Results from the 2022 Ireland and Northern Ireland Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Adolescents

Angela Carlin¹, Sinead Connolly¹, Tamsyn Redpath¹, Sarahjane Belton², Tara Coppinger³, Conor Cunningham⁴, Alan Donnelly⁵, Kieran Dowd⁶, Deirdre Harrington⁷, Helen McAvoy⁴, Elaine Murtagh⁵, Kwok Ng^{5,8,} Lauren Rodriguez⁴, Catherine Woods⁵, Marie H. Murphy¹

 ¹ Centre for Exercise Medicine, Physical Activity and Health, Sports and Exercise Sciences Research Institute, Ulster University, Newtownabbey, United Kingdom
² School of Health and Human Performance, Dublin City University, Dublin, Ireland

- ³ Department of Sport, Leisure & Childhood Studies, Faculty of Business & Humanities, Munster Technological University, Cork, Ireland
- ⁴ Institute of Public Health in Ireland, Dublin, Ireland
- ⁵ Department of Physical Education & Sport Sciences, Health Research Institute, University of Limerick, Limerick, Ireland

Introduction

Despite efforts to promote PA, a high prevalence of physical inactivity has been reported in children and adolescents across the island of Ireland. The aim of 2022 Ireland and Northern Ireland Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Adolescents was to provide grades across 11 PA indicators for children and adolescents and monitor changes from previous report cards. The 2022 Report Card for the first time, includes an indicator on 'Physical Fitness' and a set of grades specific to children and adolescents with disabilities.



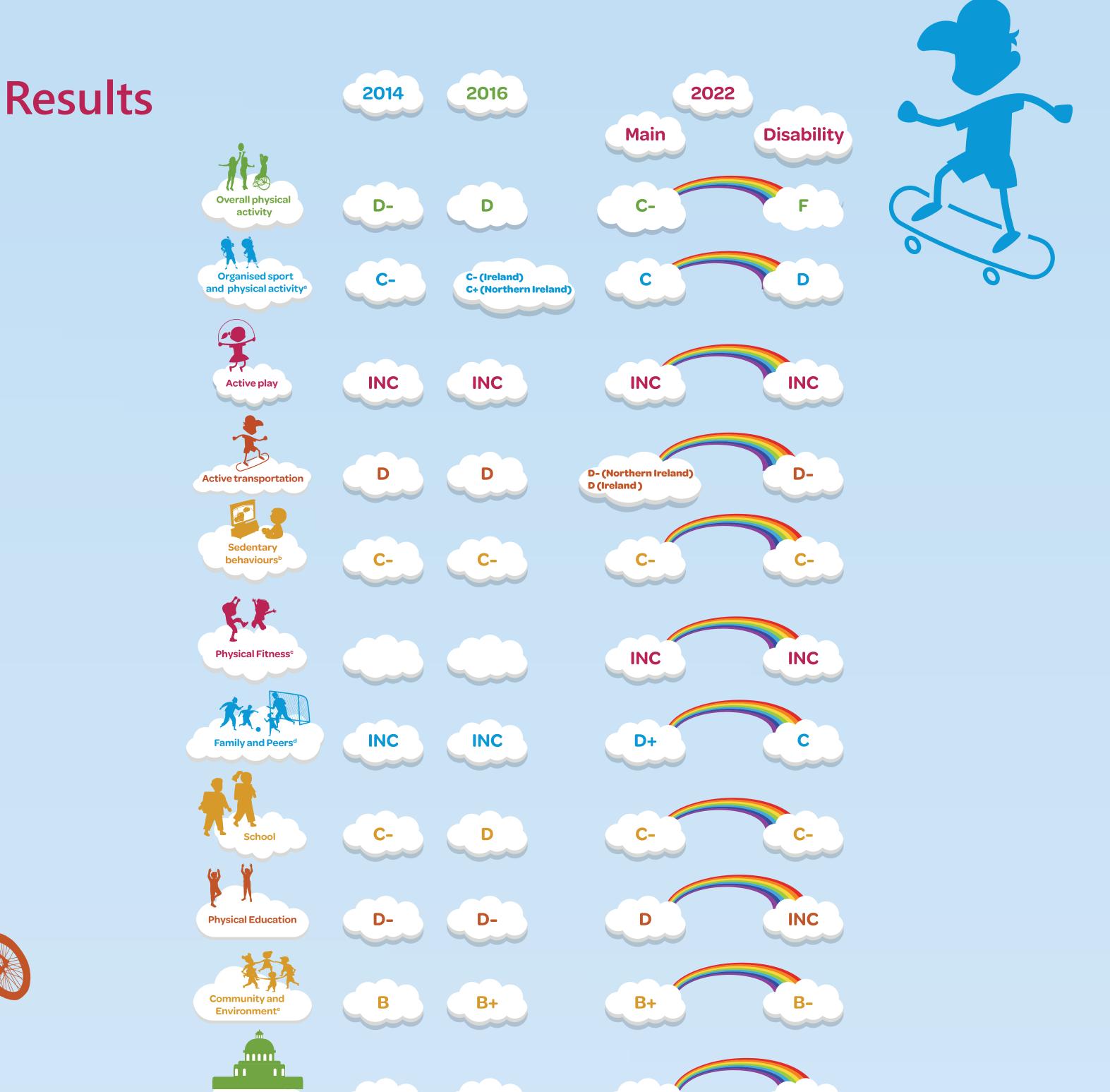
ACTIVE HEALTHY KIDS IRELAND

Access the Report Cards www.activehealthykidsireland.org/



 ⁶ Department of Sport and Health Sciences, Athlone Campus, TUS Midlands Midwest
⁷ Psychological Sciences and Health, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, UK
⁸ School of Educational Sciences and Psychology, University of Eastern Finland, Joensuu, Finland

⁹ School of Education, Sports Studies and Physical Education Programme, University College Cork, Cork, Ireland



Background

Ireland and Northern Ireland are two independent countries on the same island. Due to the political landscape on the island of Ireland and continued focus on cross-border cooperation by both governments, the Ireland North and South Report Card is presented as a unified report for the whole island. In 2016, the 'National Physical Activity Plan' for Ireland set a specific target to increase the proportion of children undertaking at least 60 minutes of MVPA every day by 1% per annum (3). The new Active Living - Sport and Physical Activity Strategy for Northern Ireland launched in March 2022, has a strong focus on children and adolescents, with the goal of providing children and young people with 'the best start in life through sport and PA opportunities' (4).

6

 (\mathbf{O})

9

Methods



Ten physical activity indicators were selected for inclusion in Global Matrix 4.0 by the AHKGA. For consistency, international standardised benchmarks were established and a grading scheme provided by the AHKGA.

Proposed grades and accompanying rationale were circulated to stakeholder agencies for consultation.

The Ireland Report Card Research Working Group (RWG) was established in October 2020. Potential data sources for each indicator were identified. Relevant data were extracted and collated.

Proposed Ireland North and South Report Card grades were submitted to the AHKGA for review and audit in November 2021.

Members of the RWG met to discuss the indicators and benchmarks to be included in the Report Card.

On completion of the stakeholder consultation and AHKGA audit, the grades were finalised and the Report Card was prepared.

The RWG members reviewed and data for each indicator and assigned a provisional grade based on factors including sample size, methodology and inequalities in the data.

A working group focused on data on indicators that were disaggregated by disabilities. This group followed the same steps (1-8).



Proposed grades and justifications were presented to the RWG. Following discussion and agreement, the RWG 'proposed grades' were awarded (A-F (including '+' or '-') or 'Incomplete' (INC) as per the standardised, international grading system (Figure 2). INC grades were awarded where not enough data existed on that indicator.



Government^f INC INC B B

Conclusion

Overall the 2022 Active Kids Report awarded a C minus grade for PA in across the Island of Ireland. This means we are succeeding in meeting the benchmark for physical activity with around half our population of children and adolescents. This is an improvement form Grade D in 2016. Positive trends were observed across several indicators, with grades for 'Overall physical activity', 'School' and 'Physical Education' increasing from 2016. Inequalities were identified and suggest that gender, socioeconomic status and age negatively impacted on PA levels in children and adolescents. Data obtained since the implementation of COVID-19 public health measures were not included, therefore future report cards will consider the impact of the pandemic on PA for children and adolescents.

Recommendations



Continue to develop policy measures that address inequalities highlighted in the report across a range of determinants including disability, gender, socioeconomic status, and age impact on children and adolescent PA levels.

Continue to progress the development of a framework for the systematic surveillance of indicators related to PA for children and adolescents with disabilities. These include greater representation, and consistency of measurement tools in policy.

Acknowledgements

This work was supported by grants from the Public Health Agency (Northern Ireland), Department of Health (Ireland) and Healthy Ireland, Sport Northern Ireland, Sport Ireland, and the Institute of Public Health in Ireland.

References

- Harrington DM, et al. Results from Ireland North and South's 2016 Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth. J Phys Act Health. 2016; 13(S2):S183-188.
- 2. Harrington DM, et al . Results from Ireland's 2014 Report Card on Physical Activity in Children and Youth. J Phys Act Health. 2014; 11(S1):S63-68.
- Department of Health, Department of Transport Tourism and Sport. Get Ireland Active! National Physical Activity Plan for Ireland. Dublin 2016. http://www.getirelandactive.ie/ Professionals/National PA-Plan.pdf Accessed 8 Nov 2021.
- 4. Department for Communities. A New Sport and Physical Activity Strategy for Northern Ireland. March 2022, Active Living (communities- ni.gov.uk). Accessed May 04 2022

Prioritise research specifically designed to measure levels of activity in children and adolescents with disabilities.

Address persistent gaps in data availability in relation to a number of indicators, for example, 'Active Play' and for some sub-groups of children and adolescents, for example, data in younger children.

Increase the use of objective measures across the indicators to help overcome a reliance on self-reported data in relation to PA.

Action the grade on the Government indicator (B), which was assigned a grade for the first time, to provide further rationale and support for the implementation of the National Physical Activity Plan in Ireland and "Active Living" Sport and Physical Activity Strategy for Northern Ireland.

Future report cards will need to consider the impact of COVID-19 public health measures on PA as data from March 2020 were not included in the grading of this Report Card. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on indicators will need to feature in subsequent Report Cards, when more robust data is available.

