

High School Sports Participation State Profile

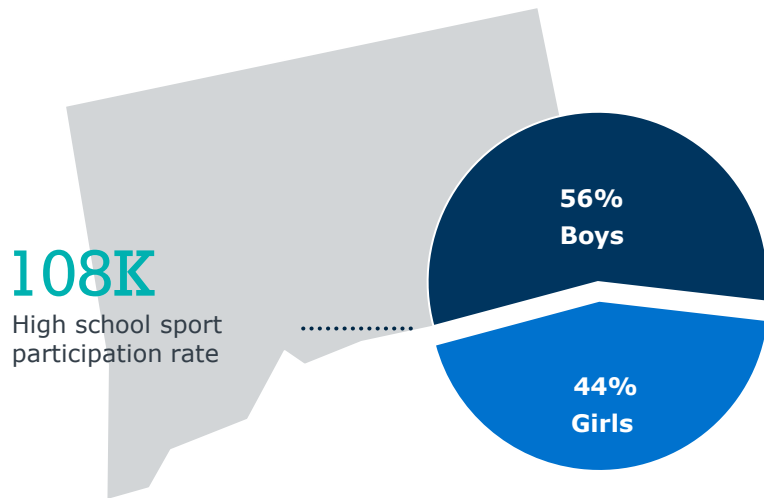
State Profile: Connecticut

Boys Account for Most High School Sport Participation

As of 2022-2023, the high school sports participation rate was 108,227 in Connecticut. Mirroring the national trend, boys accounted for more than half of participation.

High School Sport Participation, Share of Girls v. Boys, 2023-24

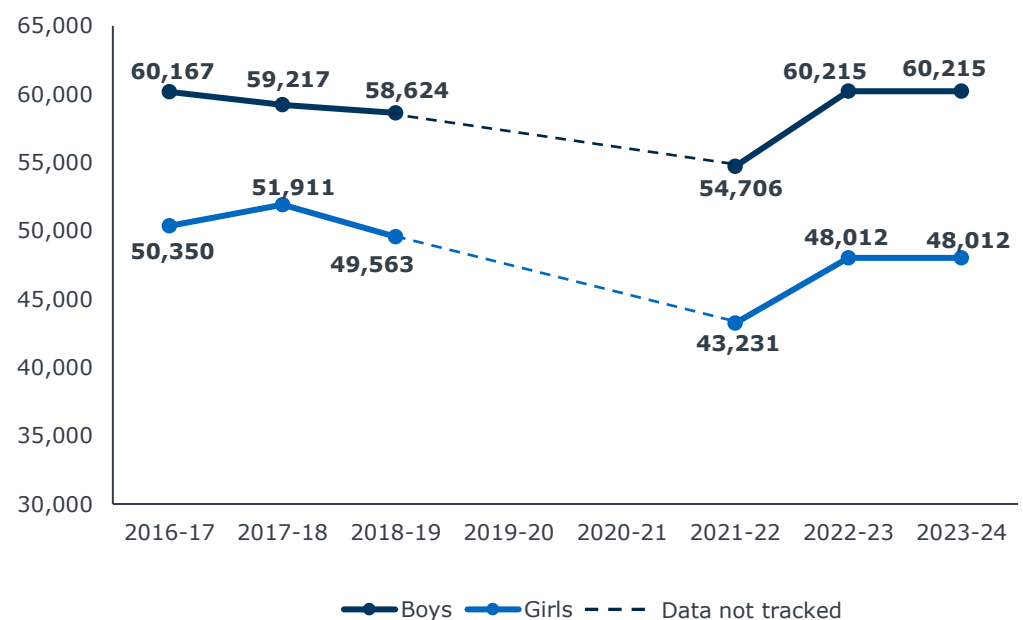
n=108,227 participation rate



Gap Between Boys, Girls Persists After Pandemic

Participation in high school sports is growing among boys and girls over the last eight years and up dramatically from the first year after pandemic closures.

Change in Participation Rates, 2016-17 to 2023-24



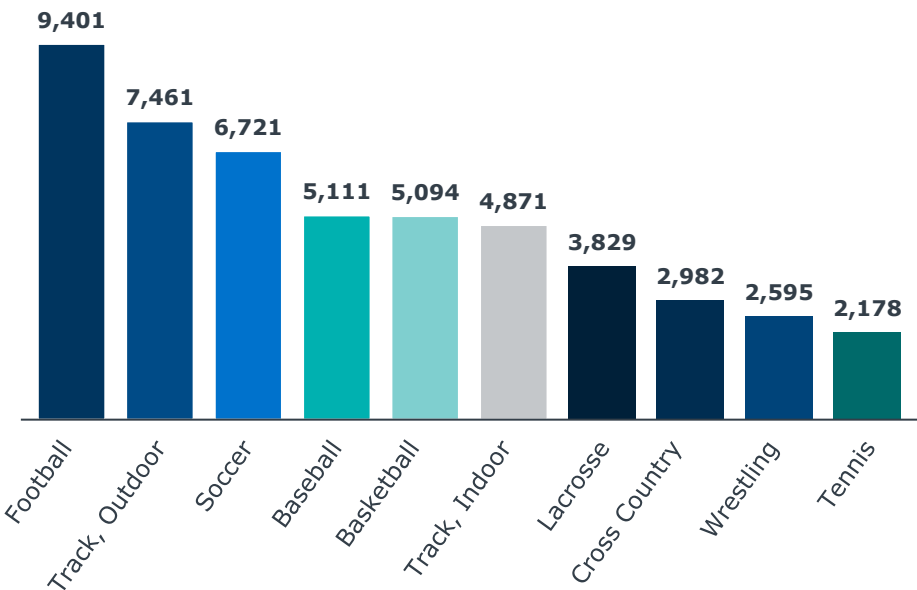
Source: EAB analysis of National Federation of State High School Association data.

Top Boys' and Girls' Sports

Lacrosse Emerges as a Popular Sport Among Boys

Like most states, football was the biggest sport as of 2023-2024. While most of the other sports reflected national trends, lacrosse was the biggest deviation. Specifically, it was the seventh largest sport in the state and not in the top 10 nationally.

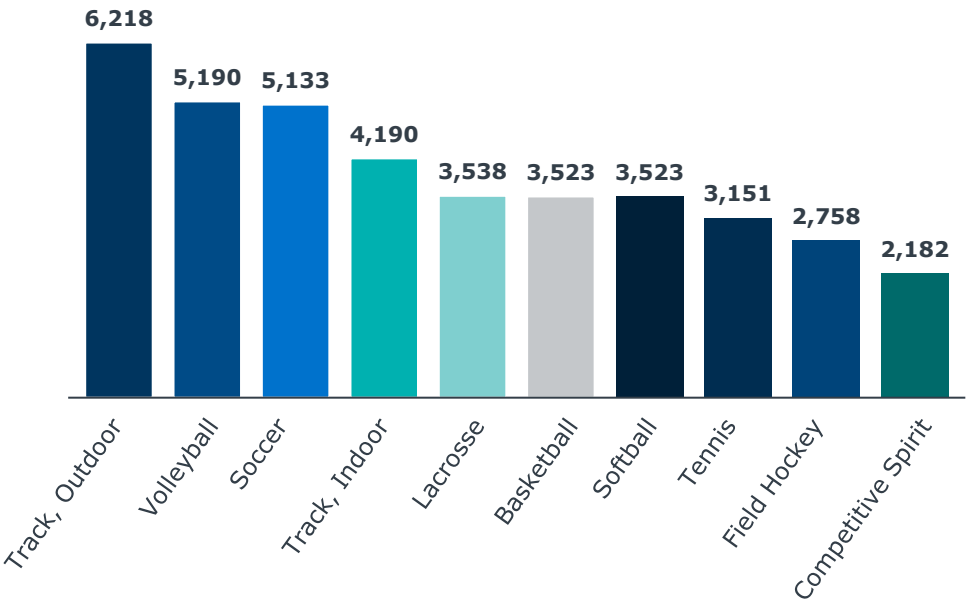
Top 10 Boys Sports by Participation Rate, 2022-2023
n=60,215 participation rate



Flag Football Emerging as a Popular Sport among Girls

The top girls' sports in Connecticut also largely reflected national trends. The biggest deviation was field, which is the ninth largest sport in the state and not in the top 10 nationally.

Top 10 Girls Sports by Participation Rate, 2023-2024
n=48,012 participation rate



Short- and Long-Term Changes in Participation

Boys

Mostly Declines in Boys' Participation

Areas of Consistent Growth

Two sports grew across the last eight years. This trend may signal emerging and/or sustainable recruitment areas. They included:

- Wrestling
- Volleyball

Areas of Steady Decline

In comparison, participation fell in the last year and across the last eight years among twelve sports. Because the participation rate double counts multi-sport athletes, it is possible some of these declines may be attributed to growing specialization.

- Baseball
- Basketball
- Cross Country
- Football
- Golf
- Ice Hockey
- Indoor Track & Field
- Lacrosse
- Outdoor Track & Field
- Soccer
- Swimming & Diving
- Tennis

Sport	2023-2024 Participation ¹	Change, 2022-23 to 2023-24 ²	Change, 2016-17 to 2023-24
Football, 11-Player	9,401	N/A	-2%
Track and Field, Outdoor	7,461	N/A	-2%
Soccer	6,721	N/A	-9%
Baseball	5,111	N/A	-13%
Basketball	5,094	N/A	-5%
Track and Field, Indoor	4,871	N/A	-9%
Lacrosse	3,829	N/A	-10%
Cross Country	2,982	N/A	-27%
Wrestling	2,595	N/A	16%
Tennis	2,178	N/A	-2%
Unified Basketball	1,964	N/A	N/A
Golf	1,745	N/A	-3%
Swimming & Diving	1,492	N/A	-21%
Ice Hockey	1,468	N/A	-1%
Volleyball	1,209	N/A	39%
Unified Soccer	876	N/A	N/A
Unified Track and Field	514	N/A	N/A
eSports	245	N/A	N/A
Unified Bowling	241	N/A	N/A
Competitive Spirit	152	N/A	0%
Unified Volleyball	66	N/A	N/A

1) Connecticut reported the same data in 2022 and 2023.
2) Change not calculated due to reporting the same data.

Source: EAB analysis of National Federation of State High School Association data.

Biggest, Fastest Growth, Largest Decline

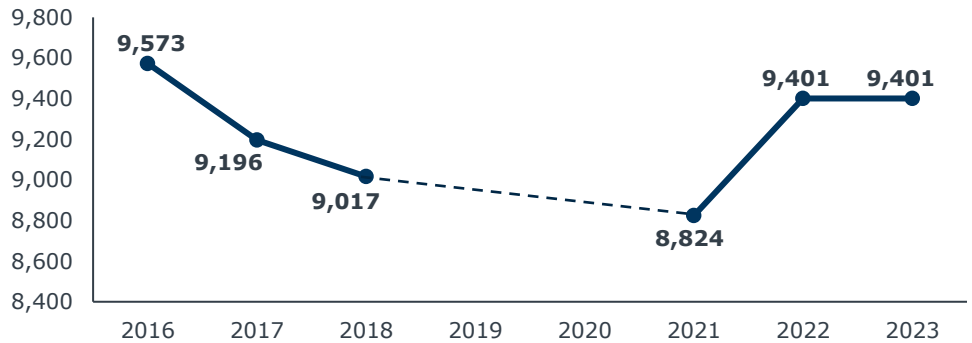
Boys

Biggest Sport

Football Not Yet Recovered from Pre-Pandemic Decline

Participation in football decreased 6% between 2016 and 2023. However, it is showing signs of growth. Participation increased 12% from 2018 to 2023.

Change in Boys' Football Participation, 2016-17 to 2023-24

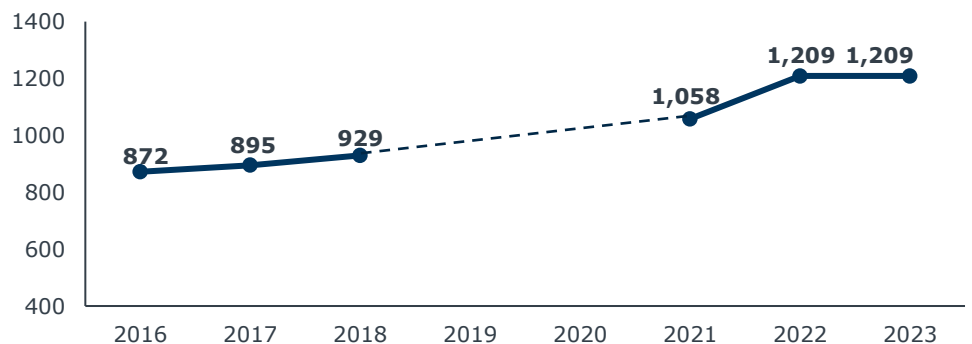


Fastest Growth

Steady Growth in Volleyball

Participation in volleyball increased 39% between 2016 and 2023.

Change in Boys' Volleyball Participation, 2016-17 to 2023-24

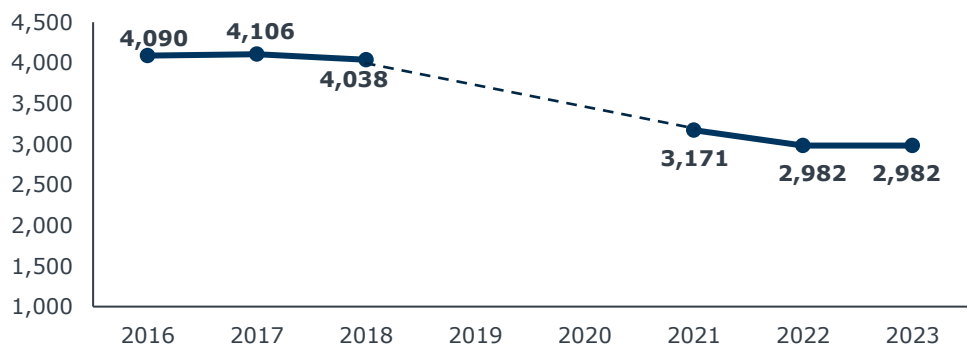


Largest Decline

Steady Decline in XC

Participation in cross country fell 27% between 2016 and 2023.

Change in Boys' Cross Country Participation, 2016-17 to 2023-24



Source: EAB analysis of National Federation of State High School Association data.

Short- and Long-Term Changes in Participation

Girls

Mostly Declines in Girls' Participation

Areas of Consistent Growth

Three sports grew both in the last year and across the last eight years. This trend may signal emerging and/or sustainable recruitment areas. They included:

- Volleyball
- Wrestling
- Football, 11-Player

Areas of Steady Decline

In comparison, participation fell in the last year and across the last eight years among fifteen sports. Because the participation rate double counts multi-sport athletes, it is possible some of these declines may be attributed to growing specialization.

- Baseball
- Competitive Spirit
- Cross Country
- Field Hockey
- Golf
- Gymnastics
- Ice Hockey
- Indoor Track & Field
- Lacrosse
- Outdoor Track & Field
- Soccer
- Swimming & Diving

Sport	2023-2024 Participation	Change, 2022-23 to 2023-24	Change, 2016-17 to 2023-24
Track and Field, Outdoor	6,218	N/A	-10%
Volleyball	5,190	N/A	6%
Soccer	5,133	N/A	-11%
Track and Field, Indoor	4,190	N/A	-17%
Lacrosse	3,538	N/A	-5%
Basketball	3,523	N/A	-9%
Softball -- Fast Pitch	3,523	N/A	-15%
Tennis	3,151	N/A	-3%
Field Hockey	2,758	N/A	-15%
Competitive Spirit	2,182	N/A	-22%
Cross Country	2,134	N/A	-23%
Swimming & Diving	2,032	N/A	-23%
Unified Basketball	1,579	N/A	N/A
Unified Soccer	753	N/A	N/A
Golf	687	N/A	-5%
Unified Track and Field	431	N/A	N/A
Gymnastics	398	N/A	-11%
Wrestling	231	N/A	189%
Unified Bowling	204	N/A	N/A
Football, 11-Player	64	N/A	68%
unified volleyball	61	N/A	N/A
Ice Hockey	15	N/A	-12%
Baseball	10	N/A	-9%
Esport	7	N/A	N/A

1) Connecticut reported the same data in 2022 and 2023.
2) Change not calculated due to reporting the same data.

Source: EAB analysis of National Federation of State High School Association data.

Biggest, Fastest Growth, Largest Decline

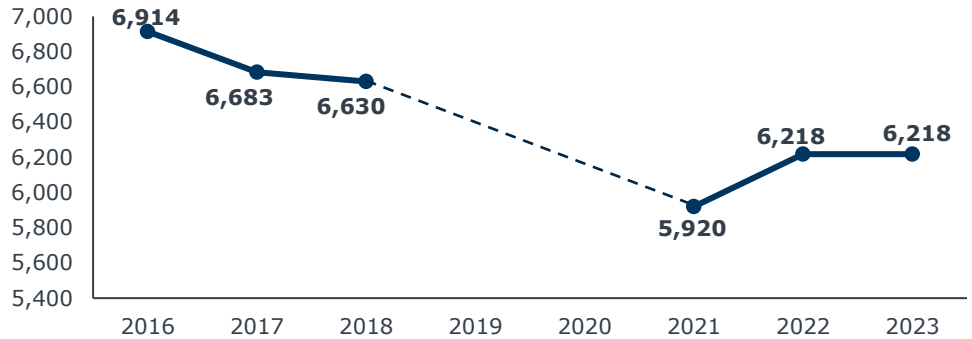
Girls

Biggest Sport

Track and Field Down Despite Recent Growth

Participation in outdoor track and field decreased 10% between 2016 and 2023. However, it is showing recent signs of growth, with a 5% increase since 2021.

Change in Girls' Outdoor Track and Field Participation, 2016-17 to 2023-24

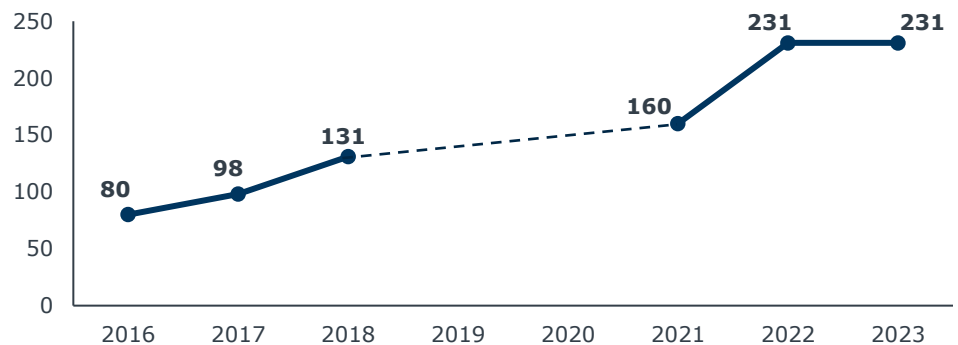


Fastest Growth

Wrestling Small But Growing Quickly

Participation wrestling increased 189% between 2016 and 2023 but remains outside of the top 10 sports.

Change in Boys Wrestling Participation, 2016-17 to 2023-24

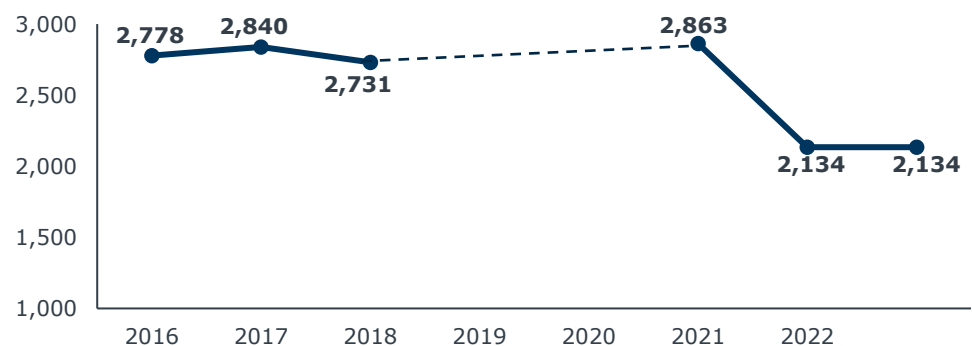


Largest Decline

XC Down After Several Years of Modest Growth

Participation in cross country fell 23% between 2016 and 2023, despite two years of growth in that timeframe.

Change in Boys Basketball Participation, 2016-17 to 2023-24



Source: EAB analysis of National Federation of State High School Association data.

Appendix: About the Data

Data in this report come from the National Federation of State High School Association's "[High School Athletics Participation Survey](#)."

Limitations of the Data

- The numbers cited in this report reflect the "participation rate." An individual who participated in two sports is counted twice, three sports – three times and so on.
- Participation rates are not adjusted for population changes.
- Most states exclude data from independent schools, unless they are part of the state league, which varies by state and sport.
- Data do not include club sport participation.
- Some states did not report data for all years included in the report. Meanwhile, others appear to have reported duplicate data in a few cases. These cases are called out in the report when applicable.

Definitions

"Adapted" refers to sports that are modified (e.g., rules, equipment) for special-needs students.

"Unified" refers to sports that are open to special-needs students but aren't adapted to meet their needs.

Appendix: National High School Sports Participation

2023-2024 Top 10 Sports in USA by Participation

Top Boys' Sports

1. Football – 11-Player	1,031,508
2. Track and Field – Outdoor	625,333
3. Basketball	536,668
4. Baseball	471,701
5. Soccer	467,483
6. Wrestling	291,874
7. Cross Country	239,874
8. Tennis	157,835
9. Golf	155,174
10. Swimming and Diving	116,799
Total Boys' Participation	4,638,785

Top Girls' Sports

1. Track and Field – Outdoor	506,015
2. Volleyball	479,125
3. Soccer	383,895
4. Basketball	367,284
5. Softball – Fast Pitch	345,451
6. Tennis	195,766
7. Cross Country	192,969
8. Competitive Spirit	181,023
9. Swimming and Diving	138,174
10. Lacrosse	101,204
Total Girls' Participation	3,423,517

Source: EAB analysis of National Federation of State High School Association data.