



Play to Lead:

The Generational Impact of Sports on Women's Leadership

Letter from the CEO

As the Women's Sports Foundation celebrates its 50th anniversary, we set out to examine the cross-generational impact that sports participation has had on girls and women, specifically in the area of leadership development. *Play to Lead: The Generational Impact of Sports on Women's Leadership* is a breakthrough study that examines the skills, traits, and experiences that develop through youth sports across seven generations, ages 20–80. It is the first study of its kind to explore the impacts of policy-driven changes, most notably the passage of Title IX in 1972, on girls and women both in and outside of the sports ecosystem. The study also illuminates the barriers that have impeded full and sustained sports participation across the decades.

For 50 years and counting, the Women's Sports Foundation has recognized the powerful connection between sport participation and leadership. This new report is vital because it proves why sports are not a nice-to-have but a must-have for all girls and women by providing insight into what can and will be achieved when they truly have equal access and opportunity to play at the youth level.

At WSF we strongly believe that girls do not have to go on to become elite athletes to reap the societal and cultural benefits of sports. By studying the leadership skills that emerge from sports participation at a young age and how they translate in adulthood, this report shines a unique light on the potential of sports to be an engine for full gender equality in leadership that spans across all sectors throughout the nation and globe.

Play to Lead is the latest proof point showcasing the critical need to ensure that all girls have equitable access to sport, but there is still a lot of work to be done. As outlined in our 2022 report, *50 Years of Title IX: We're Not Done Yet*, girls from marginalized communities — including girls of color, girls with disability, LGBTQ+ youth, and those from low socioeconomic households — face even greater obstacles to play. Our latest findings prove there is a dire need for all girls to participate in sports because it helps them develop critical building blocks that will propel them to lead throughout their lives. Simply put: when girls play, they go on to become leaders — in sports and beyond — and that means we all win!

The Women's Sports Foundation is deeply grateful to Earlystone for the generous lead donation it made in support of this study. We thank the Evelyn Y. Davis Foundation, whose major grant supports this and future critical research undertaken by the Women's Sports Foundation. Lastly, thanks to American Express for generously supporting the Women's Sports Foundation.

The Women's Sports Foundation is proud to be at the forefront of research and practice, and we look forward to working with experts across sports, youth development, education, medicine, business, and mental health to ensure that all girls have an opportunity to thrive in sports. By getting more girls in the game we can foster a vibrant pipeline of future leaders who are able to succeed beyond the boundaries of the playing field — empowering them to lead in communities, schools, and workplaces. All girls. All women. All sports® #KeepPlaying



Danette Leighton
CEO, Women's Sports Foundation

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EARLYSTONE

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We also thank YouGov, who conducted the survey and helped analyze the results, the findings of which are integrated into this report. YouGov is a leading international full-service research and consulting company and a pioneer in the use of technology to collect higher-quality, in-depth data for the world's leading businesses and institutions so that they can better serve the people that sustain them. With offices throughout the U.S., the U.K., Europe, the Middle East and Asia, YouGov leverages its online sampling, research expertise, and consulting experience to provide clients with sophisticated market strategy, market analytics, and surveys and forecasting services.

Author contributions: Sharrow, Staurowsky, Davis, Strohman, and Burton all collaborated to generate the structure and content of the survey instrument. Sharrow coordinated with YouGov staff to field the study and direct initial analyses. Sharrow conducted additional data analyses and authored the report with support in the literature review from Staurowsky and Davis. Burton and Strohman authored the policy and practice recommendations.

The study was reviewed by the University of Massachusetts Amherst Human Research Protection Office staff of the Institutional Review Board and was determined to be exempt.

About the Women's Sports Foundation

The Women's Sports Foundation exists to enable girls and women to reach their potential in sport and life. We are an ally, an advocate, and a catalyst. Founded by Billie Jean King in 1974, we are one of the *first* organizations to recognize the powerful connection between sports access, equity, and society. WSF has been changing the game for 50 years through its research, advocacy, and community programming, investing over \$100 million to help girls and women play, compete, and lead — in sports and beyond — without barriers. A leader and champion of the entire women's sports ecosystem, WSF amplifies the vital societal and cultural impact that is made when girls and women play sports. All girls. All women. All sports® To learn more about the Women's Sports Foundation, please visit www.WomensSportsFoundation.org.

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Executive Summary

Several generations of American girls have benefited from increased access to sports in their youth and adolescence. How have the resulting experiences impacted their ability and willingness to lead in adulthood? During the 50th anniversary year of its founding, the Women's Sports Foundation commissioned a nationally representative study of American adults who played girls' and women's sports between the ages of 5 and 26 ($N=2,886$) to answer this question. *Play to Lead: The Generational Impact of Sports on Women's Leadership* is the ground-breaking outcome of this research, focused on multiple generations of women to explore of how sports participation on teams for girls and women in the United States created adult leaders.

This work extends other research from the Women's Sports Foundation that consistently recognizes how participation in sports shapes the lives of girls and women for a lifetime. It explores how, across the American workforce and in communities around the country, the skills, traits, and experiences accrued in sports help girls become leaders later in their adult lives. With an eye toward leadership emergence as a developmental phenomenon, it attends to the changing circumstances of access to sports for girls and women over time, and particularly the passage and implementation of Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. Whether at work, in industries, in community organizations, in faith communities, in politics, or in movements for social change, the skills learned on sports teams shape girls into adult leaders. *Play to Lead* weaves together the threads of what is known about leadership development through sports in an intersectionally gendered lens to better understand *why* sports are important in the lives of girls, women, and gender-diverse people, and *how* policy and practice can best promote a gender-equitable future in sports and beyond.

While "leadership" (as a concept) can be notoriously difficult to pin down, this study considers leadership emerging from ordinary people who aim to motivate others to contribute to collective goals. Paths to leadership can be formal, as in a leader who is appointed or elected to a position, or informal, as in when someone in a group emerges because of a need or particular area of expertise. This study concerns leadership outcomes both in terms of formal roles (with and without traditional leadership titles, like "President" or "Manager") and taking charge of groups in informal ways. It adopts Burton et al.'s (2020) broad definition of leadership as "...an influence relationship aimed at moving organizations or groups of people toward an imagined future that depends on alignment of values and establishment of mutual purposes" (p. xi) in the ways it shows up across multiple venues in society.¹

¹ Burton, L., Kane, G. M., & Borland, J. (2020). *Sport leadership in the 21st century*. Jones & Bartlett Publishing.



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Organizations and groups need leaders to rally their members around a collective vision and a mutual purpose. This research studies how leaders are made, not born, and how formative experiences can teach individuals to collaborate in productive ways to accomplish a goal, to stand comfortably in the spotlight, and to serve as exemplars for younger generations. Focusing on the role of sports, it demonstrates how youth experiences help women and gender-diverse adults become such leaders across an array of sectors, prepared to shape the direction of our country and our democracy in times of prosperity as well as crises.

Survey respondents range from 20 to 80 years of age and were intentionally recruited in cohorts (ages 20–29, 30–39, 40–49, 50–59, 60–69, 70–80 during 2024). All played sports on girls' teams in their youth, most on organized teams, though older cohorts were also queried about their "pick up" sports experiences to account for the structural differences in opportunities before Title IX. Almost all (98.6%) respondents identify as women in their adult lives. This study design provides insight into the cross-generational impacts of sports participation on leadership in adulthood, particularly on the spillover impacts of the passage of Title IX across generations.

The survey collects information about respondents' sporting backgrounds during the formative years of 5 to 26; the skills, traits, and experiences it engendered; and the leadership roles they have taken on in adulthood. It also measures the barriers they experienced, both to accessing sports and staying engaged and to being promoted, nominated, and/or elevated

into leadership positions. The focus is dominantly on leadership outside the home (i.e., in the public sphere).

What emerges is a layered and nuanced picture of the ways in which sports for girls and women have, over the past 75 years, played a key role in socializing and preparing several generations to lead in various ways across their communities, workplaces, and elsewhere within our nation.

The conclusions offer insights into evaluating the micro-foundations of gendered leadership and the youth development institutions that fuel it. Because the study also investigates barriers to sports access and leadership emergence, it provides insights into how current practices and opportunities can be improved. The findings present novel insight into the impacts of Title IX beyond the playing fields, and point policymakers, coaches, current leaders in business and society, and parents to important lessons for the future.

This study offers new insights and a fresh litmus test into the impacts of Title IX, exploring how well policy implementation has operated to facilitate long-term, equitable outcomes across the life course that endure beyond mere athletic opportunity. It demonstrates that the expansion in school-sponsored teams for girls and women brought about by Title IX have correlated with increased adult leadership roles — an exciting new finding that reinforces the need for continued pressure to fully enforce Title IX.

Ultimately, this research provides a serious assessment of the role of sports in preparing girls, as community members and citizens, for engaged leadership. In an era where public and democratic institutions are increasingly in need of fulsome engagement from Americans of diverse and varied backgrounds, and when leadership grounded in neighborhoods, schools, faith communities, workplaces, local governments, and social movements is needed more than ever, the future health of our society rests on how well *common* people rise to lead in *everyday* challenges. To this end, understanding the successes from and barriers to youth sports as a developmental context for leadership may suggest ways to seed routine interventions in existing cultural institutions that can render significant impacts.

Finally, in a moment of multiple and polarizing national and global challenges, this research reminds parents, coaches, teachers, neighbors, extended family members, and elected officials that the possibilities for our collective futures emerge from how well we nurture our youth. Sports are more than play. The serious task of leadership development and cultivating confidence and self-reliance in the next generation of young girls can be tackled through maintaining accessible and healthy youth teams in communities nationwide. The lessons learned in everyday tasks shape the leadership possibilities for tomorrow. Indeed, our collective health and well-being depend on it.



Key Findings

- 1. Both early access to sports and participation during one's youth cultivate the skills that align with leadership emergence.** Respondents overwhelmingly credit the skills and lessons learned in sports for having a positive impact on their adult life, and many directly trace their leadership emergence to the lessons learned in sports. Two-thirds (67.0%) believe they have carried the skills and lessons from sports into adulthood. This highlights the significant role that sports can play in girls' personal development. Survey respondents who are in younger adult age groups are more likely to attribute these positive outcomes to sports than are older respondents (73.3% among those in their 20s and 30s versus 55.8% among those in their 60s and 70s). Half of women (48.6%) credit the skills acquired through sports for their leadership development.
- 2. Women across the generations report that sports provide the skills, traits, and experiences that align with the characteristics and demands of leadership.** Sports prepare women to lead. Seven out of 10 (73.0%) indicated that learning "teamwork" was their greatest takeaway for youth participation. Over half reported "learning from mistakes" (52.6%) and "handling pressure" (50.9%) as key lessons from youth sports, while nearly as many (46.2%) cited "pushing physical boundaries." Roughly three out of 10 reported developing skills in "decision-making" (36.5%), "goal setting" (36.3%), "responding to criticism" (34.3%), "problem-solving" (32.9%), and/or "effective communication" (32.3%).
- 3. Women who played sports fulfill a variety of leadership roles in adulthood across sectors.** More than two-thirds (69.1%) of the respondents identified themselves as "public sphere leaders," defined as having at least one formal leadership role outside of the family. Nearly half of respondents (48.0%), all who played sports during their formative years, have had a formal leadership role in the workplace. Among those with formal leadership roles, 70.7% had held at least one of the following leadership titles: Team Lead, Manager/Administrator, Director/Chair, Head of Staff, President, or C-Suite title (i.e., Chief Executive Officer, Chief Operating Officer, Chief Financial Officer). These represent 54.2% of respondents across the full sample. Those in their 20s and 30s are more likely to see sports as critical to leadership development and to attach their satisfaction and success in life to the skills gained through participation than older generations do.
- 4. There is a clear and positive relationship between years spent in youth and young adult sports and holding formal leadership titles in adulthood.** The longer respondents stayed in sports, the more likely they are to hold many public sphere leadership titles, compared to those who spent less time in sports. When titles are grouped into a more executive-focused group — C-Suite, Founder, President, Vice President, Director or Chair, Board of Directors/Advisory Board, Head of Staff — this group is significantly more likely to have spent higher numbers of years playing sports and to have held sports leadership positions on youth and young adult teams than those with other formal leadership titles. Respondents who reported formal adult leadership roles have longer average records of sports participation (8 years versus 6 years) than non-leaders. They also are more likely than those without formal leadership roles in adulthood to have participated in sports during adolescence (ages 14–17), young adulthood (ages 18–26), and beyond (ages 26+). Participation on coed teams is quite common in youth athletics among respondents (64% reported experiences with coed training and/or competition). Younger cohorts indicate the highest rates of coed participation (78% of those in their 20s, compared to 37% of those in their 70s). Those with formal adult leadership roles are less likely to have only played on girls-only teams (42.6% of those with formal leadership have girls-only team backgrounds, compared to 52.8% of those without formal leadership roles).



5. **The relationship between sports participation and leadership emergence holds constant across racial and ethnic groups.** Access to sport, duration of participation, and a high-quality experience within it are critical factors in ensuring equitable outcomes. The potential for sports to mitigate inequities as they relate to adult leadership is evident.
6. **The majority of women report that participating in sports during their formative years was an important part of life.** Sixty-eight percent of respondents indicated that sports were either “important” or “extremely important” in their experiences growing up. Over half (55.0%) indicated that sports played either a very big (19.5%) or big (35.5%) role in their personal or social development.
7. **Despite overall advancements in girls’ and women’s sports post-Title IX, barriers have hampered access and the likelihood of staying in sports over the decades.** Seven out of 10 respondents, all of whom played sports at some juncture in their youth, reported various barriers to full access (meaning they would have liked to play longer, more competitively, or additional sports). The most reported barrier is family finances (26.7%), a barrier that is more pronounced among younger groups (20s–40s) than any other age group (averaging 30% among those 20–49 compared to 22% among those 50–80). Lack of parental engagement (20.4%) is the second-highest barrier and is reported at a static rate across groups. The third-highest barrier is in opportunities to participate (20.4%), and this concern is distinctly generational. Twenty-seven percent of those in their 70s report this concern, revealing an awareness of their plight pre-Title IX as compared to younger generations (all other cohorts range from 17–21%) and their desire and/or longing for more formalized opportunities to play.

Other prevalent barriers to access cited include: Injury/health concerns (17.3%), a concern that is most pronounced among those in their 20s (27.6%); poor coaching (13.8%), again a concern more pronounced among younger respondents in their 20s (21.9%); and lack of woman role models (13.4%).

8. **Among the youngest group of women (20–29), there are escalating concerns around barriers to full and safe participation as a component of youth sports.** Those in their 20s, all of whom participated in sports, are statistically more likely to report barriers to their desired youth sport participation (eight in 10) than any other group. Three in 10 women in their 20s, 30s, and 40s reported financial barriers to participating in youth, a statistically significant difference from the older groups, underscoring the increasing costs and class disparities that now define access to youth/adolescent sports. Respondents in their 20s are twice as likely to report safety concerns from their youth sports experiences as those in their 40s, and 3–6 times as likely than older groups. Other barriers within the 20s age group include concerns about injury (27.6%), safety (18.9%), and poor coaching (21.9%).

9. **There remain critical differences in the rates, quality, and type of sports participation experienced by girls of color, immigrant girls, girls with disabilities, LGBTQ+ and gender-nonconforming youth, and girls from families with a lower socioeconomic status.** Racial and ethnic inequalities during youth were indicated as a barrier among 6–12% of each age group, with concerns growing among younger respondents. Yet, when young people from these groups participate in sport, they have an equal likelihood of developing leadership traits and participating in public leadership in adulthood. Thus, greater equity and investment here would likely have important implications for leadership becoming more representative of our diverse society with respect to gender.
10. **Women and gender-diverse people of every generation acknowledge the critical need to invest more in girls’ and women’s sports.** More than 80% of respondents see the need for increased opportunity, funding, pay, enforcement of Title IX, media coverage, and hiring of women coaches as important for the future. Older cohorts, particularly those in the 70–80 age group, are more inclined to see the importance of all factors when compared to younger generations, across all measures. Their views on the importance of financial investment in women’s sports, including equal pay and equal funding and on the key measures of Title IX — equal participation opportunities and full enforcement of the law — are particularly strong. Those in their 70s are distinctly likely to express that all of these factors are “very important,” with the highest support, above 50%, on all measures at a statistically significant level. Those who came of age before Title IX and were able to observe Title IX policy changes seem to see formal investments as key routes to expanded and more equitable access.



Policy and Practice Recommendations and Future Directions

Lean into Title IX

It has been more than 50 years since the passage of Title IX, and the significant and positive impacts Title IX's implementation has had on girls' and women's access to and participation in sport cannot be understated. We note the profound impact that equitable and accessible opportunities to participate in sports have on the lives of girls and women.

Recommendations:

1. Advocate for Title IX to be enforced at all levels of education (elementary through college) so that society benefits from leadership development afforded to girls and women through sports.
2. Expand the Equity in Athletics Disclosure Act (1994) to include second education programs (grades 6–12) and share those data on a publicly accessible and searchable database like <http://ope.ed.gov/athletics>.
3. Advocate for the U.S. Congress to pass the Fair Play for Women Act, to promote fairness and equity in participation opportunities and institutional support for girls' and women's sports programs; ensure transparency and public reporting of data by college and K–12 athletic programs; and improve education and awareness of Title IX rights among K–12 and college athletes as well as athletics staff.
4. Advocate for the U.S. Congress to pass the Patsy T. Mink and Louise M. Slaughter Gender Equity in Education Act, to create a new Office for Gender Equity within the Department of Education (ED) to coordinate Title IX activities in ED and throughout other federal agencies; fund competitive grants for K–12 schools, colleges and universities, states, school districts, and other educational organizations to boost Title IX compliance programs; and provide Title IX coordinators with annual trainings, information, and best practices about Title IX compliance.
5. Educate the public on the updated guidance on Title IX shared by the Biden administration and the Department of Education in 2024, which includes affirming support for transgender youth participating in sports. Advocate for support for enforcement of the protections offered to transgender youth participating in sports consistent with their gender identity.
6. Identify the benefits of Title IX to American society through continue and expanded research and education. As policy and financial restrictions influence the successful implementation and compliance to Title IX, leadership must always support equity practices across the life course, *including* sports participation. Organizations must identify and have immediate consequences to noncompliance to Title IX standards and regulations.



Elevate Youth Sport Coach Training

Youth sports coaches have a profound impact on the sports experiences of girls. Training that prioritizes personal development and teamwork can go a long way toward supporting girls holistically and simultaneously uplifting skills and experiences that prepare girls for leadership.

Recommendations:

7. Advocate for mandatory youth sports coach training based on the most up-to-date best practices for recreational, community based, private leagues, school-based opportunities.
8. Develop accessible and freely available youth sports coach training at the community and school-based levels. Include training that specifically focuses on practices that reinforce girls' holistic development and calls out leadership skills that both organically and intentionally can be integrated in and amplified through practice. Include trainings on cultural proficiency and sensitivity to create a welcoming and supportive environment for athletes from diverse backgrounds.



9. Increase program evaluation of youth sports programs, including coach training and development, to ensure sports environments are safe, welcoming, and a positive space for girls to grow and thrive.

Expand the Number of Women Coaches Through Active Recruitment and Training

It is critical to increase the number of coaches who are women to serve as role models for girls who play sports. Too many girls drop out of sports during early adolescence. Having access to more women coaches can enhance girls' athlete identity and reinforce the passion, drive, and joy they derive from sports. In doing so, girls are more likely to remain in sports and capture the full leadership benefits that comes from greater years of play.

Recommendations:

10. Support training for leaders of youth, interscholastic, and intercollegiate sports regarding the organizational barriers that exist for women pursuing coaching positions and how to reduce those barriers so that more women can pursue coaching opportunities.

11. Support the development of more women as sports coaches, especially at the youth and secondary school level. Coaching training and development programs catering specifically to women can help expand opportunities for women to join the coaching community.
12. Work with communities and schools to create resources for greater access to coach training programs and ways to compensate coaches for any mandatory or voluntary training. Financial barriers can be a factor as to why women do not pursue coaching, therefore it's essential to break down that barrier so that women have the opportunity to gain additional certifications and training.

Increase Government, Nonprofit, and Corporate/Private Sector Support for Youth Sports

Participation in sports affords girls the opportunity to develop and hone their skills and serves as a conduit for leadership development. Girls from marginalized communities continue to face obstacles to participation, and youth sports en masse have become increasingly more expensive. Moreover, privatization within the youth sports industry has left many girls behind. Greater investment is needed to expand access, support infrastructure and address the financial, transportation and other logistical changes that preclude girls' full participation.

Recommendations:

13. Create collaborative programs among private, public, and nonprofit sectors that can sustain sports programming models to ensure sports participation opportunities for girls in rural, suburban, and urban communities.
14. Advocate for greater support from the federal government (and state and local municipalities) and the corporate/private sector to provide equitable access to sports outside of school-based opportunities. Girls in under-resourced and/or underserved communities, including historically marginalized and minoritized communities, do not have similar access to youth sports participation compared with girls in better resourced communities. Youth sports participation outside of a school-based environment disproportionately benefits girls from upper-income families.
15. Prioritize historically marginalized and minoritized communities that continue to face disinvestment practices in all systems including sports participation. Additional research and resources are necessary to level the playing field such that access to leadership development opportunities are equitable for all.

Prioritize Mental Health and Wellness Support

Commercialization, discrimination, and stratification of sports negatively affects the mental health and wellness of girls, women, and gender-diverse adult participants. This phenomenon in sports participation can result in negative experiences or dropping out of sports. The consistent evaluation of sporting experiences and the presence of support services are critical to identify and address potential pitfalls and poor outcomes for girls and women and to boost the positive impacts that accrue when sports are done well.

Recommendation:

16. Develop and implement strategies that couple mental health support strategies with sports programs to enhance positive outcomes and address stigma, bias, and other negative experiences that often dissuade girls from playing. Ensure that all coaches and athletic administrators have adequate and annual mental health training to allow them to help facilitate and maintain a safe environment for all athletes.





Increase Sports Opportunities in K–12 and Higher Education Systems

Playing sports during and throughout childhood and adolescence provides the opportunity to cultivate skills, traits, and experiences that align with leadership emergence. Sports offer a unique setting in which these attributes can be learned, nurtured, and reinforced — shaping an identity that includes leadership-like qualities.

Recommendation:

17. Advocate for support from the federal government (and state and local municipalities) that all public education systems provide support for gender-equitable school-based sports resources as there are significant inequities in opportunities in urban and rural regions of the U.S. Advocate for additional support for middle school sports opportunities for girls, given the disproportionate rate of girls dropping out of sports during this critical period of development. Prioritize advocacy for girls in under-resourced and/or underserved communities who do not have similar access to youth sports participation compared with girls in better resourced communities.
18. Educate parents, family members, and caregivers about the value of participation in sports for girls and the importance of girls participating in sports over many years (beyond the age of 12) so they can engage in local advocacy. Educational programs should be offered in ways that are culturally relevant and accessible to parents, family members, and caregivers and that emphasize the benefits to sports participation, including the benefits of leadership development well into adulthood.

Provide More Sex-Integrated Sports Offerings

As adults are most often working and living in environments that are sex-integrated, it is important to better understand girls' and women's experiences in sex-integrated sports. This area of coed sports experience as a component of girls' youth sports participation is under-studied and under-valued as a component of youth experiences, particularly given the proportion of adults who report training, practicing, or competing in sex-integrated (coed) environments.

Recommendations:

19. Support sex-integrated opportunities in sports from introductory level through early adolescent level. These opportunities should be expanded in community recreation leagues, private sports offerings, and in elementary and middle schools.
20. Encourage, sport organizations from youth through adult recreational opportunities to provide more sex-integrated offerings to support diverse skill sets and interests.

Increase Opportunities for Sports Participation Past K–12 Education

Young adulthood continues to be a time for significant leadership emergence, and yet sports offerings during this time are greatly diminished. Expanding sports opportunities both inside and outside of collegiate settings, including less competitive and recreational play, will maximize the exposure young women have to the benefits that accrue from playing.

Recommendations:

21. Increase the number of and opportunities for competitive sports participation, including through club-based offerings in college/university settings, while also increasing access to less competitive opportunities for intramural sports participation to support young women who do not have opportunities to participate in intercollegiate athletics.
22. Increase the number of opportunities for competitive sports participation outside of college settings. This can include providing more adult-focused recreational sports opportunities for women within local communities (consider need for childcare support). Increase opportunities for women's sports leagues within work / corporate settings and consider opportunities for leagues to form among companies in close geographic proximity.
23. Advocate for adult sports offerings that consider support for childcare, integrating children into opportunities, and other novel approaches to sports offerings that differ from traditional adult recreation models of sports that focus on men's sports participation.



Meghan Duggan and Ed Snider Youth Hockey

Increase Opportunities for Leadership Development and Additional Research

Data from this report make clear that there are untapped opportunities to elevate the critical role that sports play in leadership development. Creating more intentional leadership development and training efforts within sport organizations can ensure these benefits are fully recognized. New research can further support this effort.

Recommendations:

24. Encourage sports organizations from youth through college (intercollegiate, club, intramural) to provide more opportunities for leadership training and development for participants. Promote collaboration between sports organizations and other youth-serving organizations (e.g., Girls Inc., Girl Scouts of America) to provide leadership skill building that connects sports participation more formally to other opportunities for leadership development.
25. Support funding additional research necessary to better understand how leadership skill development is created and nurtured in a wide range of sports involvement by girls at all ages, race/ethnicity, geographic location, and levels of competition.
26. Provide research grant opportunities to support scholars exploring some of the questions that have emerged from this research. Continue to fund research that examines some of the barriers and negative impacts that were identified by women in the younger cohort groups in this project.



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