

Scots kids among world's least active, global health report card reveals

May 20 2014

Video game-obsessed Scots children are among the least active in the world, research involving a University of Strathclyde academic has suggested.

Out of 15 [countries](#) assessed, kids in Scotland came bottom of two [league tables](#) – one ranking physical activity, and the other screen-based leisure time, including watching TV and gaming. The findings are being unveiled in Toronto, Canada, in the first "Global Matrix" of children's physical activity, with Scotland's data provided by a Strathclyde-led expert group.

However, the report – entitled "Physical Activity of Children: A Global Matrix of Grades Comparing 15 Countries", to be published in the *"Journal of Physical Activity and Health"* – did rate Scotland highly in two other league tables. One of these rated "national policies, strategies, and investments in relation to child and adolescent physical activity", while the other ranked "having a supportive community/built environment for child and adolescent physical activity".

The Global Matrix assessed nine indicators – overall physical activity; organised sport participation; active play; active transportation; sedentary behaviours; family and peers; school; community and built environment; and government strategies and investments. Each of these indicators is assigned a grade in the Global Matrix – from the top "A" mark, down to "F".

Scotland scored an "F" in two categories – overall physical activity, and sedentary behaviour – or screen-based leisure time. Its best ratings – of "B" – came in the categories of "community and built environment" – which includes the availability of parks and playgrounds – as well as "government strategies and investments".

Professor of Physical Activity and Public Health Science, John Reilly, of Strathclyde's School of Psychological Sciences and Health, said: "The Global Matrix reveals an interesting relationship between lower physical activity and higher sedentary behaviour in countries with better infrastructure, and indeed we found this to be the case in Scotland.

"What comes out very strongly is there is great variation around the globe and no single country has found a magic formula to improve children's health. Countries tend to score well in some categories – such as in the community and built environment – but badly in other areas, such as overall physical activity, and this suggests there is great untapped potential for nations to learn from each other, in order to improve the health of children around the world.

"We hope that the publication of this first Global Matrix will encourage other nations, which aren't represented, to develop their own Active Healthy Kids Report Cards, to further our international understanding of global variations in the physical activity of children."

Fifteen countries submitted data to the Global Matrix, including Australia, Canada, Colombia, England, Finland, Ghana, Ireland, Kenya, Mexico, Mozambique, New Zealand, Nigeria, Scotland, South Africa, and the United States.

New Zealand and Mozambique reported the highest grades ("B") for "overall [physical activity](#)", while 10 countries reported low or failing grades ("D" or "F"), suggesting there is widespread evidence of a

childhood inactivity crisis. New Zealand and Australia reported the highest grades ("B" and "B-minus" respectively) for "organised sport participation", while most other countries clustered around a "C" grade, indicating that about half of children participated in sport.

Grades for "active transportation", such as walking or cycling to school, ranged from "B" in Finland, Nigeria and Mozambique, to "F" in the United States. Ghana and Kenya reported the best grades ("B") for "sedentary behaviour" but, while there was significant global variation, the majority of countries had very poor or failing marks in this category.

When it came to schools' delivery of, investment in – and policies for – physical education, scores ranged from "A-minus" in England, to "D" in South Africa. While the grades were generally high for "community and the built environment, they still ranged from "A-minus" in Australia to "F" in Mexico and Mozambique.

More information: The Global Matrix study will be live and open-access from 1500 BST on 20 May, at [journals.humankinetics.com/jpa... activity-of-children](https://journals.humankinetics.com/jpa...activity-of-children)

For information on the first Active Healthy Kids Scotland Report Card, published in October 2013, visit www.strath.ac.uk/press/newsreldline_758041_en.html

Provided by University of Strathclyde, Glasgow

Citation: Scots kids among world's least active, global health report card reveals (2014, May 20) retrieved 19 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2014-05-scots-kids-world-global-health.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.