**NZ kids top physical activity survey**

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  New Zealand children have jointly topped an international survey measuring how active they are, but researchers they still spend too much time in front of screens.

The Physical Activity Report Card for Children and Youth gave New Zealand a B grade for overall physical activity, level with Mozambique at the top of the 15 countries assessed.

No other nation earned more than a C plus, with Australia, Canada, the USA, Ireland and Scotland all earning D minuses or worse.

New Zealand received a B grade for organised sport participation and active play and a B minus for activity at school.

But half the kids aged five to nine surveyed spent more than the recommended two hours a day in front of a screen, going up to two-thirds of children aged 10 to 18.

New Zealand also scored a C minus for active transport to school, with less than a third getting some exercise through either walking or cycling.

Dr Ralph Maddison from the University of Auckland's National Institute for Health Innovation, who developed the New Zealand scores, says the results are satisfactory.

But he noted there was a clear decline as children got to adolescent level, particularly among girls.

"The high levels of screen time were concerning and suggest the need to identify and implement effective strategies to reduce screen time for children and youth," Dr Maddison said.

Australia's D minus grade was worrying and the country would do well to look at New Zealand, Associate Professor Trevor Shilton of the Heart Foundation in Australia says.

"Australian children are getting too much screen time. We are raising a generation of couch potatoes," he said.

"New Zealand tends to have better co-ordinated governmental leadership. Their sports sector and their health sector work together.

"They are doing better than us in almost every measure."