



Girls Sports Survey

Summary of 2020 Findings

Introduction

San Francisco Recreation and Parks Department (SFRPD) and the Fair Play for Girls in Sports Project (a San Francisco-based nonprofit) launched a first-of-its-kind survey in 2020 about the interests, needs, and barriers related to sports participation among girls. **We heard from 890 parents/caregivers representing 1,249 girls under 18 who live and/or play in San Francisco.**

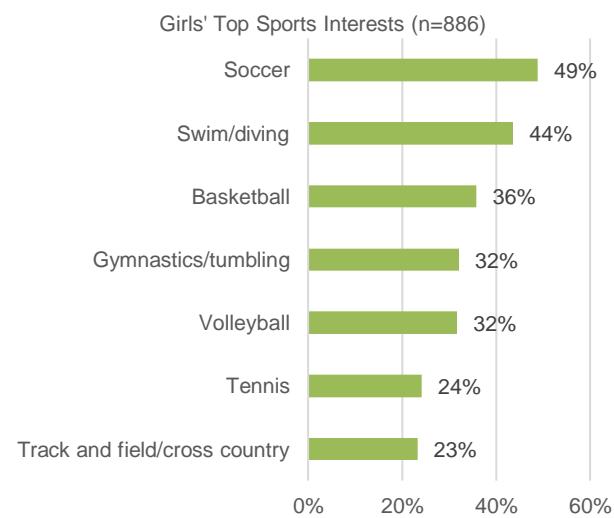
The Girls' Sports Survey* stemmed from the desire to help more girls get more involved in sports, particularly in communities of color and low-income communities that are often missing out on the tremendous benefits of sports, including greater physical and mental health, higher educational attainment, and employment success later in life.

Girls' Sports Experiences & Interests

Most of the surveyed girls (around 90%) have previously played sports, including those offered through SFRPD, independent sports leagues, school teams, or other organizations.

We learned that nearly all girls (98% of respondents) are interested in playing sports now or in the future! Many want to continue or increase their involvement in their chosen sports (e.g., more seasons and levels of play) and/or try new sports.

A wide variety of sports appeal to girls—top interests are soccer, swim, and basketball. Girls' sports interests may change over time: swim and gymnastics are popular early introductions to sports, and basketball and volleyball appeal more to older girls.



Increasing Girls' Sports Involvement

Girls are significantly underrepresented in sports across the country, often because they face barriers such as fewer sports and slots available, lower-quality facilities and coaching, and other challenges that are not commonly faced by boys.

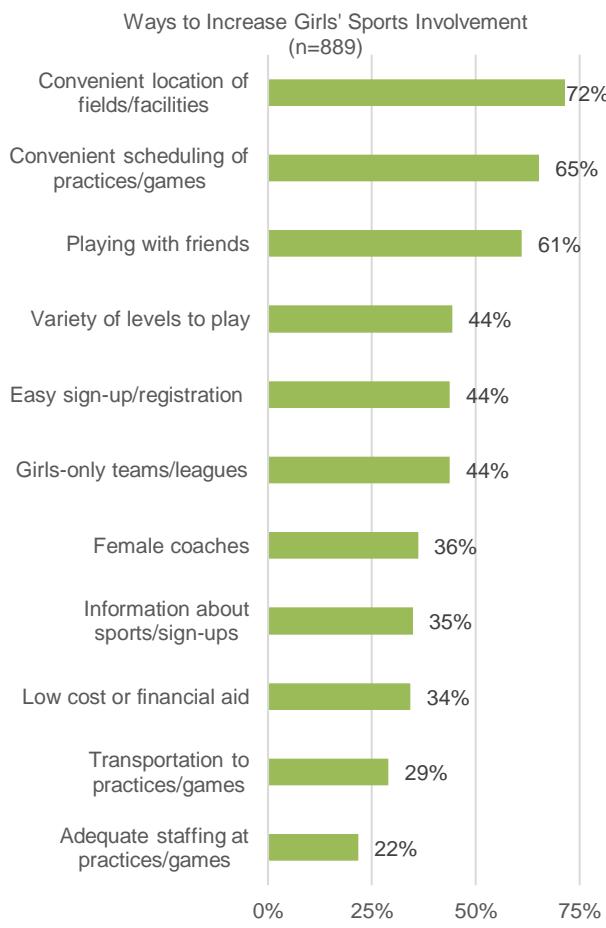
In this survey, **nearly one-in-five respondents (17%) say girls have experienced difficulties with sports run or hosted by SFRPD**, primarily

due to limited availability of enrollment slots, and the lack of easily accessible places to play.

"It's difficult to sign up for t-ball, basketball, and MicroSoccer due to websites being confusing, leagues being over-subscribed, and the complex sign-up process."

We learned that interest in sports is not the issue, so what would help girls in San Francisco start or increase their involvement in sports?

Most girls want more convenient locations for sports, convenient times to play, and the ability to play with friends.



Some strategies may encourage first-time participation (e.g., easy sign-up, "buddy" requests). Other supports could help girls gain competence and confidence in sports (e.g., varied levels of play, girls-only teams/leagues).

"We want more variety and beginning classes for older kids."

Next Steps

Most surveys were collected before the COVID-19 pandemic. In the meantime, sports have been very limited due to public health guidelines. However, the high level of interest among girls is encouraging as more youth sports open up in 2021 and beyond.

With a strong commitment to equity, and in response to this input from girls and families, SFRPD is taking the following steps:

- Continue learning about girls' sports interests and needs**, especially among girls who have never played organized sports, and those in underrepresented groups. SFRPD has already collected more than 300 additional surveys.
- Integrate girls' sports best practices into staff training and all SFRPD programming** so girls have high-quality opportunities from their first day of play onward.
- Improve girls' sports outreach** so more girls can learn about sports available, get involved, and have fun! As a start, check out SFRPD's new [girls' sports web page](#).
- Increase girls' sports offerings and enrollment** through SFRPD, partner leagues, schools, and other organizations.

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*SFRPD and Fair Play hired an independent consultant for survey design, analysis, and reporting. The project partners offered the short (3-minute) survey in English, Chinese, and Spanish on their websites, social media, to partners, and at a community event. Respondents could enter a raffle for a \$5 Starbucks gift card. Findings represent diverse girls in terms of age (majority 6-11 yrs.), neighborhood (46 zip codes in and around SF), and race (57% identify as a person of color or multiracial).

[Kris Helé](#) prepared this summary in May 2021 for [San Francisco Recreation & Parks Department](#) and [Fair Play for Girls in Sports](#). Contact [SFRPD](#) or [Fair Play](#) for more information about this project and sports equity.

