

Poor children shut out of sports

By Elaine Carey
Demographics Reporter

Most poor children are missing out on the chance to participate in organized sports, according to a new study.

Less than half of children from homes with annual incomes under \$40,000 are active in sports, compared to three-quarters of those with incomes of \$80,000 or more, Statistics Canada says.

Slightly more than half of all children aged 5 to 14, or 2.2 million, took part in some kind of organized sport activity in 1998, according to a StatsCan survey. Participation rates were almost identical for two-parent families.

If they were involved in sports at all, children from poorer homes were more likely to play relatively inexpensive games like baseball and basketball while high-income kids were more likely to be downhill skiers and swimmers.

But active kids generally come from active families. Almost two-thirds had at least one parent who was involved in organized sports. Most of these parents were athletes themselves, but they were also volunteer coaches, managers and fundraisers.

Children with two active parents and a household income of \$80,000 or more were 12 times more likely to participate in sports than those with inactive parents and low incomes.

The study confirms a "disturbing trend" that better-off kids are more physically active, says Art Salmon, technical director for Participaction, a non-profit organization that promotes fitness.

That can only get worse in Toronto where schools, as well as parks and recreation facilities, now charge user fees for their facilities, he says. "That is making it prohibitive for certain parts of society to get good physical activity," he says. "It's a little disturbing to see good-quality physical fitness tied to income."

That has long-term implications because inactive children grow into unhealthy adults, and obesity is a growing problem among children, Salmon says.



Comment [P1]: Read the title and headings. What does the title suggest that the article may be about? Create a question about the title: Why are poor kids shut out of sports? What does this mean? And then, find an answer for your question.

Comment [P5]: Read graphics associated with the article before the text. What is the title of the chart? What is the chart about? How does this chart relate to the title of the text?

Comment [P2]: This first sentence sounds like a summary. Pay attention to the opening paragraph because it usually contains the main idea.

A recent study found obesity in boys and girls aged 7-13 more than doubled from 1981 to 1996.

"When you move from a system where people used to be able to access recreation for free to one where you have to pay for it, certainly you increase the barriers," says Michele Brownrigg of the Foundation for Healthy and Active Kids.

"Clearly we have to do something to address the fact that almost half of children are not involved in physical activity."

But the research also shows parents have to take the lead, rather than looking to municipalities to ensure their kids are physically fit, Salmon says.

"Kids have so many sedentary options, computers and television, for their discretionary time," he says. "We have children who aren't learning the skills to participate physically over a lifetime."

The study found soccer is the most popular sport among children aged 5 to 14, with 31 per cent participation regularly. Swimming and hockey were tied for second, while volleyball and cycling were at the bottom of the Top 10 list.

Comment [P3]: When responding to a Graphic Text, pay attention to any paragraph that contains a lot of statistics. For example, there are a lot of numbers here. You may want to return to this paragraph after you have read the questions.

Comment [P4]: What do these words mean? Try to read the sentence to find out. If you still don't know, keep reading the paragraph. It is important to get the overall meaning first.