

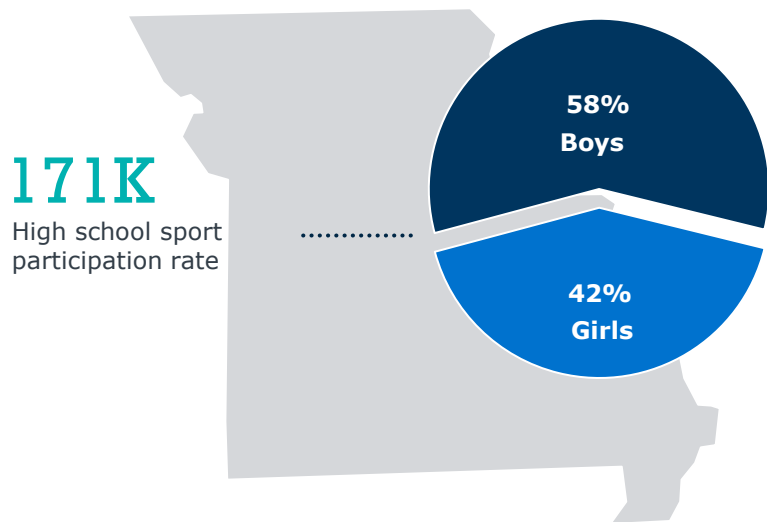
High School Sports Participation State Profile

State Profile: Missouri

Boys Account for Most High School Sport Participation

As of 2023-2024, the high school sports participation rate was 172,692 in Missouri. Mirroring the national trend, boys accounted for more than half of participation.

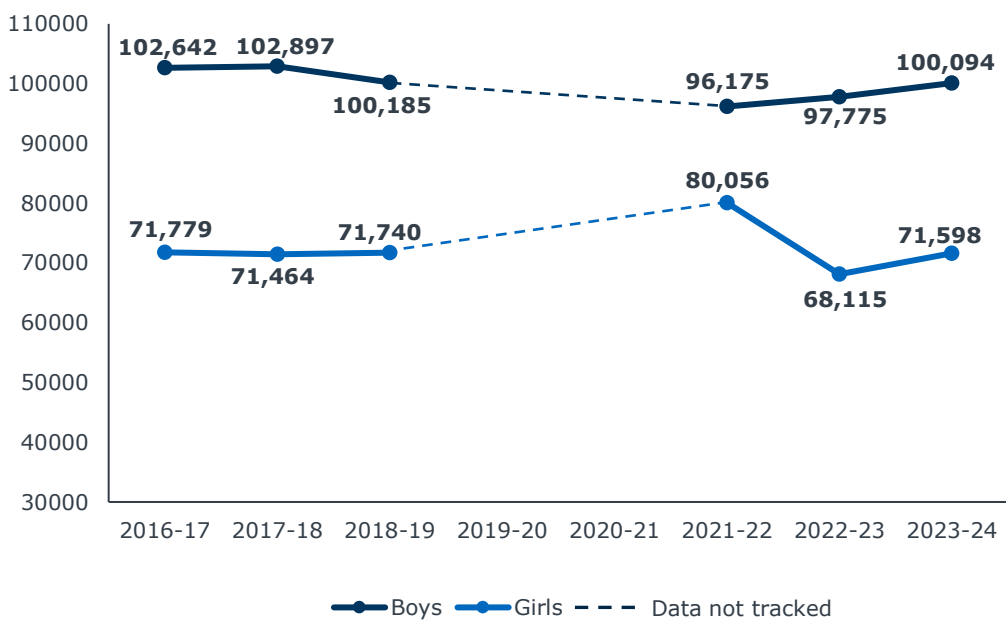
High School Sport Participation, Share of Girls v. Boys, 2023-24
n=171,692 (total participation)



Gap Between Boys, Girls Persists After Pandemic

Participation in high school sports has decreased among boys and girls over the last eight years. While the gap in participation appeared to be closing in 2021, it has since expanded.

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



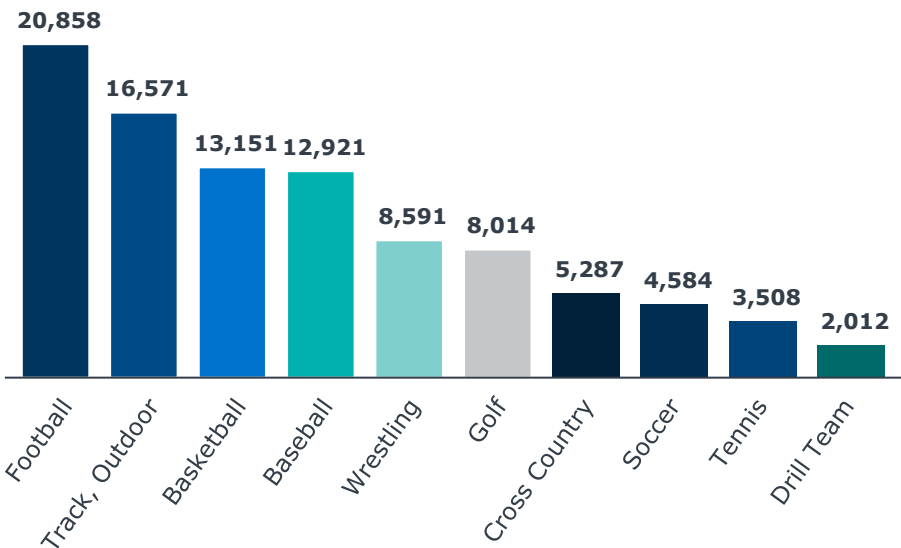
Top Boys' and Girls' Sports

Football Takes the Top Spot

Like most states, football was the biggest boys' sport as of 2023-2024. While most sports in the top 10 reflect national trends, the biggest deviation was drill team, the 10th largest sport in Missouri.

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

n = 100,094 (boys' participation rate)

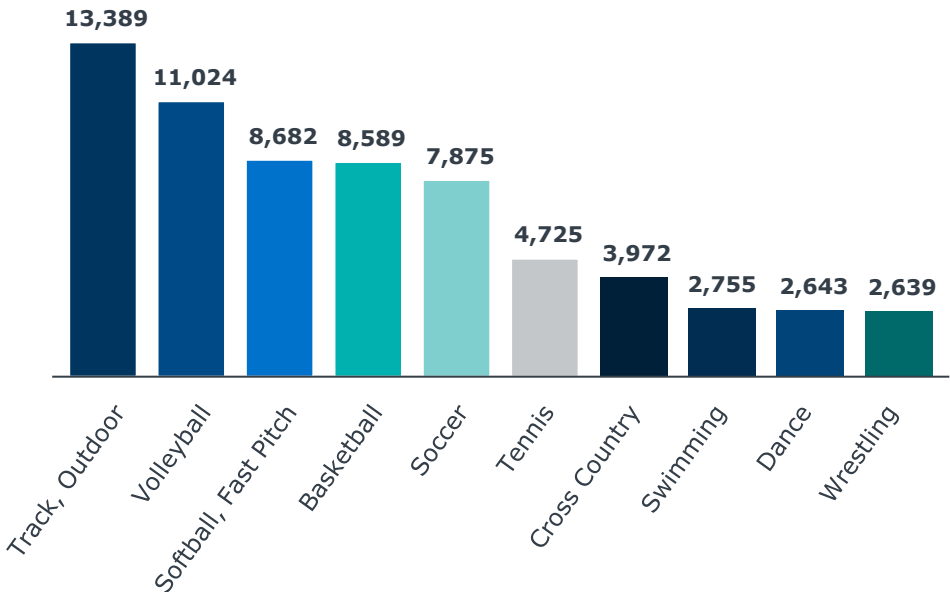


Wrestling Breaks Into Top 10 Among Girls

The top girls' sports mostly reflect national trends. The biggest deviation was wrestling, the 10th largest sport in the state.

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

n = 71,598 (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

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, 8-Player
- Golf
- Outdoor Track and Field
- Volleyball
- Wrestling

Areas of Steady Decline

In comparison, participation fell in the last year and across the last eight years among four 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
- Football, 11-Player
- Water Polo

Sport	2023-2024 Participation	Change, 2022-23 to 2023-24	Change, 2016-17 to 2023-24
Football, 11-Player	20,858	-1%	-2%
Track and Field, Outdoor	16,571	5%	6%
Basketball	13,151	-1%	-8%
Baseball	12,921	-2%	-11%
Soccer	8,591	1%	-3%
Wrestling	8,014	9%	16%
Cross Country	5,287	5%	-12%
Golf	4,584	7%	19%
Team Tennis	3,508	0%	-3%
Tennis	3,508	0%	-3%
Volleyball	2,012	28%	63%
Swimming & Diving	1,735	0%	-8%
eSports	1,178	51%	N/A
Football, 8-player	1,036	11%	98%
Water Polo	389	-8%	-28%
Bass Fishing	142	N/A	N/A
Bowling	108	-16%	66%
Adapted Track	9	0%	N/A

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

Biggest, Fastest Growth, Largest Decline

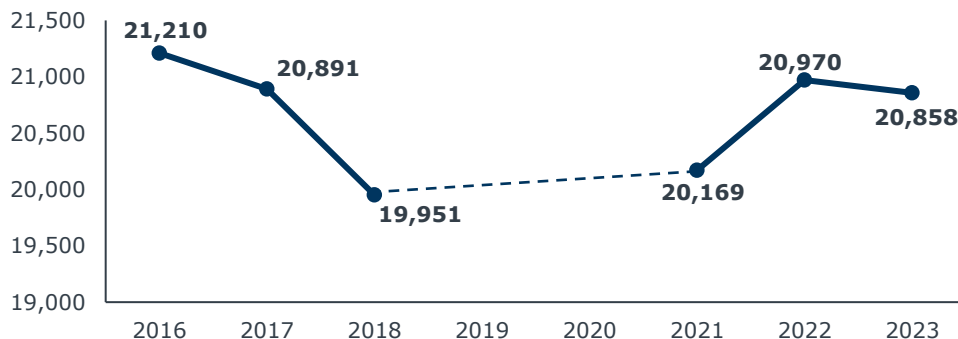
Boys

Biggest Sport

Football Recovering from Pre-Pandemic Slide

Participation in football decreased 2% between 2016 and 2023. However, it is showing recent signs of growth. Participation increased 3% from 2022 to 2023.

Change in Boys' 11-Player Football Participation, 2016-17 to 2023-24

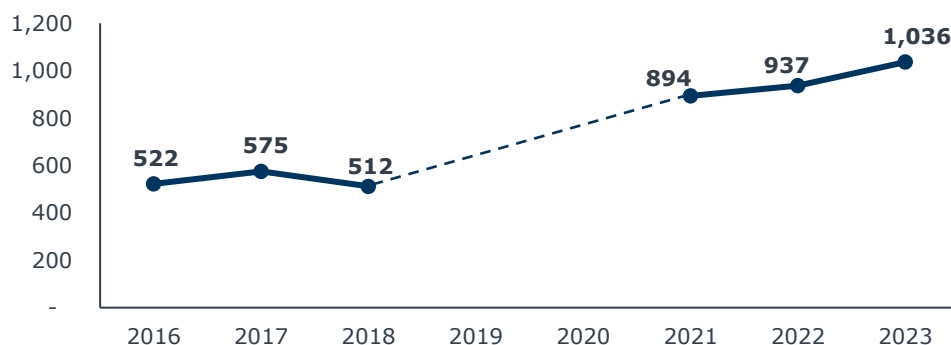


Fastest Growing Sport

Steady Growth in 8-Player Football

Participation in 8-player football increased every year but one between 2016 and 2023, for 98% total growth.

Change in Boys' 8-Player Football Participation, 2016-17 to 2023-24

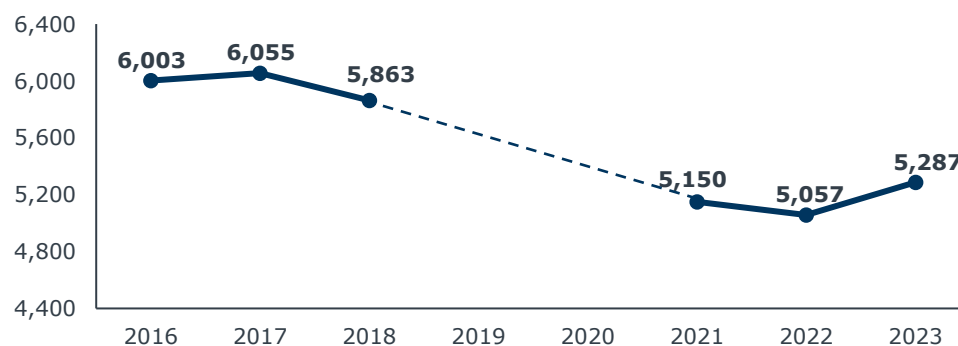


Largest Decline¹

Steady Decline in Cross Country, But Sign of Growth

Participation in cross country declined 12% between 2016 and 2023. However, it is showing recent signs of growth, with a 3% increase between 2021 and 2023.

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



1) Excludes sports missing data from the years included in the analysis

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

Short- and Long-Term Changes in Participation

Girls

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:

- Golf
- Outdoor Track & Field
- Tennis

Areas of Steady Decline

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

- Basketball
- Bowling
- Field Hockey
- Softball, Fast Pitch
- Swimming & Diving

Sport	2023-2024 Participation	Change, 2022-23 to 2023-24	Change, 2016-17 to 2023-24
Track and Field, Outdoor	13,389	4%	8%
Volleyball	11,024	0%	6%
Softball, Fast Pitch	8,682	-4%	-12%
Basketball	8,589	-4%	-16%
Soccer	7,875	3%	-5%
Tennis	4,725	6%	17%
Cross Country	3,972	3%	-12%
Swimming & Diving	2,755	-1%	-15%
Dance	2,643	N/A	N/A
Wrestling	2,639	13%	N/A
Golf	2,341	5%	22%
Lacrosse	1,520	8%	-4%
Field Hockey	1,021	-10%	-11%
Esport	181	55%	N/A
Water Polo	139	9%	N/A
Football, 11-Player	72	-20%	N/A
Bowling	17	-23%	-74%
Bass Fishing	8	-11%	N/A
Football, 8-player	4	N/A	N/A
Adapted Track	2	0%	N/A

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

Biggest, Fastest Growth, Largest Decline

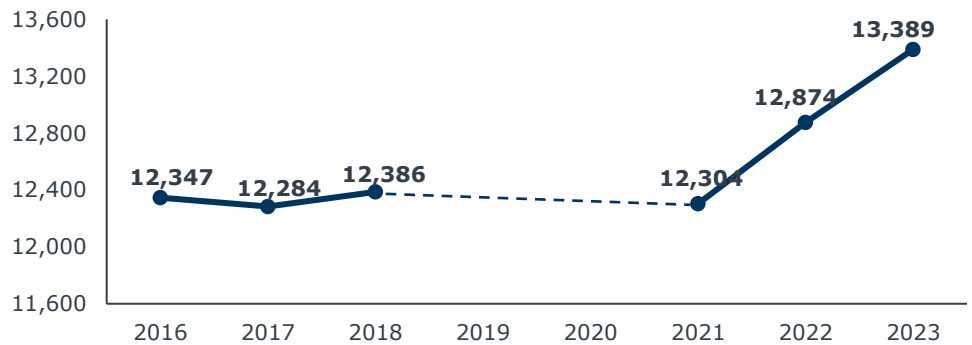
Girls

Biggest Sport

Track Growing Fast After The Pandemic

Participation in track increased 8% between 2016 and 2023, with most growth occurring since 2021.

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

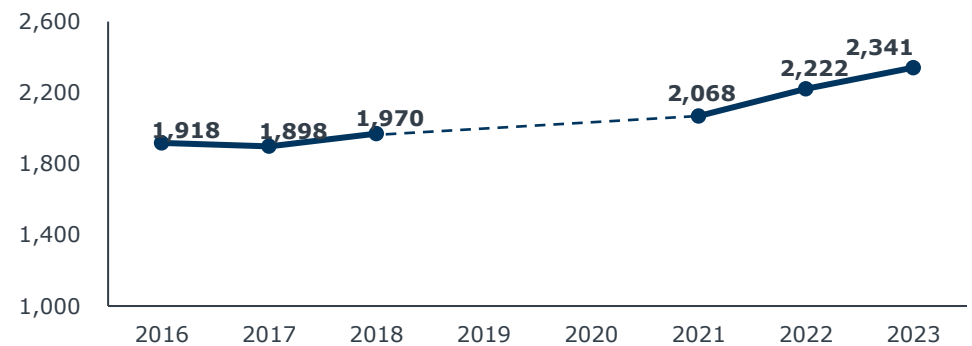


Fastest Growth

Steady Growth in Golf

Participation in golf increased every year but one between 2016 and 2023, for total growth of 22%.

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

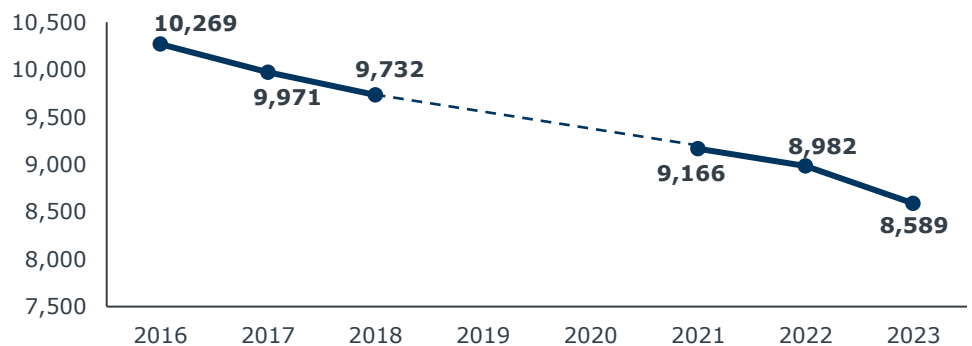


Largest Decline¹

Steady Decline In Basketball

Participation in basketball fell every year between 2016 and 2023, for a total 16% decline.

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



1) Excludes sports with fewer than 100 participants

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.