Physical activity of South Australian children: South Australian Monitoring and Surveillance System (SAMSS) 2002-2003

FINDINGS IN BRIEF

• 92.4% of parents perceived their children aged 5 - 15 years to be very active or active
• The majority of children aged 5-15 years spent up to 1 hour per day engaged in each of the activities of organised sport (61.5%), doing homework (78.1%) and reading for pleasure (72.9%), and, up to 2 hours per day in screen based activity (74.4%)

INTRODUCTION

The South Australian Monitoring and Surveillance System (SAMSS) is a systematic telephone survey system which commenced data collection in July 2002. Incorporated in SAMSS are questions about the number of hours per day, on average, participants aged 5 to 15 years spend doing organised sport, studying/doing homework and reading for pleasure, and, their parents’ perceptions of their child’s activity level. The average number of hours per day spent in screen based activity (watching television or videos, or, playing video or computer games) is sought for participants aged 2 to 15 years, and, the average number of hours of sleep (in a 24 hour period) is collected for all children up to 15 years. This brief report presents the number of hours occupied by each of these five activities by South Australian children in the age groups less than 5 years, 5 to 10 years and 11 to 15 years, for the twelve month period, July 2002 to June 2003.

METHOD

The methodology for SAMSS has been reported elsewhere. The response rate for SAMSS is high (69.3%) resulting in 6130 completed interviews between July 2002 and June 2003. The interviews are conducted by telephone using Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) technology. Prior to analysis, SAMSS data is weighted by the probability of selection within a household, and, to the sex, age and geographical area profile of the South Australian population.

RESULTS

Parental perceptions of child’s level of physical activity

Parents of children aged 5 to 15 years were asked if, over the course of the last month, they considered their child to have been physically active. The proportion of children classified as very active, active, not very active and not at all active is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Parental perception of their child’s activity level over the last month.

- 51.8% (CI 48.6 - 55.1) of respondents considered their child to be very active. (57.0% aged 5 to 10 years, 45.7% aged 11 to 15 years).
- A further 40.6% (CI 37.4 - 44.8) considered their child to be active. (38.5% aged 5 to 10 years, 43.0% aged 11 to 15 years).
- Only 6.5% (CI 5.0 - 8.2) of children were perceived as not very active with a further 1.1% (CI 0.6 - 2.0) perceived as not active at all.

Hours per day spent doing organised sport

The average number of hours per day spent doing organised sport by children aged 5 to 15 years is shown in Figure 2.

- 61.5% (CI 58.3 - 64.6) participated in up to 1 hour of organised sport per day. (44.7% aged 5 to 10 years, 33.3% 11 to 15 years most frequently participated for up to 30 minutes per day).
- 30.8% (CI 27.8 - 33.9) of children did not spend any time doing organised sport. (37.3 % aged 5 to 10 years, 23.1% aged 11 to 15 years).

Figure 2: Number of hours per day spent doing organised sport by children aged 5 to 15 years.

Hours per day spent studying or doing homework

The average number of hours per day spent studying or doing homework by children aged 5 to 15 years is shown in Figure 3.

- 86.1% (CI 83.7 - 88.3) of children spent some time each day studying or doing homework. (78.7% aged 5 to 10 years, 94.9% aged 11 to 15 years).
- The majority of children, 73.8% (CI 70.8 - 76.6), spent up to 1 hour per day doing homework. Children aged 5 to 10 years most frequently (59.9%) spent up to 30 minutes per day doing homework and those aged 11 to 15 years most frequently (42.9%) spent between 30 minutes and 1 hour in this activity.
**Figure 3: Number of hours per day spent studying or doing homework by children aged 5 to 15 years.**

**Hours per day spent reading for pleasure**
The average number of hours per day spent reading for pleasure by children aged 5 to 15 years is shown in Figure 4.

- 80.4% (CI 77.7 - 82.9) of children spent some time each day reading for pleasure. (82.6% aged 5 to 10 years, 77.8% aged 11 to 15 years).
- The majority of children, 72.9% (CI 69.9 - 75.7), spent up to 1 hour per day reading for pleasure. Most frequently, children spent up to 30 minutes per day reading for pleasure, 47.6% of children aged 5 to 10 years and 38.3% of those aged 11 to 15 years.

**Figure 4: Number of hours per day spent reading for pleasure by children aged 5 to 15 years.**

**Hours of sleep in a 24 hour period**
The average number of hours spent sleeping per 24 hour period by children up to 15 years is shown in Figure 6.

- As expected, the number of hours of sleep decreases with age.

**Figure 5: Number of hours per day spent in screen based activity by children aged 5 to 15 years.**

**Hours of screen based activity per day**
The average number of hours per day spent in screen based activity (watching television or videos, or, playing video or computer games) by children aged 2 to 15 years is shown in Figure 5.

- 98.6% (CI 97.7 - 99.2) of children spent some time each day in screen based activity.
- The number of hours spent in screen based activity varied by age group with the majority of children aged 3 to 15 years engaged in these activities for between 1 and 2 hours per day and the majority of two year olds engaged for up to 1 hour per day.

**Figure 6: Number of hours per 24 hour period spent sleeping by children 0 to 15 years**

REFERENCES

INFORMATION
For further results from the survey, please visit the Population Research and Outcome Studies website at: http://www.dh.sa.gov.au/pehs/PROS/SAMSS.html or contact Bernadette Kenny on 08 8226 6101 or email bernadette.kenny@health.sa.gov.au