

Go Out and Play: Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

Go Out and Play: Youth Sports in America is a comprehensive, 184-page research report, which 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).

The *Go Out and Play: Youth Sports in America* study points to a formidable challenge to get more girls involved with physical activity and sports. Girls' athletic participation has gone up since Title IX, but not all girls are benefiting equally. In many communities, girls lag behind boys in exercise frequency and athletic participation. Much of the gender gap in sports and physical activity is rooted in wider economic inequalities, which, in turn, can erode or elevate the capacity of families, schools and communities to provide equal opportunities for all children to engage in exercise and sports. The convergence of the gender gap and wealth gap is particularly salient in U.S. cities, where the rate of physical activity among urban girls lags well behind that of their male counterparts. Girls in rural communities also often lack similar access to sports and exercise programs as boys. The greater parity between girls' and boys' involvement with sports in suburban communities not only shows that progress toward gender equity in sports and physical activity has been made, but also that it can be made.

A group of nationally recognized leaders from government, education, academia and sport were invited to review an earlier copy of this report and to recommend guidelines for future planning and action. The report contains 37 specific policy recommendations that are categorized under the following nine main headings.

- Provide young girls with the tools to succeed at sport.
- Help families tap the resource of sports.
- Capitalize on school-based and after-school physical education.
- Address girls' wider interests in sports and exercise activities.
- Close the gender gap in sports and physical activity.
- Counteract the negative impacts of economic disparities on children's development through sports.
- Empower children with disabilities.
- Acknowledge the physical activity needs of children in immigrant families.
- Recognize diversity and who is in and out of the game.

To access the full report, go to www.WomensSportsFoundation.org/GoOutandPlay

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