

California's Unlevel Playing Field

Disparity in Funding Between Baseball and Softball in California

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In the sunny state of California, where the crack of the bat and the cheers of fans echo through the air, a tale of two sports unfolds. One is blessed with seemingly unlimited funds and admiration, and the other is left to fend for itself. A stark contrast in funding has long persisted between baseball and softball programs. This discrepancy becomes glaringly evident when examining the numbers.

Under Title IV federal student financial assistance programs, every year colleges across the United States must open their books and reveal the inner workings of their athletic departments. This requirement, set forth by the Equity in Athletics Disclosure Act, aims to ensure transparency in athletic funding, participation, and staffing. Since 2003, the Department of Education has collected data from 2,074 schools nationwide, 764 of which are located in California, through the Equity in Athletics Survey.

A single figure emerges that casts a harsh light on the systemic funding imbalance between softball and baseball. This data subset reveals a difference in average expenses of **\$100,277** per year between the sports for colleges in California. This figure is especially surprising considering there are 1.2 women per every 1 male athlete in the dataset. It is important to keep in mind that baseball and softball are not exactly equivalent sports, which will impact some of the differences between the data.

For decades, college baseball has enjoyed a lion's share of financial support, with state-of-the-art facilities, top-tier coaching staff, and generous scholarship allocations. Meanwhile, softball programs, though equally deserving of investment and recognition, are often overlooked and underfunded. The disparity serves as a barrier to the growth and development of female athletes, perpetuating inequality and hindering their ability to compete at the same level as their male counterparts. Denied access to resources and opportunities, female athletes are at a disadvantage both on and off the field, facing obstacles in their pursuit of academic and athletic success.

Amidst the challenges lie opportunities for change. Such numerical disparity not only underscores the systemic inequalities that have long plagued collegiate sports but also serves as a rallying cry for equity and fairness. It is a reminder that every athlete, regardless of gender or sport, deserves access to resources and opportunities that will enable them to succeed on and off the field.

Collegiate athletics must come together to address this issue head-on, committing to providing female athletes with the support they need to thrive, both academically and athletically. It's not just about leveling the playing field; it's about creating a culture of inclusivity and empowerment, where every athlete, regardless of gender or sport, has the chance to succeed.

Ultimately, the funding gap between baseball and softball programs should not be seen as a mere statistic but as a call to action—a testament to the power of one number to ignite change, bridge divides, and pave the way for a brighter, more inclusive future in collegiate athletics.

Spreadsheet Operations:

- Imported data from sports.csv that our group had previously subsetted in R
 - Subsetted to contain only California and only baseball and softball in R
- Created a pivot table with expenses for men, expenses for women, participating number of men, and participating number of women in the values section
 - Averaged the expenses separately for each gender and summed the number participants separately for each gender
- Subtracted the average expenses for men by the average expenses for women to obtain the difference in expenses
- Divided the number of women by the number of men to obtain the ratio of women to men