

2026 CALIFORNIA PLAY EQUITY REPORT



LETTER FROM RENATA SIMRIL

We are excited to share the second iteration of our California Play Equity Report. In 2024, we launched the first-ever statewide study that examined the landscape of youth sports participation and physical activity across our entire state, with special focuses on communities experiencing barriers to participation. Now, in 2026, we revisit the baseline we established and dig even deeper into the data and insights.

With an expanded sample size, the inclusion of youth and parent focus groups, and broader representation from communities across California, this report provides an even more comprehensive understanding of the opportunities and inequities that exist in access to sport, play, and movement. We will continue to leverage this data not only to better understand trends and disparities, but also as a catalyst for conversations, collaboration, and solutions that can help close the play equity gap.

Similar to the findings two years ago, the 2026 California Play Equity Report finds that a majority (76%) of children across the state are not meeting recommended guidelines for physical activity. Issues of accessibility like cost, a lack of interest, extreme time commitments and a lack of fun continue to drive drop out rates in sport. In fact, one out of three parents report that their child stopped playing a sport since 2024.

At the same time, the report makes clear that Californians are ready for solutions. Parents overwhelmingly support policy approaches that would improve funding, access, and opportunities for youth sports, play, and physical activity. Notably, 78% of parents support the creation of a California Department of Youth Sports to provide leadership, coordination, and investment in youth sports and physical activity across the state.

For California, this is a critical moment because play matters. A lack of access to sport, play, and physical activity denies young people the lifelong physical, mental, social, and emotional benefits that play provides. It also limits opportunities for connection, belonging, confidence, and wellbeing.

As you explore this report, I invite you to reflect on the equity gaps that persist, and ask yourself if what we are currently doing is working for all youth. If we ask ourselves tough questions and develop policy solutions together, we can create a future where play equity is a reality for all youth.

Thank you for your commitment to the play equity movement. Let's continue to work together to close the gap. Let's play because it matters.

—Renata Simril, President & CEO, LA84 Foundation



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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION—PLAY BECAUSE IT MATTERS

Research documents that in today’s climate roughly nine in ten California youth report struggling with their mental health.¹ While youth experience a growing mental health crisis, regular engagement in sports, play, and physical activity have a demonstrated positive impact on mental health and emotional well-being.² The **2026 Play Equity report finds that California parents and youth widely recognize the importance of sport, play, and physical activity.** Parents and youth are keenly aware of the mental health benefits derived from physical activity, particularly its ability to ameliorate feelings of social isolation and provide a sense of belonging. **Black/African American and Latino parents, mothers, lower-income parents,** and those living in the **Inland Empire or Central Valley** express particularly **high levels of consensus around the value of sports, play, and physical activity, particularly** as a conduit to improve mental health. Yet, youth from these groups are also the most likely to experience barriers to accessing regular physical activity. This discrepancy suggests that parents from groups who see the most value in sports and physical activity, and whose children may have the greatest need for its benefits, are also the least likely to be able to take advantage of opportunities for quality youth sports and play.

To address **these disparities, it is essential to continue working to implement changes that ensure equitable and fair access to active play, sport, and physical activity for all children,** regardless of **gender, race/ethnicity, age, region, ability level, sexual orientation, or family background** so that youth can access the benefits sports and physical activity provide.

¹ Blue Shield of California. BlueSky Youth Mental Health Survey: Perspectives on Mental Health from California’s Young People. June 2025.
https://iprsoftwaremedia.com/347/files/20258/FINAL_2025%20BlueSky%20Youth%20Mental%20Health%20Survey%20Summary%20Report..pdf

² Rodriguez-Ayllon, M., Cadenas-Sánchez, C., Estévez-López, F. et al. Role of Physical Activity and Sedentary Behavior in the Mental Health of Preschoolers, Children and Adolescents: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis. *Sports Med* 49, 1383–1410 (2019). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40279-019-01099-5>

KEY FINDINGS

Key Finding 1: Parents Overwhelmingly Recognize Benefits Of Active Play

1. Parents see a strong connection between physical activity and its benefits for their children. Nearly all parents believe that engaging in sports or physical activity can benefit young people “a great deal or quite a bit” through improving physical (95%) and mental health (89%). In addition, parents believe that sports and physical activity offer a variety of channels for young people to manage mental health challenges through opportunities for building social relationships (89%), providing a sense of belonging (86%), providing a safe space (77%), and offering opportunities for mentorship (70%).
 - In focus group discussions, parents detailed the challenges youth face today and the strain societal pressures place on youth mental health. In the words of one mother in response to a question about the climate for young people growing up today, *“Currently...the financial cost, the screens, also **society is demanding a lot.** That implies social media, bullying. It implies that they are watching social media and how **some** are doing and **get depressed and stressed, and depression, which is mental health, they just shut in to themselves and they isolate.**”* Within this context, many parents pointed to the role of sports, play, and physical activity in counterbalancing these pressures. In the words of another parent in response to the question of whether participation in sports, play, or physical activity might help youth address challenges with mental health, *“Yes, **it’s like therapy.** It helps them get distracted or get rid of the anxiety that they have. They forget about everything that they have to do and **they focus on playing, and they come home more relaxed after they have been playing.**”*
 - Youth also widely recognized the mental health benefits of physical activity. In the focus group discussions, youth pointed to sports as an outlet to build relationships, resolve feelings of isolation, and find a sense of belonging amongst their peers. During the focus group among males ages 14-15, one Bay Area youth shared: *“...through sports you can socialize with [other kids], you can see if you have anything in common after that. I feel like sports is just a **good way to find belonging...**”*

Figure 1—Parents’ Perception of the Benefits of Sport & Play

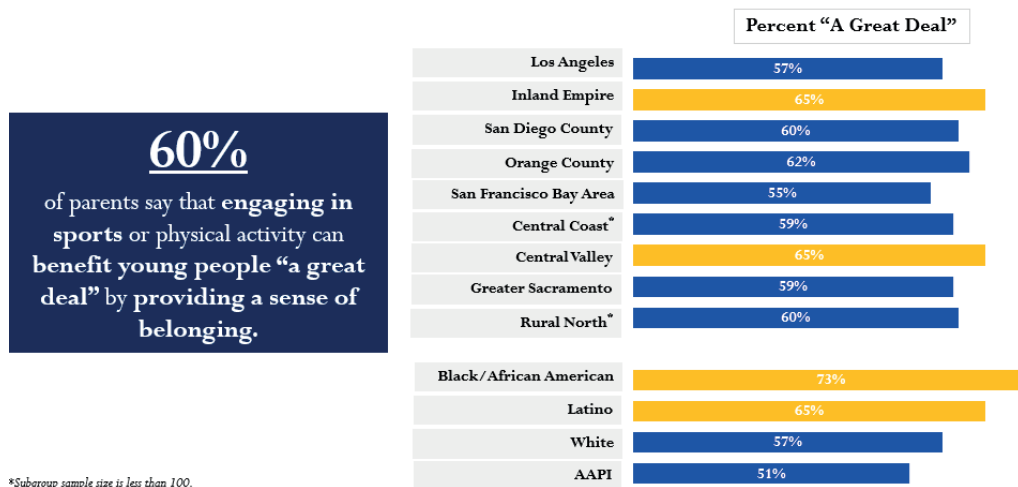
Benefit of Sport & Play	Percentages of Agreement (Benefits Young People “A Great Deal”)
Improving physical health, in general	76%
Improving mental health, in general	64%
Building social relationships	64%
Improving life skills	61%
Providing a sense of belonging	60%
Providing a safe space	53%
Offering opportunities for mentorship	46%

- Parents broadly draw the connection between physical activity and its benefits for their children’s mental health and healthy socialization across a variety of dimensions, including developing a sense of belonging (60%), building social relationships (64%), and providing a safe space (53%), as detailed in Figure 1. Levels of consensus around these benefits are particularly strong among Black/African American and Latino parents, parents in the Inland Empire and Central Valley, mothers, and parents earning less than \$50,000 per year. These are also groups and geographic regions of the state widely recognized as facing some of the starkest disparities in health and wellbeing. In this sense, the groups experiencing the greatest inequities in access to opportunities for youth sports, play, physical activity, and other resources, also place the highest value on play’s utility for their children’s mental health. This discrepancy further accentuates the play equity gap. Parents are keenly aware of how sport and play can ameliorate mental health challenges for their children, but barriers prevent them from accessing sport and play in their communities—denying many children the opportunity to experience the benefits of play for well-being.

Benefits of Active Play: Providing a Sense of Belonging

- Although three in five parents (60%) believe that engaging in sports or physical activity can benefit youth “a great deal” by providing a sense of belonging, the connection between sports and belonging resonates differently based on parent race/ethnicity and region. For example, three in four (73%) Black/African American parents and two in three Latino parents (65%) say that engaging in physical activity can benefit young people “a great deal” by providing a sense of belonging, compared to 60% of parents overall. Moreover, parents in the Inland Empire and Central Valley are most likely to view belonging as a benefit of sports—nearly two thirds of parents from these regions (65% in the Inland Empire and Central Valley) say sports provide “a great deal” of belonging—the highest among the regions of the State.

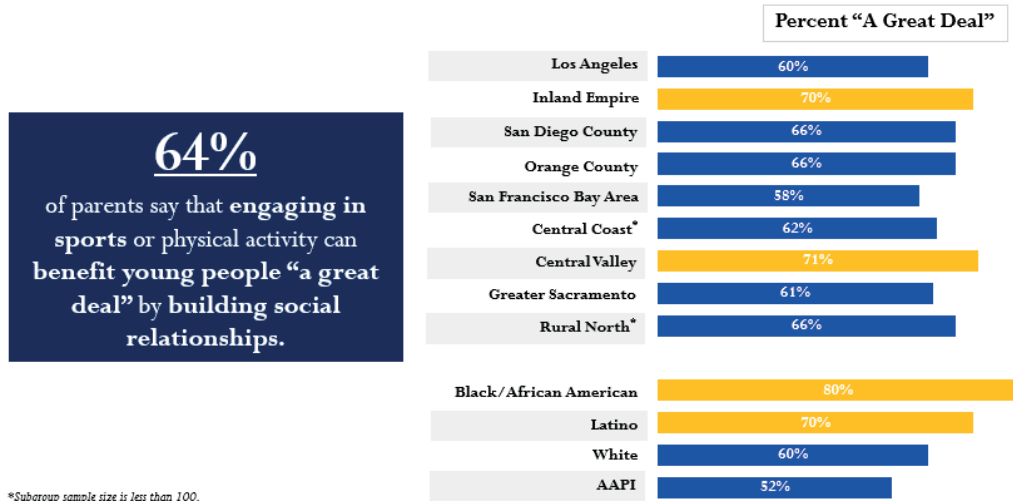
Figure 2—Benefits of Play, by Region and Race/Ethnicity: Providing a Sense of Belonging



Benefits of Active Play: Building Social Relationships

- Nearly two-thirds of parents (64%) see building social relationships as a benefit for youth who engage in sports, play, and physical activity. However, parents report different levels of intensity in how they perceive this connection across race/ethnicity, gender, and income. Four in five Black/African American parents (80%) report that engaging in physical activity can benefit young people “a great deal” by building social relationships, well above the statewide average of 64%. Parents in the Central Valley (71%) and in the Inland Empire (70%) are also more likely to draw this connection compared to parents across other regions.

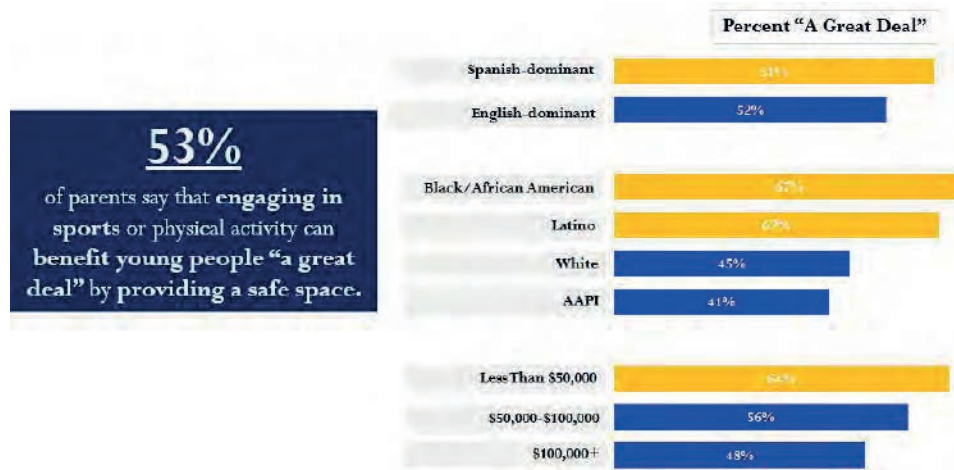
**Figure 3—Benefits of Play, by Region and Race/Ethnicity:
Building Social Relationships**



Benefits of Active Play: Providing A Safe Space

- Parents are also keenly aware of how sports, play, and physical activity can benefit their children by providing a safe space; 53% say that sports or physical activity can benefit youth “a great deal” in this area. Perceptions of sports, play, and physical activity as safe spaces differ by race/ethnicity, income, gender, and language preference. Black/African American (67%) and Latino parents (62%) are more likely to draw this connection compared with White (45%) and AAPI parents (41%). Likewise, more than three in five parents earning less than \$50,000 per year (64%) see a safe space as a benefit of physical activity, while less than half earning more than \$100,000 per year (48%) report the same. Finally, three in five mothers (59%) as well as Spanish-dominant parents (61%) report the same connection, compared with half of fathers (46%) and English-dominant parents (52%).

Figure 4—Benefits of Play, by Language, Race/Ethnicity, and Income: Providing A Safe Space



Parents Are Keenly Aware of the Mental Health Benefits Offered by Regular Sports, Play, and Physical Activity

- Parents recognize how potential benefits of sports, play, and physical activity can combine to improve their children’s mental health and well-being. In parent focus groups, one mother explicitly elevated how her child’s engagement in soccer—and the nature of team sports in general—fosters a safe space and sense of belonging through team camaraderie: *“In my opinion, **safe space is when you belong to a team, it’s my moment. I feel like I’m playing. It’s my space. I can develop along with my team. I think [soccer] is that safe space....”*** The fact that parents agree that sports and physical activity benefit youth mental health “a great deal”—across a variety of dimensions—suggests parents value how different benefits of sports, play, and physical activity can come together to support their children’s mental health and enhance their well-being.

Mental Health Benefits of Physical Activity, by Sport

- There are, however, differences in the perceptions of the mental health benefits of sports based on the type of sport youth play. For example, parents of children who play **team sports**, such as tackle football (77%), beach volleyball (75%), or cheer/dance (73%), are among the most likely to make this connection—with at least three in four reporting that engaging in sports can improve mental health “a great deal.” By comparison, only three in five parents of children who play more individualized sports—such as swimming (63%) or tennis (62%)—report the same benefits. This discrepancy is further accentuated across other dimensions of mental health benefits. Three in four parents of children who play tackle football (73%) find that it can provide a sense of belonging, compared with just over half (56%) of parents of youth who engage in cycling. While parents broadly

recognize the mental health benefits of sports, their level of consensus may differ based on the type of sport their children play—with team sports likely providing a distinctive lens through which parents view the mental health benefits of sports, play, and physical activity more acutely.

Figure 5—Benefits of Sports and Play, By Sport (Ranked by Improving Mental Health, In General)

	Improving Mental Health, In General ("A Great Deal")	Providing a Sense of Belonging ("A Great Deal")	Building Social Relationships ("A Great Deal")	Providing a Safe Space ("A Great Deal")
Football (Tackle)	77%	73%	76%	70%
Beach Volleyball	75%	71%	71%	63%
Cheer/Drill/Dance Team	73%	69%	70%	58%
Baseball	71%	67%	70%	60%
Gymnastics	71%	64%	67%	60%
Softball	70%	68%	69%	65%
Flag Football	70%	66%	68%	60%
Skateboarding	70%	62%	67%	60%
Golf	70%	65%	69%	55%
Wrestling	69%	62%	70%	60%
Track & Field	68%	69%	68%	58%
Court Volleyball	68%	63%	65%	55%
Surfing	68%	64%	62%	54%
Running/Jogging	68%	62%	64%	54%
Boxing	67%	67%	69%	66%
Soccer/Futsal	67%	64%	68%	56%

	Improving Mental Health, In General ("A Great Deal")	Providing a Sense of Belonging ("A Great Deal")	Building Social Relationships ("A Great Deal")	Providing a Safe Space ("A Great Deal")
Basketball	67%	63%	68%	57%
Rugby	67%	66%	67%	63%
Snow Sports	67%	60%	60%	46%
Running	67%	62%	64%	54%
Martial Arts	66%	60%	65%	54%
Hockey	64%	53%	51%	48%
Swimming	63%	58%	62%	52%
Cycling	63%	56%	60%	49%
Tennis	62%	57%	59%	45%

CHAPTER 2

INTRODUCTION—CALIFORNIA YOUTH CONTINUE TO FALL BELOW CDC GUIDELINES FOR RECOMMENDED LEVELS OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY—EQUITY GAPS PERSIST

While parents overwhelmingly recognize the mental health benefits of physical activity, **disparities in opportunities for play prevent youth from accessing these benefits** for themselves. Although youth activity levels have increased compared with youth activity levels in the 2024 Play Equity Report, a significant majority **still do not meet the Centers for Disease Control’s (CDC) recommended level of 60 minutes of daily physical activity.**³ Significant **gaps in physical activity levels persist across gender, race/ethnicity, and disability status.** Females, Latino and AAPI youth, disabled youth, and those from lower-income families all experience disparate levels of physical activity. These youth are less likely to unlock the full mental health benefits and opportunities for socio-emotional and physical development provided by regular engagement in sports, play, and physical activity.

Moreover, **money amplifies the duration of physical activity**—youth whose parents pay less than \$500 on their primary sport are much less likely to engage in physical activity for at least one hour (49% play an hour or more), as compared with those who spend \$1,500 or more (81% play an hour or more). This discrepancy suggests **that youth are less likely to access quality play through opportunities that are low-cost or free**—further compounding inequities, and constricting opportunities for play for youth whose families cannot afford to pay high costs for quality youth sport and play programs. In this sense, California youth experience a “pay-to-play” system—in which only those whose families can afford to spend a sizable sum on each child are able to achieve recommended activity levels and the associated physical and mental health benefits.

³ Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). “Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans.” <https://www.cdc.gov/physical-activity-basics/guidelines/index.html>

KEY FINDINGS

Key Finding 1: Activity Levels Among California Youth Have Improved Since 2024, But Still Fall Short Of CDC Recommended Levels

2. **California youth continue to fall short** in both the frequency and duration of their physical activity. Despite exposure to various types of play, sports, and physical activity, most children’s activity levels **do not meet the CDC’s recommendation** of 60 minutes of daily moderate-to-vigorous intensity physical activity.
 - Only one third (33%) of youth engage in sport, physical activity, or active play, every day. Of those who play every day, only a fourth (24%) are active for an hour or more. While youth activity levels have improved since 2024—when only 34% were active five times a week or more—a significant majority today (76%) still fail to meet the CDC’s recommendation of 60 minutes of daily moderate-to-vigorous physical activity.

Figure 1 – Overall Frequency of Play⁴

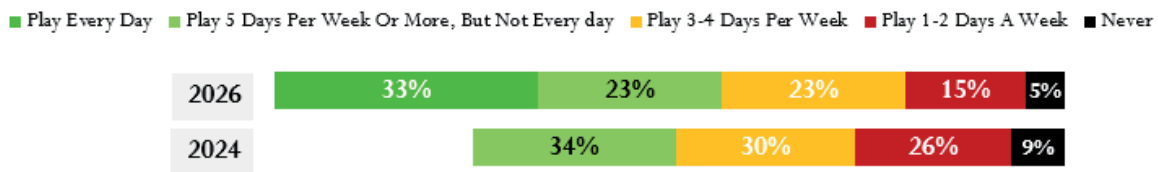


Figure 2 – Overall Frequency and Duration of Play⁵

	Overall		Play Every Day		Does Not Play Every Day	
	1 Hour Or More	Less Than 1 Hour	1 Hour or More ⁶	Less than 1 Hour	1 Hour or More	Less than 1 Hour
2026	61%	37%	24%	10%	37%	27%

⁴ Scale reflects the response options presented in the 2026 Play Equity Survey. The 2026 Play Equity Survey incorporated new response options that better align with the CDC’s recommendations for daily physical activity—adding “every day” as a new option. While the response scale for the 2024 study is different, the responses for the top item in 2026 (Every Day) and 2024 (5 Times Per Week or More) do align. Response options in the 2024 Play Equity Survey were “5 Times Per Week or More,” “3-4 Times Per Week,” “1-2 Times Per Week,” “Never.”

⁵ Duration of play was not asked in the 2024 Play Equity Survey.

⁶ The results for “Play Every Day” for “1 Hour or More” reflect the CDC’s recommendations for daily physical activity.

Activity by Gender

- **Equity gaps persist across genders** at the recommended frequency of physical activity (every day), **females are less engaged** compared with males. Fewer than one third (29%) of females play daily, as compared with nearly two in five males (37%). There is a similar gap in the duration of physical activity. Two in five females (40%) play for **less than one hour**, while only about a third of males (34%) report the same duration of play. Finally, fewer than two in seven males (28%), compared with just one in five females (20%), play at the highest intensity of physical activity—daily activity for at least one hour.

Figure 3 – Frequency of Play by Gender (Ranked by Play Every Day, 2026)

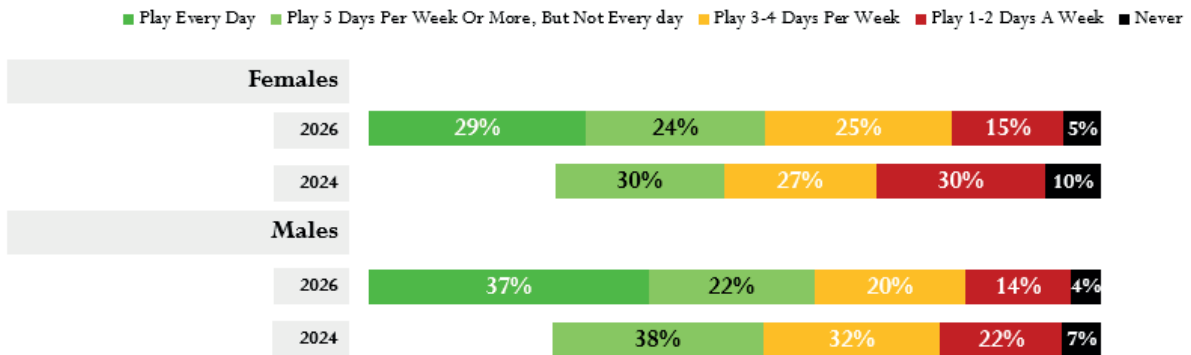


Figure 4 – Frequency and Duration of Play by Gender

	Overall		Play Every Day		Does Not Play Every Day	
	1 Hour Or More	Less Than 1 Hour	1 Hour or More	Less than 1 Hour	1 Hour or More	Less than 1 Hour
Females	58%	40%	20%	11%	39%	29%
Males	64%	34%	28%	10%	36%	24%

Activity by Race/Ethnicity

- Additionally, notable **inequities persist across race and ethnicity**. More than three in four Latino (78%) and more than four in five AAPI youth (82%) fail to achieve the CDC’s recommendations for frequency and duration of play. By contrast, White youth are least likely to fail to meet the recommended frequency and duration of play (70%)—playing every day for at least one hour. Moreover, Latino youth are active at the lowest frequency—only one third of Latino youth (31%) engage in daily physical activity, with nearly a quarter (23%) playing fewer than 3 days per week. This

is the highest proportion reporting frequency of playing fewer than 3 days per week among all racial/ethnic subgroups. By comparison, almost two in five White youth (37%) engage in daily physical activity and less than a fifth (15%) play fewer than 3 days per week. Moreover, a higher proportion of White youth—more than two-thirds (68%)—are physically active for an hour or more at a time, while less than one third (30%) are active for less than one hour. At least two in five youth among all other racial/ethnic groups are active for less than one hour (43% for AAPI youth, 40% for Latino and Black/African American youth).

Figure 5 – Frequency of Play by Race (Ranked by Play Every Day—Least To Greatest, 2026)

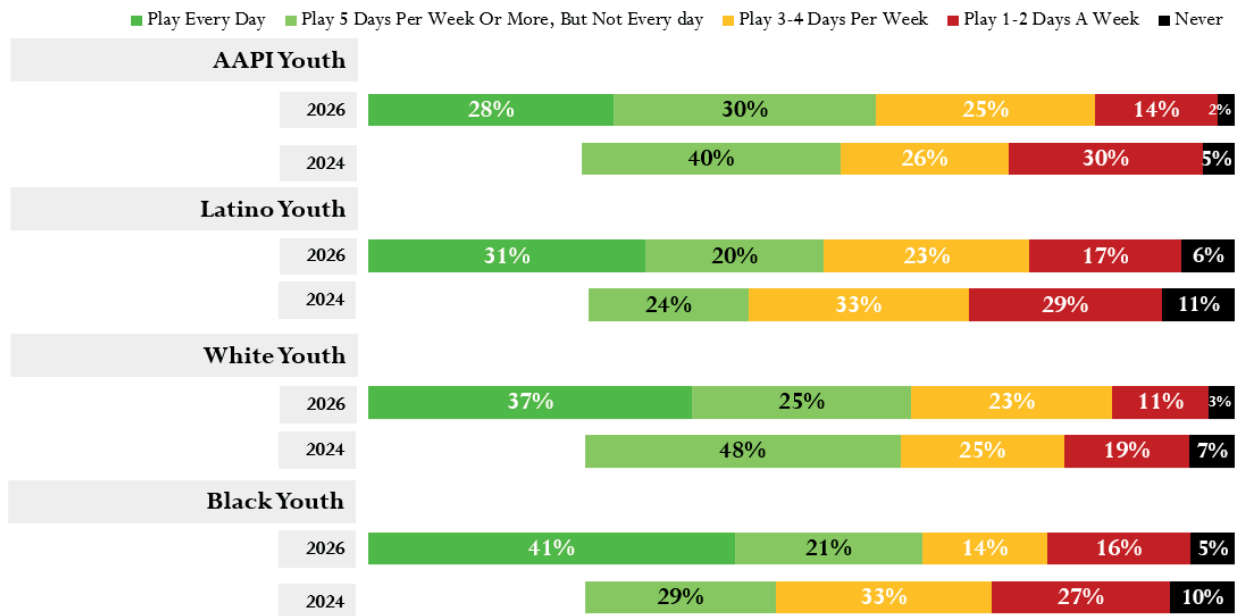


Figure 6 – Frequency and Duration of Play by Race

	Play Every Day		Does Not Play Every Day	
	1 Hour or More	Less than 1 Hour	1 Hour or More	Less than 1 Hour
AAPI	18%	10%	39%	32%
Latino	22%	12%	36%	29%
White	30%	8%	39%	22%

	Play Every Day		Does Not Play Every Day	
	1 Hour or More	Less than 1 Hour	1 Hour or More	Less than 1 Hour
Black/African American	27%	16%	31%	24%

- The equity **gaps become even more pronounced when considering the intersection of race and gender**, with significant disparities observed between males and females both within and across race/ethnicity. For example, Black/African American males are more likely to engage in daily physical activities for one hour or more (30%)—the CDC’s recommendation—compared with Black/African American females (26%). More striking, more than one third (35%) of White males are active at the highest levels, compared with less than one in five females who are Latina (18%) or AAPI (16%).

Figure 7 – Frequency of Play by Race/Gender (Ranked by Play Every Day, 2026—Least to Greatest)

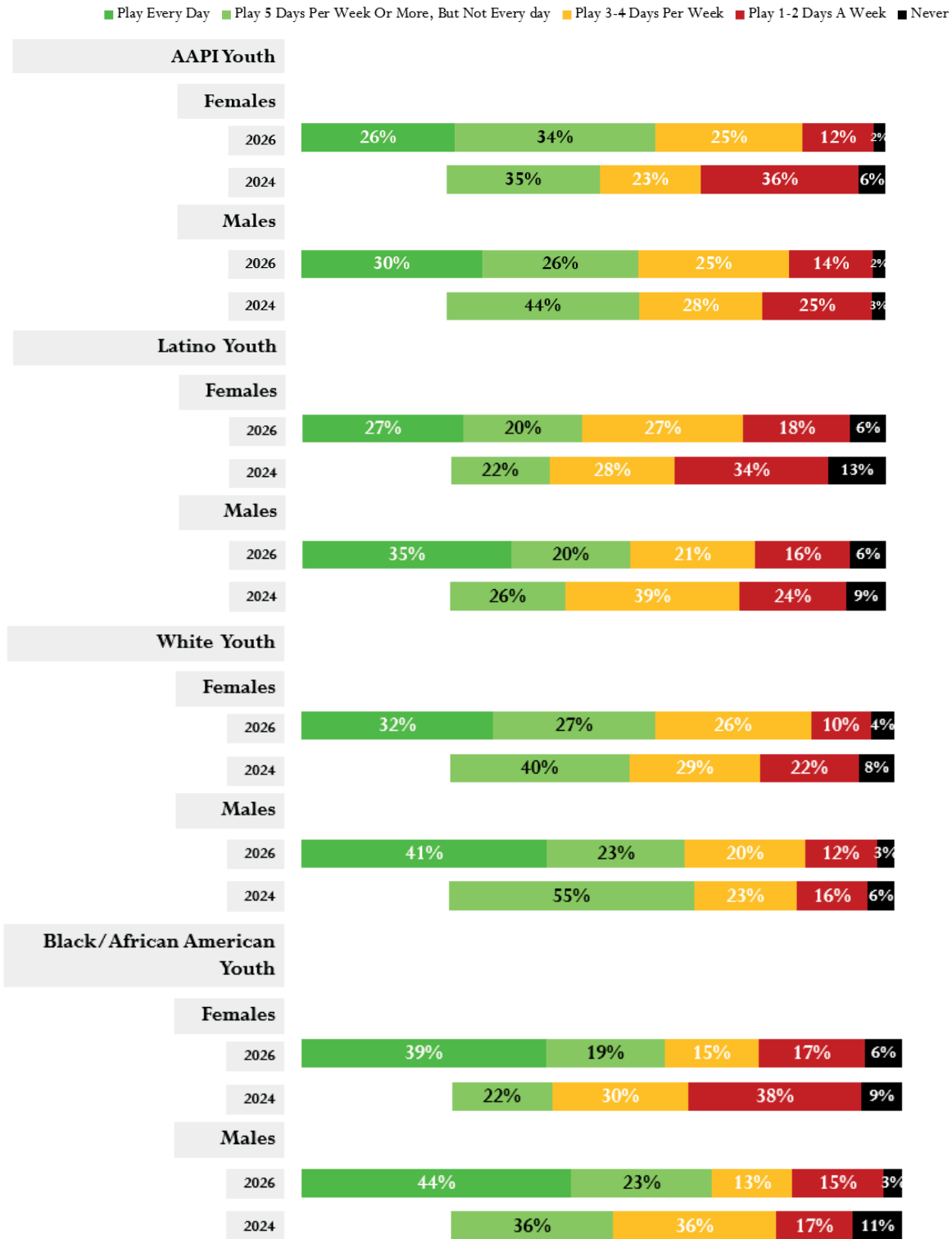


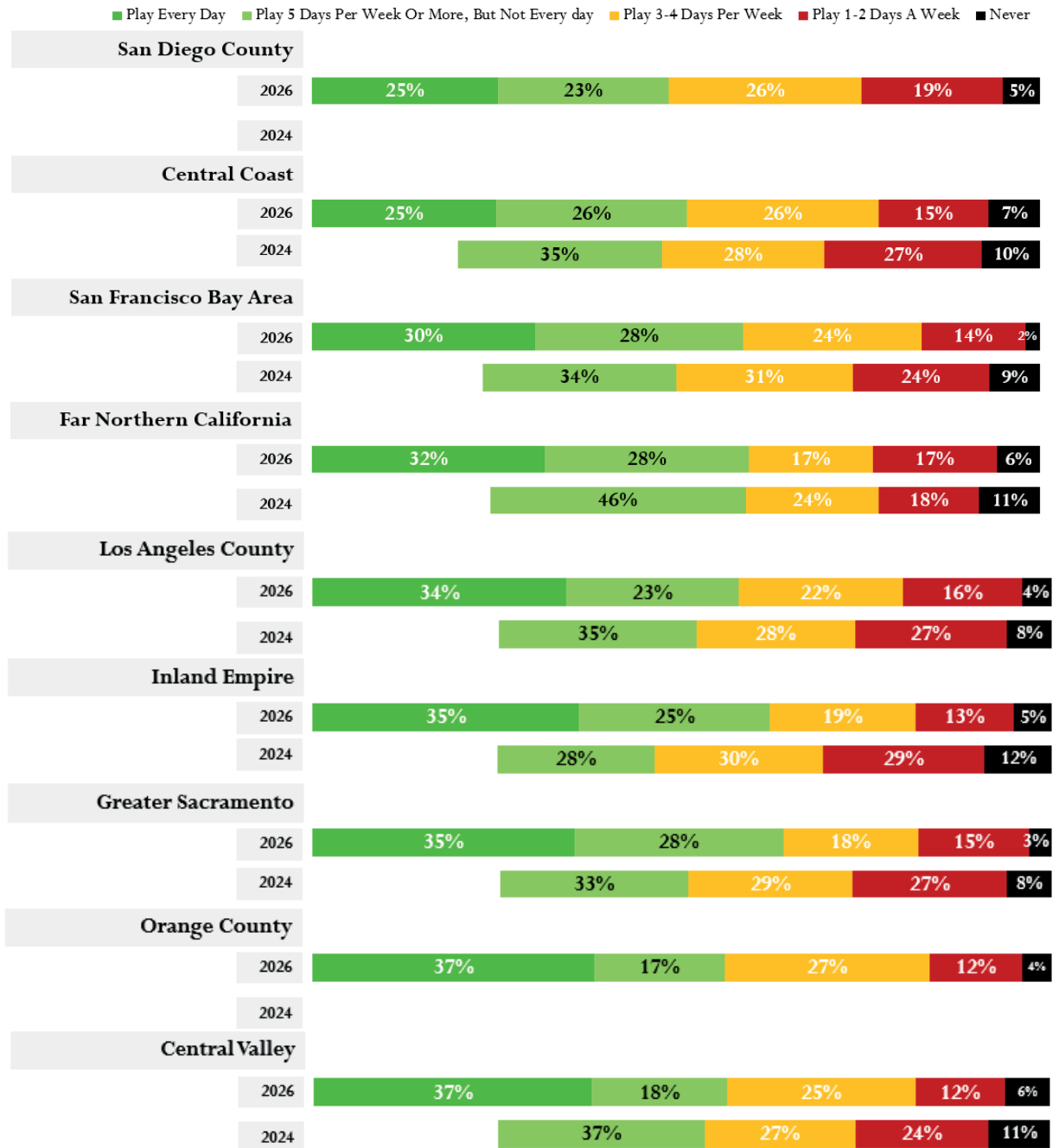
Figure 8 – Frequency and Duration of Play by Race/Gender (Ranked by Play Every Day for 1 Hour or More—Least to Greatest)

	Play Every Day		Does Not Play Every Day	
	1 Hour or More	Less than 1 Hour	1 Hour or More	Less than 1 Hour
AAPI Youth				
Females	16%	11%	42%	31%
Males	21%	11%	36%	33%
Latino Youth				
Females	18%	11%	39%	31%
Males	26%	12%	35%	26%
White Youth				
Females	24%	9%	40%	26%
Males	35%	7%	38%	18%
Black/African American Youth				
Females	26%	17%	29%	27%
Males	30%	15%	33%	19%

Activity by Region

- In addition, equity gaps for youth activity levels continue to be prevalent across regions of the state. **San Diego County** experiences the lowest youth activity levels in the State. Only a quarter of youth (25%) play every day and less than a fifth (18%) are active at both CDC recommended frequency and duration levels. By contrast, youth in the **Greater Sacramento region** report playing most frequently and for the longest durations—one third (35%) of Sacramento youth are physically active every day, three in four (72%) play for at least one hour when active, and nearly one-third (32%) play every day for at least one hour—the highest among all regions across the state.

Figure 9 – Frequency of Play by Region (Ranked by Play Every Day—Least to Greatest, 2026)⁷



⁷ In the 2024 Play Equity Survey, the number of responses from parents in San Diego County and Orange County was not sufficient to provide statistically reliable results. In the 2026 Play Equity Survey, the number of responses from the Central Coast and Far Northern California is below 100.

Figure 10 – Frequency and Duration of Play by Region (Ranked by Every Day For 1 Hour or More—Least to Greatest)

	Play Every Day		Does Not Play Every Day	
	1 Hour or More	Less than 1 Hour	1 Hour or More	Less than 1 Hour
San Diego County	18%	9%	41%	31%
Central Coast	21%	6%	46%	27%
San Francisco Bay Area	22%	9%	38%	29%
Los Angeles	23%	12%	35%	28%
Orange County	24%	15%	31%	29%
Far North⁸	24%	7%	46%	18%
Central Valley	26%	14%	32%	27%
Inland Empire	26%	12%	39%	22%
Greater Sacramento	32%	4%	40%	22%

Activity by Disability Status

- Finally, there is a **notable equity gap based on disability status**, as disabled youth are more likely to be physically active at the lowest levels of frequency and duration. More specifically, a quarter of disabled youth (25%) play fewer than three days per week, and more than two in five (46%) are physically active for less than one hour when they do play. By contrast, three in five youth without a disability (58%) are active five days a week or more, while two in three (63%) achieve at least one hour of physical activity when playing. While gaps are prevalent for disabled youth at the lower levels of activity, it is notable that at the highest levels of physical activity—every day for at least one hour—there is not an appreciable difference by disability status.

⁸Sample from Far Northern California is less than 100.

Figure 11 – Frequency of Play by Disability Status

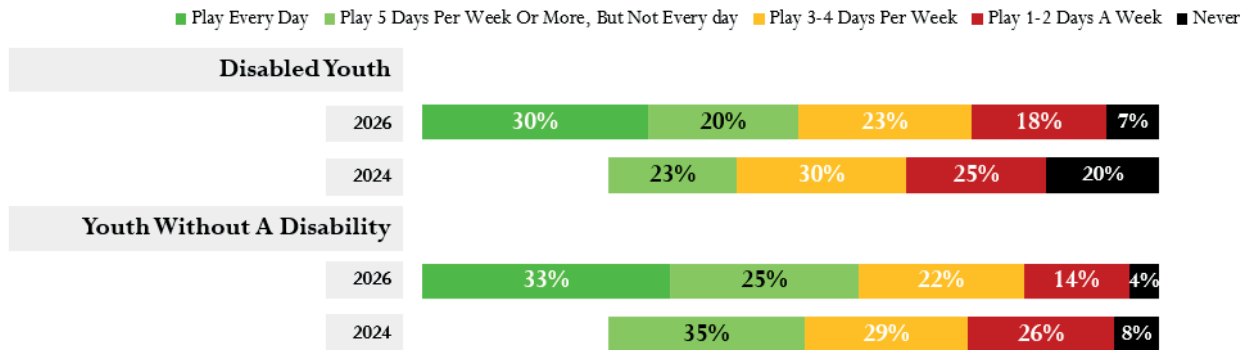


Figure 12 – Frequency and Duration of Play by Ability Status

	Play Every Day		Does Not Play Every Day	
	1 Hour or More	Less than 1 Hour	1 Hour or More	Less than 1 Hour
Disabled Youth	21%	11%	31%	35%
Youth Without A Disability	24%	10%	39%	25%

Activity by Age

- Likewise, **equity gaps across age groups exist**, particularly for those engaging in physical activities or sports at the highest frequencies. **Younger children** play at higher weekly frequencies but for a *shorter* duration, while **older youth** are physically active *fewer* days per week, but do so for *longer* durations. For example, two in five children ages 5-8 (39%) play every day, but half (48%) do so for **less than an hour**—which represents the highest weekly frequency and lowest duration of any age group. Likewise, more than two-thirds of youth ages 15-17 (68%) are active for more than an hour at a time, but fewer than three in ten engage in physical activity every day (29%). Despite these gaps, there is **no difference by age** when considering activity in accordance with the CDC’s recommended levels—three out of every four youth (75-77%) across all ages fail to participate in physical activity every day for at least one hour.

Figure 13 – Frequency and Duration of Play by Age

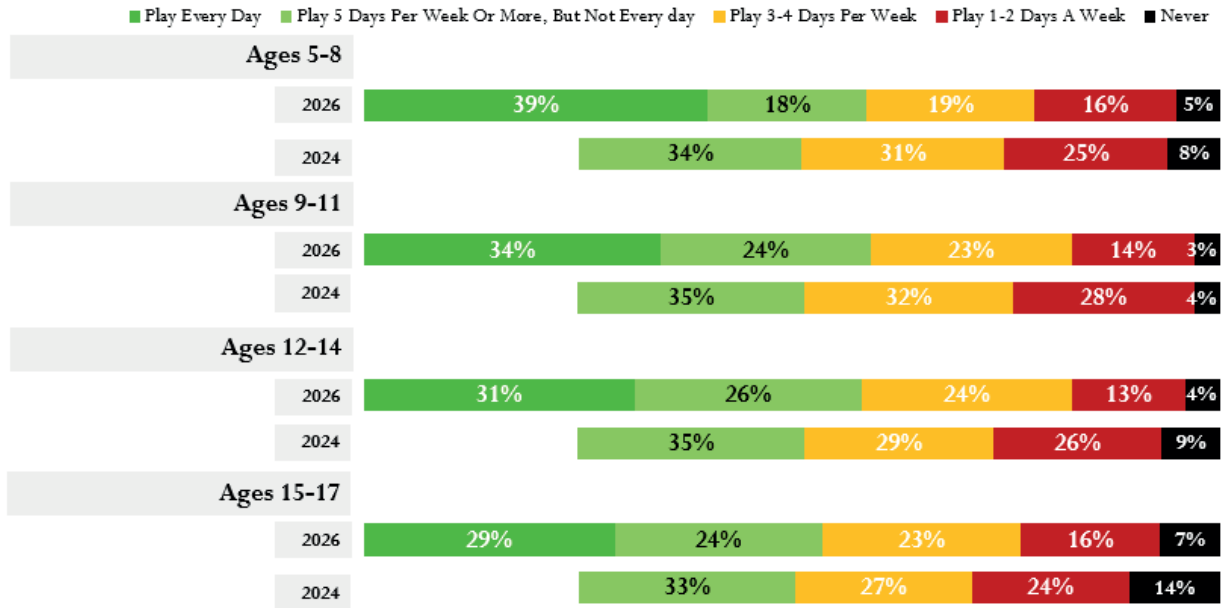


Figure 14 – Frequency and Duration of Play by Age

	Overall		Play Every Day		Does Not Play Every Day	
	1 Hour or More	Less than 1 Hour	1 Hour or More	Less than 1 Hour	1 Hour or More	Less than 1 Hour
Ages 5-8	49%	48%	23%	18%	26%	31%
Ages 9-11	60%	39%	25%	10%	36%	28%
Ages 12-14	65%	34%	25%	8%	40%	26%
Ages 15-17	68%	31%	23%	8%	45%	23%

Key Finding 2: The Cost of Play Amplifies Physical Activity Levels

- The cost of youth sports and physical activity further amplifies its duration—compounding equity gaps for youth whose parents cannot afford to pay. For example, four in five youth (81%) whose parents spend \$1,500 or more per year on their primary sport play for at least one hour when active, compared with less than half (49%) of youth whose parents spend less than \$500. In addition, youth whose parents pay higher costs for their primary sport are more likely to engage in physical activity at the CDC’s recommended levels. More than a third of youth (34%) whose parents

spend \$1,500 or more per year on their primary sport play every day for at least one hour, whereas just a quarter of youth (27%) whose parents spend \$500-\$1,500, and less than a fifth of youth (17%) who spend less than \$500 are active at the same rate. Parents in focus groups validated the challenge of navigating the cost required for their children to access quality physical activity; a Black/African American mother from the San Francisco Bay Area shared how she has to restrict her two children’s daily activity activities in order to afford two sports: *“He also does...dance... It’s extremely **expensive**. I think that’s part of my issue, too, is my 8-year-old loves basketball. But because I’m a single mom, **it’s kind of hard for me to have one son doing one activity and then another son doing another activity**. So I have to figure out how to alternate.”* Thus, youth whose parents spend more money on sports are likely to receive and engage in higher quality and longer durations of play—which accentuates inequities for families that cannot afford to pay similar costs for their desired sport or physical activity.

Figure 14 – Frequency and Duration of Play by Cost of Primary Sport (Ranked by Play Every Day for 1 Hour Or More—Least to Greatest)

	Play Every Day		Does Not Play Every Day	
	1 Hour or More	Less than 1 Hour	1 Hour or More	Less than 1 Hour
Less Than \$500	17%	14%	32%	35%
\$500 – \$1,499	27%	9%	36%	26%
\$1,500 Or More	34%	5%	47%	13%

CHAPTER 3

WHY YOUTH STOP PLAYING

Dropout rates in youth sports remain a national concern.⁹ Consistent with the findings from the [2024 Play Equity Report](#)—as well as national annual estimates—**one in three California youth (33%) have stopped playing sports or participating in physical activities in the last two years.** Groups with the highest dropout rates—as reported by parents—include disabled youth (42%), youth from families with children of multiple genders (39%), White females (39%) and middle-school age youth (36%). Top reasons for youth dropping out from sports and physical activities reported by parents include loss of interest (67%), the time commitment (61%), and high costs (58%). In addition, a notable majority report a lack of fun (53%) as a reason youth stop playing. These top reasons for dropping out are consistent with the results from 2024. However, when compared to the 2024 study, more parents today report loss of interest, the time commitment and a lack of fun as a factor for dropping out of sport and play. Notably, the increase in these factors appear to be drivers primarily for youth in higher income households. Cost remains the top reason youth in lower income households stop playing, according to parents. Parents of disabled youth share similar reasons for their children dropping out but also surface additional considerations including: a lack of coaches and staff with the proper training to work with youth who have disabilities, as well as a lack of accessible facilities and adaptive equipment, and excessive coaching criticism.

KEY FINDINGS

Key Finding 1: Equity Gaps Related to Youth Dropout Rates

1. **One-third (33%) of California youth have stopped playing a sport in the past two years. Rates are highest for disabled youth (42%), for youth from families with children of multiple genders (39%), White females (39%) and middle schoolers (36%).**
 - Parents of **disabled youth** report some of the highest dropout rates for their children. More than two in five of these parents (42%) report their child stopped playing a sport in the past two years. By contrast, for parents of children who do not have a disability, the dropout rate is less than a third (30%).
 - Just under three in eight parents (36%) of **middle school aged youth** (ages 12-to-14) report their children stopped playing a sport in the past two years. Parents of children ages 9 to 11 report similar dropout rates (also 36%). In

⁹ Moulds, K., Galloway, S., Abbott, S., & Cobley, S. P. (2024). Youth sport dropout according to the Process-Person-Context-Time model: a systematic review. *International Review of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 17(1), 440–481. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1750984X.2021.2012817>

addition to families that have children of **multiple genders**, parents in **families with more than three children** also report high dropout rates for their children (both 36%). Parents in focus groups gave voice to some of the challenges and considerations families with multiple children face. In the words of one parent, *“Especially with four kids, cost is definitely a huge thing for us. There’s definitely times we’ve told the kids, “Sorry, you can’t do that,” because we just can’t afford it.... I feel like we just can’t get ahead.... there’s definitely things my kids could have done that they didn’t do because we just couldn’t afford it.”*

- Dropout rates by region are highest for youth in Los Angeles and the San Francisco Bay Area (both 36%) and lowest for youth in the Central Valley (28%), as shown in Figure 1.¹⁰ In addition, there are significant differences across area types. Parents who live in the suburbs report higher dropout rates for their children (35%), but parents who live in rural areas report lower dropout rates for their children (28%).

Figure 1—Dropout Rates by Region

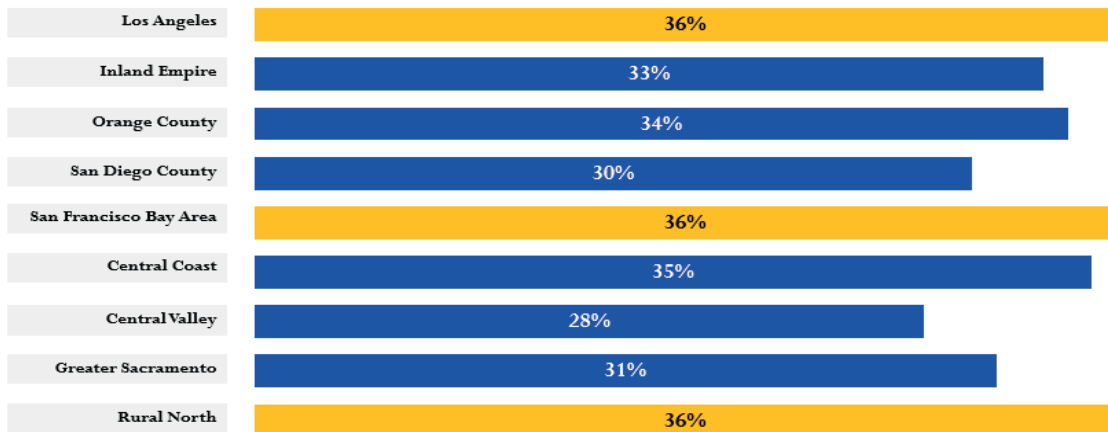
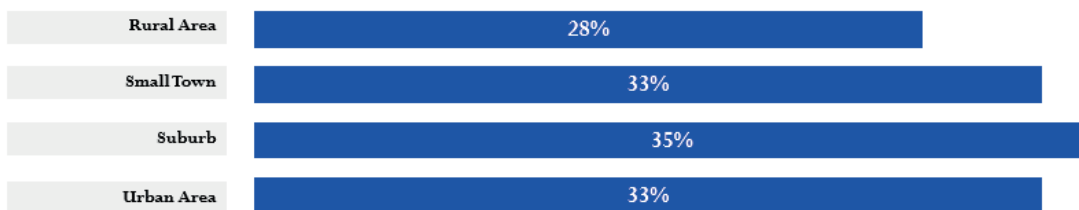


Figure 2—Dropout Rates by Area Type



¹⁰ Sample-sizes for the Central Coast and Rural North are less than 100.

Dropout Rates by Race/Ethnicity

- There are also significant differences in dropout rates reported across race and ethnicity. Just under three in eight White parents (36%) report their child dropped out of a sport or stopped participating in physical activities in the past two years. Among White parents, there are also differences in dropout rates by the gender of the children in the household. Here, **nearly two in five White parents of females (39%) report their child has stopped playing.** By contrast, White parents of *males* report no difference in the dropout rates for their children (36%). Similar to White parents, **35% of Latino parents report their child stopped playing a sport or participating in physical activities in the past two years.** There are no differences in dropout rates between parents of Latino males and the parents of Latino females. There are lower dropout rates reported by Black/African American and AAPI parents (29% and 28%, respectively). No statistically significant differences in dropout rates emerge by gender among Black/African American youth or AAPI youth, respectively.

Key Finding 2: Parents Cite Multiple Social Reasons Their Children Drop Out of Participating in Sports and Physical Activities; Top Reasons Include a Loss of Interest, the High Cost and the Time Commitment.

Figure 3—Top Reasons Youth Dropout



Factor for Dropouts: Loss of Interest

- Two-thirds of parents (67%) cite **loss of interest** as a reason their child stopped playing sports, including nearly two in five (38%) who say loss of interest had a “major impact.” Loss of interest ranks particularly high among **White female** youth (79%) and those in households with incomes of **\$100,000** or more (76%). Loss of interest is also highly cited by parents in the **San Francisco Bay Area** (71%) and by parents in the Greater Sacramento Area (84%), albeit with a lower degree of intensity for the

latter—less than a quarter (23%) in the Greater Sacramento Area cite it as a *major* reason their child dropped out of a sport or physical activity.

Factor for Dropouts: Cost

- Many California parents are experiencing the burden of the high cost of sports participation. A full three in five (60%) say they have **struggled to cover the costs** associated with their child's sports participation. In fact, among parents whose child stopped playing a sport or participating in physical activities in the past two years, **cost** was the third highest reason reported for their dropout. Just under three in five parents (58%) say cost is a reason their child stopped playing sports, with more than a third (35%) citing it as a *major* reason. According to one father in the focus groups, *"...cost is an issue. Everything keeps going up, and even when you find the money to pay for the sports, eating out, all the equipment, whatever you need to do, just keeps going up in price, going up in price, so it's hard to budget to fit everything in. It's a never-ending battle because everything goes up so quick, so often."*
- Parents of **Black/African American males** are among the most likely to feel the burden of cost when it comes to sports. More than four in five (82%) report cost as a reason their child had to drop out, and 77% describe struggling to afford their child's sports. Similarly, **younger parents** (ages 18-34) and parents with household **incomes of \$50,000 or less** also report cost as a reason their child dropped out (both 80%). Cost concerns even affect households of middle-income families (**between \$50,000 and \$100,000**), where more than two-thirds (68%) say it had an impact on the decision to drop out.
- More than four in five parents in **Riverside County** (82%) cite cost as a reason for their child dropping out. Similar levels of concern about cost are present in the broader **Inland Empire** (78%). Additionally, two-thirds of parents in **Los Angeles** (66%) report cost had an impact.

Factor for Dropouts: Time Commitment

- More than three in five parents (61%) say **the time commitment** was a reason their child stopped playing a sport. For **AAPI parents of males**, more than four in five (82%) cite the time commitment as a reason. Additionally, two-thirds of parents with only one child (66%) cite the time commitment as a reason their child stopped playing. No statistically significant differences emerge by region on this issue.

Factor for Dropouts: No longer fun

- More than half of parents say their children stopped playing a sport or participating in physical activities because it was **no longer fun** (53%). This attitude is largely driven by income, with more than three in five parents whose household **incomes are \$100,000 or more** (62%) reporting it as a

reason, compared with only two in five whose incomes are \$50,000 or less (41%). Almost four in five parents in the **Greater Sacramento Region** (79%) report loss of fun as a reason and almost two-thirds of **White parents** (63%) report the same.

Factor for Dropouts: Concerns About Safety

- Just under a quarter of parents whose child stopped playing a sport cited safety concerns as the reason for dropping out (23%). Nearly two in five parents (36%) aged 18-34 cite this concern as a reason, along with a third of parents of **AAPI males** (34%), **Latino males** (33%), and those who live in the **Central Valley** (33%). Parents with household incomes between **\$50,000 and \$100,000** (33%) and those who live in **small towns** (32%) also report safety concerns as a reason their child stopped playing a sport or participating in physical activities. Concerns about safety are also related to the places youth are playing as well as the people with whom they are playing, as one male youth focus group participant shared: *“I usually feel safe because where I usually go is at school and I’m usually playing with other people as a group.”*

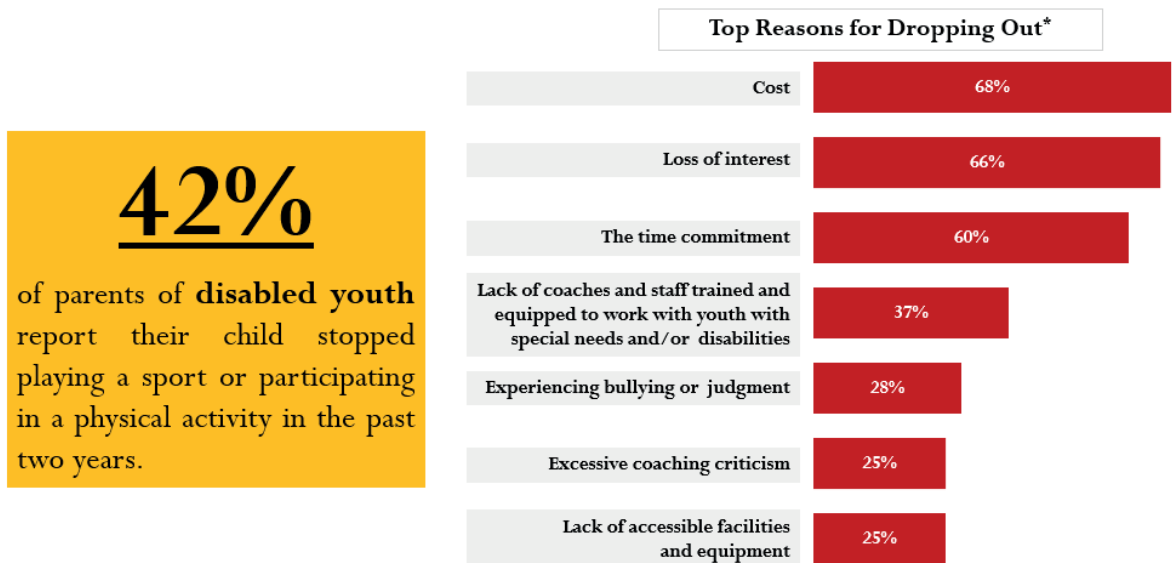
Factor for Dropouts: Concerns About Local Immigration Enforcement

- Just over one in ten California parents (11%) say their child had to stop playing a sport or participating in physical activities because of concerns about **local immigration enforcement**. This reason is cited by a third of Spanish speaking parents (30%) as well as just under a quarter of parents with **incomes of less than \$50,000** (23%). Notably, about one in five Latino parents (19%) report this factor as having an impact. During the focus groups, one Spanish speaking mother shared her perspective on the ways immigration enforcement has affected her community: *“I also have friends that would frequently go to the gym, and **sometimes they don’t go because they are afraid of ICE going there**. So they do see that. I don’t know how many days a week they would go there, but they no longer go because they are afraid. It really affects them a lot.”* By region, **Los Angeles County** has the highest rate of reporting this concern as a reason for dropping out (17%). By contrast, only 2% of parents whose child stopped playing a sport in the **Greater Sacramento Area** reported this as a reason.

Key Finding 3: Parents of Disabled Children Illuminate Distinctive Reasons Why Their Children Drop Out of Participating in Sports or Physical Activities.

- Consistent with the statewide averages, parents of disabled youth report loss of interest, cost, and the time commitment as factors that have impacted their children’s participation in sports or physical activities. However, among these parents, cost emerges as the top factor. More than two-thirds (68%) report cost as a reason and a similar percentage say the same about a **loss of interest** (66%). A full three in five (60%) report **time commitment** as a reason for their child dropping out.

Figure 4—Top Reasons For Dropping Out, Among Disabled Youth



*Figure includes top three reasons, as well as four other salient reasons for the parents of disabled youth; not all items in the question displayed.

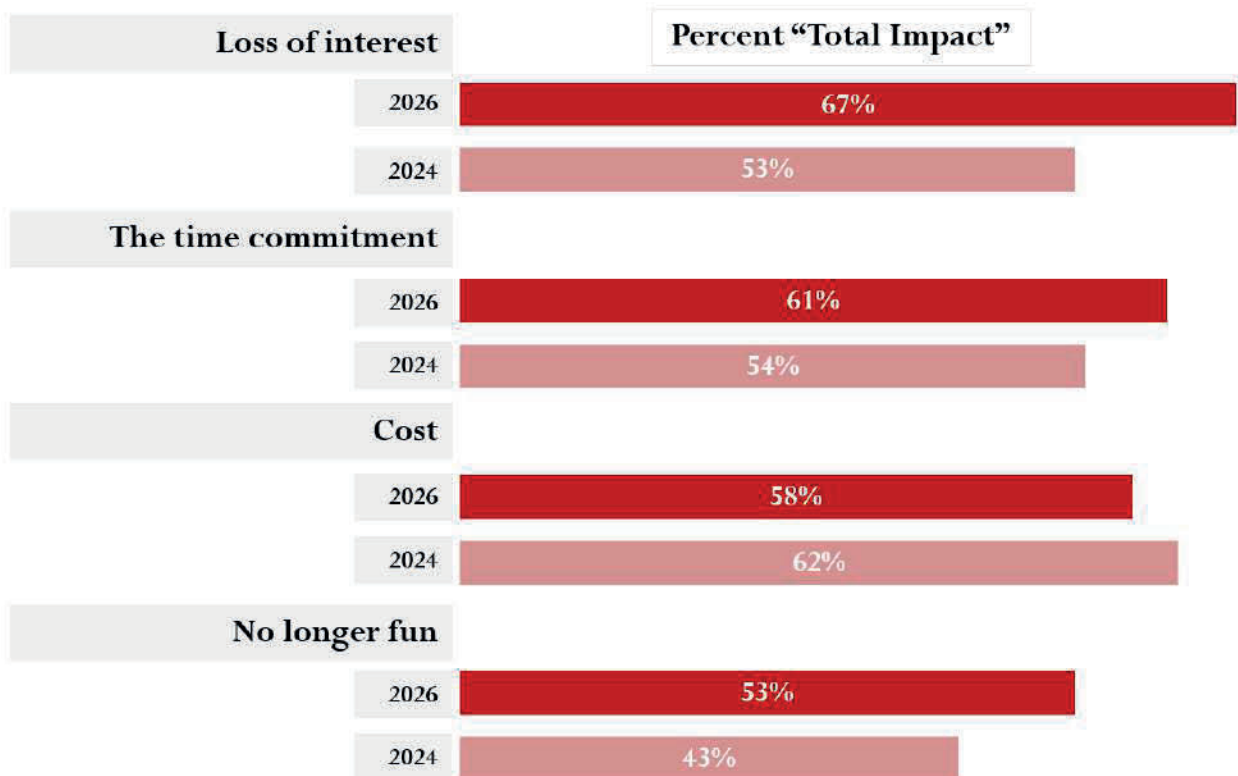
- Notably, these parents also identify other reasons their children stop playing sports or engaging in physical activity. Nearly four in five parents of disabled youth (37%) report that a **lack of coaches and staff** trained and equipped to work with disabled youth was a reason their child dropped out, with a full quarter of these parents (25%) citing it as a *major* reason.
- One parent focus group participant shared their concerns about the lack of coaches with the proper training: “...there was *not enough support*. There was just the one coach and 25 kids... He didn’t really want other parents just out on the field also. And I understand that because we’re not background checked or anything, so we couldn’t really be the translator. But then he also didn’t have anybody else who could. So, I think if there had been more adults who were coaches, it would have been better.”

- In addition, a quarter of parents with disabled youth (25%) say a **lack of accessible facilities or equipment** is a reason their children stopped playing. By contrast, only 15% of parents whose child does not have a disability reported that same issue. Similarly, **excessive coaching criticism** also emerged as a factor for youth as reported by one in four parents (25%) of youth in this subgroup. By contrast, only 15% of parents whose child does not have a disability reported the same.

Time Trend: Factors for Dropping Out

- The top three reasons reported by parents for dropouts in 2026—loss of interest, cost, and time commitment—are consistent with the top factors that influenced dropout rates in 2024. In 2026, however, more parents identified loss of interest, time commitment, and a loss of fun as reasons their children stop playing. The broader impact of factors such as interest, time commitment, and fun is largely driven by the experiences of youth, as reported by parents, in households with incomes of \$100,000 or more. For youth in middle and lower-income households, cost remains the highest-ranking factor impacting dropout rates in both 2026 and 2024.

Figure 5—Top Reasons For Dropping Out 2026 and 2024 (Ranked by 2026)



CHAPTER 4

INTRODUCTION—BARRIERS SUCH AS COST AND TRANSPORTATION PREVENT YOUTH FROM ACCESSING SPORTS, PLAY, AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Barriers preventing equitable access to sports, play, and physical activity persist. Parents continue to struggle to support their children’s participation due to challenges with affording the high cost of youth sports. A majority (53%) of California parents report spending at least \$500 on the primary sport or physical activity for at least one of their children, including a third (29%) who spend between \$500-\$1,500, and a quarter (23%) who spend \$1,500 or more. Independent of how much parents are paying for their children’s sport, **three in five (60%) say they have struggled to afford the cost** of their children’s sport physical activity. These results are consistent with the [2024 Play Equity Report](#), where 63% of parents reported struggling with costs—suggesting the **persistence of cost as a barrier** preventing access to play. This is especially true for Black/African American (72%) and Latino parents (67%), those residing in the Central Valley (65%) and the Inland Empire (63%), as well as families with incomes of less than \$50,000 (78%)—who are most likely to struggle most **with the high cost of play**.

In addition to cost, **challenges with transportation emerge as a barrier** for some. **One in five (22%) parents report that it would be difficult for their children to access a place where they can play** sports or engage in regular physical activity in their local area. Equity gaps exist for parents from a number of groups, including parents of females who are Black/African American or Latina, parents living in rural areas, and those with annual incomes of \$50,000 or less, who are all more likely to report it is difficult for their child to access a local place to play.

Taken together, barriers associated with cost and distance continue to prevent youth from achieving recommended physical activity levels. In this sense, the compounding effects of the high cost of youth sports, combined with challenges of transportation and distance for some, mean that **many California parents may be unable to fully support their children’s regular participation in sports and physical activity**.

KEY FINDINGS

Key Finding 1: A Majority of Parents Spend \$500 Or More On At Least One Child’s Primary Sport

A full **53%** of California parents spend at least \$500 on at least one child’s primary sport or physical activity, including one-third (29%) of parents who spend between \$500-\$1,500, and a quarter (23%) who spend more than \$1,500. However, just under half (45%) of parents spend less than \$500. One in five parents (14%) report spending less than \$100 on the primary sport for at least one of their children, and just under one-third (31%) spend \$100-\$500. With that said, there are notable differences in how much parents spend on at least one child’s primary sport based on their income, age, the race/ethnicity and gender of their children, and their children’s disability status.

Figure 1—Amount Parents Spend On At Least One Child’s Primary Sport



- More than three in five parents **with incomes of less than \$50,000** (64%) report spending \$500 or less on at least one child’s primary sports participation, and only 7% pay more than \$1,500. By contrast, about a third of parents with incomes of \$100,000 or more (32%) spend \$1,500 or more on at least one child’s primary sport, and only one-third (35%) spend less than \$500.
- In addition to income, parents spend differently on at least one child’s primary sport based on their child’s race/ethnicity and gender. For example, about a third of parents of **AAPI males (34%) and White females (31%)** spend \$1,500 or more on their children’s sport participation, whereas only one in five parents of Latino males (20%) and Black/African American females (18%) pay the same.
- Finally, there are further differences in the amount parents pay for at least one child’s primary sport based on region and area type. A third of parents

in the **Greater Sacramento Area** (35%) spend \$1,500 or more on at least one child’s sport participation, along with more than a quarter of parents in the **San Francisco Bay Area** (28%). Additionally, the same percentage of parents living in suburbs (28%) spend \$1,500 or more on their child’s sports. By contrast, more than half of parents in the **Central Valley** (55%) or those who live in rural areas (52%) spend \$500 on at least one child’s primary sport.

Figure 2—Amount Parents Spend On At Least One Child’s Primary Sport, By Region

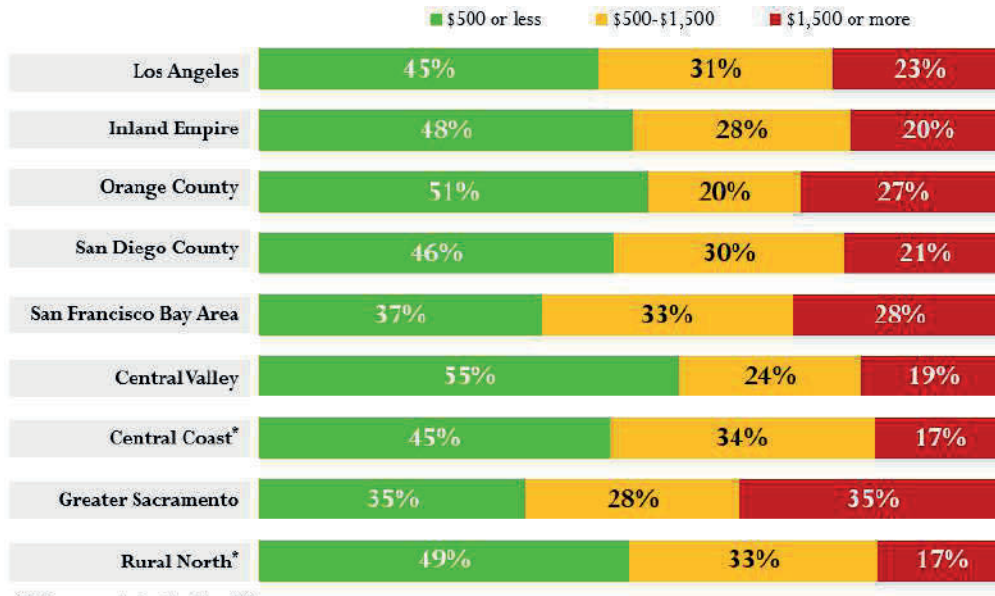
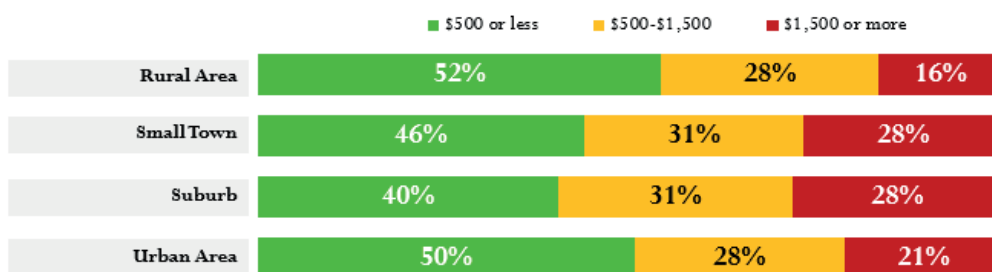


Figure 3—Amount Parents Spend On Their Child’s Primary Sport, By Area Type

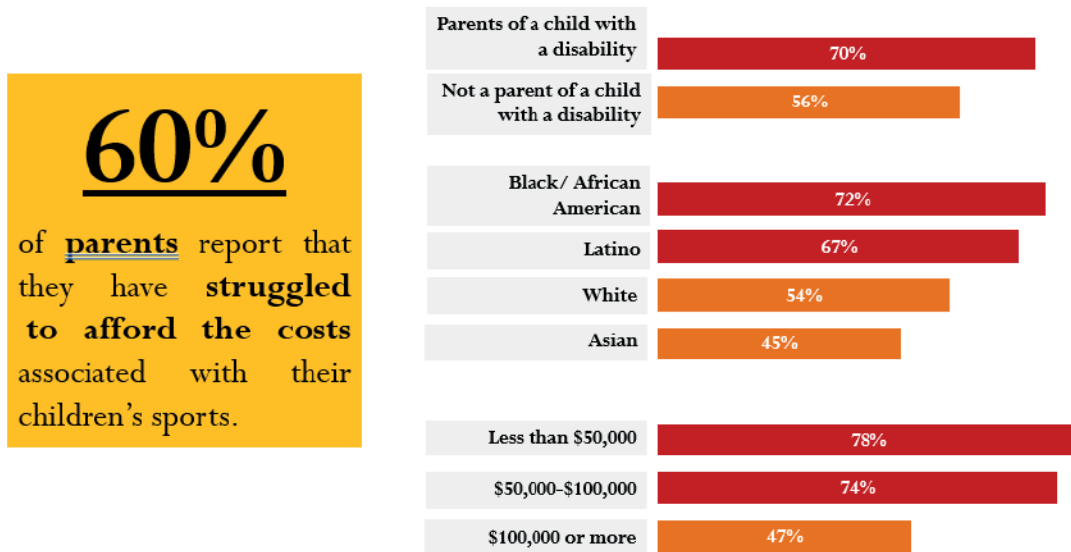


Key Finding 2: California Parents Continue To Struggle To Afford The Costs Associated With Their Children’s Participation In Sports

Independent of the cost, a majority (60%) of California parents struggle to afford the costs associated with their children’s sports participation. These results are statistically equal with the 2024 Play Equity Report, where 63% of parents reported struggling with costs (a result within each study’s margin of sampling error).

In particular, **households with incomes of less than \$50,000 (78%), Black/African American parents of males (77%), younger parents (ages 18-34) (70%), and parents of disabled youth (70%) are among the most likely to report struggling with the cost of their child’s sport participation—with at least three in five reporting they do so.** Notably, these are the same groups who were more likely to report cost as a barrier in 2024, suggesting the persistence of equity gaps connected with the price of youth sports.

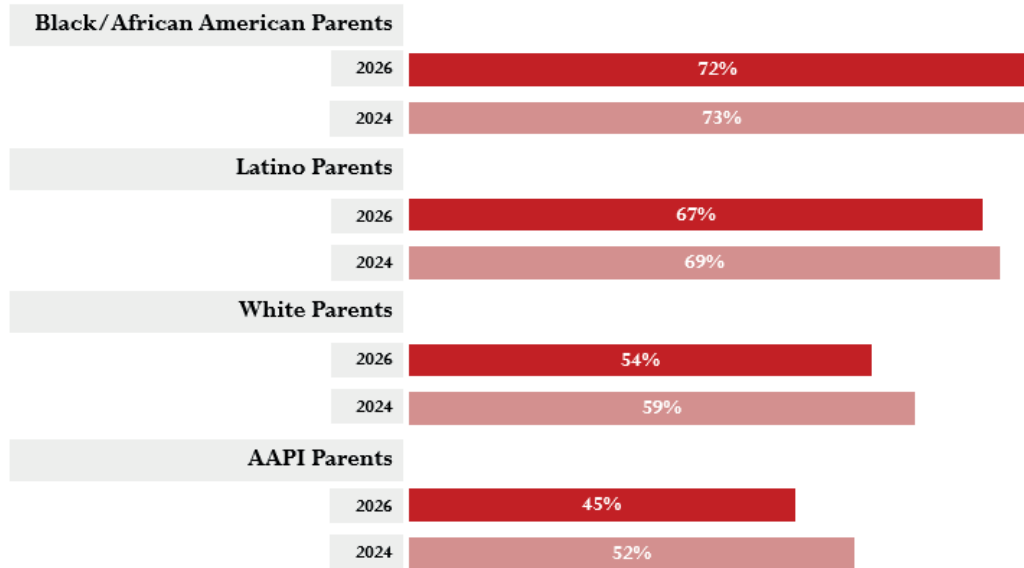
Figure 4—Subgroups More Likely To Report Struggling To Afford The Costs Associated With Their Children’s Sports



- Nearly four in five families with annual household **incomes of less than \$50,000** (78%) report struggling with the high cost of play for their children. In that income bracket, more than two in five (43%) say they have struggled a *lot*. By contrast, less than half (47%) of parents with incomes of \$100,000 or more report struggling with cost.
- Parents of **Black/African American and Latino** youth experienced these cost burdens at a much higher rate (72% and 67%, respectively), compared with White and AAPI youth. When comparing results for these groups by gender, parents of males struggle the most with cost. For example, parents of **Black/African American males** are among the most likely to feel this burden (77%) and more than two in five of these parents report struggling a lot (43%), compared with just under a quarter of California parents overall (23%). By contrast, 71% of Black/African American parents of females also report struggling with costs. Similarly, a higher percentage of parents of Latino males than parents of Latina females (69% and 64%, respectively) describe struggling with costs. These rates of struggling with cost are also

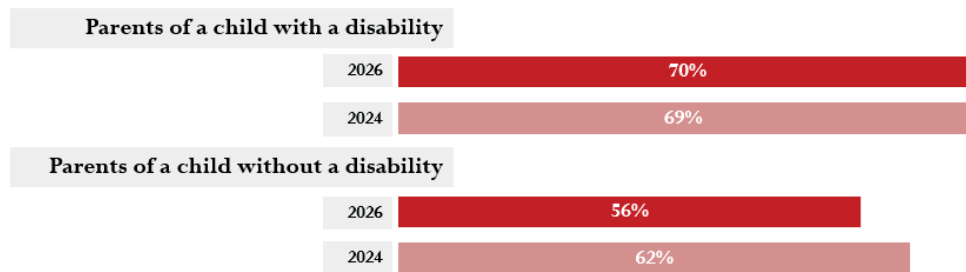
notably higher than the rates for White and AAPI parents (54% and 45%, respectively).

Figure 5—Parents Who Struggle To Afford Cost Of Their Children’s Sports, By Race/Ethnicity (Ranked by Greatest to Least, 2026)



- Moreover, equity gaps associated with cost are prevalent for parents of disabled youth. Seven in ten parents of a child with a **disability** (70%) report struggling to afford the cost of sports for their child. About a third (31%) report struggling *a lot* with these costs. Similarly, **younger parents** (ages 18-34) also describe struggling with the cost of sports (also 70%), with just under a third saying they struggle a lot (30%).

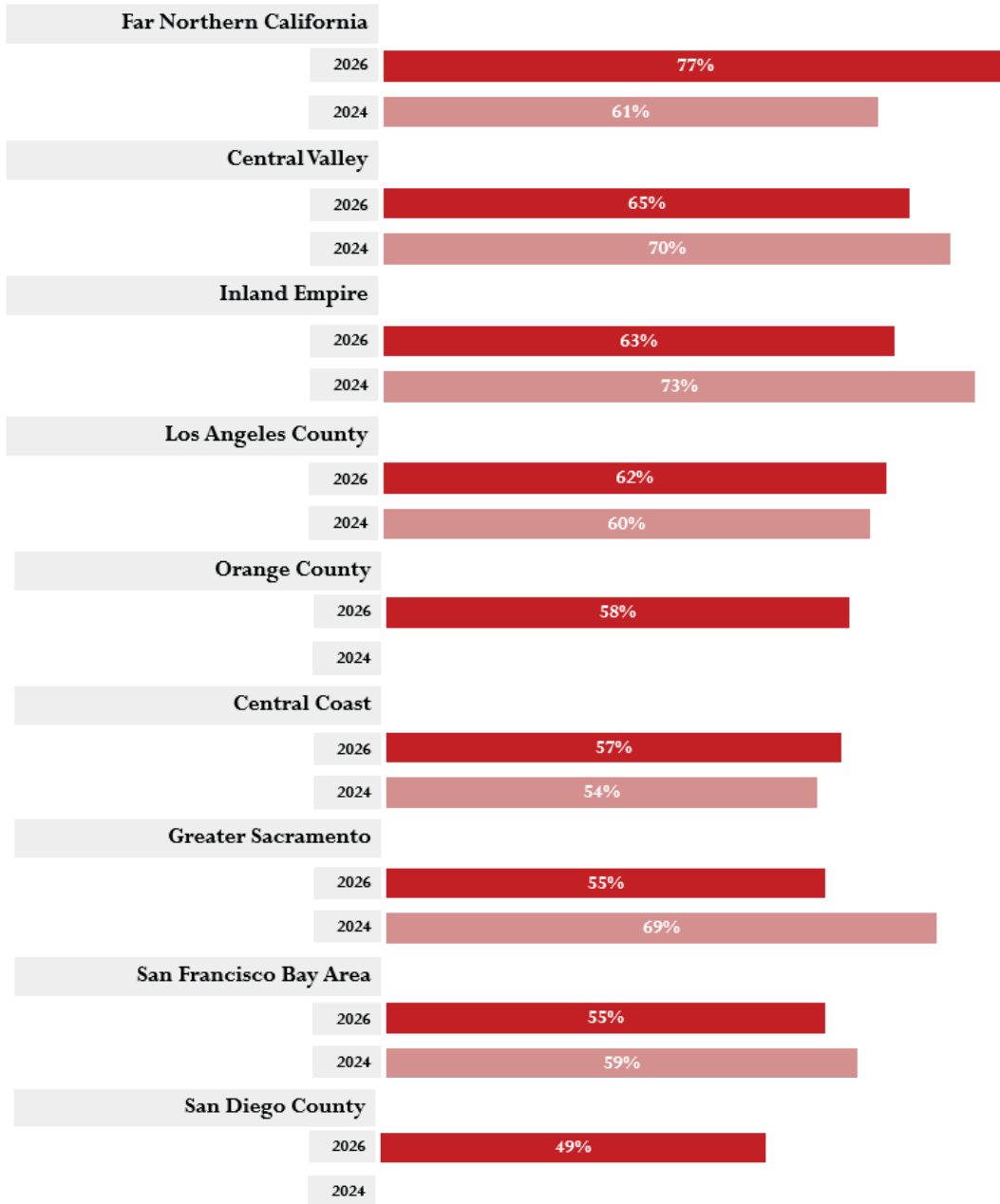
Figure 6— Parents Who Struggle To Afford Cost Of Their Children’s Sports, By Disability Status



- Across all regions and area types, nearly half of parents struggle with the cost of sports for their children.** For some parents, however, the gap is wider. More than two-thirds of parents living in rural areas (68%) report struggling with costs. Parents located in the Central Valley (65%) and Inland Empire (63%) are also likely to report struggling with the cost of sport participation and physical activities for their child. Even in regions where it is

reported less frequently, many parents still struggle to cover the cost of sports. For example, in San Diego, only half of parents report struggling with costs (49%).

Figure 7—Parents Who Struggle To Afford Cost Of Youth Sports (Ranked by “Total Yes”, 2026)¹¹



¹¹ In the 2024 Play Equity Survey, the number of responses from parents in San Diego County and Orange County was not sufficient to provide statistically reliable results. In the 2026 Play Equity Survey, the number of responses from the Central Coast and Far Northern California is below 100.

- **Despite a majority of parents paying more than \$500 on their children’s primary sport, parents who spend less are more likely to report struggling with costs.** In particular, parents with incomes of less than \$50,000, Spanish-dominant parents, those in the Central Valley, parents who are younger (ages 18-34), as well as those with a child who has a disability, are more likely to spend \$500 or less on their child’s primary sport and also struggle to afford the cost of youth sports. By contrast, parents who are paying \$1,500 or more on their children’s sport are less likely to struggle with the cost, which includes those in the San Francisco Bay Area, Greater Sacramento, parents living in suburbs, and those with incomes of more than \$100,000. In this sense, **the challenge of affording youth sports is not due to its high cost, but rather, a barrier for parents who cannot afford to spend any additional money on their children’s sport, regardless of its cost.**

Key Finding 3: Difficulty Accessing Places For Play Emerges As An Additional Barrier For Some Parents

Proximity to locations for play is an additional barrier that prevents youth from engaging in regular physical activity, as a notable percentage of parents report difficulties accessing places for their children to play in their local area. Importantly, equity gaps exist for parents of **Black/African American females and Latinas**, parents in rural areas, parents of a child with a disability, and parents in the Inland Empire. Parents within each of these subgroups report higher levels of difficulty accessing local places for their children to play sports or engage in regular physical activity.

- Just over one in five parents (22%) report difficulty in accessing places for their children to play in their local area. For parents living in rural areas and those with annual household incomes of \$50,000 or less, about a third report difficulty (32% and 29%, respectively). Additionally, about two in seven parents **of Black/African American females** and parents of **Latinas** each report difficulty in accessing these places for their children to play (both 28%). For parents in the Inland Empire, a similar percentage (26%) report difficulty.

For parents, **difficulty accessing places to play is directly tied to their geographic proximity. Parents who report greater difficulty accessing their children’s primary place for physical activity are also more likely to drive longer distances to these spaces.** Indeed, one-third of parents (33%) describe the distance between their home and where their child primarily plays sports as a moderate or long drive away (15 or more minutes)—with 26% percent driving a moderate distance (a 15–30-minute drive) and 6% driving a long distance (30-minutes or more). **Parents living in rural areas are most likely to report driving a moderate distance to where their child primarily plays (32% drive a moderate distance), while parents of Black/African**

American females are most likely to reporting driving a long distance (10% drive a long distance). Notably, these are among the same parent groups to find greater difficulty accessing places for their children to play.

- In addition, **youth also recognize the role of distance as a barrier** preventing their engagement in sports or physical activity. In focus groups, one female youth from the Inland Empire, age 14-15, shared, *“Where I live, I don’t think there is enough places [to play sports/engage in regular physical activity]. I feel like where I live, you’ve got to go somewhere else like Apple Valley or Victorville to go play other sports.”* For some, proximity to places for play serves as a barrier preventing access to sports and physical activity. In other words, **youth who do not live in immediate proximity to a place for physical activity must rely on support from parents or other adults for transportation**, which can compound equity gaps preventing access to play for those whose families do not have the capacity to transport their children to these spaces.

CHAPTER 5

INTRODUCTION – PARENTS OVERWHELMINGLY SUPPORT POLICY SOLUTIONS TO IMPROVE FUNDING AND ACCESS FOR YOUTH SPORTS, PLAY, AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY.

Parents are keenly aware of play equity gaps and overwhelmingly support policy solutions that will increase funding and access to sports, play, and physical activity for all youth. **More than two-thirds of parents (71%) say that it is *very important* that the State of California provide full funding for youth sports, physical education, and structured play. Notably, three in five parents (60%) report they would be willing to pay more in taxes to achieve these goals.**

While parents broadly support play equity initiatives, those from groups more likely to experience barriers to play—Black/African American and Latino parents, lower-income parents, and parents from the Inland Empire and the Central Valley—report the highest levels of consensus around policy to improve access to play. In this sense, parents not only recognize the various barriers that prevent their children from accessing sports and physical activity, but they also intensely support policy solutions that can help close these gaps.

Furthermore, a majority (76%) of parents also report they are more likely to support a California governor who addresses play equity issues, including actions to:

- Create more public facilities;
- Fund physical education (P.E.);
- Mandate background checks for coaches;
- Fund programs that address youth mental health; and
- Develop a minimum coaching standard for youth sports.

Despite the rising cost of living, inflation, and other prevailing socio-economic challenges, parents still want California’s next Governor to place issues important to their children front and center—by addressing equity gaps to accessing sports, play, and physical activity.

KEY FINDINGS

Key Finding 1: Parents Overwhelmingly Support Policy Solutions To Improve Funding And Access For Youth Sports, Play, And Physical Activity

- Parents understand the connection between policy solutions and youth access to play. 93% of parents believe that it is *important for the State of California to provide full funding for youth sports, physical education, and structured play activities for school-aged children*. Importantly, 71% of parents stated that it is *very important*. In addition, parents value the relationship between sports and mental health benefits (as elevated in Chapter 1 of the Report), which is why **four in five (83%) believe it is extremely or very important the State provides funding for schools to ensure that every student has daily physical education**.
- A strong majority of parents (78%) support the **creation of a state Department of Youth Sports that will provide funding for, and oversee, youth sports and physical activity in California**. There is overwhelming consensus from Spanish dominant Latinos (95%), Black/African American parents (90%), and parents whose annual household income is less than \$50,000 (90%). Regionally, parents in Los Angeles (83%) and Orange County (82%) displayed high levels of support for this policy.
- Nearly all parents (91%) believe that **high school coaches should be required to receive training on mental health practices**. More than three in five (64%) parents *strongly support* this policy.
- More than three in four parents (64%) believe that it is *extremely or very important that the next California governor prioritizes developing a minimum coaching standard for youth sports*. About three in four parents in Riverside County (74%) as well as parents in the Central Valley (72%) believe the policy priority is extremely or very important. Moreover, Spanish-dominant Latino parents and Black/African American (77%) parents are more likely to place high importance on developing minimum coaching standards.

Key Finding 2: Parents Are More Likely To Support A California Governor Who Prioritizes Youth Sports And Physical Activity

- Over **three in four** parents (76%) report they would be more *likely* to vote for a gubernatorial candidate **who prioritizes youth sports and physical activity**—with two in five (39%) reporting they would be *much more likely* to do so. Black/African American parents (82%), Latino parents (81%), and parents from the Inland Empire (80%) are most likely to support a gubernatorial candidate addressing issues within youth sports and physical activity. With that said, parents across demographic groups broadly value play equity as a policy platform. In the focus group discussion, a White father from Los Angeles who

has a child with a disability shared: “[Youth sports, play, and physical activity] should just be a priority. It’s not a priority and it should be a priority. They should do more for the kids, more for sports, and it’s never something that you ever hear anybody campaign on. It’s an irrelevant issue to them.” Indeed, parents desire the next governor to focus on policy that will benefit their children—with particular importance on addressing issues in youth sports and play.

Key Finding 3: Parents Believe It Is Important For The Next California Governor To Address The Following Play Equity Issues

A. Support for Building More Fields, Courts, and Other Public Facilities for Physical Activity

- More than **three in five** parents (68%) believe that it is *extremely* or *very important* for the **next California governor to prioritize building more fields, courts, and other public facilities for physical activity**. Almost nine in ten Spanish speaking parents, (89%), report a high amount of support for building more public facilities.

B. Support for Providing Funding for Schools to Ensure Every Student Has Daily Physical Education (P.E.)

- Overall, four in five parents (83%) think that it is *important* for the next California governor to **provide funding for schools to ensure that every student has daily physical education (P.E.)**.
- From a regional perspective, three in four parents (74%) in the Greater Sacramento Metro Area state that it is *extremely* or *very important* **to ensure that schools receive funding so that every student has daily physical education (P.E.)**.

C. Mandating background checks for youth sports coaches

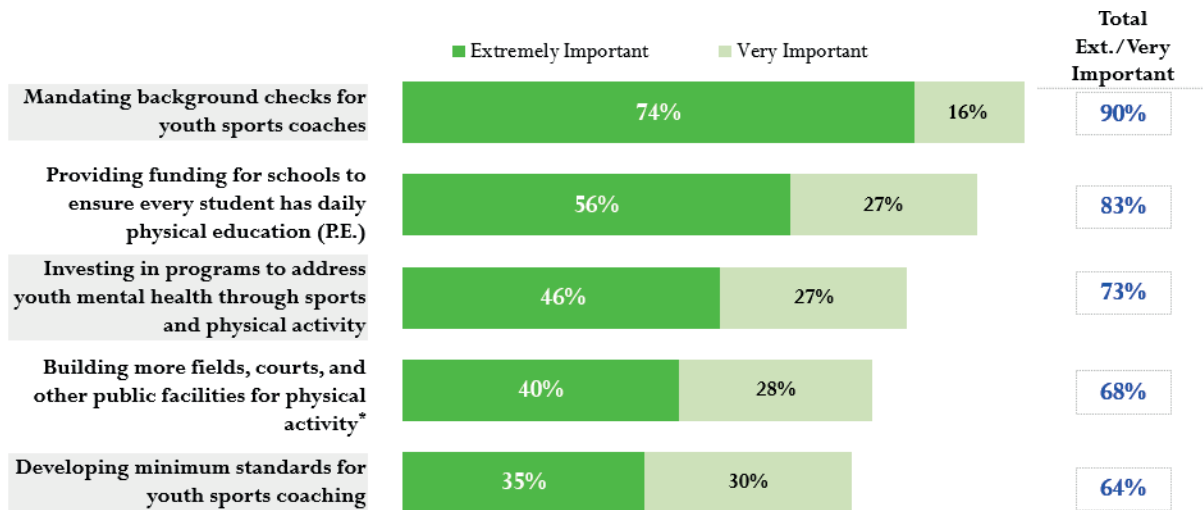
Parents **favor a gubernatorial candidate who is focused on addressing the need for increased mandatory background checks for youth sports coaches**—with 90% of parents believing that it is *extremely* or *very important* for the next governor to address this issue. Certain regions reported heightened levels of support including: parents in the Central Valley (95%), the Inland Empire (91%), Los Angeles (91%), and Orange County (91%). Notably, for 72% of parents in the Los Angeles region, it is *extremely important* that background checks are mandated for youth sports coaches.

D. Investing in Programs to Address Youth Mental Health Through Sports and Physical Activity

- Nearly **three in four (73%)** parents believe that it is *important* **for the next governor to invest in programs to address youth mental health through**

sports and physical activity. Eighty-five percent of Black/African American parents and 82% of Latino parents support such a policy. Parents in the **Central Valley (81%), Los Angeles County (77%), and Orange County (76%)** also shared high levels of support.

Figure 1 – Importance for the Governor to Address Play Equity Issues



Key Finding 4: A Majority Of Parents Throughout The State Are Willing To Pay More In Taxes To Fund Youth Physical Activity Opportunities

- **Three in five parents (60%) overall state that they are likely to pay more in taxes if the revenue is set aside to fully fund youth sports, P.E., and opportunities for physical activity in the State of California. Notably, parents in Orange County (63%) and the Central Valley (62%) are more likely to support paying more in taxes. In addition, Black/African American parents (70%) and Latino parents (62%) are more likely to support an increase to the amount of taxes they pay as long as the funds are being used to support youth access to play. In addition, 69% of parents who make less than \$50,000 a year say that they are likely to support an increase in taxes that will be used to fund youth sports, P.E., and opportunities for play.**
- Parents’ degree of willingness to pay more in taxes to support youth sports and play is contingent on the level of transparency they receive from elected officials. Provided that there is a clear understanding between parents and officials of the sole use of these funds, parents are more likely to support an increase in taxes. A Latina mother from Los Angeles, who has a child with a disability, elevated considerations about funding transparency that might impact parents’ willingness to support an increase in taxes. *“I know there is a lot of money that comes in with these events. I feel like if there was some sort of transparency of what happens with these funds, I feel like that would actually help a lot of the people in the state kind of feel a little bit more included when it comes to where this money is being allocated after the fact.”*



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