

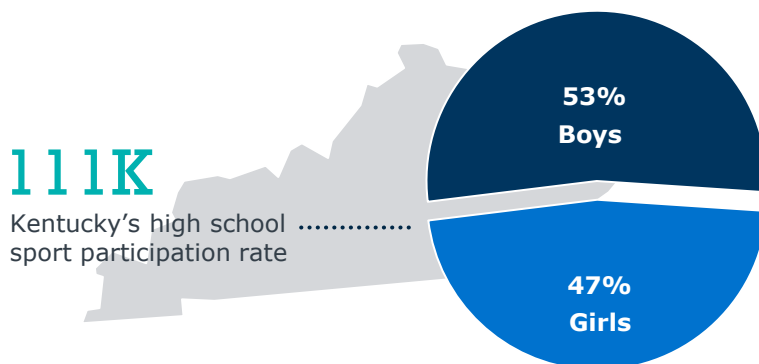
High School Sports Participation State Profile

State Profile: Kentucky

Boys Account for Most High School Sport Participation

As of 2023-2024, the high school sports participation rate was 111,620 in Kentucky. Mirroring the national trend, boys accounted for more than half of participation.

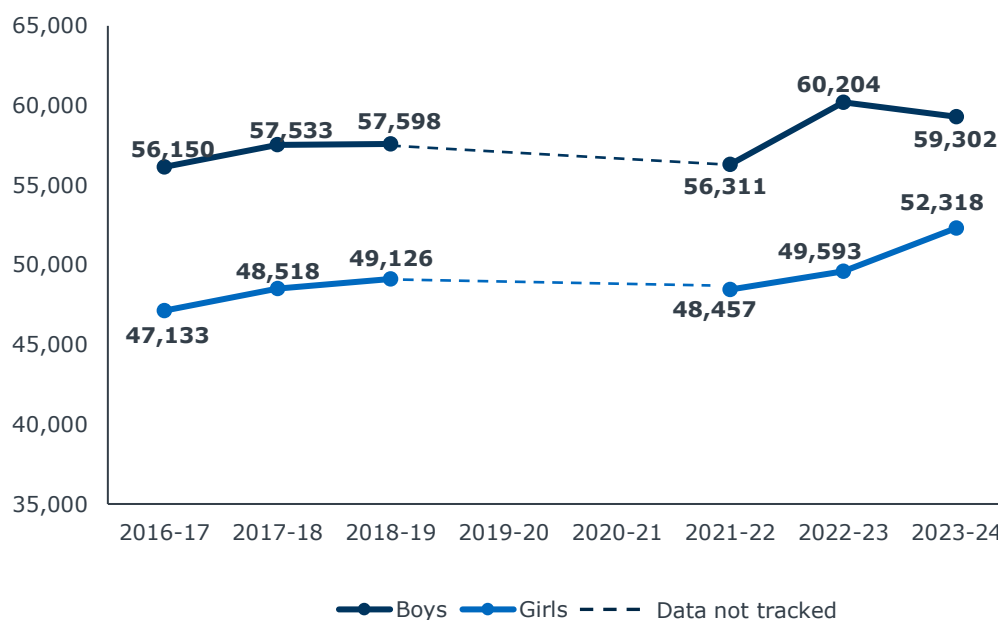
High School Sport Participation, Share of Girls v. Boys, 2023-24
n=111,620 (total participation)



Gap Between Boys, Girls Persists After Pandemic

Participation in high school sports is growing among boys and girls over the last eight years. In addition, Kentucky has one of the smallest gaps participation for boys and girls.

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



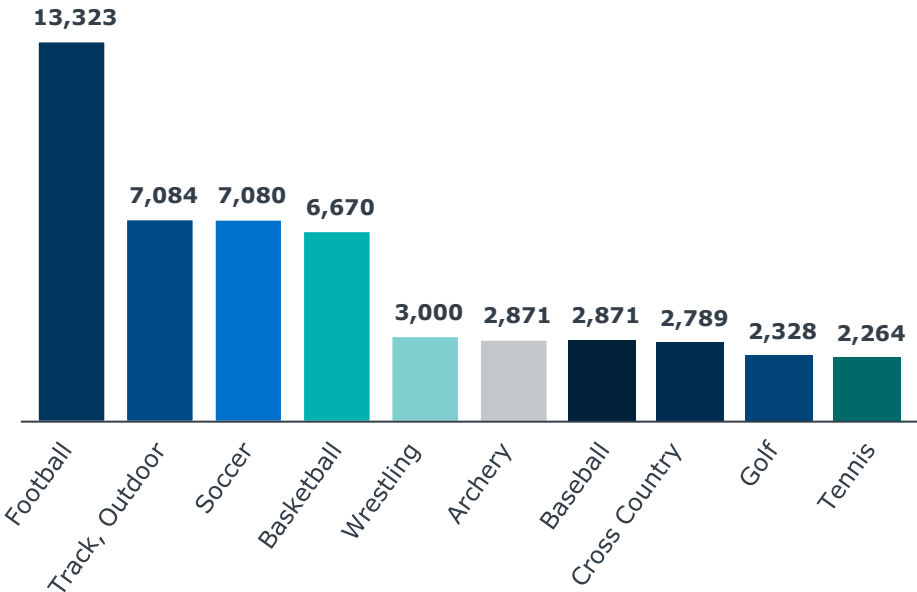
Source: EAB analysis of National Federation of State High School Association data.

Top Boys' and Girls' Sports

Football Almost Twice As Big As Next Largest Sport

Like many states, football was the biggest boys' sport as of 2023-2024. Among the remaining top 10 sports, two stand out from national trends. Specifically, wrestling and archery are the 5th and 6th largest sports, respectively in Kentucky and not in the top 10 nationally.

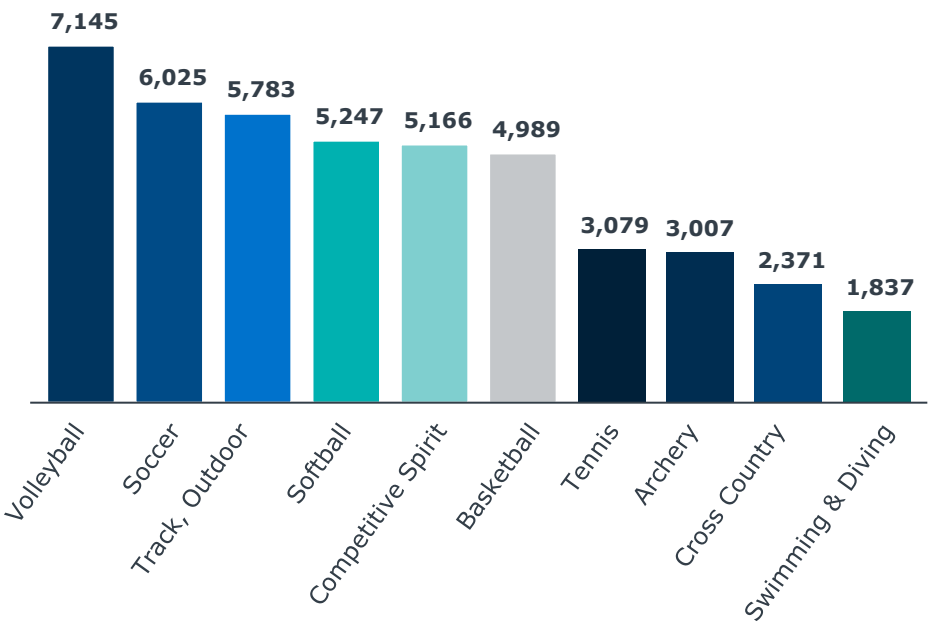
Top 10 Boys' Sports by Participation Rate, 2022-2023
n=59,302



Top Girls' Sports TAKEAWAY

Like boys, archery is in the top 10 sports for girls (8th). Otherwise, the top girls' sports largely reflect national trends.

Top 10 Girls' Sports by Participation Rate, 2023-2024
n=52,318



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

Short- and Long-Term Changes in Participation

Boys

Areas of Consistent Growth

Nine 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:

- Archery
- Bowling
- Competitive Spirit
- Golf
- Outdoor Track & Field
- Soccer
- Tennis
- Wrestling

Areas of Steady Decline

In comparison, participation fell in the last year and across the last eight years among three 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
- Swimming & Diving

Sport	2023-2024 Participation	Change, 2022-23 to 2023-24	Change, 2016-17 to 2023-24
Football, 11-Player	13,323	1%	-3%
Track and Field, Outdoor	7,084	4%	8%
Soccer	7,080	4%	10%
Basketball	6,670	-1%	-6%
Wrestling	3,000	17%	56%
Archery	2,871	10%	24%
Baseball	2,871	-60%	-61%
Cross Country	2,789	2%	-13%
Golf	2,328	7%	10%
Tennis	2,264	1%	7%
eSports	1,766	20%	N/A
Swimming & Diving	1,429	-2%	-8%
Bowling	1,337	3%	35%
Bass Fishing	1,329	-5%	N/A
Lacrosse	1,138	8%	69%
Track and Field, Indoor	1,029	N/A	N/A
Volleyball	449	N/A	N/A
Competitive Spirit	203	22%	17%
Unified Bowling	162	N/A	N/A
Unified Track and Field, Outdoor	151	9%	N/A
Dance	25	92%	N/A

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

Biggest, Fastest Growth, Largest Decline

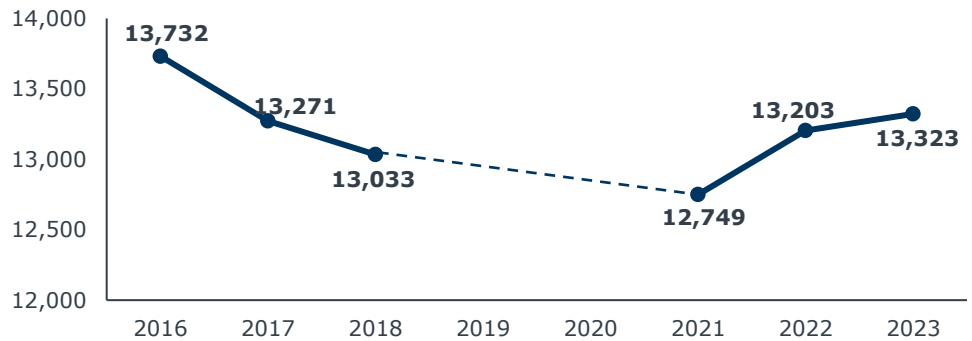
Boys

Biggest Sport

Football Participation Down But Picking Back Up

Participation in football fell 3% between 2016 and 2022. However, it is showing recent signs of growth. Participation increased 4.5% from 2021 to 2023.

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

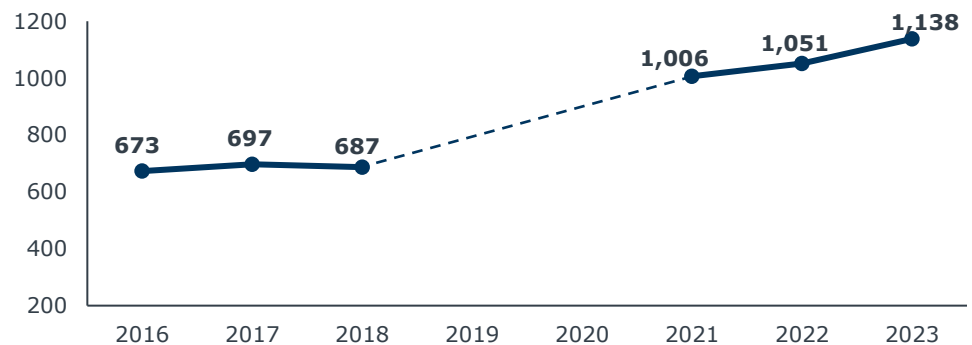


Fastest Growth

Lacrosse On Growth Streak

Participation in boys' lacrosse has grown steadily from 2016 to 2023 (+69%). Lacrosse is currently the 15th largest sport in the state.

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

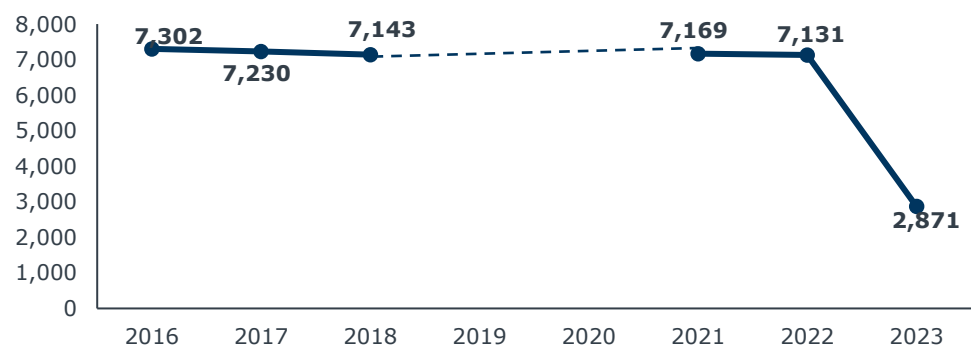


Largest Decline

Baseball Drops Sharply After Several Flat Years

According to the latest data, baseball participation is down 61% since 2016. Almost all of that drop happened between 2022 and 2023.

Change in Boys' Baseball 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

Ten 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:

- Archery
- Bowling
- Field Hockey
- Lacrosse
- Outdoor Track & Field
- Soccer
- Tennis
- Volleyball
- Wrestling

Areas of Steady Decline

In comparison, participation fell in the last year and across the last eight years among six sports:

- Baseball
- Basketball
- Cross Country
- Golf
- Softball
- Swimming & Diving

Sport	2023-2024 Participation	Change, 2022-23 to 2023-24	Change, 2016-17 to 2023-24
Volleyball	7,145	2%	14%
Soccer	6,025	2%	1%
Track and Field, Outdoor	5,783	5%	5%
Softball, Fast Pitch	5,247	-1%	-8%
Competitive Spirit	5,166	4%	4%
Basketball	4,989	-2%	-8%
Tennis	3,079	10%	21%
Archery	3,007	10%	41%
Cross Country	2,371	-3%	-16%
Swimming & Diving	1,837	-2%	-16%
Dance	1,373	3%	N/A
Golf	1,220	-1%	-1%
Lacrosse	1,091	8%	36%
Wrestling	992	162%	1808%
Track and Field, Indoor	876	N/A	N/A
Bowling	868	3%	7%
Field Hockey	655	3%	-2%
Esport	259	31%	N/A
Unified Track and Field, Outdoor	99	41%	N/A
Bass Fishing	98	1%	N/A

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

Short- and Long-Term Changes in Participation

Girls, Continued

Sport	2023-2024 Participation	Change, 2022-23 to 2023-24	Change, 2016-17 to 2023-24
Unified Bowling	77	N/A	N/A
Football, 11-Player	43	-26%	23%
Baseball	14	-13%	-30%
Adapted Track	2	-60%	N/A
Adapted Bowling	2	N/A	N/A

Biggest, Fastest Growth, Largest Decline

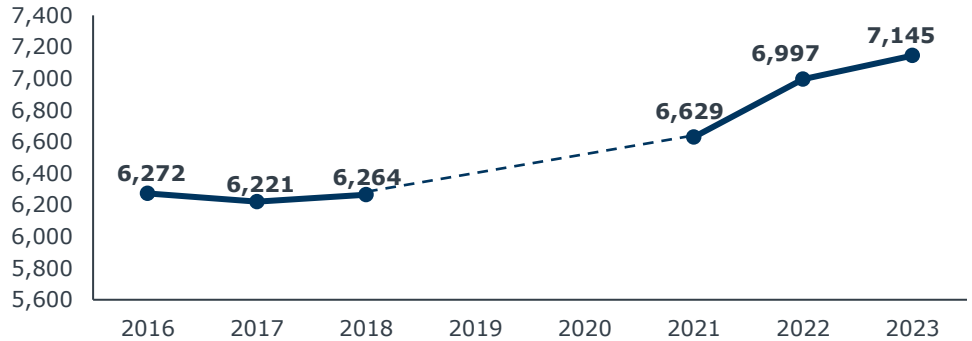
Girls

Biggest Sport

Quickening Growth for Volleyball

Participation in volleyball is up 14% since 2016. Participation has increased fastest after the pandemic.

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

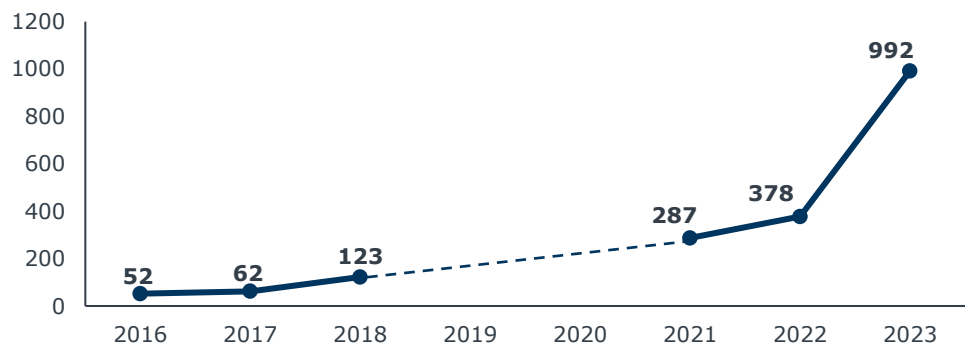


Fastest Growth

Wrestling Small but Growing Fast Among Girls

Wrestling has grown every year since 2016, and it shows signs of very fast growth going forward. Participation increased by 162% just between 2022 and 2023.

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

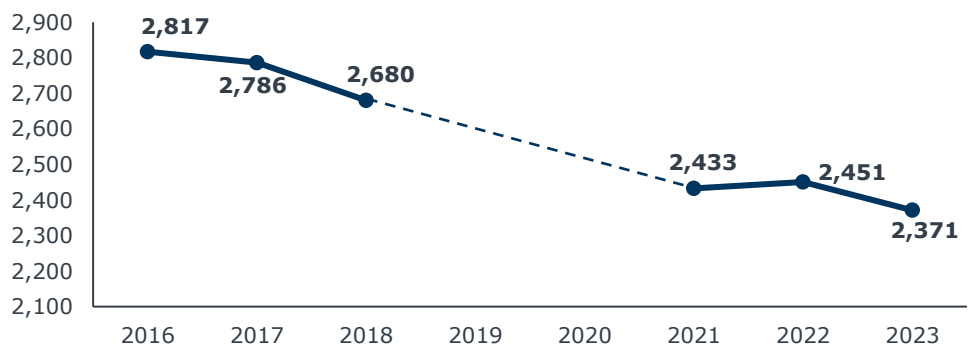


Largest Decline

Cross Country Could Slide Out of Top 10

Cross country is the 9th largest sport, but it has declined every year but one since 2016. Overall participation is down 16% since then.

Change in Girls' Cross Country 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.