

Physical activity encouraged more in boys than in girls

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School and family influences on physical activity may be stronger in boys than in girls in Australia, according to a study published March 9, 2016 in the open-access journal *PLOS ONE* by Rohan Telford from the University of Canberra, Australia, and colleagues.

Scientists have observed what appears to be a gender-based disparity in [physical activity](#) among youth, where [girls](#) are less active than boys. To better understand the mechanisms that underlie these observed differences, the authors of this study collected data from over 550 boys and girls from 29 schools as part of the Lifestyle of our Kids (LOOK) study in Australia. They measured a variety of factors at ages 8 and 12 including individual fitness (multi-stage run), coordination (throw and catch test) and [environmental factors](#) measured using questionnaires of an individual's perception of competence in [physical education](#), family support for physical activity, and school and extracurricular sports participation.

The authors found that school and family influences on physical activity may be stronger in boys than in girls in Australia. They found that girls were 19% less active than boys and that lower physical activity among girls was associated with weaker influences at school and at home. Girls were less physically fit compared to boys at age 8, including 18% lower cardio-respiratory fitness, 44% lower eye-hand coordination, higher percent body fat, and 9% lower perceived competence in physical education. The authors state that a variety of variables not measured in this study may also contribute to physical activity levels in children, but that the factors measured could be modified and potentially reduce the gap in physical activity between boys and girls. Based on these results, the authors suggest strategies aiming to increase physical activity should focus on a variety of areas simultaneously, including home, school, and extracurricular activities, paying particular attention to equality of support and opportunities for girls and [boys](#).

More information: Telford RM, Telford RD, Olive LS, Cochrane T, Davey R (2016) Why Are Girls Less Physically Active than Boys? Findings from the LOOK Longitudinal Study. *PLoS ONE* 11(3): e0150041. [DOI: 10.1371/journal.pone.0150041](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0150041)

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