

Aspen Institute Releases Youth Sports Report in Oakland

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State of Play Oakland, in partnership with Stephen and Ayesha Curry's foundation, shows ways to improve disparities in sports participation by race, gender and income

Washington, DC, August 24, 2022 — A new report released today by the Aspen Institute Sports & Society Program shows a divide based upon race, gender and income in youth sports experiences for some children in Oakland, California. [*State of Play Oakland*](#) analyzes the state of youth sports in the city and offers recommendations to grow quality access to sports and physical activity for all children.

Only 14% of Oakland youth receive the 60 minutes of daily physical activity recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention – below the national average of 23%. If even 25% of these children became physically active, \$157 million in direct medical costs would be averted and 9,829 years of life would be saved, according to analysis by the Public Health Computational and Operational Research (PHICOR).

Oakland girls (9%) are less likely to be sufficiently physically active than boys (19%). Access to quality parks and teams is unevenly distributed based on race and ethnicity. White children are three times more likely than Latino/a youth and two times more likely than Black and Asian kids to play sports on a recreation center team.

The report, authored by the Aspen Institute and in partnership with Stephen and Ayesha Curry's Eat. Learn. Play. Foundation, is available to read [here](#) and at as.institute.org/sopoakland. Read the [executive summary](#) of the report. Watch a message from Stephen Curry [here](#).

State of Play Oakland is the product of a one-year analysis of the city of Oakland. The Aspen Institute identified 40 findings and made recommendations based on the unique characteristics of Oakland through youth surveys; focus-group discussions with youth, coaches, and parents and caregivers; and analysis of Oakland's youth sports ecosystem.

Although Oakland is largely viewed as a football and basketball town, youth said they are very interested in trying other sports. However, children lack sustainable ways to keep playing these new sports to establish healthy habits for life. The report's main recommendation is to diversify sports offerings through partnerships by leveraging the city's existing community school model.

“Imagine if every child in Oakland had access to a quality sports activity into and through adolescence, and the impact on their health as they move into adulthood,” said Tom Farrey, Aspen Institute Sports & Society Program executive director. “We hope this report makes a meaningful contribution in identifying the gaps to access to sports for youth in Oakland and how stakeholders can work together to fill them. No one organization, or even sector, can do this alone.”

“*State of Play Oakland* provides us with a comprehensive analysis of play opportunities available to kids in our community and suggestions on how the community can fill many of the gaps that currently exist,” said Stephen Curry, Eat. Learn. Play. Foundation co-founder. “We’re excited to share with you our ambitious play strategy in the weeks and months ahead, including our plans to renovate lots of play spaces across the city, as well as make sure high-quality recreational and school sports programming is available to every young person in Oakland.”

Some other key findings in Oakland:

- Girls represented only 17% of youth participants on city-run sports teams in 2019. Girls were two times more likely than boys to say they are not interested in sports. But girls are rarely introduced to sports they say they want to try.
- Youth expressed strong interest in trying individual sports. Archery is the No. 1 sport both boys and girls said they most want to try. Karate/mixed martial arts, roller skating, fencing, rock climbing, figure skating, gymnastics, skateboarding, and parkour also ranked high.
- Baseball, once a popular game in Oakland, did not make the top 10 sports boys want to try, surpassed by activities like parkour, surfing and mixed martial arts. Only 14% of boys reported they regularly play baseball, much lower than basketball (50%), soccer (33%) and tackle football (26%).
- Almost 2 in 10 youth said they don’t participate in sports because they believe they are not good enough to play. Youth who identified as nonbinary, Asian, Latino/a or female reported this lack of confidence at higher rates.
- Playing with friends is the No. 1 reason youth said they play sports, followed by having fun. Winning games ranked seventh and chasing college athletic scholarships was 12th.

State of Play Oakland is the 11th community report of the Aspen Institute’s Project Play initiative, which aims to grow quality sports access for all children. The Aspen Institute has produced county reports on Seattle-King County, Washington and Mobile County, Alabama; a state report on Hawai’i; regional reports on Southeast Michigan, Western New York, Greater Rochester and the Finger Lakes, and Central Ohio; and local reports on Baltimore, Oakland, Harlem, New York, Camden, New

Jersey. The Institute's next community report in 2023 will analyze Tacoma-Pierce County, Washington.

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The Aspen Institute is a global nonprofit organization committed to realizing a free, just, and equitable society. Founded in 1949, the Institute drives change through dialogue, leadership, and action to help solve the most important challenges facing the United States and the world. The Aspen Institute Sports & Society Program's main initiative is Project Play, which develops, applies and shares knowledge that helps build healthy communities through sports. For more information, visit www.ProjectPlay.us.

Eat. Learn. Play. Foundation is an organization dedicated to unleashing the potential of every child, paving the way for amazing kids and opening doors to bright futures. Founded by Stephen and Ayesha Curry in 2019, Eat. Learn. Play. launched with a focus on improving the lives of kids and families in Oakland, the Bay Area, and across the country. Rooted in three of the most vital pillars for a healthy childhood – nutrition, education, and physical activity – Eat. Learn. Play. is working to ensure that every child in Oakland has access to the nutritious food they need to be healthy and thrive; resources to learn and read; and safe places and equitable opportunities to play. The organization, which is anchored around the message that children are our future, is committed to developing partnerships and initiatives that make a positive impact for generations to come.

www.EatLearnPlay.org