

Physical Activity-Related Behaviors and Academic Achievement



Montana Office of Public Instruction • Elsie Arntzen, Superintendent • www.opi.mt.gov

What is the relationship between physical activity-related behaviors and academic achievement?

Data presented below from the 2019 Montana Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) show a negative association between physical activity-related behaviors and academic achievement. This means that students with higher grades are less likely to engage in physical inactivity-related behaviors than their classmates with lower grades, and students who do not engage in physical activity-related behaviors receive lower grades than their classmates who do engage in physical activity-related behaviors. These associations do not prove causation. Further research is needed to determine whether low grades lead to behaviors related to physical inactivity, behaviors related to physical inactivity lead to low grades, or some other factors lead to both of these problems.

Percentage of high school students who engaged in physical activity-related behaviors, by type of grades earned – Montana Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2019.

Physical Activity-Related Behaviors	Percentage of Montana high school students who engaged in each risk behavior, by type of grades mostly earned				Significant Association*
	A's	B's	C's	D's/F's	
Physical Activity					
Physically active at least 60 minutes per day on 5 or more days during the past 7 days	55	53	46	28	Yes
Did not participate in at least 60 minutes of physical activity on at least 1 day during the past 7 days	10	11	13	21	Yes
Were physically active at least 60 minutes per day on all of the past 7 days	26	26	25	16	Yes
Other Physical Activity-Related Behaviors					
Watched television 3 or more hours per day on an average school day	14	20	28	34	Yes
Played video or computer games 3 or more hours per day on an average school day	32	38	43	53	Yes
Attended physical education classes on 1 or more days in an average school week	53	60	59	57	Yes
Attended physical education classes on all 5 days in an average school week	30	36	36	27	Yes
Played on at least one sports team run by their school or community groups during the past 12 months	70	60	48	40	Yes
Had a concussion from playing a sport or being physically active during the past 12 months	14	18	22	17	Yes
Got 8 or more hours of sleep on an average school night	36	27	23	19	Yes

*Based on logistic regression analysis controlling for sex, race/ethnicity, and grade in school, p<0.05.

Figure 1. Percentage of high school students, by physical activity-related behavior, by grades earned. Montana YRBS, 2019.

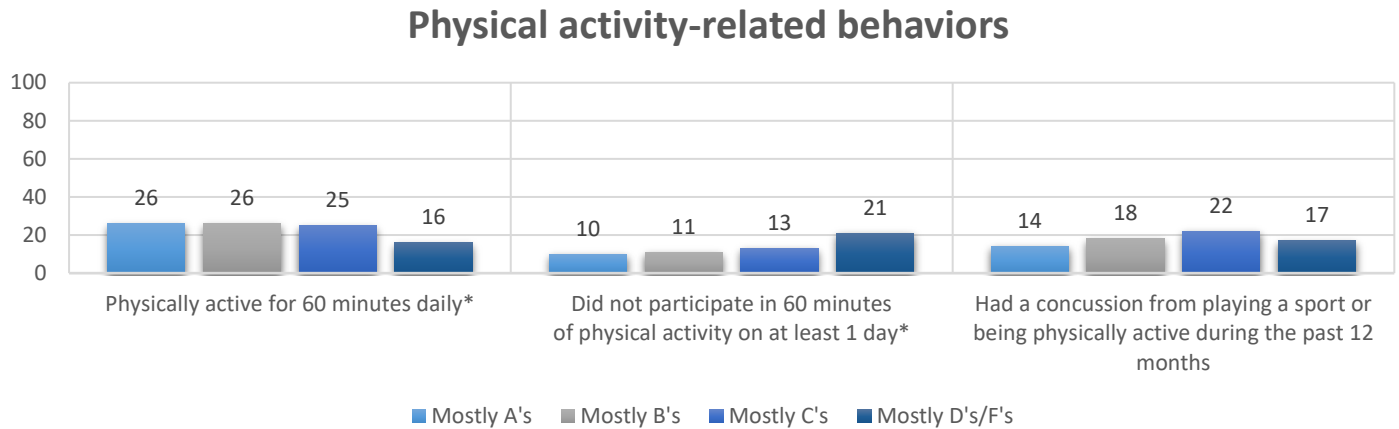
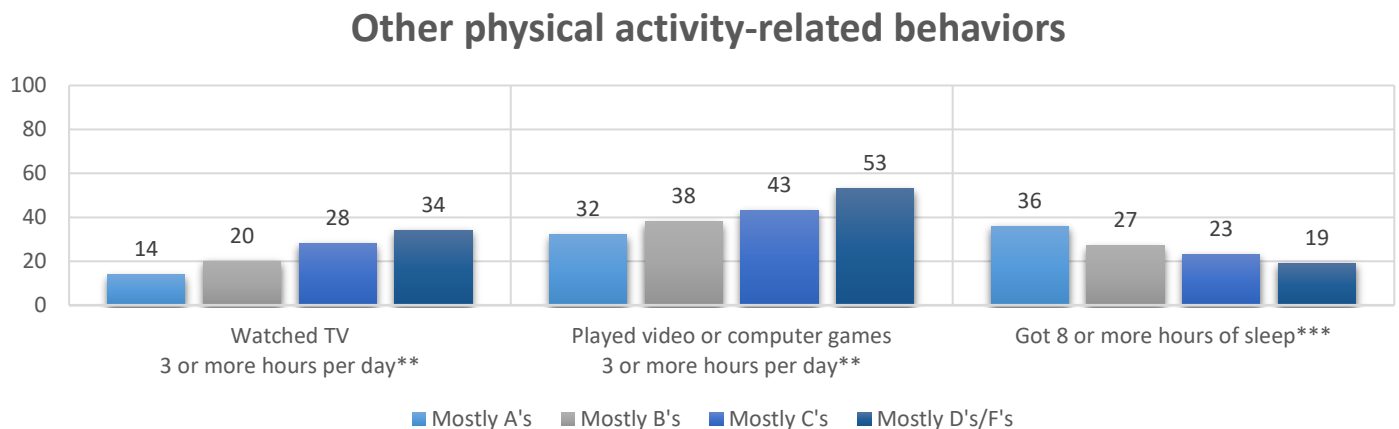


Figure 2. Percentage of high school students, by other physical activity-related behavior, by grades earned. Montana YRBS, 2019.



- * During the past 7 days.
- ** On an average school day.
- *** On an average school night.

The Montana YRBS monitors priority health-risk behaviors that contribute to the leading causes of death, disability, and social problems among youth and adults in the United States. It is conducted every 2 years during late winter and provides data representative of high school students in Montana. In 2019, students completing the YRBS were asked, “During the past 12 months, how would you describe your grades in school?” and given seven response options (Mostly A’s, Mostly B’s, Mostly C’s, Mostly D’s, Mostly F’s, None of these grades, Not sure). In 2019, 46% of students received mostly A’s, 31% received mostly B’s, 15% received mostly C’s, 5% received mostly D’s or F’s, and 4% reported receiving none of these grades or not sure. The YRBS has been administered by the Office of Public Instruction in collaboration with Montana schools since 1991. For more information on the YRBS please visit www.opi.mt.gov/yrbs.

Montana High School Students - Grades Earned

