



## Involvement of Parents in Sports Participation of Youth Athletes in Albania

### Scientific Report 2025- START project

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#### Abstract

This study explores the role of parental involvement in the sports participation of youth athletes in Albania, focusing on the impact of parents' sports history on their children's engagement in sports. A sample of 716 youth athletes, aged 8-19 years, was surveyed to assess their parents' (mothers and fathers) involvement in sports during their youth. Results indicate that 27.1% of fathers and only 9.1% of mothers participated in sports during their youth, with significant gender disparities observed. Fathers were more likely to have engaged in sports, particularly football, while mothers commonly participated in volleyball and basketball. Gender-specific findings revealed that boys reported higher parental participation rates than girls. Additionally, most parents participated at the youth level, with fewer continuing to senior competitive levels. This report highlights the importance of addressing gender and structural barriers to create a more inclusive sports culture. Volleyball was the most common sport among mothers, followed by basketball. Other disciplines had lower representation while football was the most dominant sport for fathers, with basketball and wrestling following at much lower percentages. A majority of mothers participated in sports only up to the youth level (62.5%), while fewer continued to the senior level (37.5%) while fathers: Fathers showed a similar pattern, with 56.8% participating until youth level and 41.6% continuing to the senior level. The study suggests that intergenerational sports participation may influence youth athletes, with potential implications for promoting gender equity and fostering family involvement in sports. Recommendations include enhancing access to sports for women and girls, supporting underrepresented sports disciplines, and leveraging parental support to encourage youth participation.

**Keywords:** parental involvement, youth sports participation, Albania, gender disparities, intergenerational influence, sports disciplines.



## About START project

The Albanian Sports Science Association (ASSA) has noticed that there is a significant lack of standardized and reliable measurements of athletes in Albania. Due to the lack of evidence, it is not possible to carry out even a genuine scientific analysis or study of Albanian sports.

Since 2017, the ASSA team has evaluated and undertaken an initiative to collect data on the general and specific bio-motor skills, parent involvement of athletes in various sports disciplines. ASSA specialists have compiled a set of measurements to assess these parameters of athletes.

The new initiative is a project called “START- SporT Assessment Report” which will serve to conduct scientific research with data on Albanian sports. The athletes' data are part of a long-term multi-year study led by the "ASSA" team and relevant sports clubs as well as with other partners.

ASSA had lead this project as part of studies and research in the field of sports. The long-term multi-year study allows ASSA and related sports clubs to collect data on a wide range of athletes from different sports disciplines and to help establish bio-motor skills norms and athlete profiles.

## Introduction

Understanding intergenerational sports participation provides insight into the role of parental influence on youth athletes' engagement in sports. This study aimed to assess the extent of sports participation among the parents of 716 youth athletes aged 8–19 years in Albania. Specifically, the study evaluated their involvement in sports during their youth and analyzed participation patterns by gender and sports discipline. The findings help identify potential links between family sports history and current youth involvement.

## Methodology

**Participants-** A total of 716 youth athletes aged 8–19 years participated into the study (gender distribution: 514 boys (71.8%) and 202 girls (28.2%). Athletes were randomly selected from diverse sports disciplines across Albania. Participants completed a structured questionnaire, reporting whether their parents and grandparents participated in sports during their youth. The questionnaire also captured specific sports disciplines and levels of participation (e.g., youth or senior level). Descriptive statistics were used to calculate percentages and frequencies for overall and gender-specific results. Results were also analyzed for sports disciplines and participation levels.

## Results

**Overall Parental Participation** (sports participation among the parents of 716 youth athletes aged 8–19 years in Albania- table 1)

**Mothers:** 9.1% of mothers participated in sports during their youth.

**Fathers:** 27.1% of fathers reported sports participation in their youth.

*Table 1 Parents involved in sports during their childhood or youth.*

Participating athlete	Mother		Father	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
<b>N= 716</b>				
Yes	65	<b>9.1</b>	194	<b>27.1</b>
No	651	<b>90.9</b>	521	<b>72.9</b>
Total	716		715	

**Gender-Specific Findings (table 2)**

Boys (N=514): 8.8% of mothers participated in sports and 28.3% of fathers participated in sports.  
 Girls (N=202): 9.9% of mothers participated in sports and 24.3% of fathers participated in sports.

*Table 2 Parents involved in sports during their childhood or youth.*

Participating athlete	Parent Sport participation				
		Mother		Father	
N= 716		Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Gender		Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Boy	Yes	45	<b>8.8</b>	145	<b>28.3</b>
	No	469	<b>91.2</b>	368	<b>71.7</b>
	Total	514		513	
Girl	Yes	20	<b>9.9</b>	49	<b>24.3</b>
	No	182	<b>90.1</b>	153	<b>75.7</b>
	Total	202		202	

**Missing Data**

One response was missing for the question regarding fathers' participation (N=1), leaving a total of 715 responses for this variable.

**Participation by Sports Discipline****Mothers**

The most common sports disciplines mothers participated in during their youth were volleyball (49.2%) and basketball (23.1%), followed by gymnastics (7.7%). Other sports, such as football, badminton, athletics, and swimming, accounted for smaller shares.

	N	%
Basketball	15	23.1
Football	2	3.1
Volleyball	32	49.2
Gymnastics	5	7.7
Judo	3	4.6
Badminton	3	4.6
Athletics	3	4.6
Swimming	2	3.1

**Fathers**

Fathers demonstrated a broader range of participation, with the most common sports being football (59.8%), followed by basketball (16.0%) and wrestling (7%). A diverse range of other sports, including judo, boxing, and athletics, accounted for smaller shares.

	N	%
Basketball	4	16.0
Football	31	59.8
Volleyball	116	6.7
Karate	13	0.5
Taekwondo	1	0.5
Weight Lifting	1	1.0
Table Tennis	2	0.5
Gymnastics	1	5.7
Judo	11	1.0
Tennis	2	3.6
Wrestling	7	2.1
Boxing	4	1.5
Athletics	3	0.5
Swimming	1	0.5

**Participation by Sports Level**

Most mothers and fathers participated in sports only until the youth level. However, a substantial proportion continued to the senior level, with 37.5% of mothers and 41.6% of fathers achieving advanced competitive involvement.

	Mothers		Fathers	
	N	%	N	%
Youth Level	40	62.5	108	56.8
Senior Level	23	37.5	79	41.6

**Discussion**

The findings reveal clear gender-based disparities in sports participation among parents. Fathers were three times more likely to have participated in sports compared to mothers (27.1% vs. 9.1%). This reflects historical societal norms in Albania, where women faced greater barriers to sports participation due to limited opportunities and cultural expectations. Volleyball and basketball dominated among mothers, likely reflecting the most accessible team sports for women in earlier decades. Fathers' participation showed greater diversity, with football being the dominant sport, highlighting its cultural importance in Albania. The intergenerational sports involvement suggests a potential influence of parents' sports history on youth participation. Fathers' involvement in sports appears more aligned with traditional male role



modeling, while mothers’ involvement, though limited, may contribute emotional support and encouragement, especially for girls.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Only 9.1% of mothers and 27.1% of fathers participated in sports during their youth. Boys reported higher rates of parental sports participation compared to girls. Volleyball and basketball were the most common sports for mothers, while fathers dominated in football. A significant proportion of both mothers and fathers participated only until the youth level.

### **Recommendations**

**Promote Women’s Sports:** Enhance access to sports programs for women and girls to address historical gender disparities. **Support Underrepresented Sports:** Invest in infrastructure for disciplines with lower participation rates, such as swimming and gymnastics. **Encourage Intergenerational Support:** Foster initiatives that leverage parental involvement to inspire and support youth athletes.



### Appendix



