



The generational ROI of youth sports

Evaluating the generational impact of
youth sports on personal growth and
life-long development

April 2025 / Year 3



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Section 1

Research introduction

Research methodology and
overview of key findings



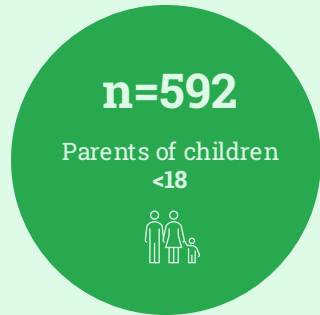
Methodology

This survey was conducted online within the United States by The Harris Poll on behalf of First Tee from April 4 to April 7, 2025, among 2,042 U.S. adults, including 592 parents of children under the age of 18.

We captured data on youth's involvement in extracurricular activities, including those who are currently involved in extracurriculars (n=453), and those who are involved in sports (n=312). We also analyzed data by gender, age, race, education, and income, among other characteristics.

The survey also references findings from April 5 to April 9, 2024, among 2,049 U.S. adults, including 498 parents of children under the age of 18 and from March 17 to March 20, 2023, among 2,082 U.S. adults, including 542 parents of children under the age of 18.

Who we talked to:



n=453
Children involved in extracurriculars



n=312
Children involved in sports



n=401
Children under the guidance of a coach



n=467
Parents who had a coach themselves growing up (aka "Coached parents")



(aka "Youth sports alumni")

Parents remain committed to investing in the personal growth of the next generation

Parents continue to invest in extracurriculars, even with tightened budgets

88%

of parents say, "Even in a tight economy, I make room in the budget for my children's extracurriculars."



They see activities like youth sports as essential for raising resilient, well-rounded kids

53% +7%
YOY

of American children belong to at least one youth organization

Nine in 10 parents say that playing sports helps children **build character** and teaches them **important life skills**.

High demand, low supply of great coaches – especially for girls

71%

of parents say, "There is a **shortage of high-caliber coaches** today."

6x

Parents rate coaching accessibility as **6x higher for boys** than for girls in their communities (32% vs. 5%)

69%

of parents say, "There are **not enough female coaches** or mentors in youth sports."

Parents see quality coaching as a catalyst for long-term success and want to keep the cycle going

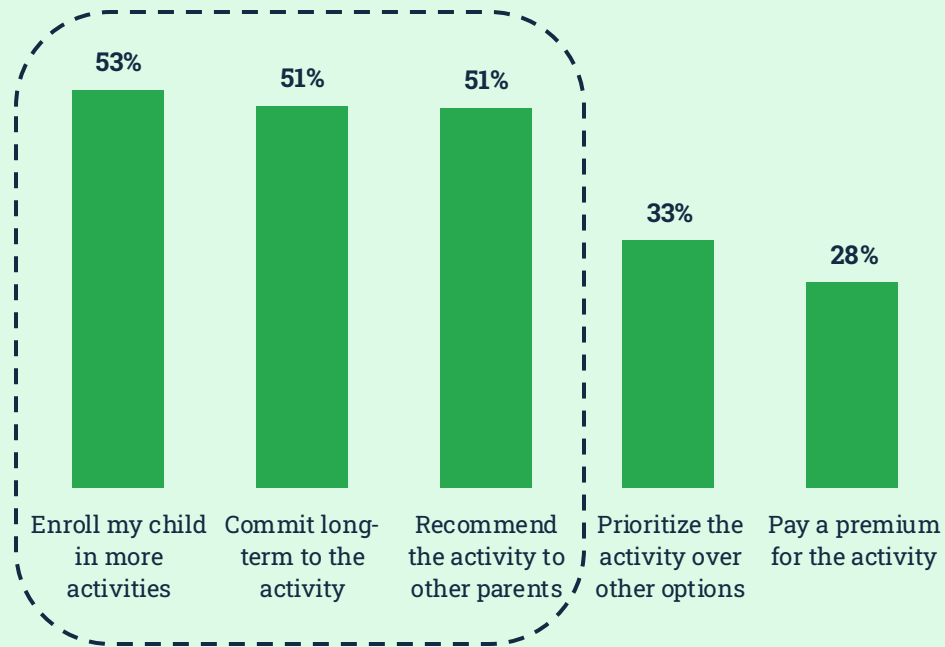
87% of parents of youth sports alumni say, "Youth sports are crucial in helping children prepare for their futures."

81% of coached parents say, "I had a coach as a child who I would consider a role model."

69% of parents already have their child currently enrolled under the guidance of a coach.

84% of parents hope that in the future, their child can participate in a youth sports program as a **mentor or coach**.

Having a trustworthy coach or mentor for my child would increase my likelihood to...



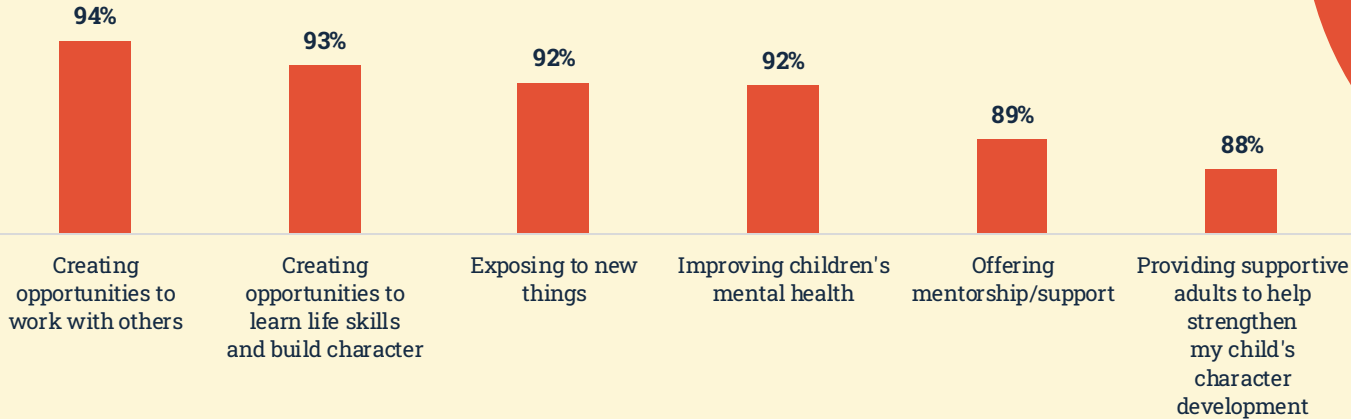
Section 2

Cultivating character

Parents continue to prioritize extracurricular activities as a cornerstone of childhood development, seeing them as essential for building character, confidence, and well-roundedness.

Parents view extracurriculars as a key driver in shaping well-rounded children

How effective are your child's extracurricular activities at each of the following?



77%

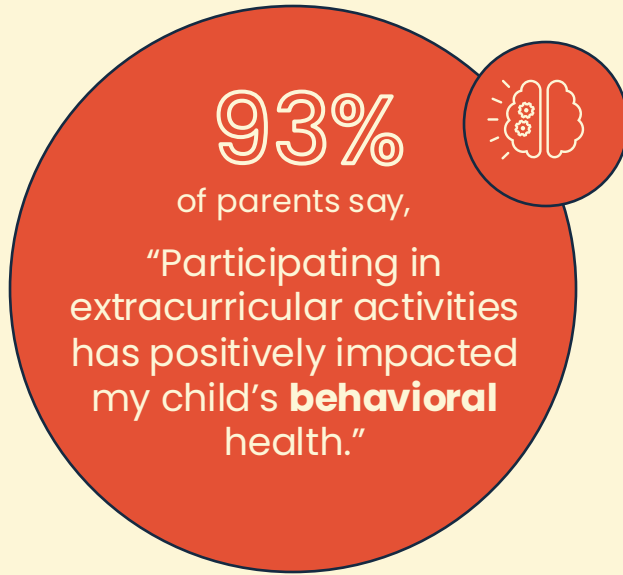
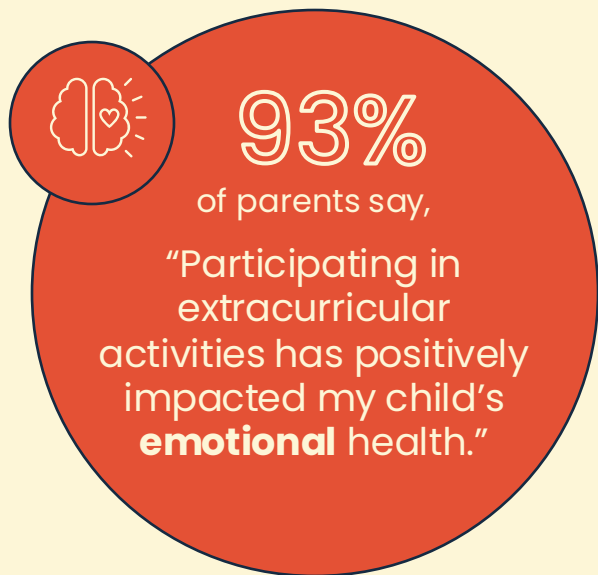
of children are involved in extracurricular activities

81% \$100K+

Millennial parents are especially looking for **character development** from their children's extracurricular activities (93%).

QS1Q7: Is your child currently involved in any extracurricular activities (e.g., sports, clubs, hobbies)? (n=592 parents of children under the age of 18) | QS1Q11: How effective are your child's extracurricular activities at each of the following? (n=453 parents of children under the age of 18 who are currently involved in extracurriculars)

Parents prioritize extracurriculars — even when the budget is tight — because the impact runs deep



88%

“Even in a tight economy, I **make room in the budget** for my children’s extracurriculars.”



Parents see youth sports as a catalyst for character and growth

“

92%

of parents agree,

“Playing sports helps children **build character.**”

97% Child in sports

90%

of parents agree,

“Playing sports teaches children **important life skills.**”

72%

of parents agree,

“Playing **golf** helps teach children important life skills.”

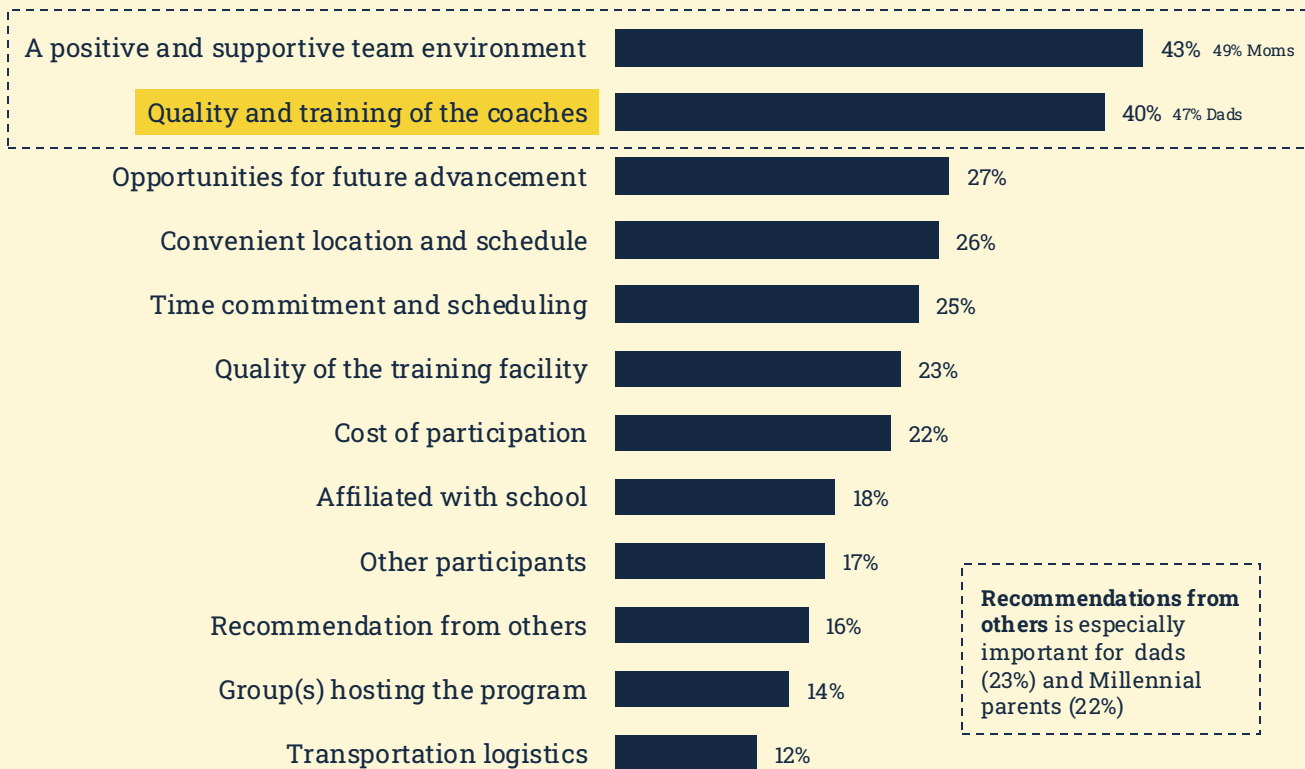
78% Coached children

”

Parents weigh coaching quality just as heavily as team dynamics when assessing sports programs



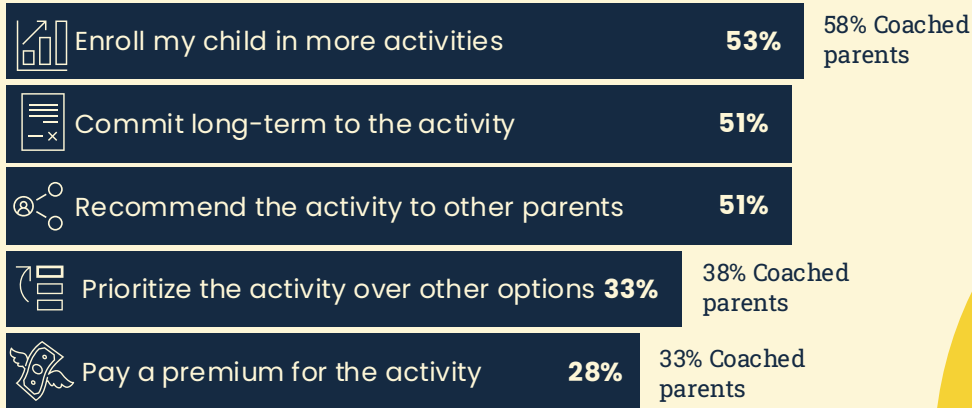
What most influences your decision on where you enroll your child in a sports program?



QS1Q101: What most influences your decision on where you enroll your child in a sports program? Please select up to 3 responses. (n=312 parents of children under the age of 18 who play sports as an extracurricular activity)

Coaching can build self-assured, confident children — and that drives long-term commitment

Having a trustworthy sports coach for my child would increase my likelihood to...



QS1Q16: How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements? (Top 2=Strongly/somewhat agree) (n=592 parents whose child is under the age of 18) | QS1Q22: Having a trustworthy sports coach or mentor for my child would increase my likelihood to... (n=592 parents of children under the age of 18) | QS1Q26: How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements? (Top 2=Strongly/somewhat agree) (n=592 parents whose child is under the age of 18; n=401 parents whose child is under the age of 18 and under the guidance of a coach)

94%

of parents agree,
“Playing sports helps children build confidence and social skills.”

88%

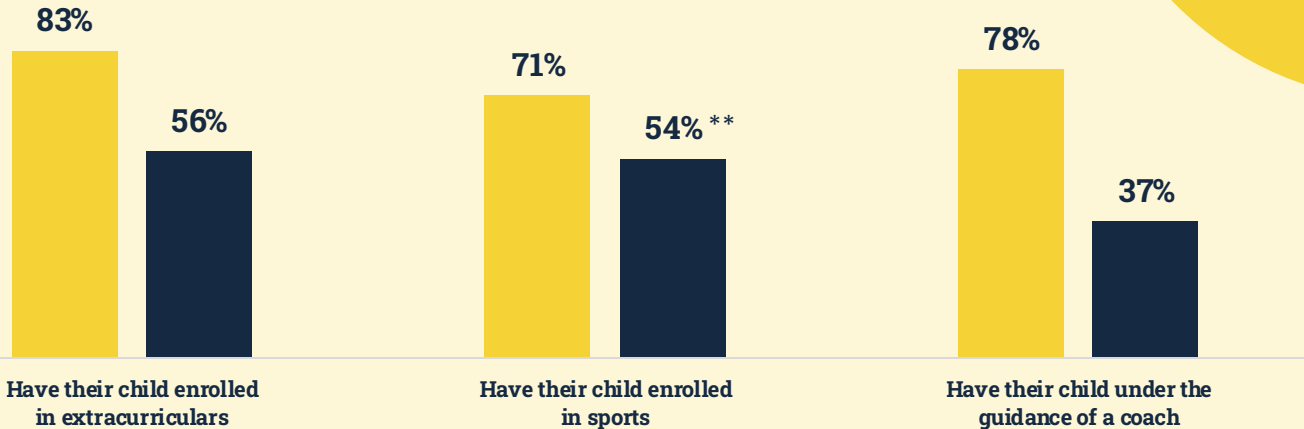
of parents with coached children say,

“Since participating in coached sports, my child is more likely to **speak up for themselves** in other areas of their life.”

Parents who were coached see more value in extracurriculars, sports, and coaching

Parents who were coached themselves are more likely to...

■ Coached Parents ■ Non-Coached Parents



79%
of coached parents* agree,
“Playing golf helps children
build character.”

(vs. 61% Non-coached parents)

QSIQ7: Is your child currently involved in any extracurricular activities (e.g., sports, clubs, hobbies)? (n=467 parents who themselves had a coach growing up) | QSIQ13: Which of the following types of extracurricular activities, if any, does your child currently participate in (e.g., at school, through a youth organization)? (n=467 parents who themselves had a coach growing up) | QSIQ21: Is your child currently under the guidance of a coach, be it through extracurricular activities or youth sports? (n=467 parents who themselves had a coach growing up) | QSIQ16: How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements? (Top 2=Strongly/somewhat agree) (n=467 parents who themselves had a coach growing up)

*Coached parent refers to a parent of a child under 18 who had a coach themselves growing up—whether through youth sports or other extracurricular activities. | **Directional insight due to small base size (n=68)

Parents want coaches who leave a lasting mark on their children

For parents, the top priorities when assessing a coach are **positive role modeling** (40%), **motivation and encouragement** (33%), and **skill development** (33%).

81% of coached parents* agree,

“I had a coach as a child who I would consider **a role model.**”

90% of parents agree,

“I hope my child has a coach in their childhood who they would consider **a role model.**”

The ROI of a good coach shows up among a variety of personal and interpersonal dimensions

Parents say their child's coaches could impact...
(among parents whose child is under the guidance of a coach)

89%

Ability to work well with others

89%

Ability to respect others

88%

Ability to be resilient in the face of challenges

94% Gen X parents

86%

Desire to do well in school

86%

Ability to lead at work

86%

Ability to mentor others

74%

Ability to parent

However, there is still a shortage of high-caliber coaches

69%

of parents have children under the guidance of a coach

And yet, only...

55%

of parents say that their child has received **excellent** coaching

71% -10% YoY

of parents agree,

"There is a **shortage** of high-caliber coaches today."

78%

of parents agree,

"I wish my child had more access to **well-trained coaches.**"

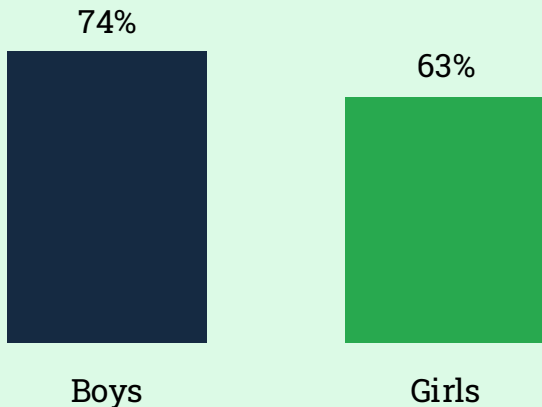
Section 4

Leveling the playing field

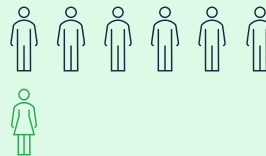
Girls continue to grow emotionally through sports, but face a persistent coaching gap, missing the mentors who shape values of confidence and character beyond the game.

Girls face a coaching gap—missing the mentors who shape them beyond the game

Children under the guidance of a coach



Parents rate coaching accessibility as **6x higher** for boys than for girls (32% vs. 5%)



69% of parents agree,

“There are not enough female coaches or mentors in youth sports.”

74% POC parents

Parents recognize girls' emotional growth from programs, yet underestimate their need for strong coaches

53%

of parents *strongly* agree, "Participating in extracurricular activities has positively impacted my child's emotional health."



47% Boys

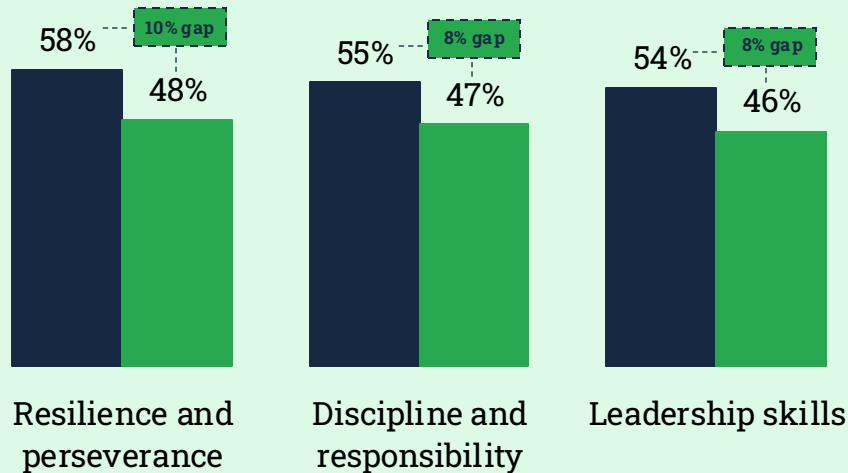


59% Girls

Impact of a trained coach on child development

(Extremely valuable)

Boys Girls



QS1Q105: How valuable do you consider the impact of a trained coach on child development in the following ways? (Top Box=Extremely valuable) (n=592 parents whose child is under the age of 18) | QS1Q16: How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements? (Top 2=Strongly/somewhat agree) (n=453 parents whose child is under the age of 18 and participate in extracurriculars)

Section 5

The lasting win

The long-term impact of youth sports is undeniable with parents advocating for alumni pathways to keep the mentorship cycle going.

Parents with grown children (18–35) can attest to youth sports as future-fortifiers

“

92%

“I’ve seen firsthand how youth sports can **shape a child's future.**”



87%

“**Youth sports are crucial** in helping children prepare for their futures.”



”



They point to youth sports as a key factor in long-term personal development and lifelong friendships

89%

of parents say,

“The confidence my child built through sports **continues to shape their success today.**”

88%

of parents say sports prepared their children for leadership and teamwork in their **advanced schooling or careers**

77%

of parents say the **friendships** their child made in sports have **lasted into adulthood**



The game may end, but the impact doesn't — parents say youth sports are a must for life-long development

91%

of parents say, "The impact of sports doesn't end when the games do—it lasts a **lifetime.**"

87%

of parents also say, "**I strongly recommend every parent put their child(ren) in youth sports.**"



Sports remain a cornerstone for fostering both well-being and character development

67%

of coached parents* agree,
**“I wouldn’t be where I am today
without the coach(es) I had
growing up.”**

Parents say their own coaches growing up had an impact on... (among parents who have been coached themselves)




QS1Q26: How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements? (Top 2=Strongly/somewhat agree) (n=467 parents who had a coach themselves) | QS1Q104x: Thinking about yourself growing up, what type of impact, if any, do you think your coach(es) (e.g., sports, extracurriculars) had on each of the following aspects of your development? (Top 2=Very/somewhat positive) (n=467 parents who had a coach themselves)

**Coached parent* refers to a parent of a child under 18 who had a coach themselves growing up—whether through youth sports or other extracurricular activities.

The cycle continues: Most parents want today's players to become tomorrow's mentors through alumni pathways

87%

of parents say,

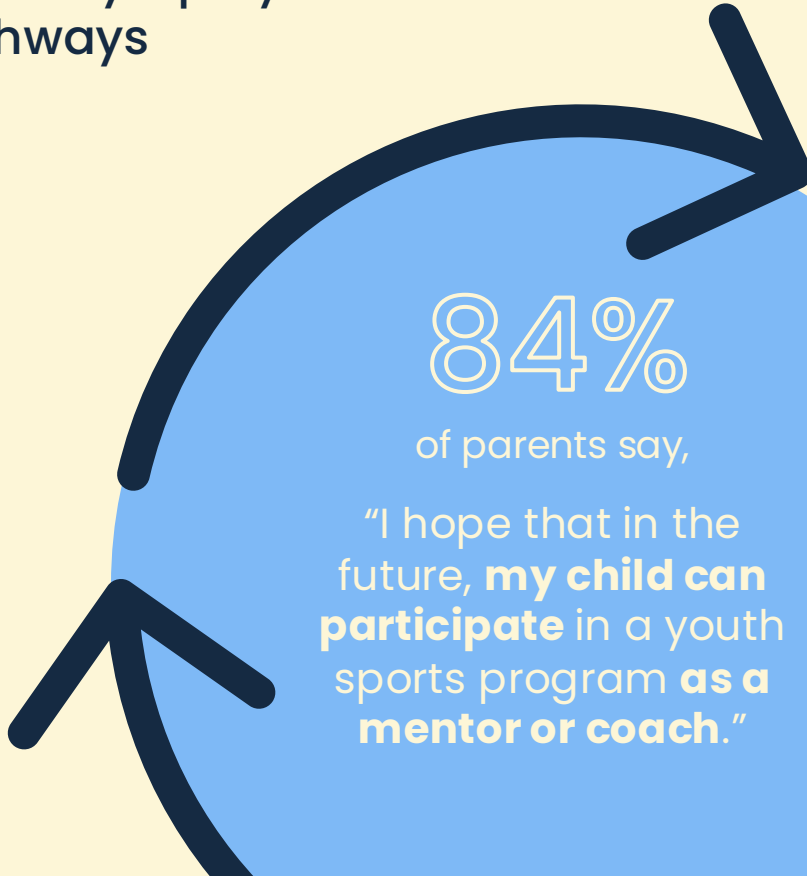


"More youth sports programs should offer **mentorship or coaching pathways for alumni.**"

92% \$100K+

84%

of parents say,



"I hope that in the future, **my child can participate** in a youth sports program **as a mentor or coach.**"

Thank you!



x



The Harris Poll

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