Pandemic-Related Challenges & Opportunities for Physical Activity

We’re only beginning to understand how COVID-19 has impacted the health and movement behaviours of children (5–11 years) and youth (12–17 years) in Canada. These four key grades from the 2022 ParticipACTION Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth highlight how many structured opportunities to get active and play were lost during the pandemic, but many families and community leaders still found ways to get kids active.

Overall Physical Activity

Only 17.5% of children met the moderate-to-vigorous physical activity (MVPA) recommendation of 60 mins/day at the height of the pandemic. The percentage of youth meeting the MVPA recommendation dropped from 51% pre-pandemic to 37% during the pandemic.

Sedentary Behaviours

16.5% of children met the screen time recommendation of 2 hours/day at the start of the pandemic. Only 3% of youth met the screen time recommendation of 2 hours/day at the start of the pandemic.

Active Transportation

46% of parents indicated that their children either solely commute actively to school or commute partially in an active way.

Active Play

25% of children and youth achieved >840 mins/week (-2 hours/day on average) of total time engaged in indoor and outdoor unstructured play. At the height of the pandemic, children’s and youth’s time spent outdoors and engaged in active play increased compared to the start of the pandemic but was still below pre-pandemic levels.

References

4 2020-21 COMPASS, University of Waterloo. Custom Analysis.
5 2021-2022 Parent Survey on Physical Activity and Sport, CFLRI. Custom Analysis.