

Go Out and Play: Youth Sports in America

This nationwide study focuses on how the intersections among families, schools, communities and economic disparities are related to girls' and boys' involvement and interest in sports and physical activity. Some of the personal and social benefits associated with children's athletic participation are documented. Children's athletic interests and involvement are examined from childhood through late adolescence.

The findings and conclusions are based on two nationwide surveys. Funded through a grant from the PepsiCo Foundation, Harris Interactive (the Harris Poll people) was commissioned by the Women's Sports Foundation to complete a school-based survey of youth drawn from a random selection of approximately 100,000 public, private and parochial schools in the United States. School-based survey method yields highly reliable results. The nationwide sample consists of 2,185 third- through 12th-grade girls and boys. In addition, phone interviews were conducted with a national cross-section of 863 randomly selected parents of children in grades 3 through 12. The study was directed by Don Sabo, Ph.D., Center for Research on Physical Activity, Sport & Health.

The comprehensive 184-page research report, *Go Out and Play: Youth Sports in America*, covers a range of topics, including children's participation in organized sports, youth involvement with exercise, links between athletic participation and family life, gender and the frequency of physical education, associations between athletic participation and children's physical and emotional well-being, age of entry into sports and drop-out rates, how gender equity varies across communities (urban, suburban and rural), gender and interest in sports and physical activity, and sports involvement among understudied populations (children with disabilities, children in immigrant families). Key findings include:

- The gender gap in youth sport is not uniform across the nation. Whereas similar rates of athletic participation exist in suburban communities, urban and rural girls are less involved than their male peers.
- Urban girls are the "have-nots" of physical education in the United States, with 84% reporting having no physical education classes during the previous week.



Go Out and Play: Youth Sports in America shows that girls who play sports have better general health, body esteem, quality of life and academic achievement.

- Daughters' involvement with sports is associated with higher levels of family satisfaction, for both dual-parent and single-parent families.
- Sports are a health asset for U.S. children. Organized sports participation is associated with general health, body esteem, healthy weight, popularity, higher quality of life and academic achievement.
- Youth sports are racially diverse, but girls of color are much more likely than their male counterparts to be non-athletes.
- Among children with disabilities, daughters are much less physically active than sons.
- Sons in immigrant families are much more likely than daughters to play sports.

The report contains 37 policy recommendations formulated by a National Policy Advisory Board. Key findings and interpretations are based on rigorous statistical analyses. To access the full report, go to www.WomensSportsFoundation.org/GoOutandPlay