

Sports participation gap exists between youth from lower-income and middle-income families

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Lower-income parents are less likely than their higher-income counterparts to involve their children in youth sports because of obstacles such as rising costs of these extracurricular activities, according to a new RAND Corporation study.

Researchers surveyed a pool of approximately 2,800 parents, public school administrators and community sports program leaders and found that financial costs and time commitments were barriers to sports participation for middle and high school youths.

Of those surveyed, 52% of parents from [lower-income families](#) reported that their children in grade 6-12 participated in sports, as compared to 66% of middle- and higher-income families. (Middle- and higher-income families had an annual household income of \$50,000 or more.)

Though costs for sports activities has increased in the past five years, about 63% of public school administrators indicated that [school](#) funding for sports has either remained flat or is decreasing. As for why parents didn't involve their children in sports, about 35% of all families cited financial costs as a reason, while 42% of lower-income families reported the same.

"Most survey participants thought [youth sports](#) participation provided [physical health](#), social and emotional and academic benefits," said Anamarie Whitaker, lead author of the report and a policy researcher at RAND, a nonprofit, nonpartisan research organization. "However, the increasing costs for such activities are often passed along to families, which has become more burdensome for those who are lower-income."

Researchers recommend that community-based organizations help reduce out-of-pocket costs for

low-income families to increase their children's participation in sports. Providing equipment and transportation, while also minimizing parent time commitments, may have the greatest effect on increasing sports participation among youths from [lower-income](#) families, the study also noted.

Provided by RAND Corporation

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