

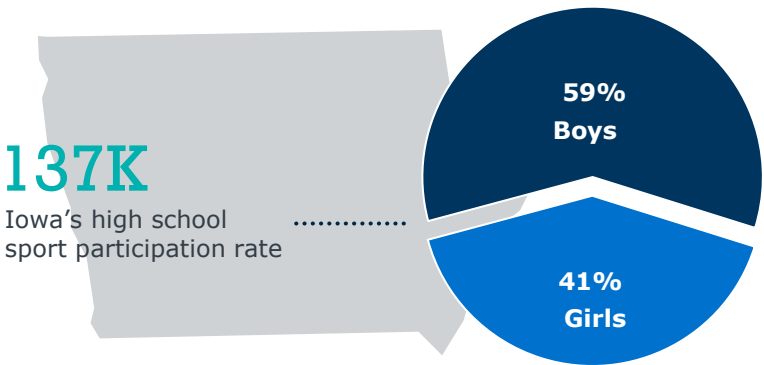
High School Sports Participation State Profile

State Profile: Iowa

Boys Account for Most High School Sport Participation

As of 2023-2024, the high school sports participation rate was 137,216 in Iowa. Mirroring the national trend, boys accounted for more than half of participation.

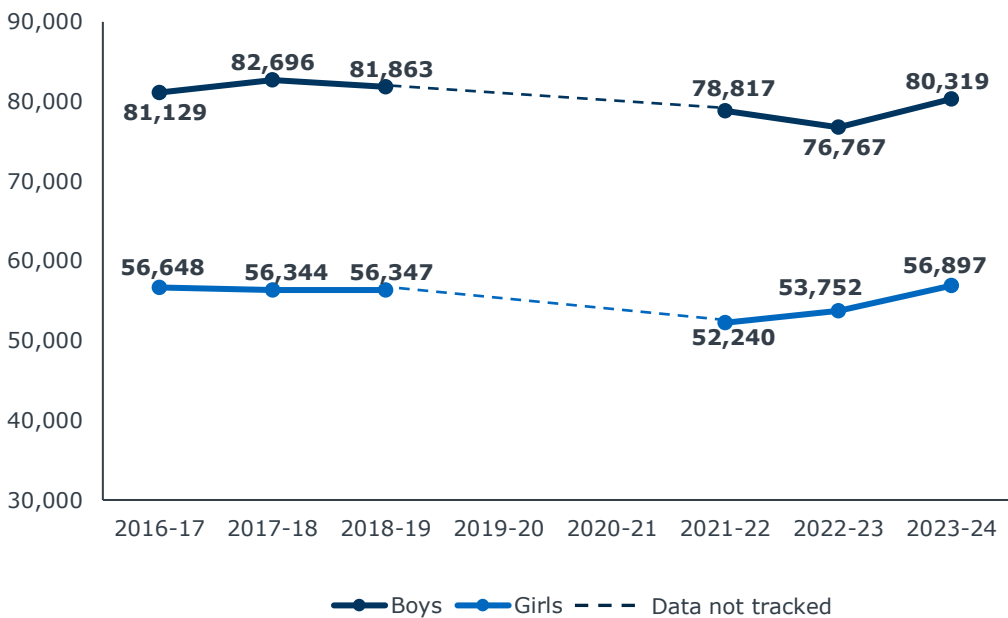
High School Sport Participation, Share of Girls v. Boys, 2023-24
n=137,216 (total participation)



Girls' Participation Surpasses Pre-Pandemic Levels, Boys Lagging

Participation in high school sports has increased slightly among girls but is down among boys since 2016.

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



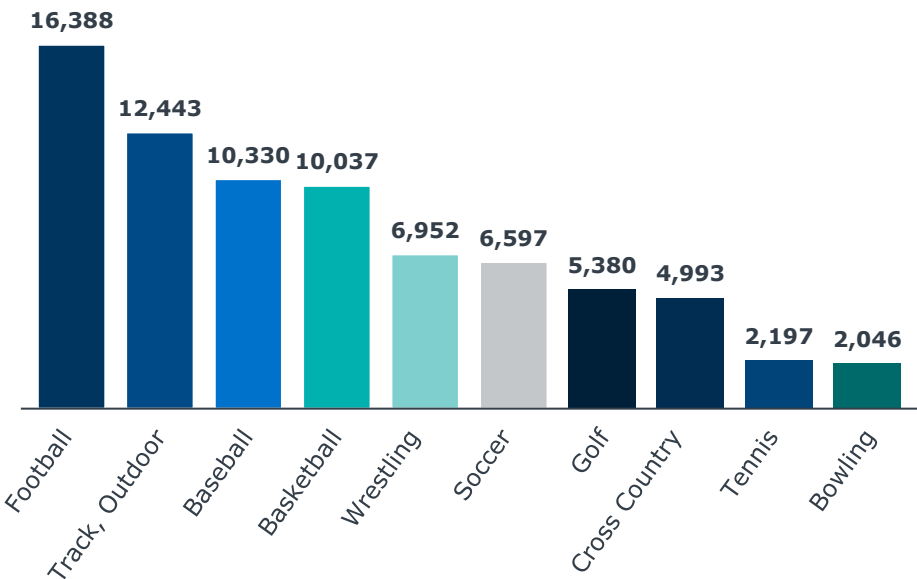
Source: EAB analysis of National Federation of State High School Association data.

Top Boys' and Girls' Sports

Top Boys' Sports Closely Reflect National Trends

Like most states, football was the biggest boys' sport as of 2023-2024. In generally, the top 10 biggest sports in Iowa resemble those nationally. The exception is bowling, which is the 10th largest sport in Iowa and not in the top 10 nationally.

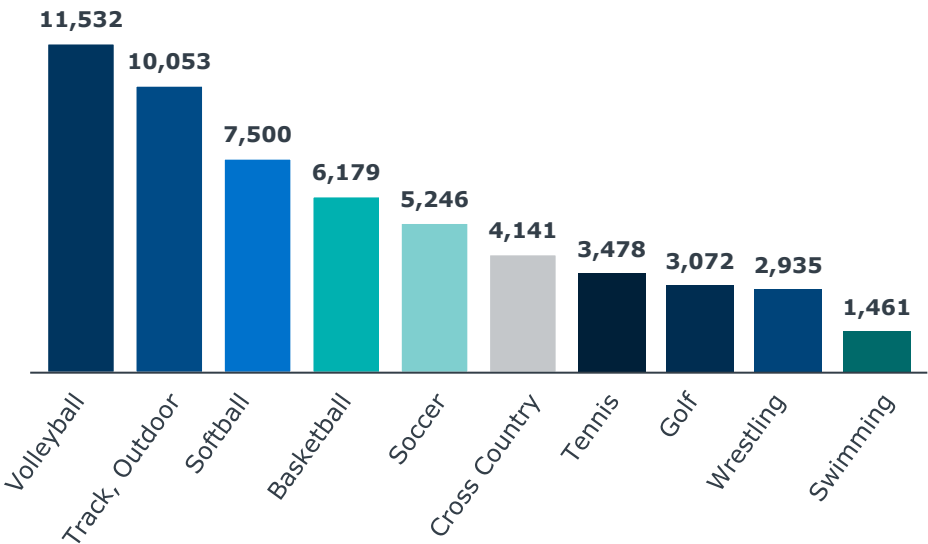
Top 10 Boys' Sports by Participation Rate, 2022-2023
n=80,319



Wrestling Breaks Top 10 Sports Among Girls

The top girls' sports in Iowa are also similar to national trends. The biggest deviation is wrestling. While wrestling is the 9th largest sport among girls in Iowa, it did not make the top 10 nationally.

Top 10 Girls' Sports by Participation Rate, 2023-2024
n=56,897



Short- and Long-Term Changes in Participation

Boys

Areas of Consistent Growth

Five 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:

- Bowling
- Golf
- Outdoor Track & Field
- Soccer
- Wrestling

Areas of Steady Decline

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

- Swimming & Diving
- Tennis

| Sport | 2023-2024 Participation | Change, 2022-23 to 2023-24 | Change, 2016-17 to 2023-24 |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Football, 11-Player | 16,388 | 4% | -4% |
| Track and Field, Outdoor | 12,443 | 5% | 4% |
| Baseball | 10,330 | 2% | -1% |
| Basketball | 10,037 | 3% | -10% |
| Wrestling | 6,952 | 13% | 6% |
| Soccer | 6,597 | 3% | 5% |
| Golf | 5,380 | 10% | 11% |
| Cross Country | 4,993 | 7% | -9% |
| Tennis | 2,197 | -1% | -8% |
| Bowling | 2,046 | 7% | 14% |
| Football, 8-player | 1,732 | -3% | -1% |
| Swimming & Diving | 1,224 | 6% | -17% |

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

Biggest, Fastest Growth, Largest Decline

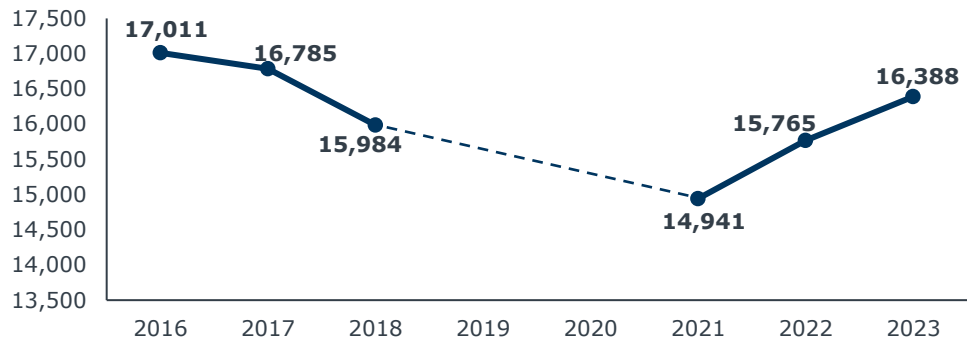
Boys

Biggest Sport

Football Recovering After Steady Decline

Boys' participation in football is lower than it was in 2016 but has shown signs of recovery since 2021. While participation dropped 12% between 2016 and 2021, it increased almost 10% between 2021 and 2023.

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

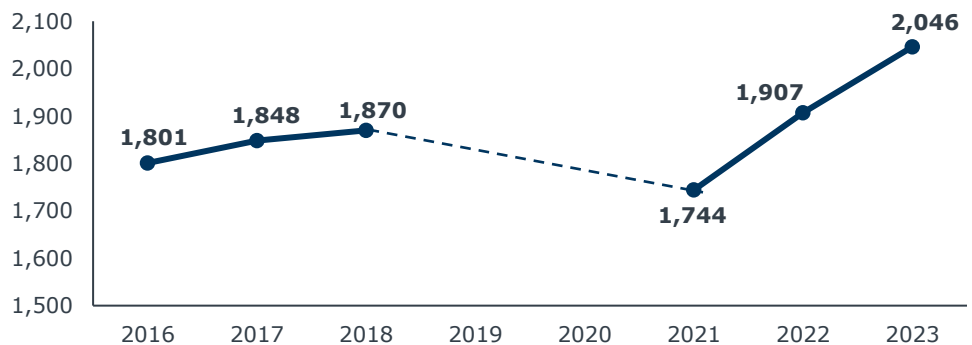


Fastest Growth

Mostly Growth for Bowling

Participation in boys' bowling has grown almost every year since 2016. Like many other sports, bowling shrunk immediately following the pandemic but is up 14% overall since 2016.

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

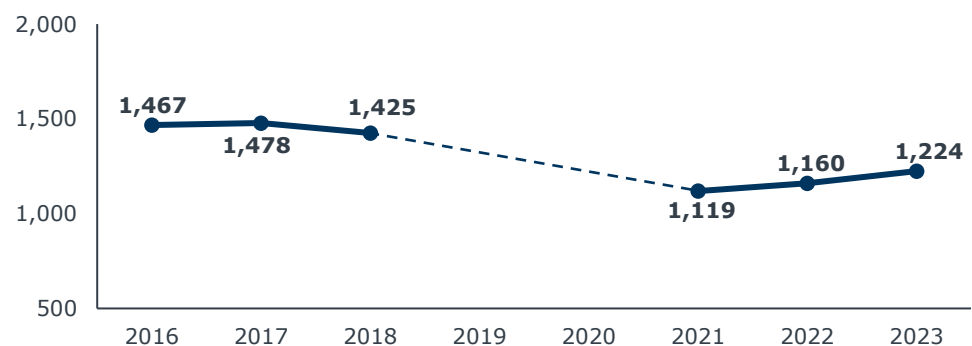


Largest Decline

Swimming and Diving Up Slightly After Declines

Overall, participation in swimming and diving is down 17% between 2016 and 2023. However, participation has started to rise slightly since 2021.

Change in Boys' Swimming and Diving 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

Areas of Consistent Growth

Five 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:

- Football, 11-player
- Football, 8-player
- Outdoor Track & Field
- Tennis
- Wrestling

Areas of Steady Decline

In comparison, participation fell in the last year and across the last eight years among two 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

| Sport | 2023-2024 Participation | Change, 2022-23 to 2023-24 | Change, 2016-17 to 2023-24 |
|----------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Volleyball | 11,532 | 4% | -2% |
| Track and Field -- Outdoor | 10,053 | 8% | 4% |
| Softball -- Fast Pitch | 7,500 | 1% | -5% |
| Basketball | 6,179 | -3% | -18% |
| Soccer | 5,246 | 3% | -3% |
| Cross Country | 4,141 | 10% | -12% |
| Tennis | 3,478 | 13% | 2% |
| Golf | 3,072 | 7% | -1% |
| Wrestling | 2,935 | 41% | 2,865% |
| Swimming & Diving | 1,461 | 4% | -12% |
| Bowling | 1,218 | 2% | -7% |
| Football -- 11-Player | 67 | 22% | 72% |
| Football -- 8-player | 13 | 18% | 44% |
| Baseball | 2 | -50% | -60% |

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

Biggest, Fastest Growth, Largest Decline

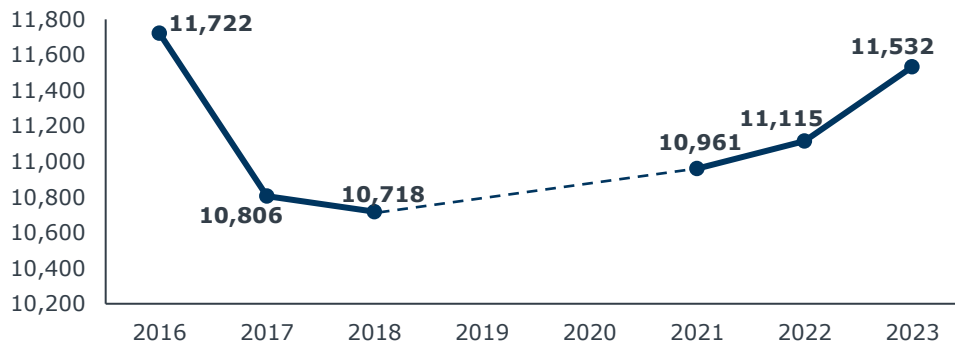
Girls

Biggest Sport

Volleyball Down Slightly, Recovering Since Pandemic

Participation in girls track is down 2% since 2013. However, participation has been growing since 2018.

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

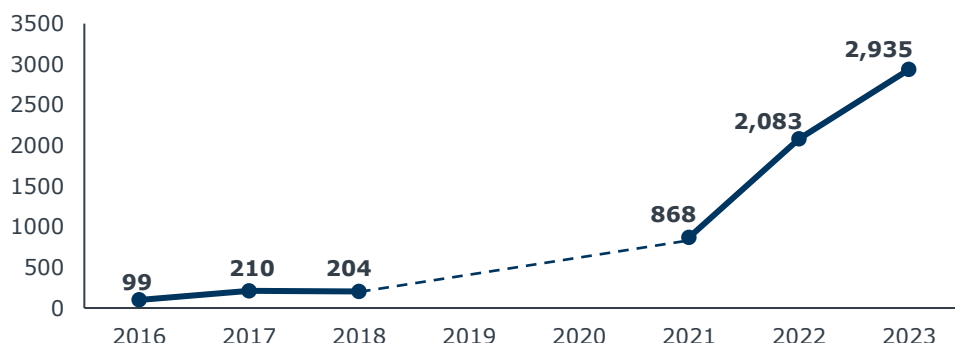


Fastest Growth

Post-Pandemic Growth Brings Wrestling to Top 10

While participation girls' wrestling was low from 2016 to 2018, it has since grown quickly to become the 9th largest sport among girls. Specifically, participation increased 238% between 2021 and 2023.

Change in Girls' Wrestling Participation, 2016-17 to 2023-24

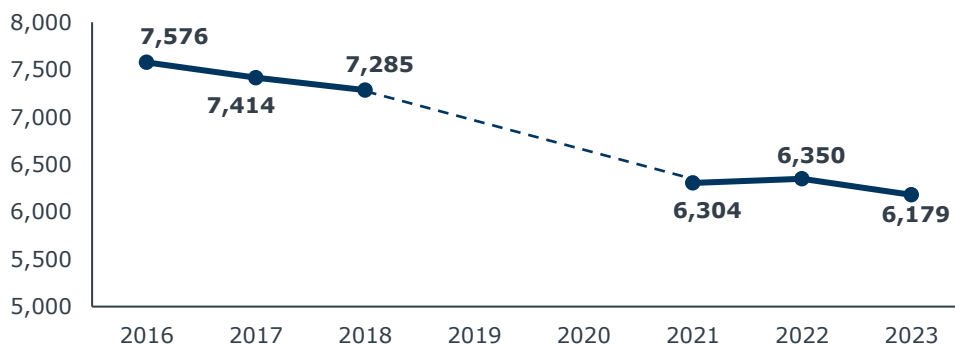


Largest Decline

Steady Decline in Basketball

Participation in basketball has fallen almost every year since 2016, with a total decline of 18% by 2023.

Change in Girls' 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.