

National physical activity indicators for French children with disabilities: Para Report Card and SWOT analysis

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Background

Physical activity is of utmost importance for the health and development of children and adolescents with disabilities, but it is generally under studied and evaluated worldwide, and France is no exception. For the first time, a team of experts in surveillance and adapted physical activity developed a French Para Report Card on physical activity for children and adolescents.



Methods

The French Para Report Card team followed an adapted version of the harmonized Active Healthy Kids Global Alliance (AHKGA) Report Card development process to compile evidence and evaluate the 10 common physical activity indicators. Four researchers completed a Strength Weakness Opportunity and Threat (SWOT) template to identify their perceived SWOT of the physical activity for this specific population using the AHKGA indicators as a guidance.

Indicator grades and rationales

F Overall Physical Activity

Among 11, 13, and 15 years old with disabilities, about 19% of boys, and 10% of girls were estimated to engage in at least 60 min of moderate to vigorous physical activity daily.

F Organized Sport and Physical Activity

In 2020, around 15,000 1–19 years old had a membership to a sport club affiliated to a French federation of adapted sport, representing 3% of an estimated total of 452,795 of children and adolescents.

F Sedentary Behaviours

Secondary analysis of 2013/2014 HBSC data suggests that most children and adolescents with disabilities accumulate over 2 hours of screentime daily

B+ School

Physical Education is mandatory, taught by specialist and part of the national curriculum. New national policies stated that in primary school, 3h/week must be dedicated to physical activity, all 6-11 years old must learn how to bike independently, and all 4-6 years old must learn how to swim.

C+ Community and Environment

In 2018, 68% of sport facilities were accessible; 47% of municipalities offered sport facility time slots to sport clubs hosting people with disabilities and 55% offered sport facility time slots to special institutions/services hosting people with disabilities; 39% of municipalities had specific policies supporting the inclusion of people with disability in sport clubs.

C+ Government

Numerous policies/ programs, some as part of the 2024 Paris Paralympic Games movement, were recently developed in France to promote physical activity in children and adolescents with disabilities (their impact has yet to be evaluated).

There was a lack of evidence to evaluate and grade **Active Play, Active Transportation, Physical Fitness, and Family and Peers** so these indicators received an **incomplete grade (INC)**.

Strengths

- Potential enjoyment toward attractive active opportunities
- Motivational factors generated by Paris 2024 Paralympic movement
- Increased awareness towards the importance of PA for CAWD
- Increased awareness toward active transportation modes
- CAWD physically active on social media
- Popular trend of being fit, training at the fitness gym

Opportunities

- New WHO PA recommendations including CAWD
- Increased representation/visibility of athletes in the paralympic movement
- Official support by major/popular sport/fashion brands
- Parental support and modeling
- Promotion of adapted use of street workout equipment, fitness path & parks
- Increased adapted sports offer in school sport clubs
- Increasing active transportation to school initiatives including walking bus
- Increased awareness towards adapted PA in health and education institutions
- Increased actions to promote inclusion and prevent discrimination
- Improved accessibility of sport equipment/facilities/public playgrounds/parks
- COVID-19 lockdown exemption attributed to people with a disability
- Numerous new national programs supporting PA of CAWD
- Training of professionals in adapted physical activity
- Olympic and Paralympic Games 2024 promotion actions
- New funding opportunities from Paris 2024 Olympic Committee
- Physical activity prescription for people with a disability

Weaknesses

- Low physical fitness, mobility/ability barriers, spiral of physical deconditioning
- High prevalence of overweight/obesity
- High amount of sedentary/screen time & Potential high amount of homework
- No public communication in popular media on the importance PA for CAWD
- Organized adapted transportation modes generally not including active options
- Lack of adapted training for PE teachers and elementary school teachers

Threats

- Cost (sport gears and sport club/facilities registration fees)
- Organised sport structure based on a systematic competitive model
- Limited amount of various, accessible, & enjoyable adapted sport opportunities
- Socio-economic status of parents & overwhelmed/ busy parents
- Parents' overprotection & PA as form of escapism from their child disability
- Stigma toward disability & social isolation
- Overwhelmed health and education professional
- Lack of trained PE teacher/ sport coach
- Limited availability/ waiting list for disability inclusion in class
- Inclusion associated with limited time in class where PE not seen as a priority
- Decreased amount of support persons affecting their availability for PE class
- Unsafe urban environment or living in remote areas
- Lack of accessibility of streets/ sidewalks/ paths
- PA of CAWD is not seen as a national priority & negatively affected by COVID-19
- Risk that CAWD won't benefit as much from new adapted sport programs/initiatives as adults and athletes

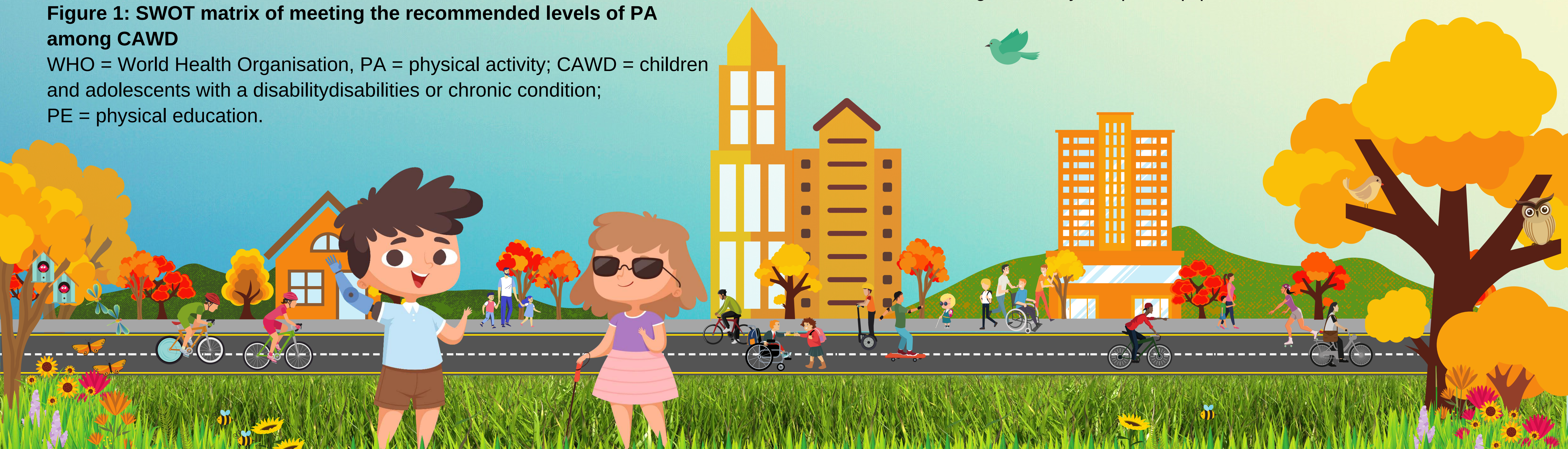
Conclusion & Recommendations

Despite increasing efforts to provide active opportunities to children and adolescents with disabilities, supported by Paris 2024 Paralympic movement, concerning levels of low physical activity and high sedentary behaviors were observed. The French Para Report Card team identified priorities to advance physical activity promotion among this population:

1. Inclusion of a representative sample of children and adolescents with disabilities in national physical activity surveillance surveys and national census of this population included/practicing sport in all clubs.
2. Systematic evaluation of current and future national and local implemented physical activity policies/programs to better understand their impact and identify the remaining needs.
3. Support of adapted physical activities among children and adolescents with disabilities within school context and sport by increasing resources including availability, adapted equipment, and trained staff.

Figure 1: SWOT matrix of meeting the recommended levels of PA among CAWD

WHO = World Health Organisation, PA = physical activity; CAWD = children and adolescents with a disability/disabilities or chronic condition; PE = physical education.



For more details/information, consult Salomé Aubert, Charlotte Verdot, Gilles Thöni, Jeremy Vanhelst. Evaluation of physical activity indicators for French children and adolescents with a disabilities: national Para Report Card and SWOT analysis. APAQ. 2023. In press.

