

California Park and Recreation Gender Equity in Community Sports Report

For the first time since the passage of AB 2404—a California law requiring gender equity in community athletic programs—information is available to measure how park and recreation departments are implementing the law and the gaps that remain in gender equity.



GIRLS, SPORTS & LIFELONG BENEFITS

We know from research that girls who play sports are more likely to graduate from high school and college, live healthier lives, develop leadership skills, and succeed in the workplace.¹ Given these known benefits, **girls need sports opportunities in their neighborhood park and recreation departments.** This is particularly true for low-income girls who may not have access to school teams and private club sports. While great strides have been made in school athletic programs through Title IX (the federal law requiring gender equity in public education and athletics) local park and recreation departments still have work to do to ensure that all girls have equal access in community youth sports programs alongside boys, as required by AB 2404.

CALIFORNIA'S YOUTH SPORTS GENDER EQUITY LAW, AB 2404



California state law **AB 2404 is the first of its kind in the country to address gender inequities in community youth athletics offered by park and recreation departments.** Passed in 2004 and built on a foundation of Title IX principles, AB 2404 mandates that girls receive equal opportunities, treatment, and benefits in leagues hosted or run by park and recreation departments in the state.

AB 2404 was designed to change the status quo. Historically, girls have had fewer chances to join local sports teams, inferior fields and courts, and fewer resources, compared to boys. The law aims to ensure that girls and boys have equal athletic participation opportunities. This mandate means that the number of team slots available should be proportionate to the number of girls and boys in the community. AB 2404 further requires gender equity in game and practice locations, scheduling and practice times, equipment, storage, spending, and more. **Until now, there has been no empirical research** on the understanding and implementation of AB 2404 by California park and recreation

departments. This report finally sheds light on application of AB 2404 throughout California, nearly a decade after the law's effective date.

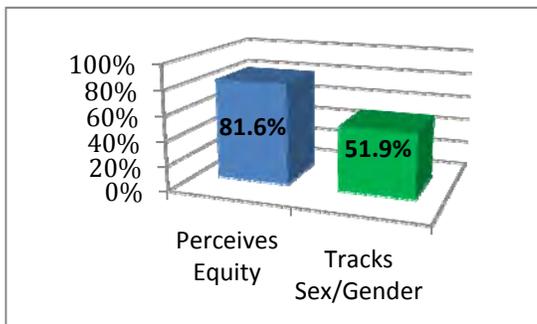
DATA AND METHOD

The California Park and Recreation Gender Equity in Community Sports Survey was co-created by [Fair Play for Girls in Sports](#) (of the Legal Aid Society-Employment Law Center), [Coaching Corps](#), and the [California Park & Recreation Society](#) (CPRS). The survey was designed to measure park and recreation employees' perceptions of gender equity in youth sport programs, knowledge of AB 2404, whether and how park and recreation departments track athletic program participants' demographic data, and ways in which respondents wish to learn more about AB 2404. The survey was electronically distributed to approximately 1500 individuals working for California park and recreation agencies in April 2013. The final sample includes 207 respondents—a 13.7% response rate.



Respondents represent a wide range of individuals working in parks and recreation in **diverse cities across California** in terms of population size, median household income, poverty level, and ethnic composition. The majority of respondents hold managerial (41.7%) or administrator (35.4%) positions within park and recreation departments, while 22.8% of the sample hold staff-level positions. The average age among respondents is 45 years old, and women represent 63% of respondents.

PERCEPTION OF GENDER EQUITY IN SPORTS IN CALIFORNIA PARK AND RECREATION DEPARTMENTS & TRACKING OF GENDER



Respondents overwhelmingly reported that they believe equity exists between boys and girls in sports programming (81.6%). **However, only 51.9% of all respondents reported that their local park and recreation department tracks the sex/gender of participants in their youth sport programs.** Data is not publicly available from park and recreation departments regarding participants' gender. Thus, assessing *whether the gender of participants is tracked* is an indicator of equity. Without tracking whether girls or boys are participating in sports, gender equity is not assured in programming in accordance with AB 2404's mandate. Strikingly, the majority of respondents in departments that do *not* systematically

track gender of youth in their athletic programs nonetheless believe equal opportunity, treatment, and benefits exist between girls and boys in their sports programming (79.4%). **Park and recreation departments are responsible for AB 2404 compliance, even where outside organizations and third parties are using park and recreation facilities.** One respondent touched on the need for more information as to third party facility use: "We only track gender in our own programs but not from organizations that use our fields."

When asked what **factor(s) are causing girls to experience unequal opportunities, treatment, and benefits** in comparison to boys with regard to sports programming, respondents noted:

- "Lack of outreach to girls."
- "Contract with little league excludes girls' softball use of fields."
- "My department is beginning to become more aware of the need."



AWARENESS OF GENDER EQUITY IN SPORTS & AB 2404 – THE NEED FOR TRAINING

Nearly two-thirds of respondents (65%) reported that they have heard of AB 2404 requiring gender equity in youth sports. Managers (68.6%) and administrators (68.5%) were more likely than general staff members (55.8%) to report awareness of the state law. However, even among those who have heard of the law, **very few respondents (less than 12%)—irrespective of their position—reported that they had received training on AB 2404 or that they had learned about the law in detail.** The majority of respondents familiar with the law report having a basic understanding of how AB 2404 applies to community youth athletic programs, but deeper knowledge is lacking.

Such data demonstrates a large gap in what California park and recreation departments know about the law designed to ensure gender equity in sports programs, **offering an excellent opportunity for additional training at the managerial, administrative, and entry-level.** Respondents reported that it would be most effective for them to receive training about AB 2404 through web pages, followed by in-person trainings, and/or conferences, written materials, and webinars, noting:

- "I think it would be a great idea to offer a training session on AB 2404 and Title IX to educate communities."
- "Gender equality for girls is an area that rec. departments need to dedicate some resources."
- "I believe rec. programming has historically been geared towards boys and now it's time for a change."

PARTNERS TO MAKE AB 2404-COMPLIANCE AND GENDER EQUITY A REALITY

[Fair Play for Girls in Sports](#) provides training and tools for increasing awareness of and compliance with AB 2404. [Coaching Corps](#) offers a wide array of resources for park and recreation departments to engage more girls in sports programming throughout the state. [California Park & Recreation Society](#) provides technical assistance and support in conferences and member meetings.

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¹ *The Case for High School Activities*, National Federation of State High School Associations (2008); *Trends in Graduation-Success Rates and Federal Graduation Rates at NCAA Division I Institutions*, NCAA (2012); *Her Life Depends on It II*, Women's Sports Foundation (2009); *Ernst & Young Studies The Connection Between Female Executives And Sports*, Forbes (2013); *Beyond the Classroom: Using Title IX to Measure the Return to High School Sports*, Betsey Stevenson/NBER (2010).