

Aussie kids among world's least active

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Australian children are among the least active in the world, ranking behind those in Britain and New Zealand, researchers say warning that the sports-mad nation was raising a "generation of couch potatoes".

A study released Wednesday showed that more than 80 percent of Australian children aged 5 to 17 failed to get the recommended 60 minutes of [moderate physical activity](#) a day, despite most playing a sport.

"We do rank quite highly on organised sport participation and we are a sporting nation as we like to say," Natasha Schranz, a researcher from the University of South Australia, told AFP.

"But this has clearly shown that it's not enough because we still rank

poorly for overall [physical activity](#) levels."

The study, which compared data taken from 15,000 young Australians with that from 14 other countries, found that the most active youngsters overall were in Mozambique and New Zealand followed by Mexico.

Next came Kenya, Nigeria, England, Colombia, Ghana, Finland and South Africa while Australia was grouped with Canada, Ireland and the United States just above bottom-placed Scotland.

Australia's report card, drawn from data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics and a national survey of secondary school students, found that less than 30 percent of children met Australian guidelines of no more than two hours of screen time per day.

Fellow researcher Grant Tomkinson, also from the University of South Australia, said many youngsters were spending so much time being sedentary they were likely to hurt their health, growth and development.

Trevor Shilton, from Australia's Heart Foundation, said the result was a "wake-up call".

"We're raising a generation of [couch potatoes](#)," he said. "Far too many kids are being driven to school and spend most of their time sitting when they get there.

"What we're facing is a potential future health crisis where heart disease, diabetes and obesity rates will rise," he added.

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