EXPLORING THE PLAYGROUND ENVIRONMENT

WHAT IS THE ISSUE?

- 74-80% of youth in Australia are not meeting the World Health Organisation (WHO) physical activity guideline of 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous activity each day.

- Childhood physical inactivity is a key risk factor for cardiovascular disease in adulthood.

- Schools have been identified as a key setting to improve children's physical activity, and physical activity levels during school hours is crucial for developing lifelong healthy habits.

- Exploration of the role of the playground environment in promoting physical activity is required to further understand students' use and activity levels within playground spaces.

OUR APPROACH

We conducted cross-sectional studies with 8 primary schools (2308 students) in the Hunter New England LHD. Observational data was collected of playground area availability, playground use and physical activity levels.

OUR RESEARCH SHOWS:

- Boys dominate the basketball courts and grass areas, and are more vigorously active than girls in those areas.

- Playgrounds markings areas (e.g., handball courts) show a more even gender balance, but boys still engage in more vigorous activity.

- Play equipment areas are popular for both genders, however boys are more vigorously active.

- Girls tend to occupy low-activity areas such as seating, indoor spaces, and transition zones more than boys.

More than twice the number of boys played on the grass areas than girls. Of those, 32% of boys were vigorously active compared to only 13.2% of girls.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR SCHOOLS?

Findings will provide foundational information to inform the design of scalable and acceptable school environmental approaches to reduce physical inactivity in primary schools.

WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT THIS RESEARCH?

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