

Results from Mexico's 2018 Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth

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Introduction

Physical activity levels among Mexican children and youth have been below recommended standards in the past six years.¹ More than half of children and a third of youth do not reach the recommended 60 daily minutes of moderate-to-vigorous intensity physical activity (MVPA).² This is concerning given that inadequate physical activity is a leading risk factor for non-communicable diseases³ and is responsible for a substantial economic burden worldwide.⁴ The purpose of this paper is to summarize the results of Mexico's 2018 Report Card. Using the best available evidence, Mexico's 2018 Report Card aims to provide a comprehensive evaluation of how the country is doing in terms of promoting physical activity among children and youth.

Methods

The development of Mexico's 2018 Report Card involved obtaining relevant physical activity information, comparing it against established benchmarks, and assigning grades across 10 indicators. These indicators are grouped into 4 categories: I) Daily Behaviors (Overall Physical Activity, Organized Sport and Physical Activity Participation, Active Play, Active Transportation, Sedentary Behaviors); II) Settings and Sources of Influence (Family and Peers, School, Community and Environment); III) Strategies and Investments (Government), and IV) Physical Fitness.

To grade each indicator, we reviewed several sources of information published from 2010 forward. The main sources of information were the National Health and Nutrition Survey (ENSANUT) 2016,^{1,2} reports from the National Commission on Physical Culture and Sports (CONADE),⁵ census data from the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI),⁶⁻⁸ reports from the Secretary of Education,⁹ and legislative documents (e.g. General Law on Physical Culture and Sports).¹⁰

This work was conducted by a team of researchers and public health practitioners from the academic, government, and healthcare sectors with expertise in all areas assessed in the Report Card.

Results and Discussion

Grades for the Mexico's 2018 Report Card are summarized in Table 1 and the front cover is presented in Figure 1.

Only 7 out of 10 indicators were graded. Grades indicate that Mexican children and youth are not meeting the recommendations for physical activity and sedentary behaviors. Sports participation and active transportation levels are better but still need improving. Schools are failing to provide adequate physical education to all children. Over half of communities lack adequate physical activity spaces while the majority of parents have safety concerns. While the



Figure 1 — Mexico's 2018 Report Card cover.

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Table 1 Grades and rationales for Mexico's 2018 Report Card

Indicator	Grade	Rationale
Overall Physical Activity	D+	According to ENSANUT 2016, ² 60% of youth 15-19 years old get at least 60 minutes of MVPA per day. Only 17% of children 10-14 years old get at least 60 minutes of MVPA per day. In this age group, less girls (12.7%) than boys (21.8%) meet these recommendations.
Organized Sport Participation	C	According to ENSANUT 2016, ¹ 48.6% of children 10-14 years of age participate in some type of organized sport.
Active Play	INC	There is insufficient data to grade this indicator.
Active Transportation	C+	According to INEGI 2015 census data, ⁶ 54.8% of children 3 years and older walk to school and 1.5% ride bicycles.
Sedentary Behavior	D-	According to ENSANUT 2016, ² 22.7% of 10-14 year old children spend no more than 2 hours per day in front of a screen. Only 21.4% of 15-19 year-old youth spend no more than 2 hours per day in front of a screen.
Physical Fitness	INC	There is insufficient data to grade this indicator.
Family and Peers	INC	There is insufficient data to grade this indicator.
School	D+	According to the Secretary of Public Education (2015), ⁹ only 36.3% of school-age children in public schools receive 1 hour of physical education per week.
Community and Environment	D+	INEGI census data show 33% of neighborhoods in Mexico have sidewalks and trees and that 45% have public lighting. ⁷ INEGI data also show 74% of Mexican adults stopped allowing their children to go outside. ⁸
Government	C	Two national physical activity programs (<i>Ponte al 100</i> and <i>Muevete en 30</i>) signal interest in physical activity promotion but their implementation and impact are unknown. Also, funds allocated for physical activity promotion are insufficient (\$181 million in 2013 and \$202 million Mexican pesos in 2014). ⁵

current government administration introduced initiatives that signal commitment to promote physical activity, the degree to which these have been implemented and impacted physical activity is unknown.

We were unable to grade the Family and Peers, Active Play and Physical Fitness indicators due to lack of reliable national data. While data to grade most Daily Behaviors exist, these were self-reported and excluded children younger than 10 years of age.

Conclusion

Mexican children and youth are far from achieving the recommended levels of physical activity and screen time. In addition, schools, communities and government are not providing adequate physical activity opportunities. In light of the obesity and diabetes epidemic Mexico is facing, efforts should be directed towards promoting physical activity and combating sedentary behaviors. Findings from this Report Card can be used to guide this endeavour.

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