

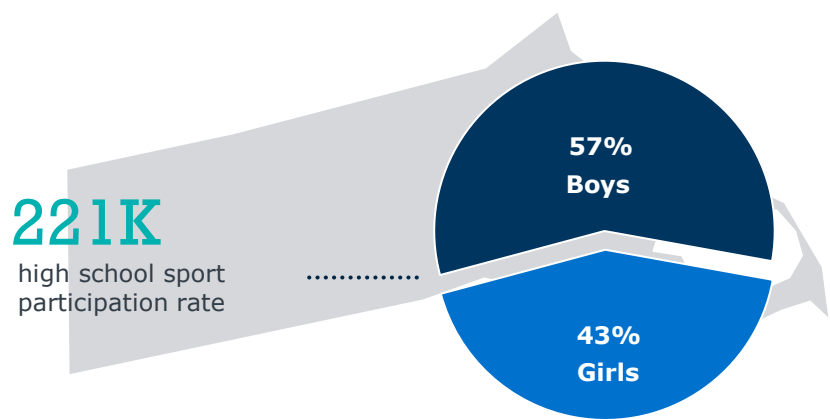
# High School Sports Participation State Profile

## State Profile: Massachusetts

### Boys Account for Most High School Sport Participation

As of 2023-2024, the high school sports participation rate was 221,142 in Massachusetts. Mirroring the national trend, boys accounted for more than half of participation.

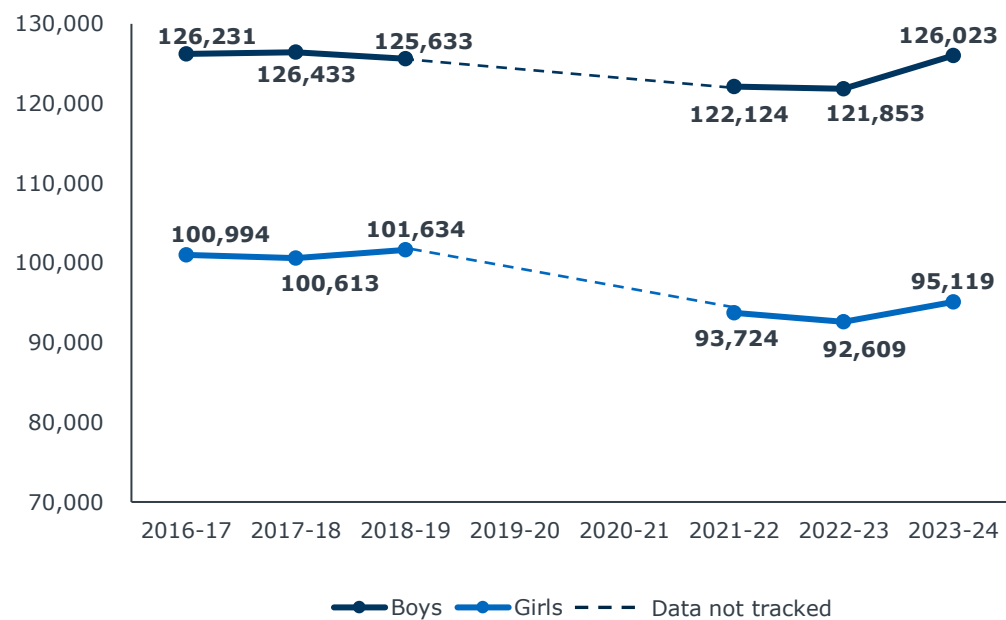
High School Sport Participation, Share of Girls v. Boys, 2023-24  
n=221,142 (total participation)



### Gap Between Boys, Girls Expanded After Pandemic

Participation in high school sports is falling among boys and girls over the last eight years. However, the decline was larger among girls, increasing the gap in participation.

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



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

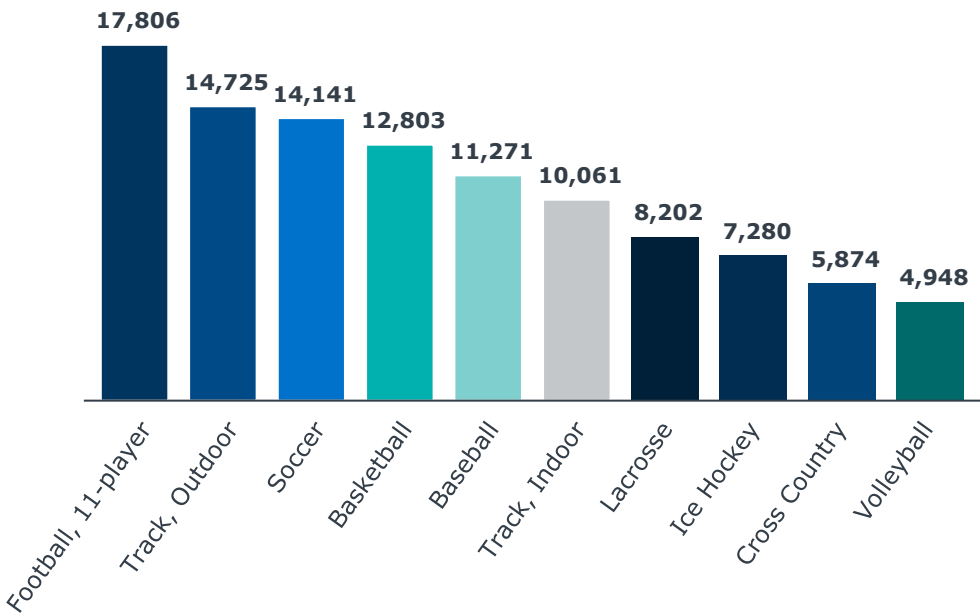
# Top Boys' and Girls' Sports

## Volleyball Breaks Into Top 10 Sports

Like many other states, football was the biggest boys' sport as of 2023-2024. The biggest deviations from national trends include ice hockey and volleyball, the eighth and 10<sup>th</sup> largest sports in Maryland, respectively. Neither are in the top 10 nationally.

Top 10 Boys' Sports by Participation Rate, 2022-2023

n = 126,023 (boys' participation rate)

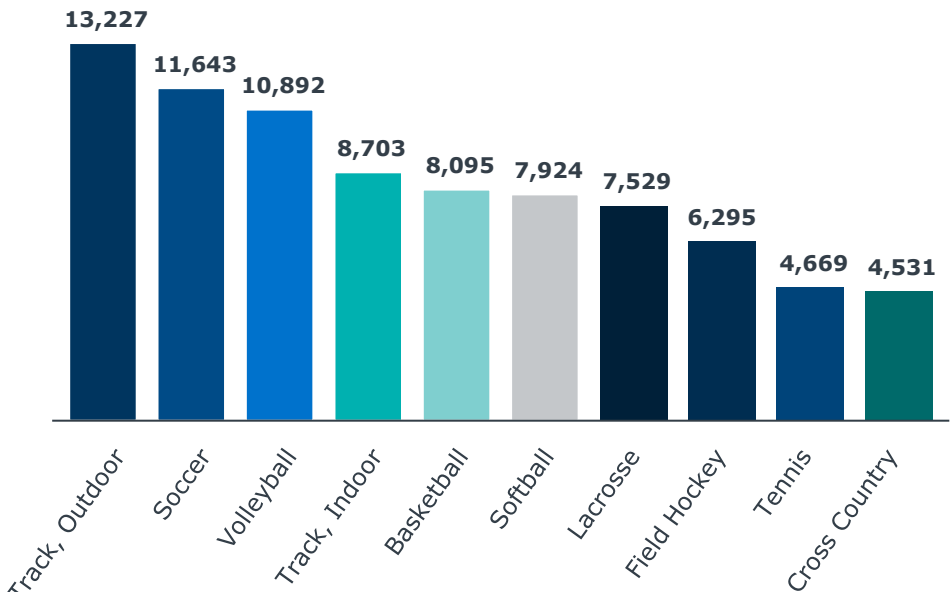


## Track Takes Two Spots in Top 10

The top girls' sports more closely reflect national trends. The biggest deviation is field hockey, which is the 8<sup>th</sup> largest sport in Massachusetts and not in the top 10 nationally.

Top 10 Girls' Sports by Participation Rate, 2023-2024

n = 95,119 (girls' participation rate)



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

# Short- and Long-Term Changes in Participation

## Boys

### Areas of Consistent Growth

Six 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:

- Basketball
- Golf
- Outdoor Track & Field
- Rugby
- Soccer
- Volleyball

### Areas of Steady Decline

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

- Football, 11-Player
- Gymnastics
- Skiing, Alpine
- Skiing, Cross Country
- Swimming & Diving
- Tennis

Sport	2023-2024 Participation	Change, 2022-23 to 2023-24	Change, 2016-17 to 2023-24
Football, 11-Player	17,806	-1%	-6%
Track and Field, Outdoor	14,725	5%	5%
Soccer	14,141	7%	1%
Basketball	12,803	2%	1%
Baseball	11,271	1%	-12%
Track and Field, Indoor	10,061	9%	-1%
Lacrosse	8202	3%	-10%
Ice Hockey	7280	4%	-3%
Cross Country	5,874	1%	-17%
Volleyball	4,948	33%	93%
Golf	4,628	10%	9%
Tennis	3,298	-2%	-8%
Swimming & Diving	2,324	-2%	-22%
Unified Basketball	1,203	-17%	N/A
Unified Track and Field, Outdoor	1,203	18%	N/A
Skiing, Alpine	1075	-5%	-2%
Rugby	859	3%	30%
Skiing, Cross Country	292	-10%	-12%
Field Hockey	70	-37%	43%
Gymnastics	22	-71%	-92%
Softball, Fast Pitch	9	-50%	N/A

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

# Biggest, Fastest Growth, Largest Decline

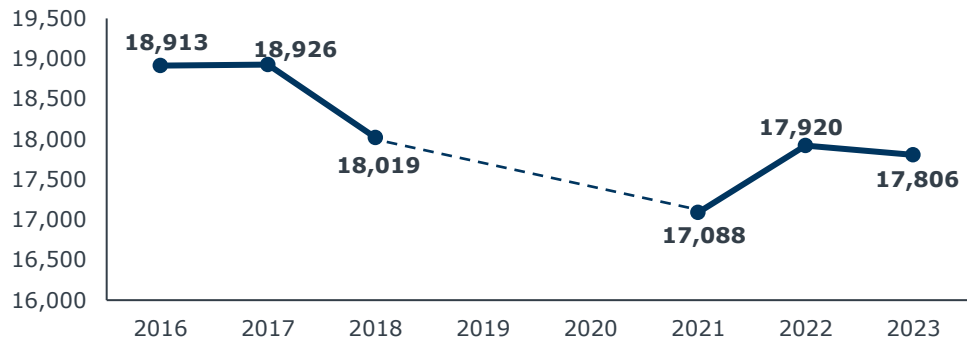
## Boys

### Biggest Sport

#### Football Mostly Declining

Participation in football fell every year but one between 2016 and 2023, with a 6% total decline.

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

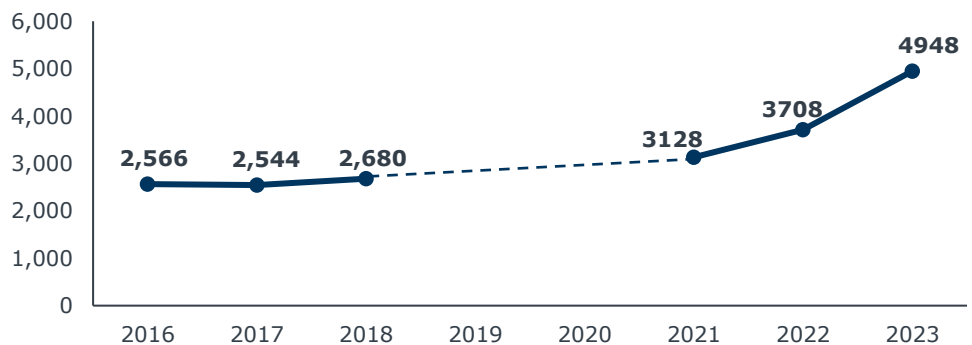


### Fastest Growth

#### Steady Growth in Volleyball

In contrast, volleyball participation nearly doubled from 2016 to 2023 (+93%), with growth accelerating in the last few years.

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

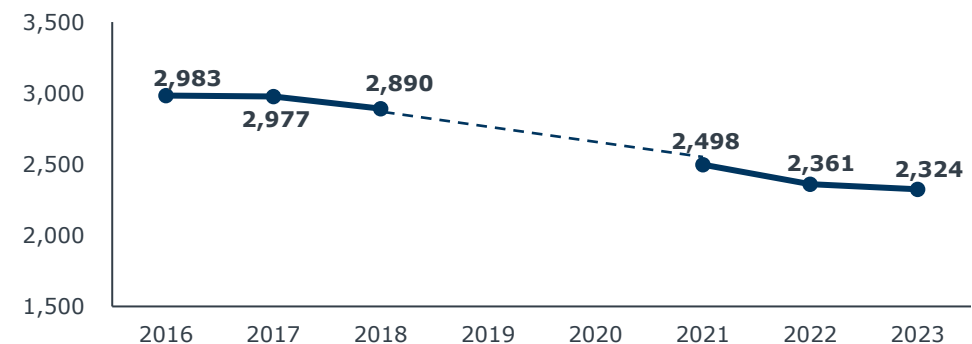


### Largest Decline<sup>1</sup>

#### Steady Decline in Swimming and Diving

Participation in swimming and diving has dropped every year since 2016, with a total decline of 22%.

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:

- Golf
- Rugby
- Tennis
- Volleyball
- Wrestling

### Areas of Steady Decline

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

- Cross Country
- Football, 11-Player
- Gymnastics
- Ice Hockey
- Skiing, Alpine
- Skiing, Cross Country

Sport	2023-2024 Participation	Change, 2022-23 to 2023-24	Change, 2016-17 to 2023-24
Track and Field, Outdoor	13,227	9%	-2%
Soccer	11,643	1%	-9%
Volleyball	10,892	1%	11%
Track and Field, Indoor	8,703	9%	-9%
Basketball	8,095	-1%	-13%
Softball, Fast Pitch	7,924	1%	-14%
Lacrosse	7,529	3%	-7%
Field Hockey	6,295	0%	-21%
Tennis	4,669	2%	3%
Cross Country	4,531	-5%	-24%
Swimming & Diving	3139	1%	-29%
Ice Hockey	2,082	-2%	-10%
Unified Basketball	1,251	N/A	N/A
Unified Track and Field, Outdoor	1,251	26%	N/A
Gymnastics	1,181	-4%	-5%
Skiing, Alpine	942	-12%	-3%
Golf	745	6%	19%
Wrestling	347	33%	237%
Skiing, Cross Country	287	-9%	-20%
Rugby	277	5%	127%
Baseball	57	-28%	2,750%
Football, 11-Player	52	-44%	-4%

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

# Biggest, Fastest Growth, Largest Decline

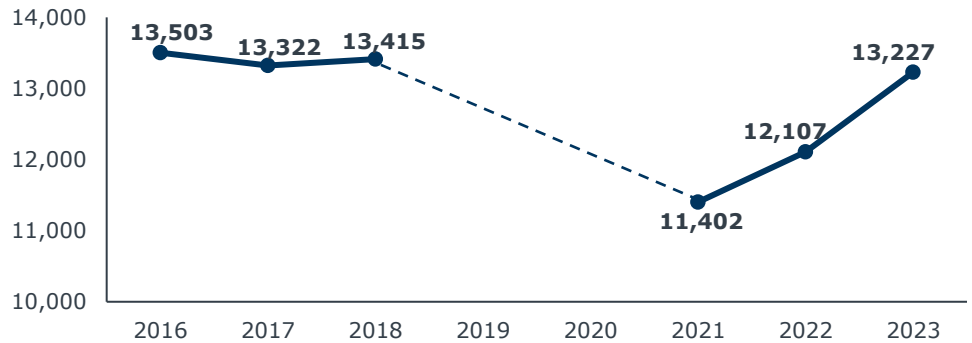
## Girls

### Biggest Sport

#### Track Recovering from Sharp Pandemic-Era Decline

Overall, participation in girls' track is down 2% since 2016. However, the sport increased 16% between 2021 and 2023 to nearly return to pre-pandemic levels.

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

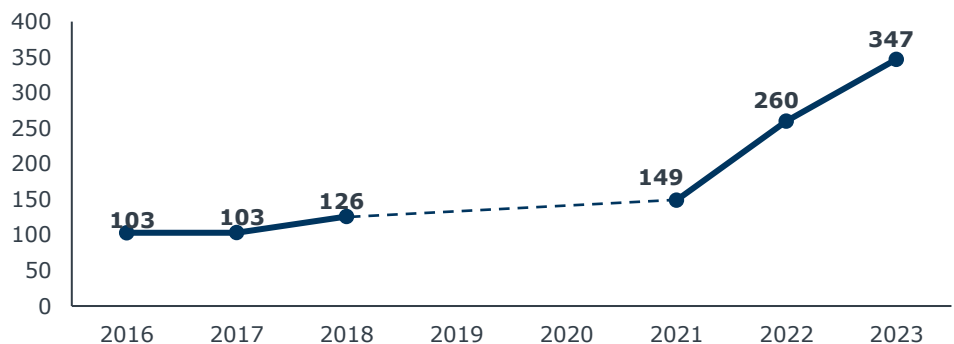


### Fastest Growing<sup>1</sup>

#### Wrestling Small but Growing Fast Among Girls

Wrestling shows signs of quick growth. Specifically, participation increased 237% between 2016 and 2023. Growth was particularly fast between 2021 and 2023, when the sport more than doubled.

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

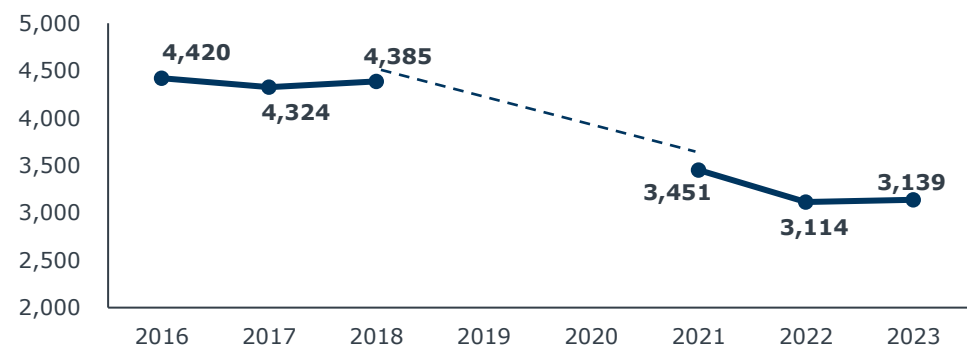


### Largest Declining

#### Steady Decline in Swimming

Participation in swimming and diving has dropped most years between 2016 and 2023, with a total decline of 29%.

Change in Girls' Swimming & Diving Participation, 2016-17 to 2023-24



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

# Appendix: About the Data

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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
<b>Total Boys' Participation</b>	<b>4,638,785</b>

### 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
<b>Total Girls' Participation</b>	<b>3,423,517</b>

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