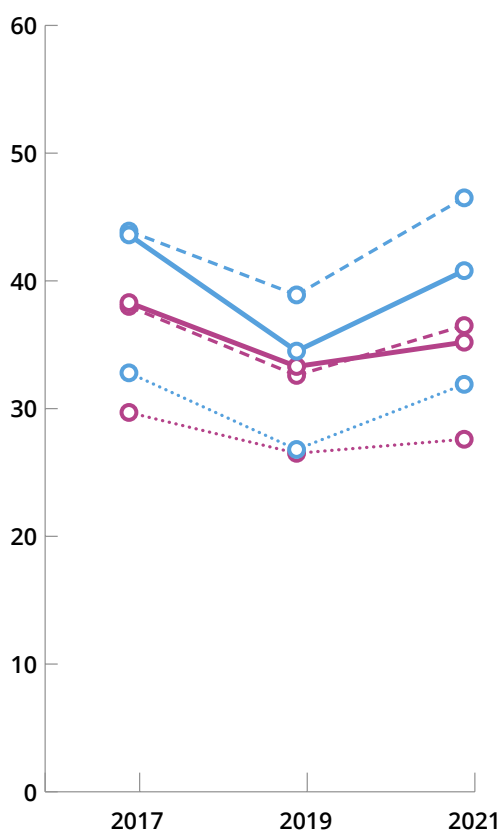
- in grades 8–9
- - - general upper secondary students
- vocational students

10 years. Girls studying in vocational school showed the greatest increases in overweight (2.9%).²⁸ Among conscripts, weight increased by an average of 0.6 kg in 2020–2021 in comparison to an average weight increase of 0.3 kg in 1993–2020⁶⁷.

Very little international reporting on changes in functional capacity during the pandemic is as extensive as that provided by Finnish monitoring systems. Comparison with existing data suggest that the stability of physical fitness elements among Finnish children and adolescents during the pandemic is exceptional. Preliminary data from the Slovenian national physical fitness monitoring system SLOfit shows that the physical fitness of Slovenian children and youth deteriorated by about 7% during the pandemic restrictions⁷⁸. International longitudinal studies performed with a smaller data set have indicated that deterioration occurred in motor skills, cardiorespiratory endurance and muscular fitness, and flexibility^{79,80,81,82}. The development of overweight in Finland was consistent with international observations that the body mass index of children and adolescents, share of overweight, and body composition of overweight children have shifted in an unfavourable direction during the pandemic^{80,82,83}.

Proportion of children and adolescents who take part in unorganised physical activity nearly every day in 2017–2021 (%)

(School Health Promotion study 2017, 2019, 2021)



SPORTS CLUBS DEVELOPED INNOVATIVE DIGITAL SOLUTIONS DURING AN EXCEPTIONAL SITUATION

The coronavirus pandemic encouraged Finnish sports clubs to take a huge leap into the digital era. Many clubs successfully arranged practices online during the exceptional period.

When sports activities were interrupted in spring 2020, Tampereen Pyrintö started actively developing new ways to continue hobbies and be physically active in different sports. Digital platforms played a key role in enabling the continuation of club activities.

The club's orienteering division developed the O-skills analysis tool to enable coach-led orienteering practices during the pandemic restrictions. The service allowed athletes to register for practices and reserve personal starting times. GPS monitoring was implemented so that practices could be analysed via remote connections.

The club's cheerleading division utilised new virtual methods after the cancellation of competitions and the spring show. The club organised Finland's first remote cheerleading competition. The competitors recorded their performances according to the instructions provided and then sent the videos for evaluation by referees during the competition weekend. The winners and other top performances were announced in a live broadcast on Pyrintö Cheer Team's Instagram account.

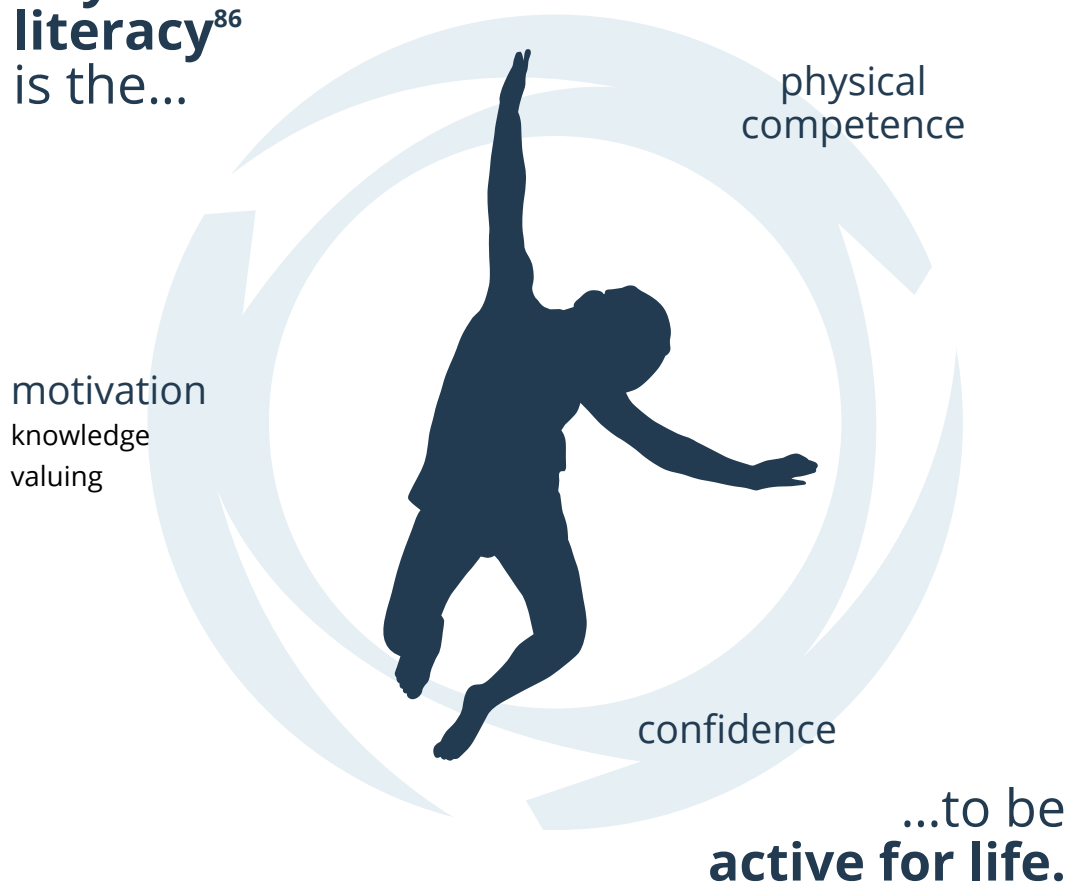
Remote practices took over the internet and social media throughout the country

- Oulun Naisvoimistelijat gymnastics club established the ONVLIVE channel, which offered many live group sessions and tips for practising independently.
- Karjalan Tennis put together a comprehensive package for independent practising on their website – including tips for tennis and physical training at the competitive and recreational level.
- Loimaan Jankko volleyball club provided remote practices on its YouTube channel and in a closed Facebook group. This included a 30-minute physical activity club for children and like-minded people.
- The Vantaa-based PuHu basketball club organised remote practices on its SolidSport channel and used the #puhutreenaa hashtag in its social media posts.
- In Seinäjoki, the SJK-juniorit football club produced training videos for its YouTube channel. The club also challenged its football players to record their own video clips, with an award going to the best video of each week.

PHYSICAL AND HEALTH LITERACY

Physical literacy is still a young concept and little-studied phenomenon. According to the international definition, physical literacy is motivation, confidence, physical competence, knowledge and understanding to value and take responsibility for engagement in physical activities for life⁸⁴. Although the areas of physical literacy have been studied in Finland, an overall picture of the level of physical literacy among Finnish children and adolescents is not available. As a result, Finland's Report Card examines health literacy and its links with physical activity and sports club activities. Health literacy has been found to be an independent and important factor with regard to health, including physical activity.⁸⁵

**Physical
literacy⁸⁶**
is the...



Health literacy

Health literacy is the ability to make decisions to promote and maintain personal health and that of others. It is also the ability to identify and adapt environmental factors that either support or threaten health. Health literacy consists of five dimensions: theoretical knowledge and practical skills related to health, critical thinking, self-awareness and ethical accountability.⁸⁷

Health literacy among Finnish adolescents has been measured with surveys as part of a more extensive examination of health and well-being. The Health Literacy among School-aged Children (HLSAC) indicator consists of 10 statements that a young person uses to assess their own health-related competence⁸⁸.

Finnish adolescents have a comparatively good health literacy level. According to the Health Behaviour in School-aged Children study, the level of health literacy is high for one in three of 13-year-olds (31% of boys, 34% of girls) and for two in five 15-year-olds (39% of boys, 39% of girls). Health literacy is low in every tenth 13-year-old (10% of boys, 8% of girls) and 15-year-old (10% of boys, 7% of girls). There is no difference in health literacy between girls and boys.⁸⁹ According to the LIITU study, 42% of general upper secondary students assessed their health-related competence as high and 58% as low or moderate⁹⁰.

There is a link between physical activity and the level of health literacy. Young people aged 13 and 15 who are physically active for at least 60 minutes on 7 days a week in accordance with the physical activity recommendation have a higher level of health literacy in comparison to those who are less active. Likewise, low health literacy is more common among those with who are less physically active than those who get more exercise.⁸⁹ General upper secondary students

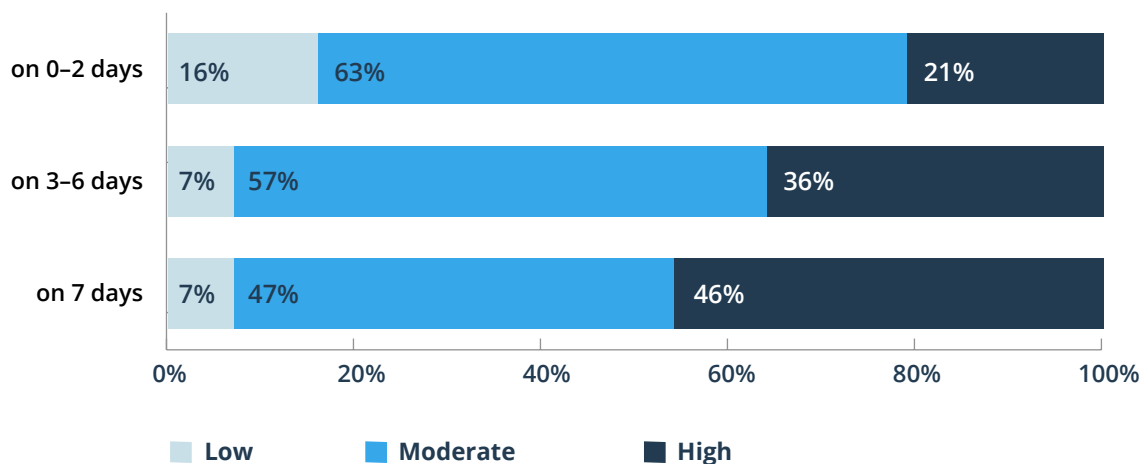


who report being physically active for one hour on 0–2 days per week have the lowest level of health literacy. The majority of general upper secondary school students who are physically active according to the recommendations have a high level of health literacy.⁹⁰

Active participation in sports club activities is positively linked to a better level of health literacy. A high level of health literacy is more common among 13- and 15-year-olds who belong to a sports club than in those that don't belong to a sports club. Sports club members are less likely to have a low level of health literacy (6%) than non-members (10%).⁸⁹

Health literacy of lower secondary pupils according to physical activity⁸⁹

At least 60 minutes physical activity per day on 0–7 days a week



COMMUNITIES SUPPORTING PHYSICAL ACTIVITY FOR CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS



Family and friends and educational institutes play an important role in facilitating physical activity. In Finland, children and adolescents spend the majority of their day in early childhood education, basic education and, after completion of basic education, in upper secondary school. The operational culture at these education institutes affects the physical activity of children and youth. At the same time, they learn an active – or passive – lifestyle, which also influences well-being later in adulthood. Studies have shown that physical activity also promotes learning, inclusion and contentedness.

One goal of Prime Minister **Sanna Marin's** Government Programme is to increase overall physical activity in all groups. The national promotion programmes for physical activity and physical exercise (On the Move programmes) promote a physically active lifestyle for different age groups and demographic groups. The goal of the Families on the Move programme is for different family physical activity operators to offer diverse opportunities for unstructured and organised family activity and communicate about physical activity for families. By increasing movement and reducing sitting, the goal of the Joy in Motion, Schools on the Move and Students on the Move programmes is to create a more active operational culture in different communities to support the growth, development and learning of children and adolescents. Early childhood education units, comprehensive schools and institutions can register in their own individual programmes and receive support for developing their operational culture and the well-being of children and youth.

Finland also has a sports academy network coordinated by the Finnish Olympic Committee to support young athletes who are training in a goal-oriented manner. The purpose of sports academies is to support athletes in combining studies and training. The Finnish dual career model starts in the lower secondary school stage and continues to the career transition taking place after an elite sports career ends. The sports academy network includes athletes from lower secondary to the elite level as well as coaches and experts.

ETELÄ-KYMENLAAKSO SPORTS ACADEMY FACILITATES SUCCESS IN STUDIES AND SPORTS

The goal of Etelä-Kymenlaakso Sports Academy (EKA) activities is to combine studies, sports and a civilian career. The activities support the possible success of young athletes in studies and in sports.

EKA is an alliance of athletes, sports federations, educational institutes, sports clubs, municipalities, and operators that provide coaching support services. It works in close cooperation with the Sports Academy Programme of the Finnish Olympic Committee. EKA is open to athletes in all sports, and it includes 454 athletes and 36 coaches.

“EKA supports the career development and psychological and physical growth of high-performance athletes. One of the key elements involves helping athletes to practice more on a daily basis and utilise support services,” says **Jiri Auranen**, Director of Etelä-Kymenlaakso Sports Academy.

“The activities create good opportunities for young athletes to prepare for further studies or working life while simultaneously giving them the opportunity to develop as athletes,” says Auranen.

EKA arranges regular training sessions for academy athletes and coaches. It also organises training sessions for the parents of athletes, coaches in the region and clubs.

“For example, the Vanhempien valmennusoppi (Coaching for Parents) programme, which has also received national publicity, was developed by EKA and South-Eastern Finland University of Applied Sciences (Xamk). The purpose of the training programme is to support the parents of young athletes in everyday life and help them understand what is needed to reach the top level in sports,” says Auranen.

Partner educational institutes in the region invest in sports academy activities in the form of weekly hours. A total of 21 weekly hours are available for sports academy use (2021–2022 academic year), and these hours are used for coaching. The coaching is mainly purchased from local clubs.

“The sports academy makes it easy to successfully combine school and sports. It’s also nice that athletes get study credit for sports academy morning practices,” says basketball player **Mette Nurminen** from Kotkan lyseo high school.

“The sports academy gives me more practice time. Practising doesn’t interfere with school because the practices provide us with course credits, and our teachers are flexible about sports-related absences. The sports academy also offers a variety of services, such as test packages,” says **Lilli Hakkarainen**, a student and basketball player who attends Kotkan lyseo high school.

Key figures for sports academy activities in Finland⁹¹

19

sports academies

10,400

lower secondary athletes

6,700

upper secondary athletes

84

para-athletes



05 FAMILY AND PEERS



The significance of the family as a physical activity supporter is greatest among small children, and with age, the significance of friends increases. The parents' roles are to set an example, encourage and facilitate their children's physical activity. Grandparents, siblings and the local community can also support a child's physical activity. As age increases, the ways friends spend their free time affects the physical activity of young people. Peer support could be utilised more in promoting adolescents' physical activity.

THE GRADE IS BASED ON THE FOLLOWING RESULTS:

Preschool-aged children

Based on the JOYPAM study (PIILO in Finnish), 45% of the guardians of 3–6-year-olds are active with their child at least three times a week. 78% of guardians encourage, praise or show gratitude regarding their child's physical activity or physical exercise skills at least three times per week.⁴⁵

Information about children with disabilities is not available for preschool-aged children.

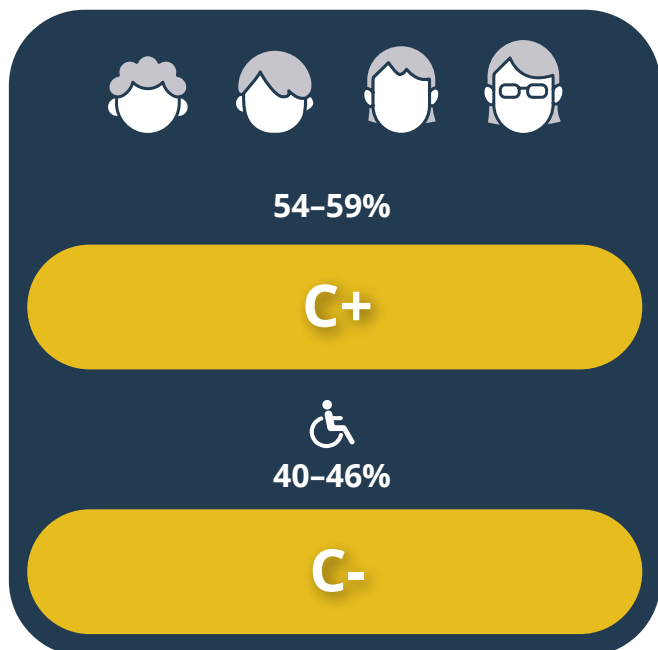
Pupils in primary and lower secondary school

Guardians of pupils in grades 4–5 report that they often support their child's physical activity or sports: 80% provide encouragement, 72% talk about physical activity or sports, 61% provide rides to physical activity venues or sports hobbies, and 32% are active with their child. 76% of guardians of children with physiological, cognitive or social disabilities state that they often encourage their child to take part in physical activity or sports, 64% talk about physical activity or sports, 45% provide rides to physical activity venues or sports hobbies, and 28% are active with their child.⁴⁶

According to 9–15-year-olds, parental encouragement for physical activity is the most common form of support: 80% receive encouragement from their parents. Nearly as many (79%) parents contribute financially to their children's physical activity costs and 64% of the respondents get a ride from their parents to physical activity venues. 38% of basic education pupils are physically active with their parents and 43% of pupils are physically active with their peers.⁹²

79% of the parents of 7–14-year-olds take part in their child's physical activity hobby in a guardian role at least once a week. 74% of 10–14-year-olds estimate that their friends encourage and motivate them to be active at least to a certain degree.¹⁸

% of children and adolescents with family members or peers who encourage and support them to be physically active or are active with them.



Students

Upper secondary students report that they often receive parental support related to physical activity: 73% of the parents of general upper secondary students and 58% of the parents of vocational students pay costs related to a physical activity or sports hobby; 70% of parents of general upper secondary students and 67% of parents of vocational students encourage their adolescents to be active or participate in sports; 49% of the parents of general upper secondary students and 38% of the parents of vocational students give their adolescents rides to physical activity venues or a sports hobby; 24% of the parents of general upper secondary students and 25% of the parents of vocational students are physically active with their adolescents.⁴⁰

67% of upper secondary students with physiological or cognitive disabilities and 60% of those with social disabilities report that their guardians encourage them to be physically active and participate in sports. 44% of adolescents with physiological or cognitive disabilities and 39% of those with social disabilities report that their guardians give them a ride to physical activity venues or sports hobbies. 24% of students with physiological or cognitive disabilities and 21% of those with social disabilities are active with their guardians.⁴⁰

40% of general upper secondary students and 37% of vocational students report that their friends often take part in physical activity or sports with them. 28% of general upper secondary students and vocational students report that friends often ask them to take part in physical activity or sports. Boys are more likely than girls to perceive that they receive support for physical activity from their friends.⁹³

30% of upper secondary students with physiological or cognitive disabilities and 25% of those with social disabilities often engage in physical activity or sports with a friend. 20% of students with physiological or cognitive disabilities and 14% of those with social disabilities say that friends often ask them to take part in physical activity or sports.⁴⁰

76% of the guardians of 7–17-year-olds take part in their child's hobby in a background role at least once a week. The corresponding share for guardians of children and adolescents with disabilities is 84%. One in 10 guardians participate in a coaching role on a weekly basis. The corresponding figure for guardians of children and adolescents with disabilities is one in five. The role of parental participation is emphasised in the hobbies of children and adolescents with disabilities, and serving as a coach is common.¹⁹

Children and adolescents with a foreign background

81% of the guardians of pupils in grades 4–5 with a foreign background (82% of boys, 79% of girls) often encourage their child to take part in physical activity or sports, 73% talk about physical activity and sports, 63% give rides to physical activity venues or sports hobbies, and 36% are physically active with their child.⁴⁶

PARENTAL SUPPORT CONTRIBUTES TO ENTHUSIASM FOR PHYSICAL ACTIVITY⁹⁴

Parenting practices have an impact on a child's enthusiasm for physical activity. But how can parents promote the development of permanent physical activity habits and genuine enthusiasm for physical activity?

An interview study conducted at the University of Jyväskylä's Faculty of Sport and Health Sciences examined parenting practices that affect physical activity enthusiasm among 7–10-year-olds and the child's perceptions of their parent's role in terms of enthusiasm for physical activity.

The results suggest that children's perceptions of parenting that supports physical activity are linked to their enthusiasm for physical activity. The children's perceptions showed a link between physical activity enthusiasm and parenting that promotes children's freedom of movement, takes their interests into consideration and provides opportunities for recreation, and participating in physical activity together with the child. A parent's acceptance of a temporary decrease in enthusiasm also increased children's enthusiasm for physical activity.

Children felt that parental control, meaning various degrees of coercion and bypassing the child in decision-making related to physical activity, was unpleasant and had a detrimental effect on enthusiasm for physical activity. However, some interviews revealed the perception that a parent's unconditional and controlling guidance increased the child's enthusiasm for physical activity. The children found these situations to be positive experiences that reinforced their enthusiasm when the parent also took part in physical activity with the child.

Parents can promote child's enthusiasm for physical activity

- by providing clear and consistent rules, expectations and instructions to support the child's physical activity.
- by considering the child's needs to experience autonomy, competence and parental participation when they provide guidance regarding physical activity. Guidance can be firm and goal-oriented if the parent is able to take the child's preferences and personality into account and does not appear to be controlling. Being active with the child seems to be one of the requirements for fulfilling these conditions.
- by listening to child's feelings, because interpretations of a parent's support for physical activity can vary a lot depending on individual qualities and contexts.



06 EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Municipalities are responsible for early childhood education in Finland. Around 77% of children aged 1–6 are in early childhood education. There are large differences in participation in early childhood education according to age. A total of 37% of 1-year-olds, 72% of 2-year-olds and 91% of 5-year-olds are in daycare.⁹⁵ During their time in daycare, 4–6-year-olds accumulate 2.6 hours of physical activity and 4.8 hours of sedentary time per day, including rest periods, meals and other quiet activities. Physical activity increases and sedentary time decreases with age. Boys aged 4–6 get 46–57 and girls 39–43 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity per day in early childhood education.²³

Diverse and sufficient daily physical activity and reducing sitting is included in the principles of the national core curriculum for early childhood education and care^{96,97}, which is supplemented by the recommendations for physical activity in early childhood⁴. The local plans compiled on the basis of national principles take into account the

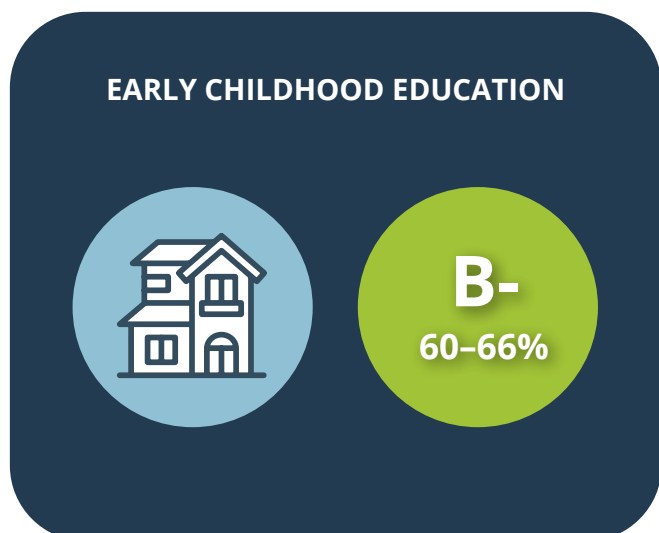
fact that physical activity is a natural part of the early childhood education operational culture and everyday pedagogy. Physical activity and learning motor skills in early childhood education improve children’s ability to learn new things and skills.

Joy in Motion, a national programme for exercise and well-being in early childhood education, began in 2015. Its goal is to ensure that every child has the opportunity to partake in and enjoy physical activity every day. One of the targets set for the Joy in Motion programme is to ensure that early childhood education makes it possible for a child to be physically active for at least two hours per day. Based on the JOYPAM study, 82% of children (82% of boys, 76% of girls) are physically active for at least two hours during the early childhood education day⁴⁵.

THE GRADE IS BASED ON THE FOLLOWING RESULTS:

- The number of early childhood education units registered in the national Joy in Motion programme (2,309 administrative units, or 64%) in November 2021^{98,99}.
- Early childhood education personnel¹⁰⁰
 - 82% estimate that the children in their group have the opportunity for physical activity indoors at least on a weekly basis
 - 75% estimate that the group is physically active in diverse ways in different environments at least once a week
 - 66% estimate that the group personnel activates all children daily during outdoor activities
 - 50% estimate that the children in the group have free access to various types of physical activity equipment on a daily basis
 - 18% estimate that their group participates in systematic daily activities in which all the children are out of breath.
- Municipalities¹⁰¹
 - 60% have included actions that promote physical activity for children in early childhood education in the municipality’s physical activity plan or development programme
 - 87% have specified targets in 2020 and 82% have allocated resources for promoting physical activity in early childhood education during planning activities.

% of early childhood education units with active policies that facilitate physical activity during the day.





AN ACTIVE OPERATIONAL CULTURE IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

The operational culture and conditions in an early childhood education unit create the prerequisites for children's physical activity and movement. In a self-evaluation of active operational culture, 81% of the units estimated that daily physical activity was recorded in the action plan. 61% of the units have physical activity equipment available to children and 57% use indoor facilities diversely for physical activity. One in three units has a gymnasium available during the day. The personnel take part in continuing education that supports active or functional learning in about half of the units. The least active children and those who need support are taken into consideration in 85% of the units, and children who require assistance with movement have access to special support and help in 69% of the early childhood education units that performed a self-evaluation.¹⁰²

Large differences in physical activity conditions exist between early childhood education units. The outdoor conditions in early childhood education are assessed as being better than the indoor conditions. Two out of three units assess the size, functionality and condition of fixed playground equipment in their yard as good. Approximately half of the units assess the adequacy of playground equipment and the functionality of indoor spaces with regard to physical activity as good. Approximately half of the units assessed the conditions for physical activity in the yard and indoor spaces as well as the adequacy of physical activity equipment as good with regard to children who need special support. One in four units believes there is a need for improvement in the yard area and one in three believes improvement is needed in indoor facilities.¹⁰³

A survey for early childhood education personnel in 2020 reveals a positive attitude towards physical activity and promoting it. The majority believe that everyone in their unit is responsible for making physical activity possible for children, and equality is taken into account in the activities. Two-thirds of educators believe that their unit reduces sitting, eliminates prohibitions and allows children to test their limits in terms of physical activity. The personnel's competence, mutual interaction, attitudes and the possibility for continuing education promote physical activity in early education units. Matters that prevent physical activity include adequate facilities and personnel and the size of the groups. In addition, 35% of personnel perceive deficiencies in the accessibility of facilities that limit physical activity.¹⁰⁴

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION CONDITIONS AND OPERATIONAL CULTURE SUPPORT PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND JOY OF EXERCISE

Adults are responsible for supporting children's well-being, health and learning so that a child's right to be physically active and play every day is fulfilled. The conditions and a positive operational culture in early childhood education are central elements in terms of a child's opportunities for physical activity.

Important conditions with regard to children's physical activity include a yard area and equipment both indoors and outdoors. Encouraging physical activity is an important part of an early childhood education operational culture that favours physical activity.

"Adults have to ensure that every child has the opportunity to be active both indoors and outdoors," says early childhood education teacher **Monica Frilander** from Säynätsalo daycare and school.

"In early childhood education, we offer guided sessions and voluntary physical activity for children, which I think is the most important element. Adults enable physical activity and provide the equipment, facilities and opportunities to be active.

4-6-year-olds accumulate lighter physical activity according to the recommendations. More opportunities for moderate-to-vigorous physical activity are needed at home and in early childhood education.

"Moving around is natural for children, and they prefer to run rather than walk. I think it's important to avoid telling children 'don't run' when we could preferably say 'remember to walk'," says Frilander.

Physical activity is fun for children. The JOYPAM study examined children's thoughts about physical activity, and the interviews showed that nearly all children like it. Most children said they were 'very happy' or 'quite happy' when they were on the move. Even children with the weakest motor skills are just as eager to be active, but they may withdraw from play even when they enjoy the activity.

"Children in early childhood education and care often want us adults to be involved in play. In that case, the children are most active and children who might not otherwise take part also join in," explains Frilander.

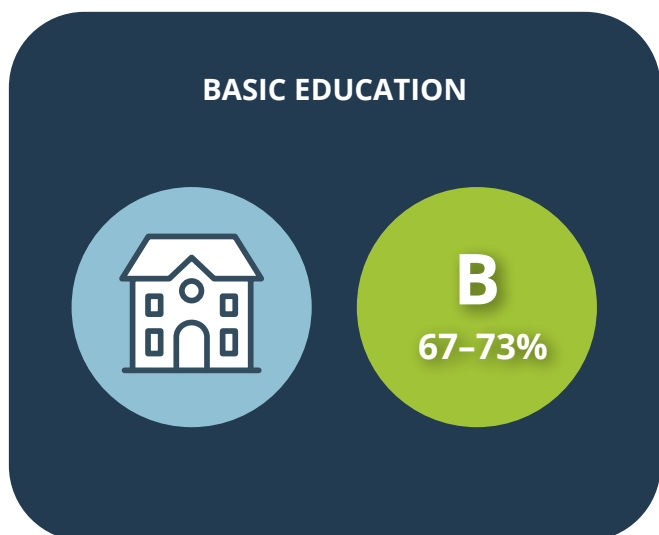
07 BASIC EDUCATION

School plays a major role in children and adolescents' physical activity, because basic education measures reach the entire age group. Children and adolescents accumulate 34% of all their daily physical activity of at least moderate intensity and 47% of all their sedentary time during a school day. The majority of a school day is spent sedentarily: primary and lower secondary school students respectively accumulate 39 and 46 minutes of sedentary time per 60 minutes¹⁰⁵. Physical activity can be added to the school day, particularly with physical education (PE) lessons, recess times and, depending on the teaching methods, active lessons. Physical activity during the school day is most important for least inactive pupils¹⁰⁵.

Schools on the Move, which supports schools in developing a more physically active operational culture, began in 2010 and has since expanded from pilot project to a national programme. In 2016–2018, the Schools on the Move programme was part of the key project in the field of knowledge and education in the Government programme of Finland for the period. A physically active operational culture in basic education developed positively during the 2010s^{106,107}. According to an external assessment, School on the Move has been successful in broadly strengthening schools' capacity to increase physical activity¹⁰⁸.

One action in Prime Minister Marin's government programme involves expanding the Schools on the Move programme to different stages of life. Schools on the Move activities are widely perceived as necessary in schools: the benefits are considered to include support for the pupils' learning and inclusion and implementation of the curriculum^{109,110,111}.

% of schools with active policies that facilitate physical activity during the school day and where physical education is taught by qualified teachers.



THE GRADE IS BASED ON THE FOLLOWING RESULTS:

- Number of schools registered in the national Finnish Schools on the Move programme (2027; 91%) in October 2021¹¹².
- Schools¹⁰⁶
 - 84% report that the school yard is a stimulating site for physical activity that is also used outside the school day
 - 77% of schools also use indoor physical activity facilities outside of PE lessons during the school day
 - 75% report that pupils engage in active school commutes
 - 71% of schools have long recesses
 - 68% of pupils have been trained as physical activity tutors (peer leaders).
- 33% of pupils in primary schools and 19% in lower secondary schools have participated in planning recess activities¹¹³.
- 96% of full-time and part-time PE teachers in basic education are qualified¹¹⁴.



An active operational culture in the school

Basic education promotes physical activity in many ways. The most common measures are related to activity during recesses: schools have purchased equipment for use during recesses, the school day is broken up with long recesses, and the school yard stimulates physical activity. About 70% of primary schools and every other lower secondary school focus on reducing sitting.¹⁰⁹

The personnel has a positive attitude towards promoting physical activity in schools: The majority (97%) feel that physical activity during the school day enhances school enjoyment. Approximately 90% of the personnel feel that every teacher is responsible for promoting physical activity among pupils and believe that the example set by each teacher influences pupils' attitude towards physical activity. Approximately 95% of the staff believes it would be a good idea for the students to go outside during recess and that physical activity during recess contributes to a peaceful working environment during lessons.¹⁰⁹

Primary school pupils spend nearly all their recesses outdoors and are clearly more active than lower secondary students during recess. Boys are more active than girls in recess at all grade levels.¹¹³ Among pupils with disabilities, boys (39%) are clearly more active than girls (16%) during recess¹¹⁵. Sitting during recess is more common in lower secondary school than in primary school. Only about one-quarter of lower secondary students has participated in planning recess activities while primary school pupils are more active participants in the planning process.¹¹³

Club activities in schools facilitate low-threshold physical activity hobbies for all students regardless of their backgrounds. The activities are mainly carried out after the school day. 36% of 9-year-olds (39% of boys, 33% of girls), 24% of 11-year-olds (25% of boys, 22% of girls), 15% of 13-year-olds (17% of boys, 14% of girls), and 10% of 15-year-olds (13% of boys, 7% of girls) are physically active in school sports clubs on a weekly basis^{116,31}. For pupils with physiological or cognitive disabilities, the corresponding shares are 27% of 11-year-olds (29% of boys, 24% of girls),

13% of 13-year-olds (9% of boys, 15% of girls), and 10% of 15-year-olds (18% of boys, 5% of girls)³¹.

PE lessons

The purpose of PE lessons is to influence students' well-being by supporting their physical, social and psychological functional capacity and a positive attitude towards their own bodies. PE lessons aim to offer positive experiences and support a physically active lifestyle¹²¹. 11–15-year-olds consider it important for PE lessons to promote health (80%), have a good atmosphere (74%) and be fun (78%) and have a teacher who is fair and encouraging (76%)¹¹⁷.

In basic education, depending on the grade unit and grade level, pupils have two to three 45-minute lessons and an average of 100 minutes of compulsory PE a week. However, it is possible for pupils in many schools to take elective PE lessons. On an international scale, the amount of PE lessons is at the average European level¹¹⁸. A total of 96% of basic education PE teachers in Finnish-speaking schools and 90% in Swedish-speaking schools are qualified¹¹⁴. Classroom teachers are primarily responsible for teaching PE lessons in primary schools. No statistics are available regarding their physical education qualifications.

From the perspective of health promotion, PE lessons are particularly important for the physically least active pupils. When the PE lessons of 11–12-year-old Finnish children were monitored with an accelerometer, the average lesson involved 23% moderate-to-vigorous physical activity, 39% light physical activity, and 37% sedentary time¹¹⁹. Heart rates increased to a health-promoting level especially among pupils who get very little physical activity during their free time¹²⁰. PE lessons should provide all pupils with opportunities to succeed and participate and support a functional capacity that guarantees the pupils' well-being. Support for learning and school attendance comprises community- and learning environment-related solutions and meeting the pupils' individual needs.¹²¹

SCHOOLS ON THE MOVE ACTIVITIES ARE A PERMANENT PART OF EVERYDAY LIFE AT LÄNSINUMMI SCHOOL

Schools on the Move activities have become a permanent part of everyday life and structures at Länsinummi school in Pietarsaari. The strengths of the activities include a pupil-centred approach and differentiation between learners at different levels.

Länsinummi school registered for the Schools on the Move programme in 2016. Pupils' participation and learning, as well as an increase in physical activity and less time spent sitting are key elements of Schools on the Move activities. The aim is more active and enjoyable school days.

Schools on the Move activities at Länsinummi school are organised by a team of two teachers, but the entire personnel is involved in implementation. The activities are recorded each year in the school's annual plan, and they are monitored regularly, for example, at teacher meetings. The school uses the Self-Evaluation Survey every year.

The personnel is committed and actively brainstorms new ways to add physical activity to the school day. The structure of the school day has been modified so that physical activity is possible, and the activities are varied at the daily, weekly and monthly level. Many different types of activity are arranged during long recesses, such as a music recess, forest recess and physical activity campaigns.

A pupil-centered approach guides activities

Pupils have the opportunity to participate in developing and implementing ideas. The pupils run a recess borrowing service, which buys equipment with support from the Home and School parents' association. The pupils have been involved in planning the physical activity campaigns, equipment for the recess borrowing service, and the school yard.

The activities also take pupils who need special support into account. All of Pietarsaari's Finnish-speaking pupils with special needs or a developmental disability attend the school for their entire basic education. Physical activity events are organised so that wheelchair users and persons with reduced mobility can participate equally in all events.

"We also try to take other special needs into consideration, and each person can participate according to their abilities," says **Taina Pesola**, a classroom teacher at the school.



PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AS PART OF PROMOTING WELL-BEING IN UPPER SECONDARY EDUCATION

Students on the Move activities support the well-being of upper secondary students in a broad manner. Valkeakoski Vocational College (VAAO) and Muurame upper secondary school have incorporated the activities into the structures of the school.

Physical activity is a natural part of studies at VAAO

Students on the Move activities at Valkeakoski Vocational College are coordinated by three coordinators and the Liikkuva VAAO working group, which is responsible for creating a knowledge base and suitable structures for Students on the Move activities. VAAO has also been an active communicator and developer on the national level.

The school has invested in the personnel's competence and awareness related to the benefits of physical activity for study and work capacity. The activities support well-being, work ability, physical activity and community spirit during the study day – while studying and during breaks. Attention is focused on arranging breaks in lessons and keeping the doors to the gymnasium and weight room open for physical activity. Students that need special support have been taken into consideration by offering individual support and low-threshold activities.

The students' competence is utilised, for example, when building sports facilities and equipment, planning spaces and organising various events. There is close cooperation with the student council, and a well-being tutor group of students has been set up.

Muurame general upper secondary school invests in holistic well-being

At Muurame upper secondary school, Students on the Move activities are part of goal-setting for the school's sustainable development certificate, and they were recorded in the work plans and course catalogue and integrated into the well-being strategy at the municipal level. Key issues are also recorded in the local curriculum.

The activities focus on different well-being areas and are integrated into teaching. The methods include study breaks and recesses as well as exercise breaks during double lessons. Student health care is also an active participant in the process. The activities have changed the everyday life and operating methods of both students and the work community in a manner that promotes physical activity and well-being.

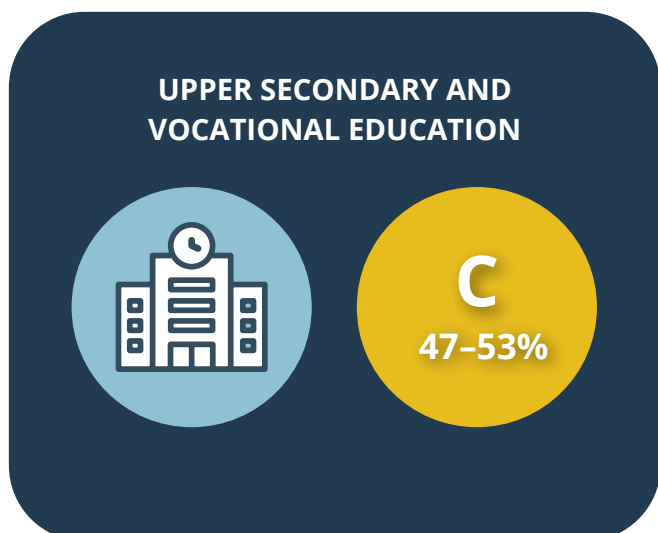
They have also been combined with development projects related to virtual teaching content and artificial intelligence. The activities also have a link to one of the school's special features, which is entrepreneurship studies. Each class has its own mentor company, many of which operate in the physical activity sector.



08 UPPER SECONDARY AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

Students have a lot of sedentary time during the study day. General upper secondary students accumulate 47 minutes of sedentary time for every hour during the study day¹²². The physical activity of vocational students varies during the study day depending on the field of education, but accurate measured data on physical activity and sedentary time is not available. Conditions to promote physical activity can be increased in upper secondary education institutes, physical activity facilities utilised outside learning situations and equipment offered that encourages activity. Additional movement can be added to the study day with, for example, breaks in sedentary behaviours, active teaching methods, students' peer activity and encouraging active school commutes.

% of upper secondary educational institutes with active policies that facilitate physical activity during the study day and where physical education is taught by qualified teachers.



The majority of students (75%) would like to be more active and 65% feel that physical activity supports their studies. Students want the conditions at schools to be developed in a way that increases physical activity (70%) and to have the opportunity to use physical activity facilities during the study day (64%). 65% of students would like the schools to provide alternative ways of sitting. General upper secondary students have a slightly more positive attitude than vocational students towards various measures that increase physical activity during the school day.¹²³

THE GRADE IS BASED ON THE FOLLOWING RESULTS:

- Number of upper secondary institutions registered in the national Students on the Move programme (303; 64% of all general upper secondary schools, 59% of all vocational schools) in October 2021¹¹².
- Educational institutes^{127,128}
 - 62% of general upper secondary schools and 58% of vocational schools utilise indoor sports facilities outside PE lessons during the study day
 - 50% of general upper secondary schools and 64% of vocational schools work with student health care to promote students' physical activity
 - 40% of general upper secondary schools and 29% of vocational schools train students to support physical activity as peer leaders (for example physical activity or well-being tutor)
 - 37% of general upper secondary schools and 45% of vocational schools promote active school commutes
 - 31% of general upper secondary schools and 43% of vocational schools provide students with individual counselling to support physical activity (for example, personal trainer services).
- 20% of general upper secondary students and 29% of vocational students feel they have an opportunity to influence the planning and implementation of physical activity during recesses and breaks¹²⁹.
- 96% of PE teachers in general upper secondary school and 95% of PE teachers in vocational schools are qualified^{130,131}.

The principles of the National Core Curriculum for General Upper Secondary Schools¹²⁴ highlight a physically active operational culture that encourages an active lifestyle and creates structures for physical activity, reduces sedentary behaviours and promotes learning. General upper secondary education strives to enhance the student's physical, psychological, and social well-being and provide the skills needed to maintain these in different life stages. In vocational education, physical activity is part of the obligatory units from the perspective of maintaining work ability and well-being¹²⁵.

As part of the Schools on the Move key project, trials were launched in upper secondary educational institutes in 2017 with the goal developing the operational culture in a direction that supports physical activity and capacity to study. In 2019, the Ministry of Education and Culture expanded the trials into the Students on the Move programme, the aim of which is to increase physical activity and capacity to study at upper secondary and higher education institutions. Capacity to study refers to a student's work ability, which is linked to progress of studies, well-being and future ability to work. Particular attention should be focused on promoting physical work fitness in female-dominated sectors that require moderate physical effort¹²⁶.

An active operational culture in the educational institute

A total of 15% of general upper secondary schools and 11% of vocational schools have listed practices to reduce sitting and increase physical activity^{127,128}. The personnel in upper secondary educational institutes have a positive attitude towards promoting physical activity and consider it necessary to activate the study day and reduce the amount of sitting during teaching. Three out of four members of the personnel are concerned about the students' current capacity to study and, in vocational schools, also about the future work ability of students.¹³²

Students mainly accumulate light physical activity during breaks in the study day in upper secondary education. Sports equipment and facilities made available by the school have a particularly encouraging effect on physical activity. Physical activity is still rarely used to interrupt sedentary time or support teaching. It should also be noted that a relatively large proportion of young people answered "no possibility" when asked about participation in organised physical activity during breaks or active learning.¹²⁹

6% of general upper secondary students (9% of boys, 4% of girls) participate in a physical activity club organised by the school on a weekly basis³⁹. The corresponding share for general upper secondary school students with physiological or cognitive disabilities is 7% (15% of boys, 3% of girls)⁴⁰. 9% of students in special vocational colleges (11% of boys, 6% of girls) report that they participate in a physical activity club organised by the school⁴⁹.

4% of general upper secondary students (6% of boys, 4% of girls) and 9% of vocational students have received individual counselling related to physical activity¹³³. The



corresponding share among students with disabilities is 4%⁴⁰ and 8% among students in special vocational colleges (9% of boys, 7% of girls)⁴⁹.

PE lessons

The principles of the national core curriculum emphasise the importance of physical activity in promoting holistic well-being as part of an active way of living. General upper secondary students consider the objectives of promoting psychological functional capacity, such as PE lessons that are fun and have a good atmosphere, to be the most important area of physical education. Students believe that social functional capacity is the second most important target area.¹³³

General upper secondary schools share two compulsory modules for physical education, and in addition, and the national core curriculum specifies three courses of specialisation studies that schools must offer students as electives. One PE module is worth two credits, which in terms of time means 38 lessons when lessons are 45 minutes long or 22.8 lessons when the length is 75 minutes. 96% of PE teachers in Finnish-speaking and 85% of teachers in Swedish-speaking general upper secondary schools are qualified¹³⁰. Based on the LIITU study, general upper secondary students mainly complete PE courses during the first semesters. Boys choose elective PE courses slightly more often than girls.¹³⁴

In the current vocational upper secondary qualifications, one of the areas in the scope of citizenship and working life competence is maintaining work ability and well-being. Physical activity has been highlighted as a separate competence target in this area. The aim is for students to use physical activity to enhance their ability to study and work and their well-being. However, there is very little compulsory physical education in vocational education. Depending on the school and field of study, there is a lot of variation in terms of the elective PE offering. 95% of PE teachers are qualified¹³¹. Nearly 60% of vocational students consider PE important, and 51% believe that PE is useful¹³⁴.

COMMUNITY AND THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Municipalities' decisions play a significant role in facilitating physical activity for children and adolescents. Among other things, municipalities traditionally organise sports and physical activity services, support civic work, provide sports venues, build sports facilities, and maintain non-motorised traffic routes and nature trails. Physical activity in municipalities can be promoted more extensively via zoning, urban planning and public transport solutions as well as by promoting daily physical activity as part of municipal services, such as education and teaching.

Municipalities' responsibility for promoting physical activity is based on the Act on the Promotion of Sports and Physical Activity¹³⁵. The Act provides municipalities with guidance on broader mutual cross-administration cooperation and the use of practices that are suitable for local conditions and needs. As a public actor, the municipality has a

% of municipalities with a physical activity plan or development programme that takes the promotion of non-discrimination and gender equality into consideration and which support the physical activity of all children and youth.



duty to increase equality and non-discrimination among residents through its service offering. The municipality is also responsible for consulting its residents in decisions concerning physical activity and for assessing the physical activity of its residents.¹³⁵ Regular consultation events have been organised for municipal residents or adapted physical activity target groups in 38% of municipalities¹³⁶.

During the 2000s, the physical activity field has expanded into work that crosses sector and organisational boundaries. The work on conditions in municipalities has progressed from special gymnasiums, swimming pools and sports halls and fields to local physical activity and recreational facilities, outdoor activity and nature as well as a community structure that supports physical activity. In addition to well-being and health promotion and social welfare and health care services, municipal sports and physical activity work is often linked to the areas of education, economic development, technical services and land use planning. Following the municipal administration reform, decision-making related to promoting physical activity is more often the task of education, well-being or leisure committees.¹³⁷ Less than half of municipalities have a cooperation body that deals with issues related to adapted physical activity across administrative boundaries¹³⁶.

THE GRADE IS BASED ON THE FOLLOWING RESULTS:

- Municipalities^{101,138}
 - 71% have a valid physical activity plan or physical activity development programme
 - 61% have proposed actions to promote equality and 32% have proposed actions to promote gender equality in the physical activity plan/development programme
 - 68% have made promoting physical activity one of the starting points in municipal general planning (master plans, component master plans)
 - 77% organise activities for children and adolescents outside sports clubs
 - 65% provide practice sessions for children and adolescents free of charge in school gymnasiums and 83% in sports grounds and ball fields
 - 68% describe the physical activity of residents in well-being reports
 - 76% monitor the physical activity of children and



adolescents regularly at least every two years and 52% by gender

- 61% have made proposals concerning physical activity among children and adolescents to the municipal management group
- 87% of personnel in the sector responsible for physical activity familiarised themselves with the municipality-specific Move! results for 2019.

In recent years, actions by municipalities to promote physical activity have developed in a positive direction. Municipal physical activity plans or development programmes have become more common, and an increasing number of municipalities describe the physical activity of residents in well-being reports. Regular monitoring of physical activity among children and adolescents and provision of physical activity facilities at no cost has become more widespread.¹³⁸

Half of municipalities estimate that the situation has improved with regard to adapted physical activity services, while half estimate that the situation has remained unchanged in recent years. However, only around half of municipalities have plans that guide adapted physical activity. The situation regarding plans is very fragmented and there is no clear picture of how their implementation is monitored in practice.¹³⁶

In recent years, actions to promote physical activity in early childhood education and during the school day, coordination of physical activity that promotes health and well-being, and cross-disciplinary work groups to address the promotion of physical activity have become more common in municipalities. The promotion of walking and cycling is more visible in municipal strategy planning: approximately one in five municipalities now has a strategy linked to this target. Physical activity continues to be a small part of municipal operations and there are significant differences in the promotion of physical activity depending on the municipality.^{139,140}

Finland has approximately 40,000 built physical activity facilities¹⁴¹, with approximately 70% owned, maintained and managed by municipalities. Natural environments also provide opportunities for wide-ranging physical activity for the whole population. During the 2010s, municipalities have increased construction, development and general planning of local physical activity facilities. Finland has nearly 800 local physical activity facilities¹⁴¹.

Since 2015, the Ministry of Education and Culture has required that the inclusion of an accessibility plan in applications for state subsidies concerning the construction of sports facilities. There is a lot of room for improvement in terms of accessibility in municipal physical activity facilities¹⁴³. A national knowledge base for describing the state of accessibility in physical activity and sports facilities does not exist. Approximately half of municipalities report that they perform accessibility surveys, but not on a systematic basis. Surveys are not performed in about one fifth of municipalities.¹⁴²

According to the health and social services reform that took effect in 2021, 21 well-being services counties will be responsible for organising public healthcare, social welfare and rescue services from 2023 onwards. In addition, the City of Helsinki will be responsible for organising these services for its residents. The municipalities will continue to handle education services, economic development tasks and planning. Municipalities will still be responsible for physical activity services in the future. Health and welfare promotion (HYTE) for residents remains a broad task of the municipality, but the well-being services county will also have tasks to the extent specified in the law. The reform will change administrative structures, because cooperation with social welfare and health care services will be organised in a new way. Physical activity counselling and the organisation of adapted physical activity will become key interfaces between the municipality and the well-being services county.



HELSINKI RELIES ON RESEARCH DATA WHEN PROMOTING PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

One of the tasks of municipalities is to create the conditions for physical activity at the local level. The City of Helsinki focuses on diverse cooperation with researchers and research institutes to promote physical activity.

Helsinki highlighted promoting physical activity as one of the key projects in its city strategy for 2017–2021. The aim was to influence attitudes, lower the threshold for getting started and increase the joy of motion for city residents of all ages. Each City of Helsinki sector planned its own measures for the programme, and these have been implemented in child health clinics, daycare centres, schools and the urban environment sector for three years.

“The physical activity programme focused on changing everyday routines. Our goal was to include physical activity in every early childhood education, school and study day. We wanted to reach each guardian with information and tips about movement, which is why we actively campaigned throughout the city council term,” says **Minna Paajanen**, Project Manager of the Physical Activity Programme.

Helsinki was selected as Finland’s most active municipality in 2019. The selection criteria emphasised the strong role of knowledge-based management in promoting physical activity. Knowledge-based management involves analysing and utilising information in decision-making.

“We cooperate actively with around 10 research projects. The researchers have helped us to reflect on the targets for physical activity, factors that prevent and enable movement, the production of monitoring data and also the key messages of our campaigns. We’ve benefited a lot from the cooperation and we’re grateful for that.”

A monitoring platform measures achievement of targets

Helsinki’s physical activity programme introduced an open monitoring platform called Liikkumisvahti, which makes the city’s concrete actions to increase movement more visible. The Liikkumisvahti tool brings together the starting points, objectives, actions and progress of the physical activity programme. Monitoring the indicators makes it possible to interpret the information about achievement of the objectives and the impact of the physical activity programme.

“The Physical Activity Programme is a large entity and we use various indicators to monitor its progress. Some of them describe the progress, quality and scope of the actions. We also use a large number of indicators to monitor the physical activity of Helsinki residents of all ages.”

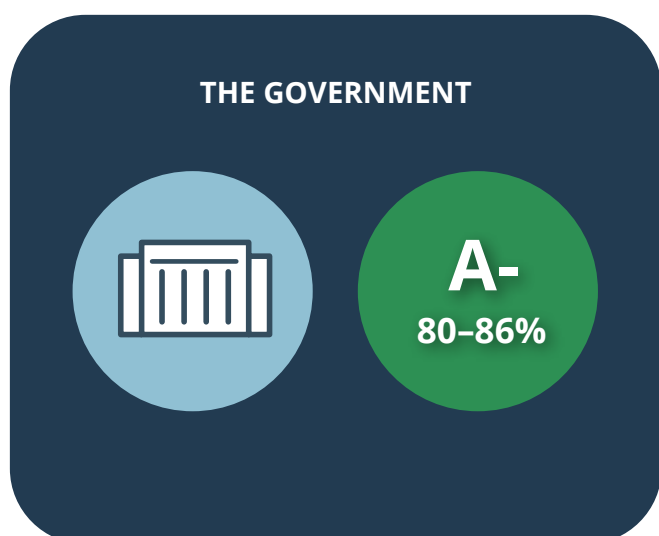
“The fragmented nature of information is a widely recognised challenge, and we wanted to emphasise the fact that anyone can examine the work carried out to promote physical activity and its progress,” says Paajanen.

10 GOVERNMENT STRATEGIES AND INVESTMENTS

According to the Act on the Promotion of Sports and Physical Activity¹³⁵, the government’s objectives include promoting opportunities for different population groups to engage in physical activity. The act also requires the government to foster the well-being and health of the population, as well as the growth and development of children and adolescents. The efforts to achieve these objectives are based on equality, non-discrimination, social inclusion, multiculturalism, healthy lifestyle, respect for the environment and sustainable development.

The government creates conditions for realising the goals set in its sports and physical activity policy by providing resources for physical activity services for all children and adolescents.

The grade of A- (80–86%) is based on the fact that in Finland physical activity for children and adolescents is a strategic priority in the sports and physical activity policy. Additionally, the state funds national programmes for promoting physical activity among children and adolescents.



The Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC) is responsible for the general management, coordination and development of the sports policy. One of the cross-administrative goals of Prime Minister Sanna Marin’s Government Programme is to increase overall physical activity in all age groups. This goal is linked to a need to involve all ministries in promoting a physically active lifestyle.

An interface with physical activity for all administrative sectors

In accordance with the government programme, a Coordination body for sport policy (LIPOKO) has been appointed to coordinate the sports policy measures of different administrative sectors. Its members include representatives from 11 ministries as well as expert and educational organisations. LIPOKO continues the work of the steering group for health-enhancing physical activity (TEHYLI). In addition to the government programme, the work is based on the report on sports policy¹⁴³ discussed in the previous parliamentary term. The report outlines sports policy objectives and measures in the 2020s. The aim of the report is to increase physical activity in all age groups, especially by integrating physical activity and mobility into people’s everyday lives.

The action plan of the Coordination body for sport policy¹⁴⁴ lists 126 different administrative sector actions to promote physical activity and mobility. Each sector has an interface with promoting everyday physical activity and exercise, and some also with competitive and high-performance sports. Promoting physical activity supports the goals of each administrative branch.

The links that administration branches in different ministries have to promoting physical activity and movement are described in the ministries’ scorecards¹⁴⁵. Physical activity among the population is important for the national economy, as well as the work and functional capacity, health, well-being and learning of the population. Physical activity is also important in terms of social skills, sense of community, integration, preventing exclusion, military performance and combating climate change.

The national promotion programmes for physical activity and physical exercise (On the Move programmes) promote a physically active lifestyle for different age and demographic groups. LIPOKO handles work for the On the Move programmes to the extent that their promotion requires

inter-ministerial coordination and cooperation. The entity comprises Families on the Move, Joy in Motion, Schools on the Move, Students on the Move, Adults on the Move, and On the Move in Perpetuity programmes. The programmes are funded by the Ministry of Education and Culture. By increasing movement and reducing sitting, the goal of the programmes for children and adolescents is to create a more active operational culture in different communities to support the growth, development and learning of children and adolescents.

The government as a funder of physical activity

In 2019, the state appropriations for enhancing physical activity and sport totalled 159.3 million euros. Of this sum, 5.3 million was covered by budget resources, with 3.8 million euros of this was allocated to the Students on the Move programme.¹⁴⁶ In 2020 and 2021, one-off supplementary allocations were granted in order to deal with the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. In the future, the size of the budget for physical activity and sports will depend on the extent to which declining revenue from gambling will be compensated by budget resources.

The government has numerous subsidies that target physical activity for children and adolescents. In 2021, these included

- Development subsidy for club activities 4.5 M€
- Support for a physically active lifestyle nationally 1.62 M€ and locally 3.0 M€, which is used to fund, for example Joy in Motion projects
- Students on the Move subsidies (2021–2022) 1 M€
- Special subsidy to municipalities for piloting the Finnish Model for Leisure Activities 6.4 M€ and 17.04 M€ for implementation, which will be used to fund physical activity and other hobby activities
- COVID-19 subsidy for physical activity and sports clubs, appr. 9.7 M€ and a special subsidy for supporting major physical activity and sports events 3.5 M€.

With regard to adapted physical activity, the government follows the so-called dual strategy, which means implementing adapted physical activity and sports for people with disabilities as separate activities and mainstreaming equality and non-discrimination work both in the administration and in assisting organisations¹⁴⁷. State subsidies can be divided directly into targeted, inclusive and indirect grants for adapted physical activity and sports for athletes with disabilities. In 2019, these included

- Direct subsidies targeting adapted physical activity appr. 5.8 M€
- Projects promoting equality in physical activity 1.5 M€
- Projects targeting adapted physical activity in the development subsidy for club activities 0.49 M€
- Promotion of physical activity for immigrants 0.87 M€.

In terms of non-discrimination, construction and renovation grants allocated to municipalities are effective government steering, because they guarantee that accessibility is taken into account¹⁴⁸.

The government determining sport policy

Children's physical activity has been a priority of the government's sports policy for a long time. National recommendations have been issued for different age and population groups in order to increase physical activity. The recommendations for physical activity in early childhood for children under the age of 8⁴ were published in 2016 and the recommendation on physical activity for children and adolescents aged 7 to 17 years⁶ in 2021. The recommendations are used to communicate how much and how often physical activity is recommended, how effective it is and the quality of physical activity. The recommendations are also used to monitor the population's health and physical activity behaviour and whether the measures to promote physical activity are successful.

The role of physical activity in supporting the growth, development and learning of children and adolescents of different ages has been taken into consideration in documents that guide early childhood education and teaching^{96,97,121,124,149}. The Move! physical functional capacity monitoring system has been implemented in Finnish schools as part of the national core curriculum for basic education⁶⁸. In 2020, a national steering group for the Move! system was established and, at the same time, systematic development work was launched to promote utilisation of the system at the pupil, school, municipality, and national level.

The Government resolution on promoting well-being, health and safety 2030 outlines the actions that will be taken in an effort to reduce inequalities in well-being and health by 2030. The resolution has four priority areas: 1) Opportunity for all to get involved, 2) Good everyday environments, 3) Measures and services promoting well-being and health, and 4) Decision-making generates effectiveness.¹⁵⁰ The resolution guarantees that children and adolescents have an equal opportunity to participate in hobbies. The Finnish Model for Leisure Activities (www.harrastamisensuomenmalli.fi) is a Ministry of Education and Culture project that aims to enable every child and young person to have a leisure activity in connection with the school day that they enjoy and is free of charge. The Finnish model combines consultation of children and adolescents on leisure activities, coordination of existing good procedures and practices, and cooperation between schools and actors in leisure activities.



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Finland's Report Card 2022 – Physical Activity for Children and Youth

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DATA UTILISED IN THE FINLAND'S REPORT CARD 2022

Research (conducted by)	Research year	Method	Participants	Number of respondents or participants (N)	Gender (boys/ girls/other or no information, %)
AMEO 2020 (LIKES)	2020	Survey	Vocational special education students	1,257	58/40/2
			Students aged 15–20	715 (all 6 vocational special education colleges in Finland)	60/38/2
DAGIS (Folkhälsan)	2014–2018	Accelometer measurement	Children aged 3–6	773	52/48
FinChildren (THL)	2018	Survey	Parents of children aged 4	8,720	50/50
Harrastus- ja järjestötoiminnan merkitys nuorten elämässä (Youth Work Centre of Expertise Kentauri)	2021	Survey	Adolescents aged 14–19	14,939 (lower secondary school students 11,486, upper secondary school students 2,168, vocational school students 1,285)	41/52/7
Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) (University of Jyväskylä)	2018	Survey	Pupils aged 11, 13 and 15	3,136	49/51
International Ipreschooler Surveillance Study among Asians and otherRs (University of Jyväskylä)	2019	Survey	Guardians of children aged 2–6	2,512	52/48/0,1
JOYPAM – Research and development project on monitoring the joy of motion, physical activity and motor skills of young children. (LIKES, University of Jyväskylä)	2020–21	Accelometer measurement	Children aged 4–6	780 (in 5 municipalities)	47/53
		Survey	Guardians of children aged 4–6 Early childhood educators	723 756	
LIITU study (University of Jyväskylä and UKK Institute)	2018	Survey Accelometer measurement	Pupils aged 7, 9, 11, 13 and 15	7,132 2,555	44/56
	Fall 2020	Survey	Students aged 16–20	Upper secondary school students 4,952, Vocational school students 375	42/57/0,8
		Accelometer measurement	Upper secondary school students	936	27/73
Spring 2020	Survey Accelometer measurement	Students aged 16–20 Pupils, grades 1, 3, 5, 7, 9	3,328 255		
Move! measurements (Finnish National Agency for Education, Ministry of Education and Culture, National Sports Council)	2021	Physical functional capacity measurements	Pupils, grade 5 Pupils, grade 8	55,759 51,307 (coverage: grade 5: 88,5%, grade 8: 83,4%)	51/49 51/49
Physical activity, functional capacity and well-being of students (LIKES)	2017–18	Survey	Upper secondary school students Vocational school students	352 536	47/53 54/46
		Accelometer measurement	Upper secondary school students	178	47/53
Physical activity in municipal operations – TEA 2020 (THL)	Spring 2020	Data collection	Persons responsible for physical activity promotion in municipalities	286 (97% of municipalities in continental Finland)	
Physical activity survey (Finnish Paralympic Committee)	2020	Survey	Children and youth with a disability aged 18 and below	210	56/41/2

Research (conducted by)	Research year	Method	Participants	Number of respondents or participants (N)	Gender (boys/ girls/other or no information, %)
Promotion of wellbeing and health in basic education – TEA 2019 (THL)	Fall 2019	Data collection	Headmasters of vocational schools in collaboration with a student welfare group	2,057 (91% of comprehensive schools)	
Promotion of well-being and health in upper secondary schools – TEA 2020 (THL)	Fall 2020	Data collection	Headmasters of comprehensive schools in collaboration with a student welfare group	364 (95% of upper secondary schools)	
Promotion of well-being and health in basic vocational education – TEA 2020 (THL)	Fall 2020	Data collection	Headmasters of upper secondary schools in collaboration with a student welfare group	336 (96% of the units that organise basic vocational education)	
School Health Promotion study (THL)	Spring 2021	Survey	Pupils, grades 4–5	104,082 (coverage 83%)	49/50/1*
			Pupils, grades 8–9	91,560 (coverage 75%)	49/51/0,3*
			Upper secondary school students, grades 1–2	47,383 (estimate of coverage 71%) (also including those over 18)	40/60 /0,2*
			Vocational school students, grades 1–2	21,853 (estimate of coverage 32%) (also including those over 18)	58/42/0,3*
	2017	Survey	Guardians of pupils, grades 4–5	33,726	48/52
	2019	Survey	Guardians of pupils, grades 4–5	34,569	49/51
Sports clubs survey (Finnish Paralympic Committee and Finnish Society of Sport Sciences)	2020	Survey	Sports club or association	314 clubs 334 respondents	
Staff surveys, On the Move programmes (LIKES)	Spring 2020	Survey	Early childhood education staff	2,008	
	Fall 2020	Survey	Basic education staff	1,109	
	Fall 2020	Survey	Upper secondary education staff	1,287 (general upper secondary school 391, vocational school 866)	
A study of children's and young people's leisure activities in 2018 (The Finnish Youth Research Society & Network)	2018	Hybrid data collection Survey (separate sample)	Children and young people aged 6–29	1,447	63/38/1
			Adolescents aged 7–17 with a disability (Responded either by themselves or with the help of their guardian or assistant)	162	62/37/1
TUTKA (University of Jyväskylä)	2018	Survey	Children and adolescents aged 7–18, studying in special education	889 (27 basic education schools, 31 special education schools)	68/31/1

*Biologically defined sex

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Finland's Report Card 2022 on Physical Activity for Children and Youth is a research-based summary report regarding physical activity among Finnish children and adolescents and its promotion in various contexts. In the Report Card, promotion of physical activity is examined and presented through 10 indicators. Finland's Report Card 2022 was prepared by five research institutions. The LIKES Research Centre for Physical Activity and Health coordinated the compilation process, which was funded by the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture.

The Report Card work is part of the international Active Healthy Kids Global Alliance. The Global Matrix 4.0 comparison of countries will be published in October 2022. Information about the comparison of all countries and results is available at:
www.activehealthykids.org

Finland's Report Card 2022 is available in PDF format in Finnish and English at:
www.likes.fi/tuloskortti.



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