

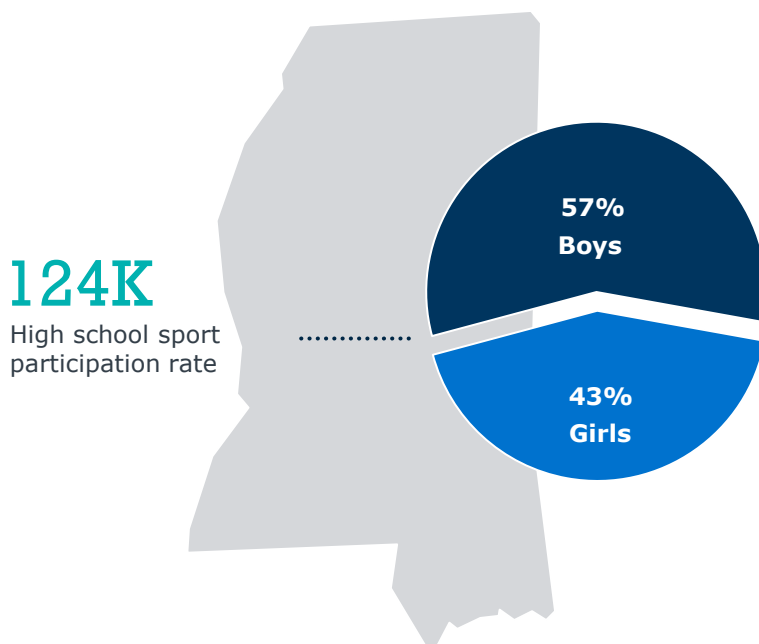
High School Sports Participation State Profile

State Profile: Mississippi

Boys Account for Most High School Sport Participation

As of 2023-2024, the high school sports participation rate was 124,321. Mirroring the national trend, boys accounted for more than half of participation.

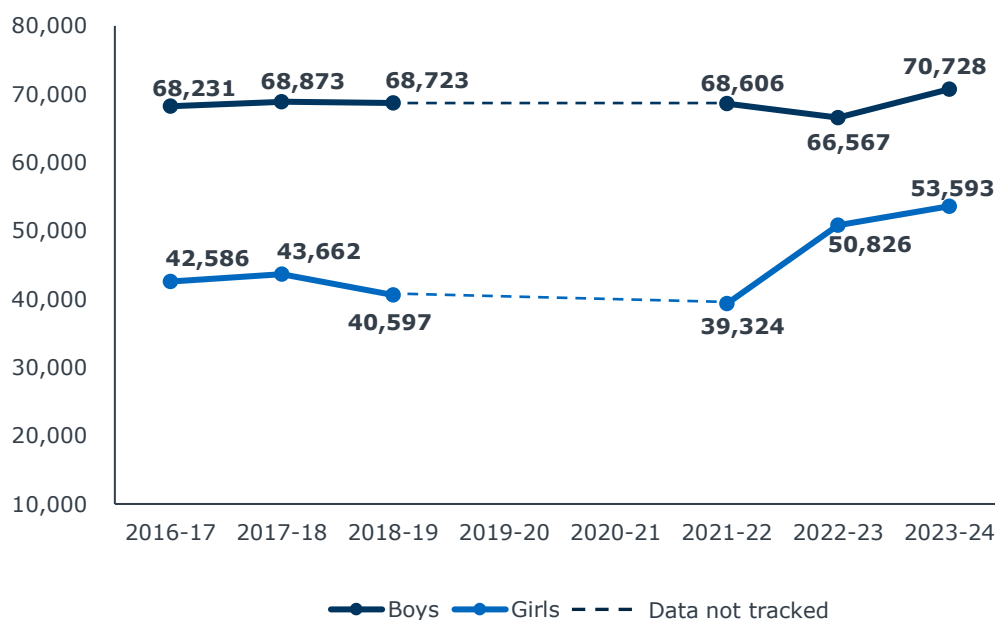
High School Sport Participation, Share of Girls v. Boys, 2023-24
n=124,321 (total participation)



Gap Between Boys, Girls Shrinking After Pandemic

Participation in high school sports is growing among boys and girls over the last eight year. Growth has been particularly quick among girls, which has closed the gap in participation from 64% v. 36% in 2021 to 57% v. 43% in 2023.

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



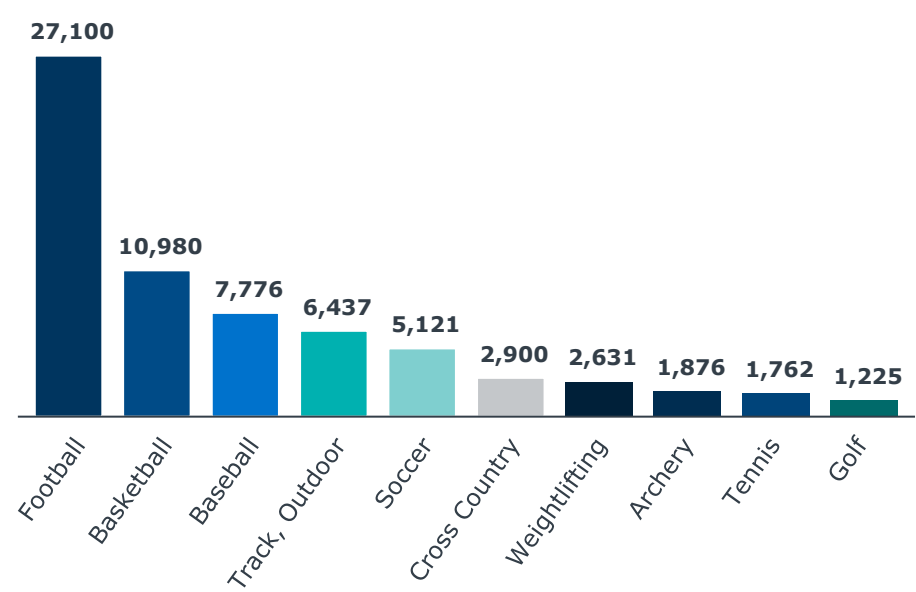
Source: EAB analysis of National Federation of State High School Association data.

Top Boys' and Girls' Sports

Football Participation Far Outpaces Others

Like most states, football was the biggest boys' sport as of 2023-2024. The biggest deviation from national trends are weightlifting and archery, which are the seventh and eighth largest sports in Mississippi, respectively.

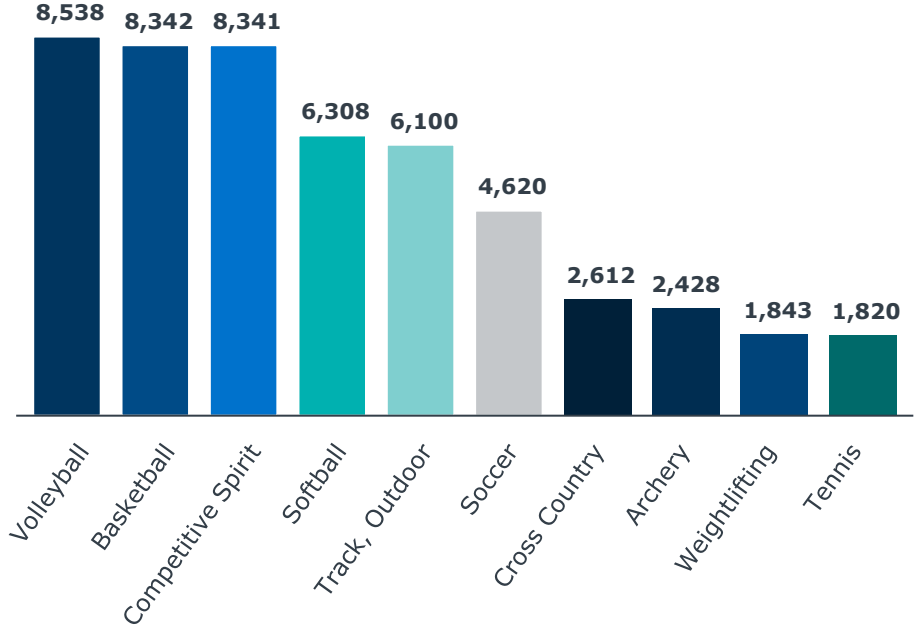
Top 10 Boys' Sports by Participation Rate, 2022-2023
n = 70,728 (boys' participation rate)



Archery, Weightlifting Break Into Top 10

Like boys, archery and weightlifting were among the top 10 sports in Mississippi but not in top 10 nationally in 2023. Otherwise, the top girls' sports more closely align with national trends.

Top 10 Girls' Sports by Participation Rate, 2023-2024
n = 53,593 (girls' participation rate)



Short- and Long-Term Changes in Participation

Boys

Areas of Consistent Growth

Seven 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
- Basketball
- Competitive Spirit
- Cross Country
- Football, 11-Player
- Soccer
- Wrestling

Areas of Steady Decline

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

- Bowling

Sport	2023-2024 Participation	Change, 2022-23 to 2023-24	Change, 2016-17 to 2023-24
Football, 11-Player	27,100	5%	20%
Basketball	10,980	14%	29%
Baseball	7,776	-8%	3%
Track and Field, Outdoor	6,437	2%	-22%
Soccer	5,121	8%	28%
Cross Country	2,900	6%	66%
Weightlifting	2,631	28%	-42%
Archery	1,876	7%	34%
Tennis	1,762	8%	-22%
Golf	1,225	13%	-46%
Wrestling	711	85%	2,744%
Swimming & Diving	700	17%	-59%
eSports	676	54%	N/A
Bowling	670	-4%	-3%
Competitive Spirit	148	37%	18%
Dance Team, Jazz	15	650%	N/A

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

Biggest, Fastest Growth, Largest Decline

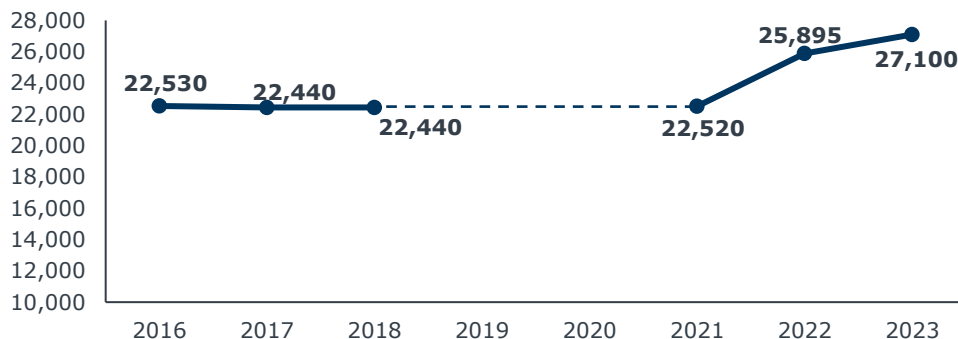
Boys

Biggest Sport

Football on the Rise

After several years of mostly flat participation started growing more quickly in 2021 for a 20% increase.

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

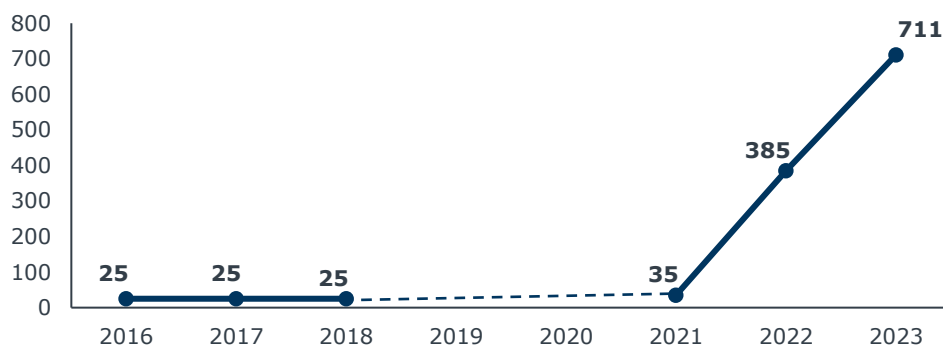


Fastest Growth

Wrestling Small But Growing in Mississippi

Participation wrestling increased 2,744% between 2016 and 2023. While participation is still comparatively small, it is currently the 11th largest sport and could break into the top 10 if trends continue.

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

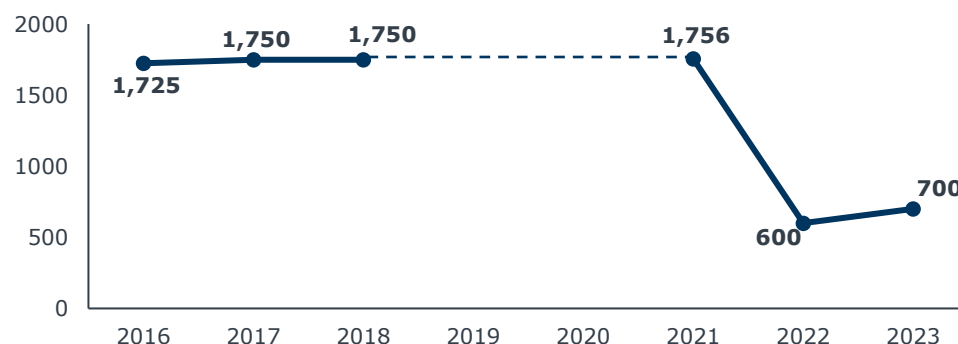


Largest Decline

Swimming Sees Sudden Drop in Participation

Participation in swimming and diving fell 59% between 2016 and 2023. However, the sharpest drop occurred from 2021 to 2022 and increased slightly afterward.

Change in Boys' Golf 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
- Competitive Spirit
- Cross Country
- Dance Team, Jazz
- Golf
- Outdoor Track & Field
- Soccer
- Softball
- Volleyball
- Weightlifting

Areas of Steady Decline

In comparison, participation fell in the last year and across the last eight years decade 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.

- Bowling
- Tennis

Sport	2023-2024 Participation	Change, 2022-23 to 2023-24	Change, 2016-17 to 2023-24
Volleyball	8,538	10%	271%
Basketball	8,342	1%	-1%
Competitive Spirit	8341	7%	114%
Softball, Fast Pitch	6,308	2%	28%
Track and Field, Outdoor	6,100	5%	13%
Soccer	4,620	5%	74%
Cross Country	2,612	3%	83%
Archery	2,428	23%	87%
Weightlifting	1,843	23%	71%
Tennis	1,820	-3%	-4%
Swimming & Diving	715	9%	-58%
Golf	603	5%	36%
Bowling	538	-2%	-2%
Dance Team, Jazz	331	32%	38%
Dance Team, High Kick	243	8%	-24%
eSports	101	17%	N/A
Wrestling	80	14%	N/A
Football, 11-Player	30	-90%	N/A

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

Biggest, Fastest Growth, Largest Decline

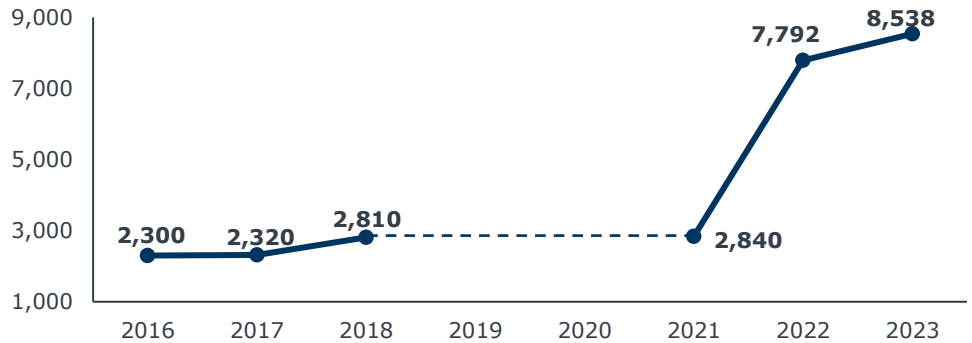
Girls

Biggest Sport

Volleyball Participation Spikes

After several years of modest increases, participation increased sharply between 2021 and 2022, resulting in a 271% increase since 2016.

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

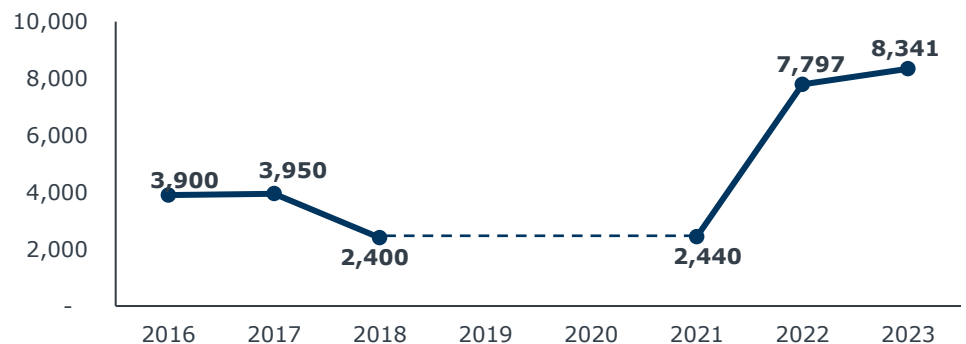


Second-Fastest Growth

Wrestling Small but Growing Fast Among Girls

Like volleyball, the fastest growing sport, competitive spirit saw a steep increase in participation between 2021 and 2022. Overall, participation is up 114% since 2016.

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

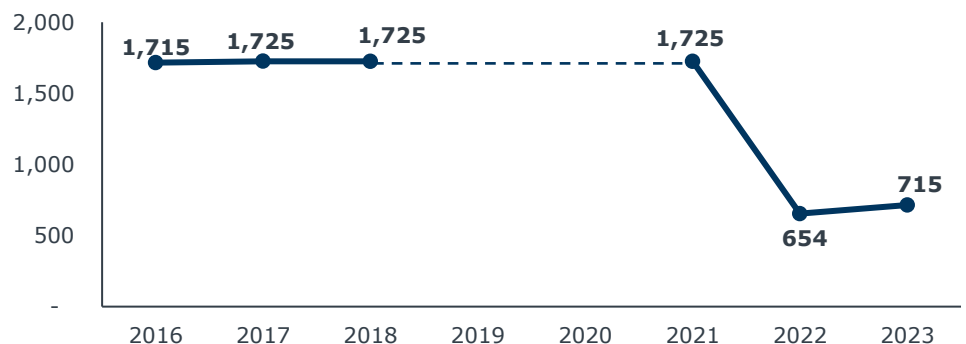


Largest Decline

Swimming and Diving Takes Sudden Drop

In contrast to the two fastest growing sports, participation in swimming and diving fell sharply between 2021 and 2022, with a total decline of 58% since 2016.

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

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.