



# ACTIVE HEALTHY KIDS - DENMARK

SHORT FORM

— 2022 | GLOBAL MATRIX 4.0 —



## SUMMARY OF ASSESSMENT

A total of 27–33% of Danish children and young people are sufficiently active (D). 2/3 spend more than two hours per day in front of a screen during their free time (D+). The available data on *physical fitness* is inadequate, but show that Danish children, on average, have a good physical fitness (B-).

The results also show that *organised leisure sports* are still an important setting for children and young people's participation in physical activity (A).

Data on unorganised physical activity in the form of *active play* and time spent actively outdoors is more scarce, but receives the assessment B-.

Finally, 82% state that they actively transport themselves to and from school at least twice a week, while approx. 60% usually walk or cycle (A-).

The assessment of these indicators shows that the opportunities in Denmark, generally, are good compared to other countries.

Several parents are physically active. Around 60% of children are encouraged to play sports and exercise by their parents (C+).

A school reform stipulated that all children should be physical active 45 min. in average per day. However, evaluations show that an active school day is not a certainty for all children (B+)

Physical activity for children and young people generally receives a great deal of local and national political attention and is included in many policies and in the design of the physical surroundings. The two indicators in this area are both graded as B+.

Table 1:  
Summary of assessment

	Denmark 2017	Denmark 2019	Denmark 2022
<b>PHYSICAL ACTIVITY</b>	<b>D+</b>	<b>D-</b>	<b>D</b>
<b>SEDENTARY TIME</b>	<b>U</b>	<b>D+</b>	<b>D+</b>
<b>PHYSICAL FITNESS</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>U</b>	<b>B-</b>
<b>ORGANISED LEISURE SPORTS</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>A-</b>	<b>A</b>
<b>ACTIVE PLAY</b>	<b>U</b>	<b>U</b>	<b>B-</b>
<b>ACTIVE TRANSPORT</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>B+</b>	<b>A-</b>
<b>FAMILY &amp; FRIENDS</b>	<b>U</b>	<b>U</b>	<b>C+</b>
<b>SCHOOL</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>A-</b>	<b>B+</b>
<b>ENVIRONMENT &amp; LOCAL COMMUNITY</b>	<b>B+</b>	<b>B+</b>	<b>B+</b>
<b>POLITICS &amp; LEGISLATION</b>	<b>A-</b>	<b>A-</b>	<b>B+</b>

# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

## 1) Sports clubs for the oldest children and development of alternative organized physical activity

There are valid reasons for ensuring good conditions for sports clubs in all parts of the country and at the same time directing attention to the conditions for other forms of organised physical activity. It could be private and commercial centres, after-school programmes and sport and exercise at educational institutions, which are increasingly becoming important settings for children and young people's physical activity. At the same time, there is a need for more knowledge about initiatives that can prevent children and especially young people in sports clubs from dropping out.

## 2) Physical activity at school

There is a need for a discussion of how schools can promote physical activity. Fundamentally, strengthening the school's physical activity culture should be prioritised, which also involves competence development of current and future teachers to integrate physical activity in teaching activities and in the school day. In this respect, the teacher education should contain mandatory modules about the integration of physical activity in teaching and learning. New ways should be developed to ensure that the oldest students take part in an active school day that contributes to their health and motivation for an active life.

## 3) Culture and environment for active play and outdoor activities

There are good reasons to focus on active play and unorganised physical activity – regardless of whether this is part of day care, school or after-school care, or whether it takes place in the children's leisure time. In particular, attention should be paid to how opportunities for active play are promoted in the transition to school age, including the conditions for outdoor activities in school and after school programmes. There is a need to focus on the older children's continued engagement in self-organised physical activity, for which the schools' physical environment and culture should provide inspiration and opportunities. Besides the school setting, active play could also be promoted

through providing more opportunities for unorganised use of sports facilities, and by designing parks, nature areas and playgrounds for all ages. At the same time, there is a need for more knowledge about how and why children and young people use their local areas for physical activity.

## 4) Active transport

To increase the proportion of children who use active transport on a daily basis, walking and cycling should be an integral part of the teaching activities for school-entry children (classes 0–3) in collaboration with the parents at all schools. Cycling and walking should be the preferred forms of transport to, from and in school. This should be supported by the prioritisation of safe school routes, campaigns and ongoing school-home cooperation with a focus on children's transport to and from school. There is also a need for more knowledge about promotion of active transport for young people to i.e. secondary education programmes and high schools.

## 5) Focus on the physical fitness

Children's physical activity is important for their physical fitness. Some children are not sufficiently physically active to achieve positive effects related to their physical fitness, which has an impact on their health development. There should be a greater focus on physical activities which have an effect on i.e. fitness, strength and motor skills. At the same time, there is a need for the continuous representative monitoring regarding children's physical condition.

## 6) The implementation of political initiatives

Physical activity for children and young people is included in several policies and initiatives. However, some of the political intentions never reach the children and young people concerned, or are without an effect on the problem. There is therefore a need for solutions that are based on evidence and involvement of children and young people. At the same time, there is a need for deeper insight into how political initiatives can be successfully implemented in public, private and voluntary organisations.

# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MONITORING

## 1. Youngest children

There is a lack of national studies on physical activity and time spent on sedentary activities, including screen time among the youngest children (5–10 years).

## 2. Physical fitness

There is a lack of representative studies of the physical fitness of children and young people in Denmark.

## 3. Implementation

There is a need for more detailed knowledge about how political initiatives are established and subsequently implemented in the local communities.

## 4. National strategy

Several large Danish studies already exist that monitors the physical activity and health of children and young people over time. However, additional resources should be invested in a comprehensive national strategy for collaboration, coordination, development and implementation of the monitoring of children's and young people's physical activity and health.

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**Active Healthy Kids – Denmark 2022** has been conducted by a network with representatives from a total of ten organisations with expertise in physical activity for children and young people.

The members of the network group represent research and educational institutions as well as national sports organisations. The Danish Health Authority and the sports association, DGI, have participated as observers.



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