

Poorer children get far less outdoor exercise, study finds

Lauren Gilmour

Children's physical health has seen little improvement over the past decade, prompting fears that the pandemic has exacerbated socio-economic inequalities such as high levels of obesity, experts have found.

A report commissioned by the Active Healthy Kids Global Alliance compared 57 countries on six continents and graded them on trends in child and adolescent physical activity. Scotland achieved a B for community and environment, and sport and physical activity but F for recreational screen time.

Researchers found that while policies on activity and diet are high quality, they are not fully implemented and there is no policy on screen time. They recommend that physical activity should be promoted early in life and often, and say that ways to incorporate physical activity through play and limited screen time should be promoted.

The study showed disparities between the most and least deprived areas of Scotland. Just over half of children (53 per cent) in the most deprived areas were found not to be engaging in sport, compared with 18 per cent in the least deprived.

Just 4 per cent in the most deprived areas had been on outdoor excursions

in the previous 12 months. This compared with 19 per cent in the least deprived areas.

Experts have also recommended that more information should be collected on children under the age of five.

The University of Strathclyde led on the study, with the universities of Aberdeen, Glasgow, Stirling and Robert Gordon also involved.

Professor John Reilly, of Strathclyde's school of psychological sciences and health, said: "The Global Matrix 4.0 represents the largest compilation of information to date on levels of physical activity of children and adolescents, and the data show a failing grade across the world. Scotland is no exception, and things did not improve in the decade prior to Covid-19."

Farid Bardid, a lecturer in Strathclyde's school of education, said: "This is particularly concerning as these low levels of physical activity and high levels of screen time may have worsened after the Covid-19 pandemic."

The study concludes: "There is a clear need for greater monitoring of physical activity and health, and improved policy implementation."

The findings for Scotland are published in the Journal of Exercise Science & Fitness.



Covid helping turn Scots kids into couch potatoes

By **Lauren Gilmour**

COVID has hampered efforts to get children in Scotland to take more exercise, a report suggests.

Campaigners compared 57 countries across six continents and gave them grades for levels of physical activity among their children and adolescents.

Scotland managed B grades for community and environment and sport and physical activity, but a worrying F for the length of time children here spend staring at screens instead of playing outside.

And researchers found worrying gaps in physical activity between the best-off and worst-off parts of Scotland, as well as high levels of obesity as early as Primary One.

Dr Farid Bardid, a lecturer at Strathclyde's School of Education, was concerned by some of the report's findings.

And he warned: "These low levels of physical activity and high levels of screen time may

have worsened following the Covid-19 pandemic."

The study by the Active Healthy Kids Global Alliance found that while Scotland had high-quality policies on activity and diet, they were not always fully implemented. It also noted there

was no specific policy on screen time for children.

It found that just over half of children in the most deprived areas were not taking part in sport, compared with only 18 per cent in the least deprived.

And while 19 per cent of kids in the

richest areas had been on outdoor excursions in the past 12 months, the figure for the poorest areas was only four per cent.

The report recommended that authorities should promote physical activity through active play early in life, as well as advising less screen time.



Too much screen time for kids



SOCIETY

Obesity fears as low income impacts health

By Lauren Gilmour

Children's physical health has seen little improvement over the past decade, prompting fears that the Covid pandemic has exacerbated problems such as obesity affecting those from low-income backgrounds, experts have found.

A report commissioned by the Active Healthy Kids Global Alliance compared 57 countries from six continents, looking at trends in child and adolescent physical activity and produced a grading matrix.

Scotland achieved B grades for community and environment and sport and physical activity, but an F for recreational screen time.

It found that children in Scotland face socio-economic inequalities in low physical activity, high levels of screen time and high levels of obesity as early as primary one.

The study concludes: "There is a clear need for greater monitoring of physical activity and health."

The findings of the study by researchers at Strathclyde, Aberdeen, Glasgow, Stirling and Robert Gordon universities were published in the *Journal of Exercise Science & Fitness*.



Kids' physical activity hit by too much screen time

by STEPHEN DEAL

EXPERTS looking at children's physical activity levels have highlighted the amount of time youngsters in Scotland spend staring at screens.

They fear the Covid pandemic may have exacerbated already relatively low levels of physical activity among Scots youngsters, as well as increased screen time.

Their report was commissioned by the Active Healthy Kids Global Alliance and it was led in Scotland by a team at Strathclyde University.

The global matrix 4.0 study compared activity levels among children and adolescents in 57 countries from six continents. They gave Scotland a 'B'



Grade: Child uses a phone SHUTTERSTOCK
grade for community and environment, and sport and physical activity - but an 'F' for recreational screen time.

The study gives the world an overall 'D' grade, saying this represented success with fewer than half of children.

The researchers said kids in Scotland face socio-economic inequalities in low levels of physical activity, high levels of screen time and high levels of obesity as early as primary one.

The study, published in the Journal of Exercise Science & Fitness yesterday, found that while policies on activity and diet are of a high quality in Scotland, they are not always fully implemented.

It also highlighted a lack of specific policy on screen time.

The study also found just over half of children (53 per cent) in the most deprived areas of Scotland were not engaging in sport, compared with just 18 per cent in the least deprived.

Prof John Reilly, of Strathclyde

University, said: 'The global matrix 4.0 represents the largest compilation of information on physical activity of children and adolescents, and the data shows a failing grade across the world. Scotland is no exception.'

His colleague, Dr Farid Bardid, said: 'This is particularly concerning as these low levels of activity and high levels of screen time may have worsened following the Covid-19 pandemic.'

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Child obesity may have risen during pandemic

LAUREN GILMOUR

Children's physical health has seen little improvement over the last decade, prompting fears the Covid pandemic has worsened existing socio-economic inequalities like high levels of obesity, experts have found.

A report commissioned by the Active Healthy Kids Global Alliance (AHKGA) compared 57 countries from six continents, looking at trends in child and adolescent physical activity and produced a grading matrix.

This saw Scotland achieve a B- grade for community and environment, and sport and physical activity but F for recreational screen time.

And children in Scotland face socio-economic inequalities in low physical activity, high levels of screen time and high levels of obesity as early as primary one, experts found.

Research showed that while policies on activity and diet are of a high quality, they are not always fully implemented and there is no specific policy on screen time.

The report recommends that physical activity should be promoted early and often in life and ways to incorporate physical

activity through active play and limited screen time should be promoted.

Just over half of children (53%) in the most deprived areas were found not to be engaging in sport, compared with 18% in the least deprived, while just 4% in the most deprived areas, compared with 19% in the least deprived, had been on outdoor excursions in the previous 12 months.

Half in the most deprived areas perceived their communities as safe, compared with 72% in those that were least deprived.

Experts have also recommended that more information should be collected on children under the age of five.

Strathclyde University led on the study, with the universities of Aberdeen, Glasgow, Stirling and Robert Gordon also involved.

While the full extent of the pandemic on the physical health and activity of children is not yet clear, there are concerning signs of increased screen time and childhood obesity, experts say.

Professor John Reilly, of Strathclyde's School of Psychological Sciences & Health, said: "The Global Matrix 4.0 represents the largest compilation of information to date on

levels of physical activity of children and adolescents, and the data shows a failing grade across the world.

"Scotland is no exception, and things did not improve in the decade prior to Covid-19."

Dr Farid Bardid, a lecturer in Strathclyde's School of Education, said: "This is particularly concerning as these low levels of physical activity and high levels of screen time may have worsened following the Covid-19 pandemic."

The study concludes: "Despite a decade of favourable policy, physical activity and health of children and youth has not improved, and marked socio-economic inequalities persist in Scotland."

"There is a clear need for greater monitoring of physical activity and health, and improved policy implementation and evaluation, particularly as many indicators and related inequalities may have worsened following the Covid-19 pandemic."

The findings for Scotland are published in the Journal of Exercise Science & Fitness.



Little improvement in children's health

Fears Covid has halted progress

CHILDREN'S physical health has seen little improvement over the last decade, prompting fears the pandemic has exacerbated existing socio-economic inequalities such as high levels of obesity, experts have found.

A report commissioned by the Active Healthy Kids Global Alliance (AHKGA) compared 57 countries from six continents, looking at trends in child and adolescent physical activity and produced a grading matrix.

This saw Scotland achieve a B-grade for community and environment, and sport and physical activity, and an F for recreational screen time.

Children in Scotland face socio-economic inequalities in low physical activity, high levels of screen time and high levels of obesity as early as primary one, experts found.

Research found while policies on activity and diet are of a high quality, they are not always fully

implemented, and there is a lack of specific policy on screen time.

The report recommends that ways to incorporate physical activity through active play and limiting screen time should be promoted.

Just more than half of children (53%) in the most deprived areas were found not to be engaging in sport, compared with 18% in the least deprived. Just 4% in the most deprived areas, against 19% in the least deprived, had been on outdoor excursions in the previous 12 months. And half of those living in the most deprived areas perceived their communities as safe, compared with 72% in the least deprived.

The University of Strathclyde has led on the study, with the universities of Aberdeen, Glasgow, Stirling and Robert Gordon also involved.

While the full impact of the pandemic on the physical health and activity levels of children is not yet clear, there are concerning signs of

increased screen time and childhood obesity, experts said.

Professor John Reilly, of Strathclyde's School of Psychological Sciences & Health, said: "The Global Matrix 4.0 represents the largest compilation of information to date on levels of physical activity of children and adolescents, and the data show a failing grade across the world. Scotland is no exception, and things did not improve in the decade prior to Covid-19."

The study concludes: "Despite a decade of favourable policy, physical activity and health of children and youth has not improved, and marked socioeconomic inequalities persist in Scotland."

"There is a clear need for greater monitoring of physical activity and health, and improved policy implementation and evaluation, particularly as many indicators and related inequalities may have worsened following the Covid-19 pandemic."



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