



Contact: Jaime McBeth
Women's Sports Foundation
646.912.8099

JMcBeth@WomensSportsFoundation.org

Women's Sports Foundation Report "Go Out and Play" Finds: Families Benefit When Kids Play Sports, Many Schools Failing

Urban Girls Last in Line for Sports Opportunities

Kids with Disabilities All but Ignored

Girls from Immigrant Families Fighting Cultural Stereotypes

NEW YORK, N.Y., October 9, 2008 – The Women's Sports Foundation today released "Go Out and Play: Youth Sports in America," an exhaustive study of children's participation in sports and exercise, the first to document the benefit of sports to the wellness of families.

"In addition to the powerful role sports play in shaping kids' health, the study finds when kids play sports families are happier," stated Women's Sports Foundation President Aimee Mullins of the study, which found increased communication in families with active children. "The study gives parents new evidence and motivation to ensure their children play — important information since kids today often depend on their parents, schools and communities to find sports opportunities," she continued.

The Foundation partnered with Harris Interactive to survey 2,185 third- through 12th-graders and 863 parents in this unprecedented investigation of the numbers of children playing, types of sports being played, the demographic profiles of today's child athletes and the role of family and community in shaping kids' physical activity.

Although the report finds children's play linked to healthier, more content families, many parents, especially African-Americans and Hispanics, reported that schools are shortchanging their daughters.

The first study to examine sports among children from immigrant families and children with disabilities, it reports these subpopulations are in greater jeopardy of being shut out of sports. The most at-risk group — urban girls — receive far fewer opportunities to play.

About nine in 100 families (9%) have a child with a disability. Many of these parents report a lack of known accommodations for play. More than two-thirds of these parents reported that their kids would be interested in playing, but 38% said no such athletic opportunities exist.

Similar to the film "Bend it Like Beckham," some immigrant families' gender models may be more aligned with cultural traditions, allowing little room for girls' sports participation. About 43% of girls from these families play sports, compared to 75% of boys.

Perhaps last in line are urban girls, 84% of whom have no physical education class in 11th and 12th grades.

Possibly the study's most encouraging finding is that many suburban girls' interest in sports and opportunities to play are on par with boys.

“A level playing field exists for suburban boys and girls,” stated lead researcher Dr. Don Sabo. “However, urban communities are often faced with a lack of space and resources. When funds for sports are found, boys seem to come first, leaving girls literally with leftovers,” he added.

According to the report, parents — especially dads — are critical in ensuring that kids play. Fathers tend to be the teachers of sports in the family, but currently dads are more apt to actively teach their sons.

A National Policy Advisory Board formulated the report’s 37 policy recommendations.

A copy of the complete report is available at www.WomensSportsFoundation.org.

Survey Methodology

The “Go Out and Play: Youth Sports in America” study includes two surveys: one of children in grades 3 – 12 and one of parents of children in grade 3-12. The student survey was conducted by a self-administered questionnaire during class time in school with 2,185 students in grades three through 12. Interviews were conducted by Harris Interactive on behalf of the Women’s Sports Foundation between February 21 and June 19, 2007 and between September 13 and October 30, 2007. The parent survey was conducted by telephone within the United States by Harris Interactive on behalf of the Women’s Sports Foundation between April 13 and May 22, 2007 among 863 parents of students in grades 3-12. A full methodology for each of these studies is available. Harris Interactive was responsible for the data collection and initial analysis; the principle investigators were responsible for the final analysis and reporting.

About the Women’s Sports Foundation

The Women’s Sports Foundation—the leading authority on the participation of women and girls in sports—advocates for equality, educates the public, conducts research and offers grants to promote sports and physical activity for girls and women.

Founded by Billie Jean King in 1974, the Women’s Sports Foundation builds on her legacy as a champion athlete, advocate of social justice and agent of change. We strive for gender equity and fight discrimination in all aspects of athletics.

Our work shapes public attitude about women’s sports and athletes, builds capacities for organizations that get girls active, provides equal opportunities for girls and women, and supports physically and emotionally healthy lifestyles.

The Women’s Sports Foundation is recognized worldwide for its leadership, vision, strength, expertise and influence.

For more information, please call the Women’s Sports Foundation at 800.227.3988 or visit www.WomensSportsFoundation.org.

About Harris Interactive®

Harris Interactive is a global leader in custom market research. With a long and rich history in multimodal research, powered by our science and technology, we assist clients in achieving business results. Harris Interactive serves clients globally through our North American, European and Asian offices and a network of independent market research firms. For more information, please visit www.harrisinteractive.com.