



Sport Participation in Canada

Chapter 6

6.0 Sport Participation by Other Household Members

Sport involvement on the part of one person in the household seems to encourage others in the household to follow suit. When asked if anyone else in the household participated in sport, 8.3 million adult Canadians or 34% answered yes. Sixty percent reported that one other household member was involved in sport, 30% reported two others, and only 10 % reported that three or more other household members were involved in sport.

Studies have shown that children and adolescents with physically active parents tend to be more active than children with inactive parents. Early exposure to regular physical activity and sport is an essential early childhood learning experience. It is believed that active participation in sport plays a role in the optimal growth and development of children. It aids in building co-ordination, a positive self-image, helps build concentration thus improves learning, and helps children to co-operate and share with others.

6.1 Just over half of children aged 5-14 participated in sport ¹

Just over half (54%) of Canadian children aged 5-14 were actively involved in sport.

Despite the significant advantages of regularly participating in sport, the latest GSS data show that just over half (54%) of the estimated 4.1 million Canadian children aged 5 -14 were active in sport.² Why are more of our children not actively involved? Perhaps the attraction of information technology is to blame as video games, computers and the Internet move into our homes at an exceedingly rapid pace, attracting large numbers of our young people. Also playing a role is the lack of free time on the part of kids, who are busy with school work and extracurricular activities, and on the part of their parents who have less time to chauffeur them to and from practices and games.

¹ This section on children's (aged 5 to 14) involvement in sport derives much of its information from an upcoming article entitled *A Family Affair: Children's Participation in Sports*, by F. Kremerik in *Canadian Social Trends*, Autumn 2000, Statistics Canada, Cat. No.11-008.

² The number of children participating in sport may be an undercount since information on kids was collected from respondents (aged 15+) speaking on behalf of up to 4 other household members. Thus, participation of kids in large families may not have been entirely reported.

Girls tend to be less active in sport than boys.

6.2 Girls less active in sport than boys

Girls tend to be less active in sport than boys. In the past, our society fostered the belief that participation in sport was not as important for girls as it was for boys. Girls were perceived as not having the co-ordination, confidence, strength, speed, nor interest in competing in sports. Thus girls were not encouraged to participate. The 1998 GSS figures reveal that perhaps some of these perceptions persist today. While 61% of boys between the age of 5-14 are active in sport, the corresponding figure for girls was 48%.

6.3 Soccer Most Popular Sport Among 5 - 14 year olds

Soccer, swimming, hockey and baseball were the most popular sports among active 5 to 14 year olds. Soccer was reported as the game of choice for an estimated 3 in 10 (31%) active children, tied for second place were swimming and hockey at 24% each, followed by baseball (22%).

Differences exist between boys and girls and the sports they choose to play. Hockey topped the list for active boys, while girls preferred swimming. Interestingly, after this initial preference, both boys and girls chose identical sports listing soccer in second place, followed by baseball and then basketball.

Table 6.

Most Practised Sports* by Children (aged 5 to 14), 1998

	Active Kid Participation Rate (1) %	Active Boy Rate (1) %	Active Girl Rate (2) %
Soccer	31.4	34.4	27.7
Swimming	23.6	18.8	29.9
Hockey (ice)	23.6	37.4	5.7
Baseball	21.9	25.7	16.9
Basketball	13.1	12.4	14.1
Skiing (downhill)	7.2	6.3	8.3
Figure Skating	5.8	x	x
Karate	5.5	6.5	4.1
Volleyball	5.2	3.1	8.1

* Respondents may report participation in more than one sport per child.

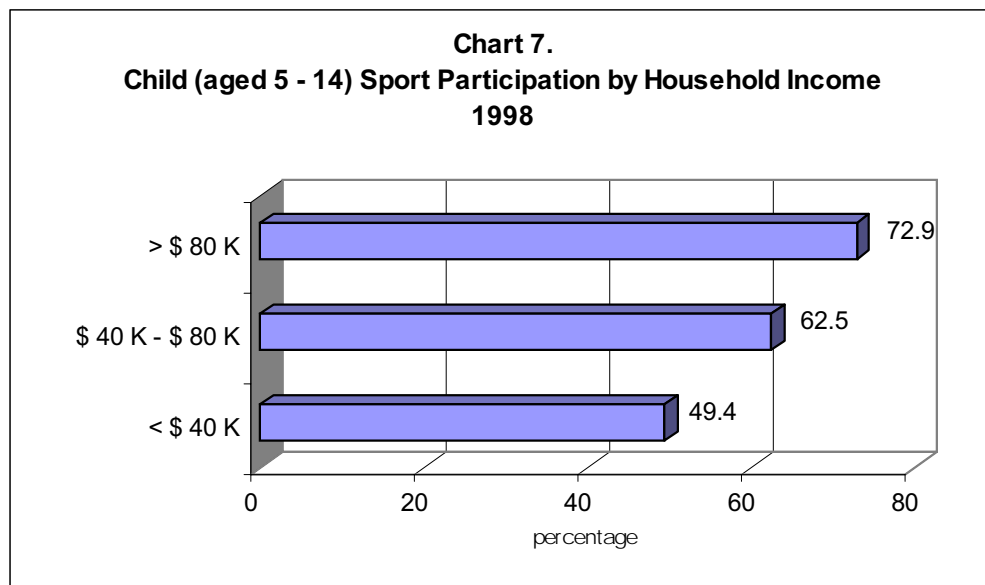
(1) The percentage is calculated over the population participating in at least one sport - the 'Active population.'

Source: General Social Survey, 1998

Family income is key to children's involvement in sport. Children from households with earnings under \$40,000 were less active in sport, compared to those from households earning over \$80,000.

6.4 Family Income Key to Children's Involvement in Sport

A recent Canadian study suggests that income is a barrier to sport participation for children from households in lower income groups.³ Data from the 1998 General Social Survey also seem to support this theory. Almost three-quarters (73%) of children from households with earnings of \$80,000 or more were active in sport, compared with 49% of those from households earning less than \$40,000. Specifically, children from homes with incomes under \$40,000 were more likely to be involved in relatively inexpensive sports such as baseball, while kids from higher income households were more likely to be downhill skiers and swimmers.



Source: *A Family Affair: Children's participation in sports*. Canadian Social Trends, Autumn, 2000.

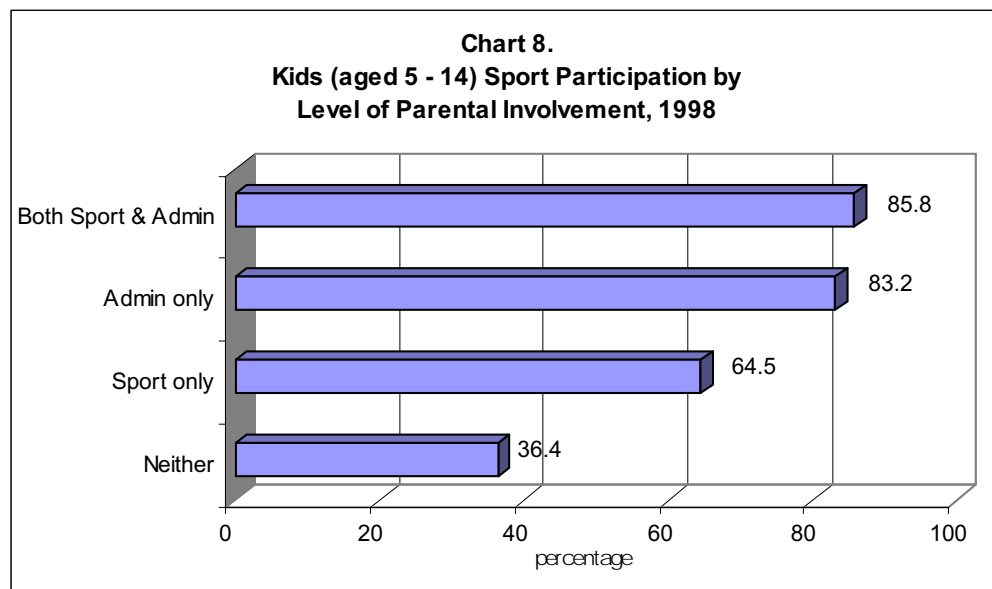
6.5 Parent as Role Model

While parental involvement in sport tends to encourage their children to also partake, it does not seem to matter which parent is involved—mother or father. In two-parent households where the father was actively involved in sport, either as an active participant or in an administrative capacity, 66% of children participated in organized sport. In households where the mother was the active parent, the rate was just over 64%.

³ Offord, D., E. Lipman and E. Duku. 1998. *Sports, the Arts and Community Programs: Rates and Correlates of Participation*. Ottawa: Human Resources Development Canada.

The rate of children's sport participation did differ, however, depending upon the degree to which a parent was involved in amateur sport. Almost two-thirds of active kids (1.5 million) had at least one parent actively involved in organized sport in one way or another. Most often, parents actively participated themselves, others helped in an administrative capacity or both. That is, two-thirds (65%) of children with at least one active parent were themselves involved in sport. When at least one parent helped in an administrative capacity, the child participation rate jumped to 83%. And where parents were both active themselves and helped with the administration, the child participation rate increased to 86%. By contrast, where neither parent was involved in amateur sport, the proportion of children active in sport was 36%.

It is interesting to note that no great differences were found between child participation rates and whether parents played sports themselves and helped with the administration (86%), or whether parents solely helped with the administration (83%). Perhaps this can be explained by the tendency of many parents to volunteer their time as coach, referee or administrator in the very sports in which their children are involved.

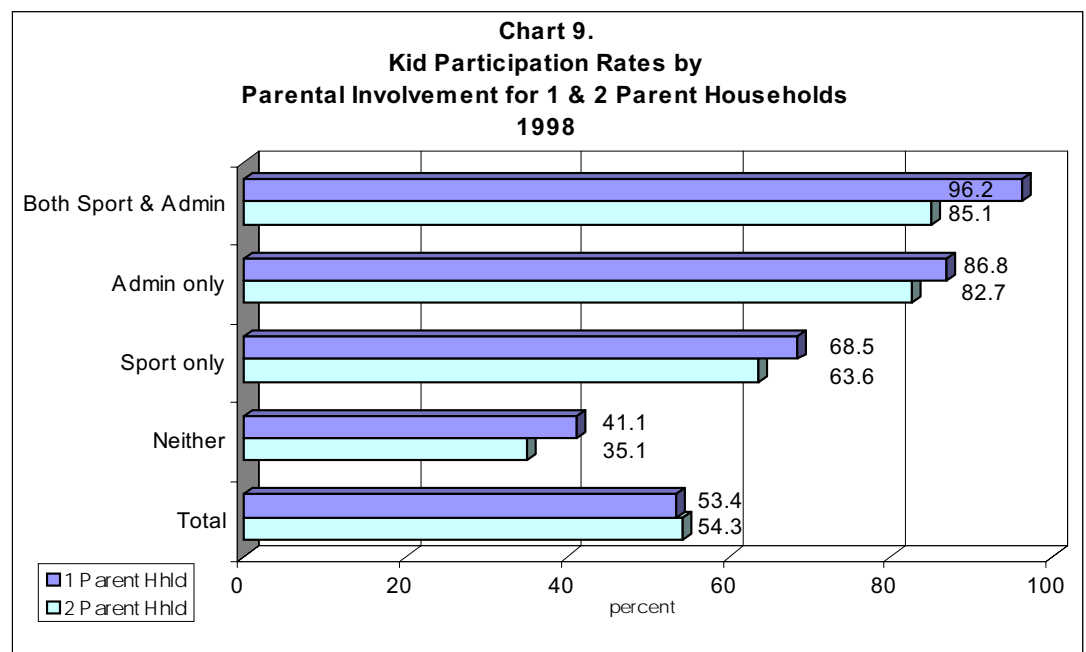


Source: *A Family Affair: Children's participation in sports*. Canadian Social Trends, Autumn, 2000. Catalogue No. 11-008.

One might expect that family structure may have an impact on children's participation in sport given that it is probably easier for a 2-parent household to share the responsibilities of transportation and cost compared to a single parent household. In fact, participation rates for children from 2-parent versus single-parent families were not very different (54% and 53% respectively).

Investigating a little deeper, we find that differences are observed when we look at levels of parental involvement for single versus 2-parent families. Children from single-parent households showed consistently higher sport participation rates when a parent was also involved in sport in one capacity or another. Nearly 100% of kids from single-parent families played sports when a parent was either active themselves or helped with administration versus 85% of kids from 2-parent households.

The importance of cultivating the next generation of sport participants, athletes, and coaches is integral to the survival of amateur sport. Sport offers children of all ages the opportunity to participate in co-operative, active, enjoyable activities, and in so doing they gain positive life experiences which can only benefit our young people.



Source: *A Family Affair: Children's participation in sports*. Canadian Social Trends, Autumn, 2000. Catalogue No. 11-008.