



Older But Not Wiser Canada's Future At Risk

Canada's Report Card on Physical Activity for Children & Youth – 2007

Canada's Overall Grade 2007: D

The 2007 Canada's Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth is the third annual overview of physical activity levels of Canada's young people conducted by Active Healthy Kids Canada.

For the third straight year, Canada has received a failing grade (D), indicating that overall progress on improving physical activity among children and youth has stalled. Three consecutive years of poor grades is disappointing; however, *some* progress has been made and there are opportunities for further improvement in several areas.

PROGRESS EXAMPLES IN RESPONSE TO THE 2006 RECOMMENDATIONS

The federal government is stepping up to the first recommendation of **increasing public awareness for parents** by announcing funding for a new ParticipACTION that has identified children and youth as a key target. As well, a report from the Standing Committee on Health recommended “a comprehensive public awareness campaign on healthy weights for children that promotes quality physical activity,” and the revised *Canada's Food Guide* makes reference to the need for increased physical activity. Alberta and Ontario have addressed the second recommendation for **increasing school-based physical activity** by introducing Daily Physical Activity policies, while Manitoba announced that health and physical education will be part of the mandatory curricula in Grades 11 and 12. In general, mandatory Daily Physical Activity in elementary schools is increasing, but secondary schools are lagging behind. Newly available data indicate we still have work to do in meeting the third recommendation of **reducing screen time**, as Canadian children and youth report spending twice as much time in front of a TV or computer screen as they do engaged in physical activity.

Awareness and support to improve physical activity levels among children and youth has been growing; however, the 2007 grade assignments for many indicators demonstrate a need for continued attention. Increasingly accurate data and refined analyses reveal definite trends, and confirm the need to build upon the good work that is underway to address physical inactivity and the related health and development issues among children and youth.

REPORT CARD DEVELOPMENT AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The grade assignments are based on the analyses of newly available data from various sources, including the 2005/2006 *Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children Survey* (HBSC) and trends over time in relation to the 2001/2002 HBSC. In addition, the analyses looked at findings from the 2006/2007 *Tell Them From Me Survey* (TTFM), the Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute's 2005 *Physical Activity Monitor* (PAM), the 2005 *Survey of Canadian Schools*, and the *Canadian Physical Activity Levels Among Youth Study* (CAN PLAY). Where appropriate, the most recent data from the Statistics Canada *Canadian Community Health Survey* (CCHS) and the *National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth* (NLSCY) were also referenced.

For detailed information regarding primary data sources, Report Card methodology, and the Report Card development process please refer to the detailed version of the 2007 Report Card at www.activehealthykids.ca

Physical Activity Levels**Grade: F**

(2006 Grade D)

91% of Canadian children and youth are still not meeting the guidelines set forth in *Canada's Physical Activity Guides for Children and Youth*, which recommend 90 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity per day (the equivalent of 16,500 steps). Generally, boys are more physically active than girls, and overall levels of physical activity decline as children get older.

Screen Time**Grade: D-**

(2006 Grade D-)

Canadian children aged 10 to 16 are spending 6 hours per day in front of a screen. Sedentary screen time behavior has been associated with increased body mass index and a decreased level of physical activity. Findings also indicate that increased screen time can pose other developmental risk factors for anxiety, depression, low sense of belonging and low self-esteem.

Sport Participation**Grade: C**

(2006 Grade C-)

Canadian children aged 10 to 13 report high levels of sport participation, with nearly 80% who participate in structured, competitive sport. This participation reflects a relative equitable representation of boys and girls. However, at ages 14-17, participation levels decline by approximately 15%.

HEALTH

Overweight and Obesity**Grade: F**

(2006 Grade F)

The number of obese children and youth has increased by 35.7% from 2003 to 2006. Rates among Aboriginal children are of even greater concern, with 55% of First Nations children on reserves and 41% of Aboriginal children living off reserve either overweight or obese.

Overall Physical Well-Being and Psychosocial Development**Grade: C-**

(2006 Grade C)

Physical activity has been shown to be related to improved concentration and memory as well as academic performance. Both boys and girls with higher physical activity levels are less likely to report somatic and psychosocial health issues such as feeling "low," irritable or nervous, or having difficulty sleeping.

FAMILY

Family Perceptions and Roles Regarding Physical Activity**Grade: D**

(2006 Grade D)

Nearly all parents report that their children are very physically active, yet in reality fewer than half of Canadian children and youth are active enough to ensure healthy growth and development. Findings indicate that parents who are physically active are more likely to financially support physical activity and volunteer their time to support their child's sport or physical activity event (within or outside of school). However, fewer than half of parents volunteer their time in this manner, and there has been a small decline in volunteer support from 2000 to 2005.

Physical Activity Programming at School**Grade: C**

(2006 Grade INC)

Almost all elementary and middle school students in Canada participate in at least one physical education class per week, with an average of three classes of physical education per week. In contrast, a significantly lower percentage of secondary school students take at least one physical education class per week, with an even greater decline among female students.

Social Support for Physical Activity at School**Grade: B-***(New)*

Two-thirds of Canadian schools report that they have policies or programs that encourage teachers, parents and students to be involved in organizing physical activity events, services and facilities. However, only half report hosting social events to publicly recognize students who participate in physical activity or sport.

Training of School Personnel**Grade: C-***(New)*

24% of schools provide professional development on physical activity promotion to all staff, and 26% provide it only to physical education teachers.

Community Facilities and Programs: Access and Use**Grade: C**

(2006 Grade C)

92% of parents report that public facilities and programs are available; however, only 60% indicate that these meet their children's physical activity needs either well or very well. Further, only one-quarter of parents indicate that they use these facilities and programs often or very often. Parents of teen girls indicate the girls use them rarely or never.

Community Parks and Outdoor Spaces: Access and Use**Grade: C+**

(2006 Grade B-)

95% of Canadians report that parks and outdoor spaces that are conducive to children's physical activity are available locally, however only 57% indicate that these spaces meet their needs well or very well, and only 34% use them often or very often. Parents indicate that teens report using these facilities rarely or not at all.

POLICY AND INVESTMENTS

Progress on Government Strategies and Investments**Grade: C**

(2006 Grade C-)

There has been a visible increase in the amount of activity and profile that federal, provincial, territorial and municipal governments have given to this issue; however ongoing monitoring is required to ensure these forward movements continue.

Sector Investments in Research, Industry, Foundations**Grade: INC***(New)*

As awareness and concern surrounding physical inactivity among children and youth grows, various sectors (not-for-profit, philanthropic, corporate) have begun to identify where they can contribute. This indicator has been identified to monitor and track investment, activity and cross-sectoral collaboration in the future.

Moving Forward: Key Recommendations to Improve the Grade

With a failing grade (D) three years in a row, the Report Card shows that a great deal of work still needs to be done to ensure we effectively enhance, leverage and evaluate what is happening in homes, schools and communities — on the ground and in the offices of decision-makers in government, industry and those with philanthropic interests to support this issue.

This year's recommendations build on those from the previous year, and focus on the following specific areas:

Engage our Youth.

Nearly every indicator in this year's report card sends a clear message that it is more critical than ever to engage youth to develop strategies that provide them with autonomy and opportunities to direct and design the ways in which physical activity can be motivating, socially stimulating and enjoyable.

Transform the After School Hours from Screen Time to Active Time.

Recent attention has been focused on the fact that after-school physical activity options are limited, and children are seeking meaningful, enjoyable activities. We need to continue to support kids in replacing sedentary time with physical activity time. Fostering effective partnerships between schools, community agencies and school-aged programs will help create opportunities for structured and unstructured physical activity during the after school hours.

Better Measurement, Better Progress.

Both research objectives and results need to be more effectively communicated to reduce the gaps between perception and reality and reduce disparities in relation to physical activity participation that have been observed among parents, children and the broader community. Enhanced efforts are also required to monitor policy initiatives and gather objective measures of physical activity levels in relation to clearly understood physical activity guidelines.

These recommendations, when brought to life through the combined efforts of all sectors working together with Active Healthy Kids Canada, will produce profound, positive change for the nation's children and youth.

To access the detailed version of this Report Card containing more information about the overall grade, indicators and recommendations, please visit www.activehealthykids.ca

ACTIVE HEALTHY KIDS CANADA WOULD LIKE TO THANK THE FOLLOWING SPONSORS:



Active Healthy Kids Canada is dedicated to advocating the importance of high quality, accessible, and enjoyable physical activity experiences for children and youth. We are committed to working with partners in all sectors in a collaborative effort to increase the number and quality of physical activity opportunities for Canada's kids.

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