

FINLAND'S REPORT CARD 2016



Physical Activity for Children and Youth





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COMMON GOAL: AN HOUR OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY A DAY for every child and adolescent

Finland's Report Card 2016 is a compilation of recent research results on the status and promotion of physical activity among children and adolescents. Physical activity for children and adolescents consists of several different parts throughout the day, and it is strongly connected to everyday routines, social networks and the living environment. Through the latest research results, the Report Card sheds light on the state of physical activity of children and adolescents, as well as how it can be promoted in Finland.

Everyone working with children and adolescents and influencing their lives can facilitate their physical activity. Such agents can be children's families, friends, early childhood education, schools, healthcare, sports clubs and other associations, among others. Municipalities, as well as the Finnish Parliament, make decisions that intentionally or inadvertently affect the conditions for physical activity among children and adolescents.

Studies indicate that physical activity for children and adolescents has many beneficial effects on aspects such as health and well-being, and according to the latest research, learning. Furthermore, childhood physical activity affects lifestyles and health later in life. Promoting children and adolescents' well-being with physical activity is included in the Finnish Government Programme, and the concrete goal is to engage every school-aged child and adolescent in physical activity for at least one hour a day.¹

Finland's Report Card 2016 was prepared by five research institutions. The work group (p. 31) included 20 specialists from different fields, working on research, policy or practices related to physical activity among children and adolescents. The LIKES Research Centre for Physical Activity and Health coordinated the compilation process. Finland's Report Card has been produced as part of a global alliance.



Physical activity recommendations

National guidelines in Finland include physical activity recommendations for early childhood and school-aged children as well as recommendations to reduce sedentary time among children and adolescents. Physical activity refers to all kinds of activities that increase energy consumption and generally involve movement.²

Physical activity recommendations for early childhood (2016):^{3,4}

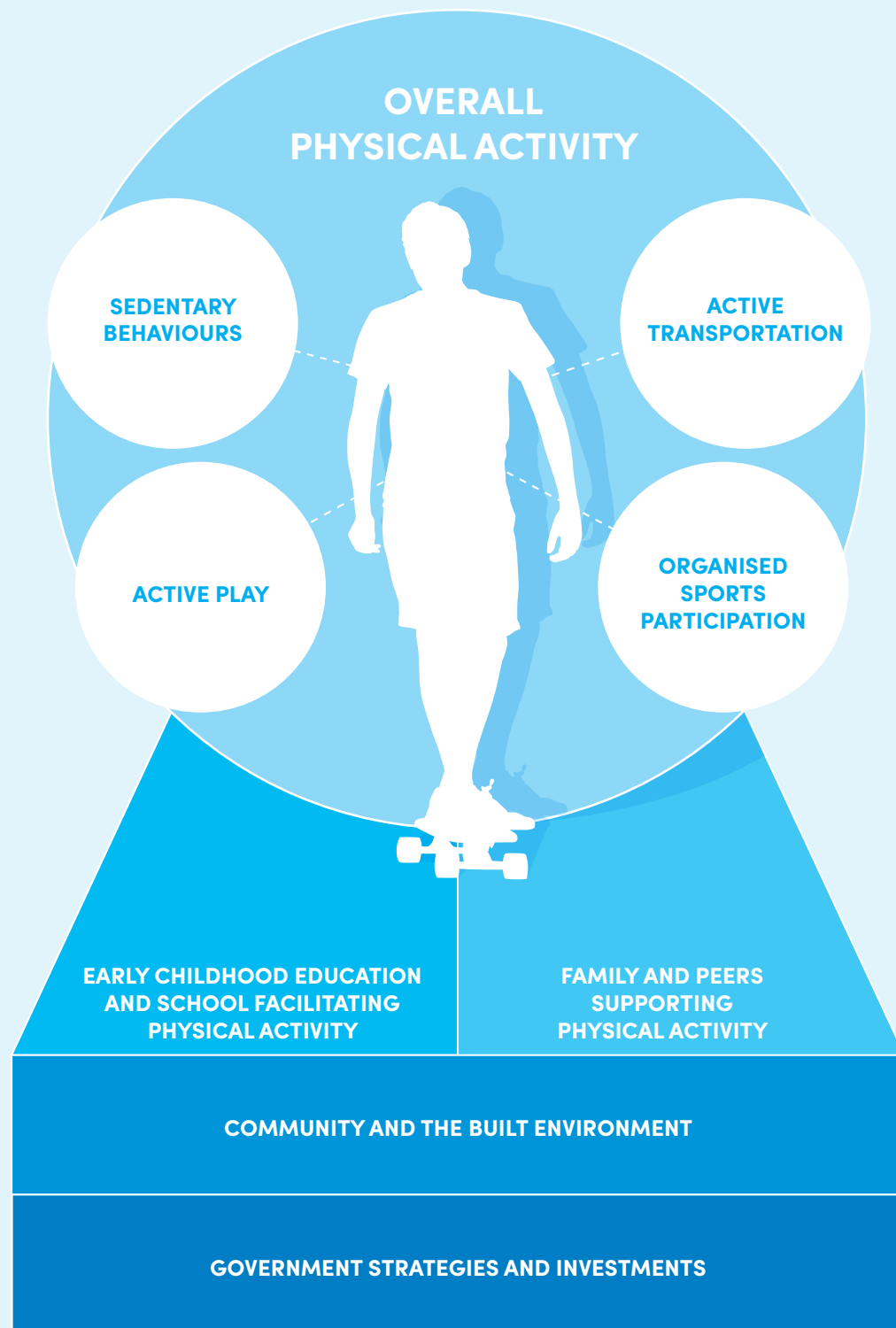
- A child needs at least three hours of physical activity with varying intensity levels every day, comprising light physical activity, brisk outdoor activities and vigorous physical activity.
- Activity is characteristic of children, which is why sedentary periods should not last longer than an hour; even shorter periods of inactivity should be broken up with something that the child finds enjoyable.
- The child should practise basic motor skills every day in a variety of ways and environments, in all seasons of the year.

Basic physical activity recommendations for school-aged children (2008):⁵

- All 7–18-year-olds should be physically active for at least one to two hours a day, in a variety of ways suitable for each age group.
- Sitting still for more than two hours straight should be avoided.
- Screen time with entertainment media should not exceed two hours a day.

National recommendations to reduce sedentary time (2015):⁶

- The purpose of the recommendations is to bring up practical ways to reduce sedentary time for individuals of different ages, as well as in daycare centres, schools, student and work communities, social and healthcare facilities and different municipal sectors.
- For children and adolescents, the recommendation is the one-hour rule – do not sit still continuously for longer than one hour, and engage in physical activity for at least one hour a day.



FINLAND'S REPORT CARD 2016

The work group evaluated the evidence and assigned grades for ten indicators related to physical activity among Finnish children and adolescents, corresponding to a five-grade scale used by the The Active Healthy Kids Global Alliance (from A = best to F = poorest). Grade 'A' means that the indicator in question is realised almost perfectly (81–100%), while 'F' means that the indicator is realised poorly (0–20%).

A	B	C	D	F
81–100%	61–80%	41–60%	21–40%	0–20%

1. Overall physical activity levels	D
2. Sedentary behaviours	D
3. Early childhood education	D
4. School	B
5. Active transportation	B
6. Active play	C
7. Family and peers	C
8. Organised sports participation	C
9. Community and the built environment	B
10. Government strategies and investments	B

In Finland, the overall physical activity levels for children and adolescents remain lower than recommended. A significant portion of their waking time is spent in a sedentary manner, typically by sitting in the classroom, at home or in a car. This is a global problem in developed countries. In Finland, national-level programmes coordinate actions to promote physical activity and decrease excessive sedentary behaviour among children and adolescents.

Children and adolescents' well-being is every adult's responsibility. Sufficient physical activity is a significant part of well-being. The least physically active children and adolescents are especially important targets for physical activity promotion because for them, increasing physical activity plays the most major role in health and well-being.

1. Overall physical activity levels

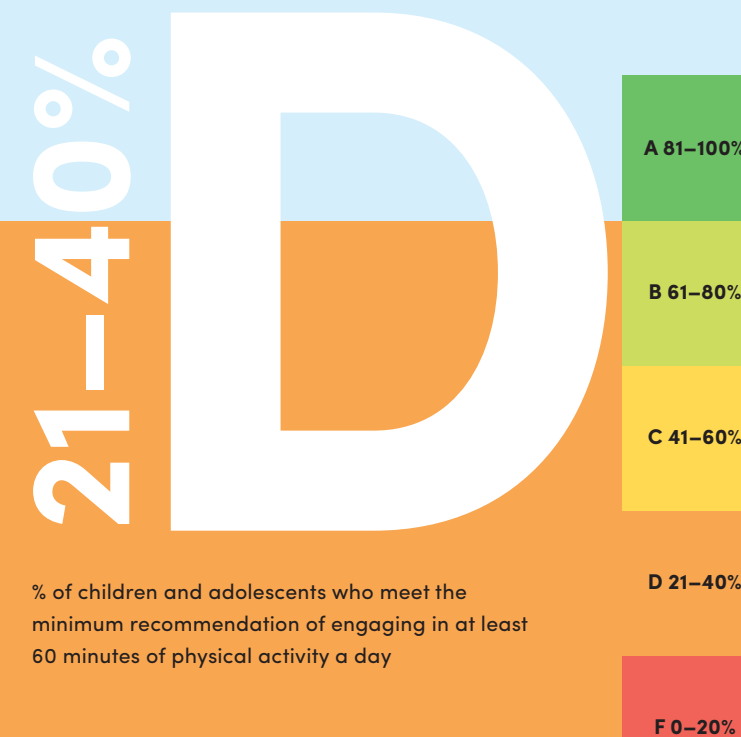
Overall physical activity includes all activities accumulated throughout the day, such as hobbies, unorganised physical activity and physical education (PE). According to physical activity recommendations, school-aged children should be physically active for at least one hour every day.



Grade 'D' (21–40%) describes the proportion of children who meet the minimum recommendation of engaging in at least 60 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity (MVPA) a day. Boys meet the recommendation more often than girls, and the proportion of children meeting the recommended physical activity levels decreases as age increases.^{7–9} Physical activity has been measured in research by surveys and objectively by accelerometers.

Based on accelerometer measurements in 2010–2015, the proportion of 3–15-year-old children engaging in at least 60 minutes of MVPA a day varies between 16% and 59%.^{9–13} The specific percentages are 29% of three-year-old children,¹⁰ 49% of children in primary school (40% of girls and 59% of boys) and 18% of adolescents in lower secondary school (16% of girls and 22% of boys).¹¹ Similar results have been observed in another study among primary school children (35%).^{12,13} School-aged children have less physical activity during weekends than during weekdays.⁹

Based on self-reports in the spring of 2016, 32% of 9–15-year-old children (28% of girls and 37% of boys) engage in at least one hour of MVPA every day.¹⁴ Similar self-reported results have been found in a study of the Finnish Schools on the Move (FSM) programme (21%),¹⁵ in a Naantali study (23%)¹² and in the Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children study (HBSC), indicating that 23% of girls and 33% of boys aged 11–15 achieve the recommended minimum of physical activity every day.⁸



Recommendations

- The majority of Finnish children and adolescents need more physical activity in different forms to meet the minimum requirement of one hour a day.
- Children and adolescents' everyday physical activity should be supported in a variety of ways. Every quarter counts; an additional 15-minute physical activity a day means an annual increase of more than 90 hours.

- Promoting physical activity should be especially directed at the most inactive children and adolescents, for whom increasing the amount of physical activity has the greatest effect on health and well-being.
- All adults in a child's or an adolescent's life – at home, in early childhood education, in school, in hobbies and so on – are important facilitators of physical activity.

Research gaps

- Information is needed regarding the changes in physical activity among children and adolescents, as well as the factors affecting them.
- New approaches are required to increase physical activity, especially among the least active children and adolescents, as well as evaluations of these approaches.
- There is a lack of a national monitoring system of physical activity among preschool-aged children. Furthermore, monitoring information based on objective physical activity measurements is needed for children and adolescents of all ages.

2. Sedentary behaviours

Sedentary behaviours refer to the waking time spent in a physically passive manner. This sedentary lifestyle is a major health risk in the Western world, according to the World Health Organization. In Finland, children get used to a sedentary lifestyle in daycare and in school. Time spent in front of computer and TV screens, also known as screen time, increases the sedentary time among Finnish children and adolescents and often competes with physical activities.



Sedentary behaviours are graded 'D' (21–40%), based on the low proportion of children and adolescents meeting the recommendations related to screen time on most days. Although the concept of screen time has become problematic due to the increasing popularity and versatility of smart devices, screen time continues to be mostly physically passive time that reduces physical activity.

Before school age, children spend a mainly moderate amount of time in front of TV and computer screens. Based on parents' reports, 97% of children aged 3–6 use entertainment media for maximum of two hours a day on weekdays, as recommended; this percentage is lower (83%) during weekends.¹⁶ The situation changes with age; only 4% of children aged 9–15 meet the screen time recommendation every day, and 25% meet the recommendation at least five days per week.¹⁴ The amount of screen time is higher on weekends compared to weekdays.⁹ On average, boys spend more time in front of screens compared to girls, on both weekdays and weekends.^{9,12} Concerning different screen-based behaviours, gender difference is the most obvious in digital playing; half of boys but only 11% of girls aged 11–15 report playing computer or console games for two or more hours daily on weekdays.⁸

In the most recent studies, sedentary behaviours have been measured with accelerometers since the amount of sedentary time is difficult to perceive and measure with questionnaires. Based on accelerometer measurements, the total sedentary time is 5.5 hours a day among children aged 3–6.¹⁰ Primary school students accumulate 6.4 hours (65% of waking hours), and lower secondary school students have 8.2 hours (71% of waking hours) of sedentary time a day. Of all daily sedentary time, 47% occurs in school.¹¹

Recommendations

- Using computers and smartphones is part of daily life for children and adolescents. However, these devices can dominate the use of time and make children physically passive. The parents' role is to set boundaries to excessive playing, TV viewing and using smart devices late in the evening.

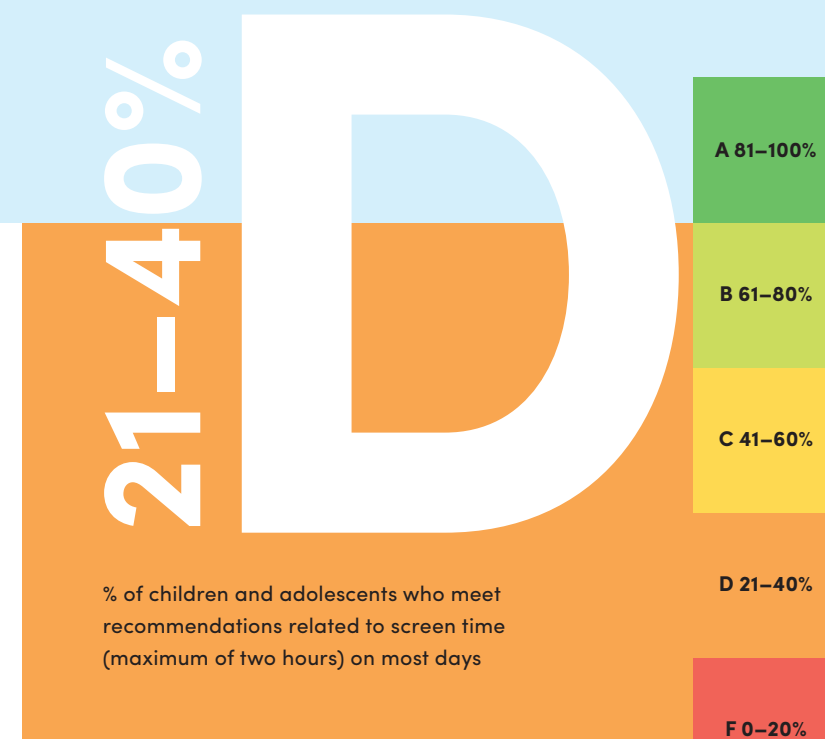
- Students should be provided with opportunities to work in a standing position and break up sitting during school lessons as well.

Research gaps

- More information and tools are needed to decrease excessive sitting among children and adolescents.

- It is necessary to conduct further research about the effects of decreasing excessive sitting and increasing light physical activity on children's health and well-being.

- The use of digital technology has changed radically. To promote physical activity, more information is required regarding the effects of the usage of technology on physical inactivity, on one hand, and the possibilities of using technology to encourage physical activity, on the other hand.



3. Early childhood education



Municipalities are responsible for early childhood education in Finland. Around 63% of children aged 1–6 are in daycare.¹⁷ Physical activity and learning motor skills in early childhood education improve children’s ability to learn new things and skills.

Early childhood education is graded ‘D’ (21–40%), based on the proportion of early childhood education units participating in the national Joy in Motion programme (1,118 or approximately one-third) by May 2016. Launched in March 2015, the Joy in Motion programme aims at a physically oriented operational culture in early childhood education.¹⁸

Studies indicate that daycare days tend to be physically quite passive. According to a study based on daycare personnel’s observations, children aged 3–6 spend 10% of their daycare days (from 8 am to 4 pm) engaged in vigorous physical activity, amounting to approximately 48 minutes a day. Among these children, up to 60% of each daycare day consists of physically passive activities, such as sitting, using a pencil and eating. One-fifth (20%) of the day consists of free play indoors, and another fifth (21%) comprises free play outdoors, a large portion of which does not include physical activity.¹⁹

In another daycare study, physical activity has been observed by researchers.¹⁰ Outdoor play is found to be more active than indoor play. Approximately half (46%) of outdoor play involves very light activity, and only a small fraction (2%) comprises moderate to vigorous physical activity. On the other hand, 86% of indoor activities involve light physical activity, such as arts and crafts and teacher-led group moments.

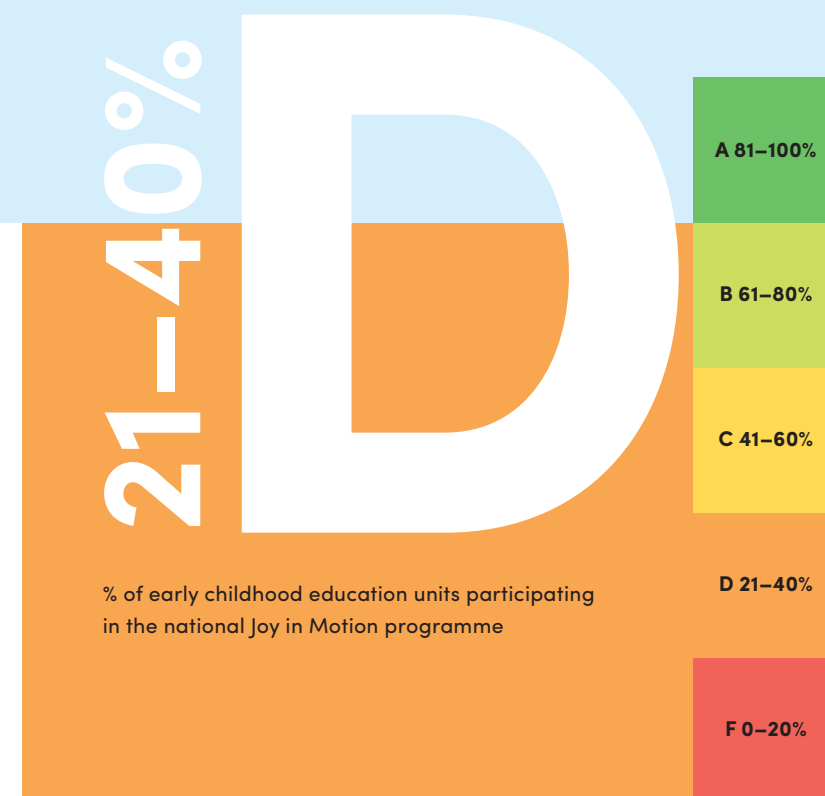
Daycare units provide minimal instructed indoor physical activity for children, totalling only seven minutes a week.¹⁹

Recommendations

- All the different forms of early childhood education (daycare, family daycare, and club and play activities) should secure the children’s right to receive regular and structured PE.
- Educators and parents’ meetings provide a natural opportunity to discuss children’s physical activity and the amount of physically active play and outdoor activities with the parents.
- Early childhood education personnel should be provided with opportunities for further training regarding themes related to children’s physical activity.
- Early childhood education units should have equal opportunities to support children’s physical growth, development, learning capabilities and daily well-being with physical activity.

Research gaps

- A national charting of early childhood education conditions is needed because not all daycare units have adequate facilities to encourage activity, suitable for instructed exercise or outdoor areas with versatile terrain.
- Information is needed regarding how children’s PE is realised in early childhood education and what obstacles are faced by different units.



4. School



School plays a major role in children and adolescents' physical activity. Children and adolescents accumulate 34% of all their daily physical activity of at least moderate intensity and as much as 47% of all their sedentary time during a school day. The majority of a school day is spent sedentarily; primary and lower secondary school students respectively accumulate 39 and 46 minutes of sedentary time per 60 minutes.¹¹ Physical activity can be added into the school day, particularly with PE lessons, recess times and depending on the teaching methods, lessons.

Recommendations

- Students should be encouraged to be active and spend recess outdoors.
- Continuous sitting should be broken up during lessons with physically active teaching methods.
- Students should be invited to take part in planning and carrying out a more active school day.
- Teachers' basic and further training should develop the know-how needed in promoting physical activity and developing the operation culture of the entire school.
- The quality of PE must be secured in primary schools as well by increasing the amount of PE teaching training for teachers and having PE lessons delivered by specialised teachers.

Research gaps

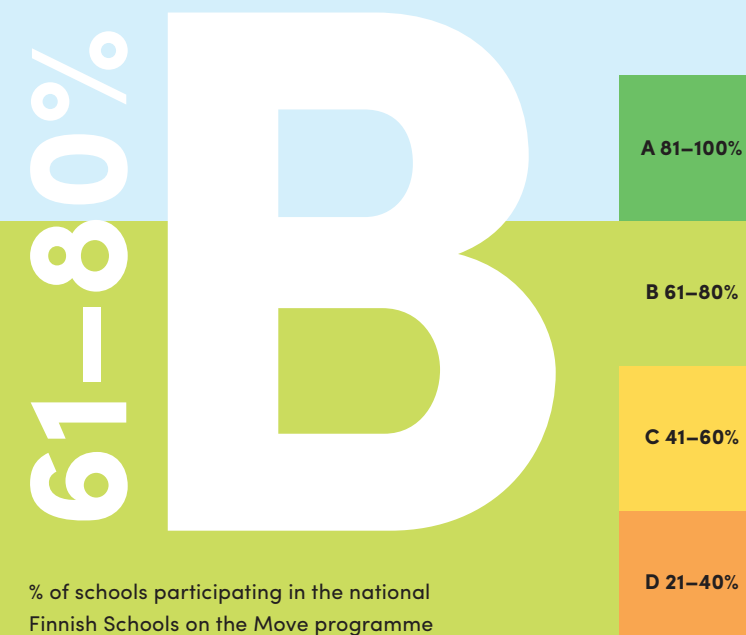
- Research information is needed regarding efficient ways to increase exercise and reduce sedentary time in schools.
- More research information is required regarding action-based learning methods and their effects on students' physical activity and learning results.
- There are no comprehensive national surveys regarding PE teaching and teacher qualifications in primary schools.
- Realisation of the new core curricula in practical PE teaching must be surveyed from both the teachers' and the students' viewpoints.

School is graded 'B' (61–80%) based on the proportion of schools participating in the Finnish Schools on the Move programme (1,564 or 62% of all comprehensive schools) by May 2016.²⁰ School provides an important arena to promote a physically active lifestyle because it reaches all age groups.

The amount of PE lessons is not particularly high in Finland. In basic education, students have on average 100 minutes of compulsory PE a week. However, it is often possible for students in secondary schools and vocational school to take elective PE lessons. In fact, PE is one of the most popular school subjects; 78% of boys and 65% of girls in grade 9 state that they like PE.²¹ The proportion of qualified PE teachers in Finland is also high. Over 80% of them in lower and upper secondary schools and in vocational education are qualified to perform their tasks,²² while there is no exact information regarding the qualification of the PE teachers in primary schools.

Typically, Finnish comprehensive schools provide 45-minute lessons, followed by 15-minute recess times in between. The amount of physical activity during recess decreases with age. Almost all students in primary school (96% in grade 5) usually spend recess outdoors, and participation in light physical activity during recess is common (58%). In lower secondary school, less than half of the students (43% in grade 9) usually spend recess outdoors, and only 15% of the students perform light physical activity. Boys are physically more active during recess than girls in all grades.²³

A common way to increase physical activity during recess is to have a longer recess period in the middle of the school day. The activities for longer recess have been designed and organised by the students themselves. More than half (55%) of Finnish comprehensive schools organise a longer recess period (e.g., 20–35 minutes) for physical activity in the middle of the school day.²⁴ Students act as peer activators during recess in every other school,²⁵ and 24% of students take part in planning recess activities.¹⁴



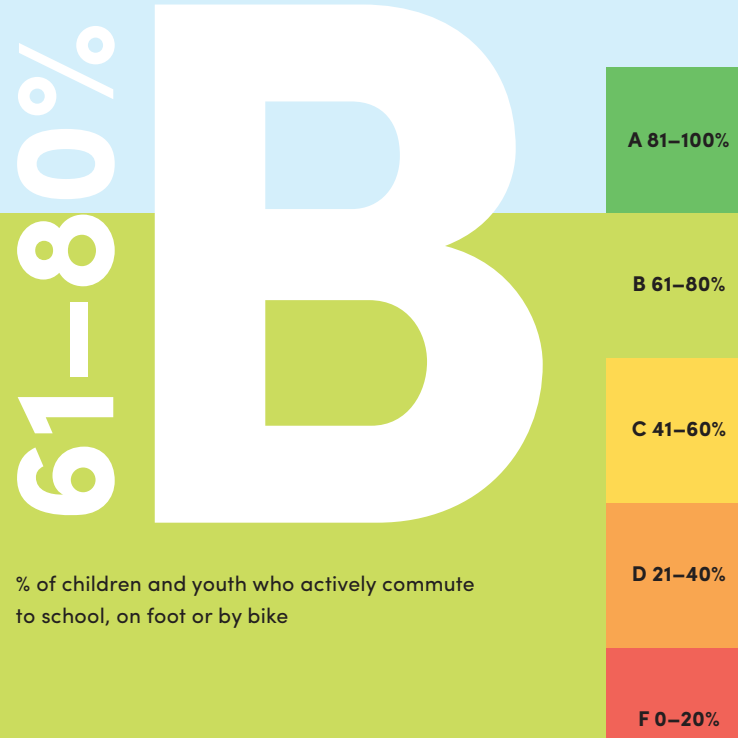


Active transportation refers to commuting everyday distances with muscle power, most often on foot or by bike. Active transportation to school, hobby activities and meeting their friends form a significant portion of children and adolescents’ daily physical activity. The largest amount of research information has been accumulated regarding active school commutes.

Active transportation is graded ‘B’ (61–80%), based on the proportion of children and adolescents who actively commute to school. The evaluation is based on five national surveys^{12,15,23,26,27} according to which approximately 70% of comprehensive school students actively commute to school (80% in spring and autumn and 60% in winter). The percentage is slightly higher (approximately 75%) among upper secondary school students.

Naturally, the distance between home and school affects transportation methods. Approximately 85% of comprehensive school students living no more than three kilometres away commute to school on foot or by bike.^{12,15}

5. Active transportation



% of children and youth who actively commute to school, on foot or by bike

Recommendations

- Parents’ encouragement plays a significant role in children’s active transportation. Children should be encouraged to commute to school, their friends’ homes and venues of hobby activities on foot or by bike.
- Traffic planning and non-motorised traffic route maintenance must support walking and cycling as easy and safe alternatives for children as well.
- All students must have safe routes to commute to school on foot or by bike.

Research gaps

- In addition to active school commutes, information is needed regarding children’s commutes and transportation to hobbies and meeting friends, for example, and to daycare among small children.
- More information is necessary concerning factors and phenomena supporting or impeding active transportation.
- In the future, the effectiveness of measures to promote active school commutes aimed at schools and families should be surveyed.

6. Active play

Active play refers to uninstructed physical activity or play that can be engaged in alone or with friends or family members. This chapter examines unorganised active play outside early childhood education and school hours.



Active play is graded 'C' (41–60%), based on the results related to physically active play outdoors among younger children and unorganised physical activity alone or with friends among school-aged children.

Parents of Finnish children aged 3–6 report that 63% of the children play outdoors on weekdays after daycare for at least 30 minutes, and 30% play outdoors on weekends for more than two hours a day.¹⁶ Unorganised physical activity among school-aged children has been charted in slightly different ways in various studies. According to a survey in the spring of 2016, over half (52%) of children aged 9–15 participate in unorganised physical activity at least four times a week.¹⁴ According to another study, the proportions of children engaged in unorganised physical activity by themselves almost daily are 36% in the 7–9 age group, 49% in the 10–14 age group and 33% in the 15–19 age group.²⁸ In the same study's survey on unorganised physical activity with friends, the corresponding numbers are 40% in the 7–9 age group, 36% in the 10–14 age group and 16% in the 15–19 age group. After comprehensive school, unorganised physical activity is relatively common; 41% of students in upper secondary school and 35% of students in vocational school take part in unstructured physical activity almost daily.²⁷

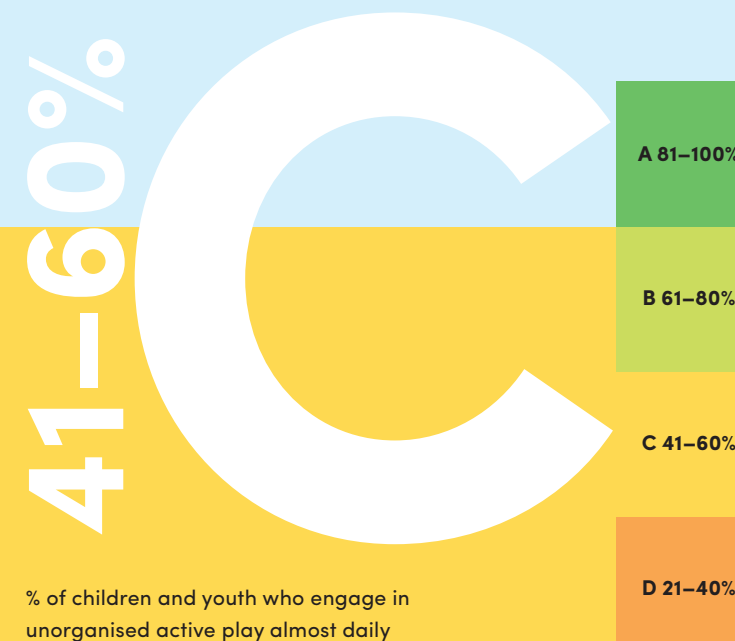
Adolescents are interested in uninstructed physical activity; 63% of comprehensive school students would also like to use the school facilities and equipment with their friends without an instructor.²⁹

Recommendations

- It is important that the yards of homes, schools and early childhood education units, parks, non-motorised traffic routes and other surroundings support and facilitate unorganised physical activity among children and adolescents.
- Methods of unorganised physical activity favoured by adolescents should be supported and taken into account in decision making.
- It is especially important to listen to children and adolescents in promoting unorganised physical activity.

Research gaps

- Research is needed regarding the various methods, significance and promotion of unorganised physical activity among children and adolescents.



7. Family and peers

The significance of the family as a physical activity supporter is great among small children, and with age, the significance of friends increases. The parents' roles are to set an example, encourage and facilitate their children's physical activity. Friends can have either a motivating or an impeding role. Peer support could be utilised more in promoting adolescents' physical activity.

The family and peers indicator is graded 'C' (41–60%), based on the proportion of children and adolescents who are encouraged and supported to be physically active by their families or peers.

Children aged 9–15 estimate parental support for their physical activity as follows: 79% of parents encourage them to be physically active, 77% contribute financially to their children's physical activities, 62% take them to venues of physical activities, and 37% are physically active with their children.¹⁴ Around 54% of parents engage in physical activity with their preschool-aged children at least three times a week, and 16% do so every day.¹⁶ Approximately 13% of children aged 7–9 and 8% of children aged 10–14 are physically active together with their parents almost every day.²⁸

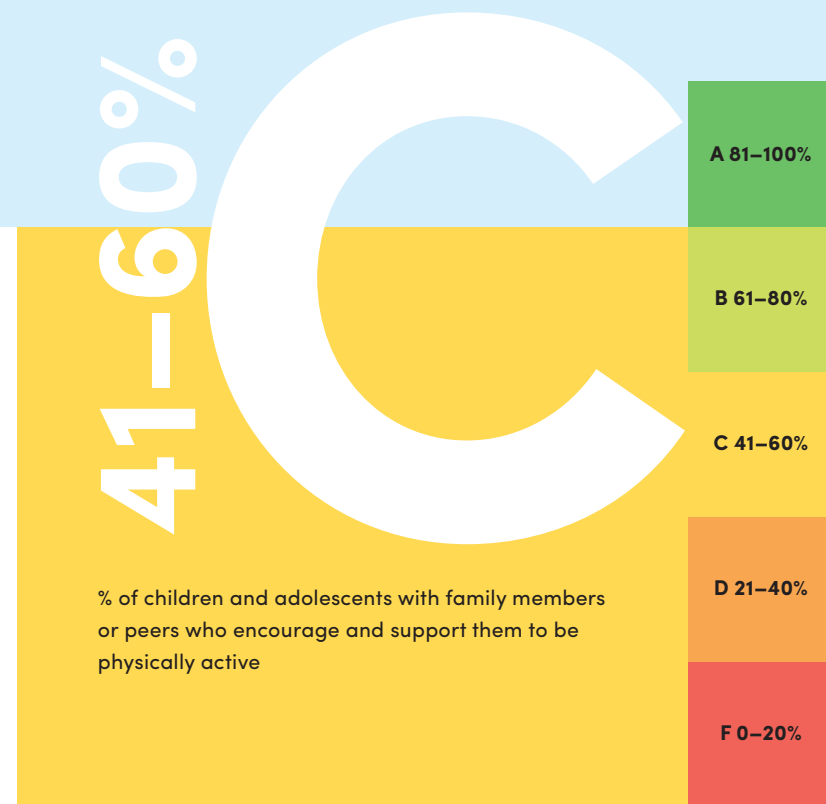
More than half of adolescents consider spending time with friends an important motive for their participation in physical activity.^{28,30} For children aged 9–15, the importance of peers as physical activity supporters appears as co-participation (44% of children report that their friends play sports with them) and encouragement (33% note that friends encourage them to be physically active).¹⁴ However, 26% of children aged 11–15 report that their own participation in physical activity is impeded because their friends are not involved in sports, whereas 30% indicate their friends' low level of appreciation for sports and physical activity as an impeding factor.³⁰

Recommendations

- Peer groups and peer support should be taken into account more efficiently than before in promoting children and adolescents' physical activity in school and during their free time.
- To promote family physical activity, municipalities and the community sector could organise more events that facilitate engaging in joint physical activity.
- Child health clinics and school healthcare should encourage least physically active children and families to participate and provide opportunities for low-threshold physical activities.

Research gaps

- Information is needed regarding the significance of friends and peer support in promoting children and adolescents' physical activity.
- A survey should be conducted about what factors are most likely to support or impede family and peer physical activity.



8. Organised sports participation

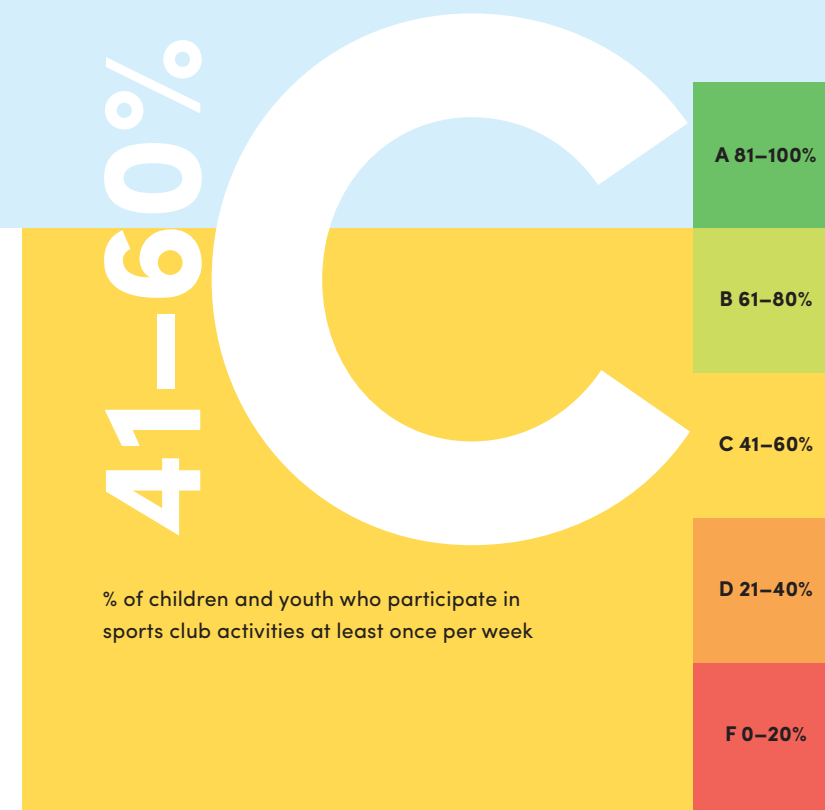
Participation in organised physical activities and sports play a significant role in daily physical activity for a portion of Finnish children and adolescents. Organised physical activity and sports refer to sports hobbies organised by clubs, municipalities, associations, businesses or similar entities.

The organised sports participation indicator is graded 'C' (41–60%) as 46% of children and adolescents aged 7–19 join sports club activities at least once a week. Boys (51%) participate more often than girls (41%).²⁸ For children under school age, no accurate information is available regarding their participation in organised practice sessions in sports clubs. According to the parents' report in a study conducted in the spring of 2016, 57% of children aged 3–6 take part in some kind of organised sports hobby.¹⁶

Participation in organised sports activities declines with age. Whereas 49% of girls and 61% of boys aged 7–14 participate in sports club activities every week, the corresponding percentage for adolescents aged 15–19 drops to a third.²⁸ In the under-14 age group, the most active club participants are children aged 11–12. Approximately 60% of them participate in club practice sessions, boys more commonly than girls. The 15–19 age group shows no significant differences between ages or genders.^{31,32}

Around 40% of children and adolescents aged 9–15 participate in business-organised sports activities at facilities such as dance academies or riding stables. Organised sports activities are also arranged by many other operators, such as the Finnish Scout movement, parishes and village associations, and these activities are participated in weekly by 27% of children and adolescents aged 9–15.¹⁴

Club activities in schools facilitate low-threshold physical activity hobbies for all students, regardless of their backgrounds. The activities are carried out during long breaks or after school. Almost half (47%) of comprehensive schools provide physical activity clubs in connection with school days,²⁵ and 23% of students aged 9–15 report participating in school physical activity clubs at least once a week.¹⁴



Recommendations

- Financial support should be directed more extensively towards those organisations and associations working with children and adolescents that organise sports and physical activities for recreation.

- Attention should also be paid to the overall activity and versatile physical activity among children and adolescents participating in sports club events.

- Club participation fees and cost structures should be evaluated critically because high hobby prices can prevent some children and adolescents from participating in sports club activities.

Research gaps

- Surveys are needed regarding what factors motivate children and adolescents to participate in sports club activities and what factors are behind not participating.

- Up-to-date and consistent information regarding the cost structures of different sports would help target measures to reduce costs.

- More information is needed regarding physical activity-related club events in schools, as well as their organisers.

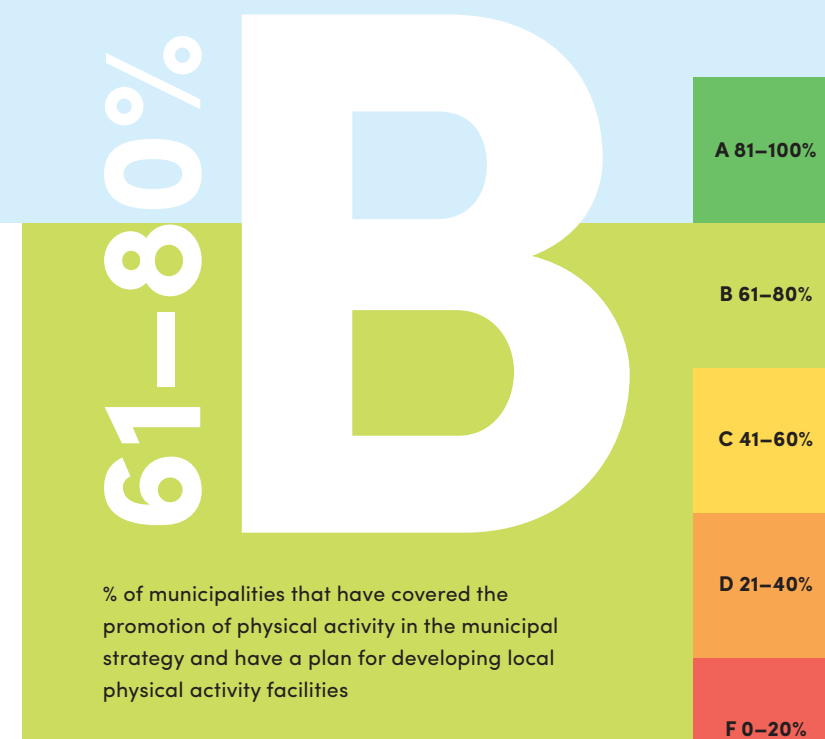
9. Community and the built environment

Municipalities' decisions play a significant role in facilitating physical activity for children and adolescents. Among other things, municipalities organise sports and physical activity services, support civic work, subvent sports facility fees, build local sports facilities and maintain non-motorised traffic routes. Municipalities' responsibility for promoting physical activity is based on the Act on the Promotion of Sports and Physical Activity (390/2015, Section 5).³³

The community and the built environment indicator is graded 'B' (61–80%), based on 63% of municipalities that have covered physical activity promotion in their strategy document. This case is increasingly common in sector-specific plans for different administrative fields; for example, 78% of municipalities report that the promotion of physical activity is covered in education documents. Additionally, 62% of municipalities have a plan for developing local physical activity facilities.³⁴

Municipalities organise a portion of children's physical activity services, such as clubs, courses, swimming schools, camps and events. Municipalities grant financial aid to sports clubs and associations that organise sports and physical activity and provide opportunities to use physical activity facilities. Around 65% of municipalities have provided school gyms free of charge for the use of sports clubs for children and adolescents. Sports grounds and ball fields have been primarily provided free for practice sessions for children and adolescents; 78% of municipalities collect no fees, and 12% charge minimal fees.³⁴ Municipalities also maintain pedestrian and cycleways that facilitate daily physical activity.

Of the 33,000 physical activity facilities in Finland (9.3 facilities per 1,000 people), approximately 75% are owned and maintained by municipalities. Municipalities spend more than €800 million on physical activity annually, and their physical activity services employ approximately 5,000 people. In recent years, the construction of such facilities has emphasised developing physical activity environments for children and adolescents.³⁵



Recommendations

- The requirements listed in the Act on the Promotion of Sports and Physical Activity include monitoring the residents' physical activity, as well as receiving their feedback. Municipalities should implement measures developed for these purposes.
- Monitoring data regarding children and adolescents' physical activity must be reported to the elected representatives as a basis for decision making.
- Children and adolescents must be heard when planning and developing physical activity services for them.

Research gaps

- Information is needed regarding how many children and adolescents participate in physical activities organised by municipality.
- Additionally, information is required about what percentage of financial aid for sports clubs is directed towards children and adolescents' physical activity.
- Research information is necessary concerning the use of local physical activity facilities and their effects on children and adolescents' physical activity.

10. Government strategies and investments

The new Act on the Promotion of Sports and Physical Activity (390/2015),³³ regulates the promotion of sports and physical activity by the government. The key goals of the act include promoting physical activity opportunities for different population groups and fostering citizens' well-being and health, as well as the growth and development of children. Physical activity for children and adolescents is a strategic priority in the government's sports policy. Additionally, the state funds national programmes for promoting physical activity among children and adolescents.

The government strategies, policies and investments indicator is graded 'B' (61–80%), based on how the government of Finland creates conditions for physical activity among children and adolescents.

The Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC) is responsible for the general management, coordination and development of the sports policy. The state budget in 2015 for enhancing physical activity and sports, delivered mainly through the MEC, was €148 M (€28 per inhabitant). Children's physical activity has been a priority of the government's sports policy for a long time. It is also taken into account as a priority for numerous government subsidies. These include financial aid for organisations promoting physical activity, sports facility construction or scientific research regarding physical activity. Additionally, €5.4–9.0 M was granted as targeted aid for physical activity for children and adolescents in 2012–2014.³⁶

The MEC is responsible for coordinating joint operations and has created guidelines for physical activity that promote well-being and health, in collaboration with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. Strengthening the position of physical activity in primary healthcare and social and healthcare services is considered a key area of development, especially in reaching those with low levels of physical activity for health maintenance.³⁷

Promoting physical activity is listed in the core curricula, enforced in August 2016. The curricula state that all students in grades 5 and 8 should take part in monitoring their physical functional capacity (the Move! system), and the results can be utilised in PE teaching and school health services to support the students' well-being.³⁸ The early childhood education plan prepared in 2016 considers physical activity aspects.

One goal of the Finnish Government Programme is that every student in comprehensive school engages in one hour of physical activity a day. Municipalities will be granted a total of €21 million in 2016–2018 as funds for the Finnish Schools on the Move programme.

Recommendations

- Co-operation among different ministries and administrative fields must be increased, as a significant portion of procedures affecting physical activity among children and adolescents is carried out outside the sports policy.
- Promoting physical activity must be taken into account in all societal decision making, especially as it pertains to children and adolescents.

Research gaps

- The effects of regulation and incentive systems on physical activity among children and adolescents must be evaluated.
- Information is needed regarding the flow of government aid and its effects on physical activity among children and adolescents.

61–80%

B

A 81–100%

B 61–80%

C 41–60%

D 21–40%

F 0–20%

The government creates conditions for realising the goals set in its sports and physical activity policy by providing resources for physical activity services for children and adolescents.



Work group

Finland's Report Card 2016 – Physical Activity for Children and Youth

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Images

Finnish Schools on the Move / Jouni Kallio
Joy in Motion / Antero Aaltonen (pp. 14–15)
Students NMedia, Keuda (pp. 24–25)

Press

Waasa Graphics, 2016

Data sources

RESEARCH (conducted by)	RESEARCH YEAR (reference)	METHOD	PARTICIPANTS	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS OR PARTICIPANTS (n)
Finnish Schools on the Move (FSM) programme (LIKES)	2010–2015 (11)	Accelerometer measurements (ActiGraph), physical activity and sedentary time	Students, grades 1–9	1,186
	2013–2015 (15)	Student surveys	Students, grades 4–9	2,500–2,600
	2015–2016 (25)	Self-evaluation tool for physical activity promotion in schools	Comprehensive schools taking part in FSM programme	581
Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children (HBSC) study (University of Jyväskylä)	2014 (7,8)	Survey	Students aged 11, 13 and 15	5,900
LIITU study (University of Jyväskylä)	2014 (39)	Survey	Students aged 11, 13 and 15	3,071
	2016 (14)	Survey	Students aged 9, 11, 13 and 15	6,318
Naantali Schools on the Move project (UKK Institute)	2013 (13)	Accelerometer measurements (Hookie AM 20), physical activity and sedentary time	Students, grades 1–7	851
	2013 (12)	Survey	Students, grades 1–7	1,029

RESEARCH (conducted by)	RESEARCH YEAR (reference)	METHOD	PARTICIPANTS	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS OR PARTICIPANTS (n)
Orientaatio project (University of Helsinki)	2015 (19)	Observations made by kindergarten personnel	Children aged 3–6	2,889 in 13 municipalities in Southern Finland
Promotion of health and welfare in comprehensive schools – TEAvisari 2015 (THL)	Autumn 2015 (24)	Data collection	Headmasters of comprehensive schools in collaboration with a student welfare group	2,013 (80% of all comprehensive schools)
Promotion of physical activity in municipalities – TEAvisari 2014 (THL)	Spring 2014 (34)	Data collection	Management of sports/physical activity services in municipalities	249 (78% of all municipalities)
School Health Promotion (SHP) study (THL)	Spring 2015 (27)	Survey	Comprehensive school students, grades 8–9	50,404
			Upper secondary school students, grades 1–2	38,760
			Vocational school students, grades 1–2	31,236
Study of young people’s leisure activities (Finnish youth research society)	2012 (28)	Interviews	Children and youth, aged 7–29	1,205
Taitavat tenavat (University of Jyväskylä)	Spring 2016 (16)	Surveys	Parents of 3–6-year-old children in kindergarten	684 in 13 municipalities in different parts of Finland

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Finland's Report Card 2016 on Physical Activity for Children and Youth is a research-based summary report regarding physical activity among Finnish children and adolescents and its promotion in various contexts. In the Report Card, physical activity is examined and presented through ten indicators. Five research institutions produced the Report Card. The LIKES Research Centre for Physical Activity and Health coordinated the compilation process, which was funded by the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture. Finland's Report Card 2016 was prepared as part of the Active Healthy Kids Global Alliance.

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