

High School Sports Participation State Profile

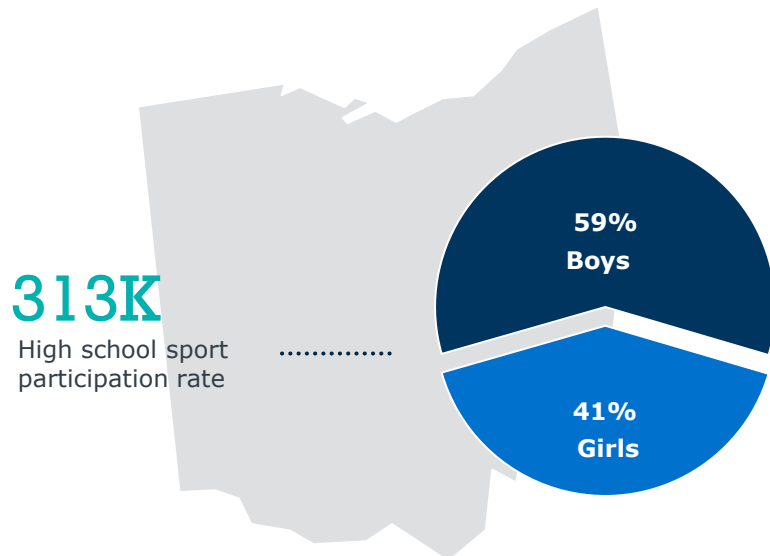
State Profile: Ohio

Boys Account for Most High School Sport Participation

As of 2023-2024, the high school sports participation rate was 313,117 in Ohio. Mirroring the national trend, boys accounted for more than half of participation.

High School Sport Participation, Share of Girls v. Boys, 2023-24

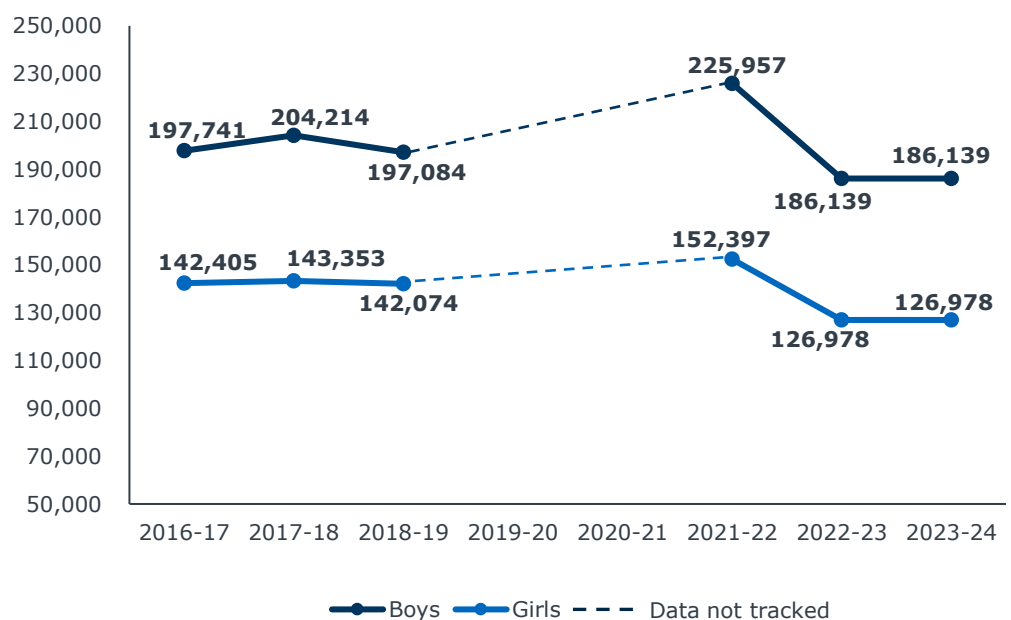
n=313,117 (total participation)



Participation Tumbles After Post-Pandemic Increase

Participation in high school sports declining among boys and girls over the last eight years, despite a bump in participation immediately following that pandemic.

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



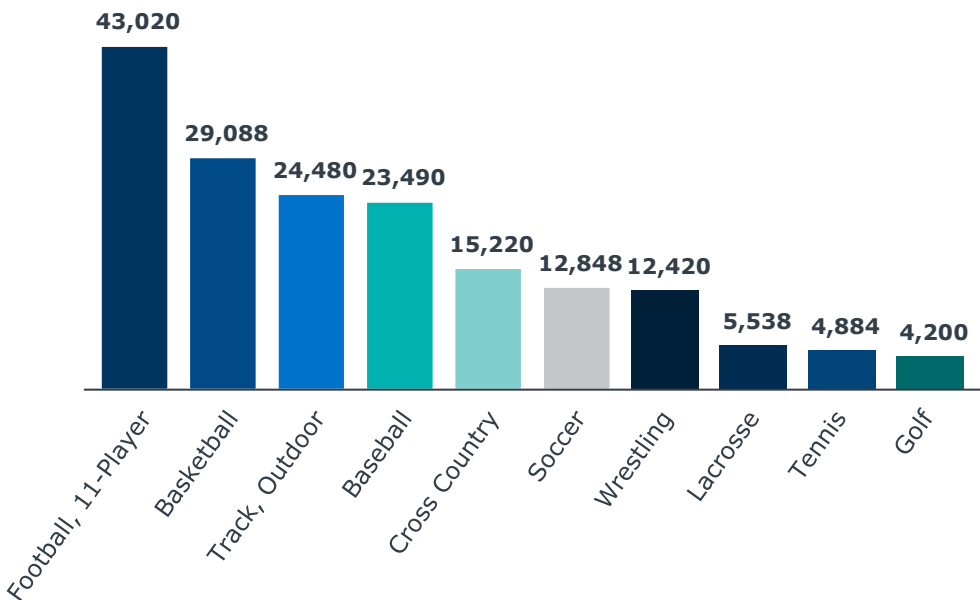
Source: EAB analysis of National Federation of State High School Association data.

Top Boys' and Girls' Sports

Lacrosse Stands Out from National Trends

Like most states, football was the largest boys' sport as of 2023-2024. The remaining top 10 sports also reflect national trends, except for lacrosse. Lacrosse is the eighth largest sport in Ohio and not in the top 10 nationally.

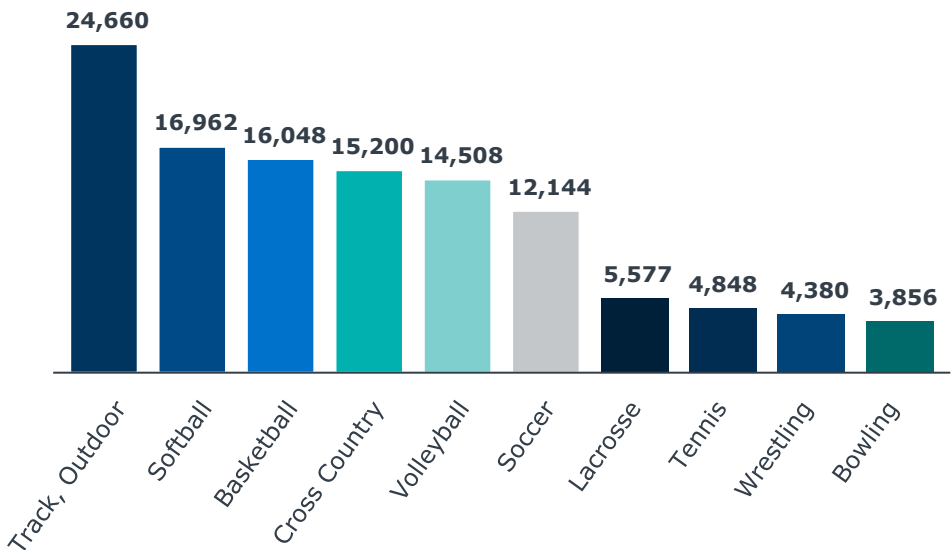
Top 10 Boys' Sports by Participation Rate, 2022-2023
n =186,139 (boys' participation rate)



Wrestling, Bowling Emerge as Top 10 Sports

The top girls' sports also largely reflect national trends. The biggest deviations are wrestling and bowling, the ninth and 10th largest sports in Ohio, respectively. These two sports are not in the top 10 nationally.

Top 10 Girls' Sports by Participation Rate, 2023-2024
n =126,978 (girls' participation rate)



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

Long-Term Changes in Participation

Boys

Some Growth, But More Long-Term Decline

Areas of Consistent Growth

Five sports grew across the last eight years. This trend may signal emerging and/or sustainable recruitment areas. They included:

- Baseball
- Basketball
- Cross Country
- Football, 11-Player
- Wrestling

Areas of Steady Decline

In contrast, participation fell across the last eight years among nine sports.

- Bowling
- Golf
- Ice Hockey
- Lacrosse
- Outdoor Track & Field
- Soccer
- Swimming & Diving
- Tennis
- Volleyball

Because the participation rate double counts multi-sport athletes, it is possible some of these declines may be attributed to growing specialization.

Sport	2023-2024 Participation	Change, 2022-23 to 2023-24 ¹	Change, 2016-17 to 2023-24
Football, 11-Player	43,020	N/A	1%
Basketball	29,088	N/A	30%
Track and Field, Outdoor	24,480	N/A	-3%
Baseball	23,490	N/A	1%
Cross Country	15,220	N/A	33%
Soccer	12,848	N/A	-26%
Wrestling	12,420	N/A	8%
Lacrosse	5,538	N/A	-7%
Tennis	4,884	N/A	-17%
Golf	4,200	N/A	-43%
Bowling	3,920	N/A	-12%
Swimming & Diving	3,031	N/A	-47%
Volleyball	2,250	N/A	-15%
Ice Hockey	1,750	N/A	-19%

1) Ohio reported the same participation numbers in 2022 and 2023.

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

Biggest, Fastest Growth, Largest Decline

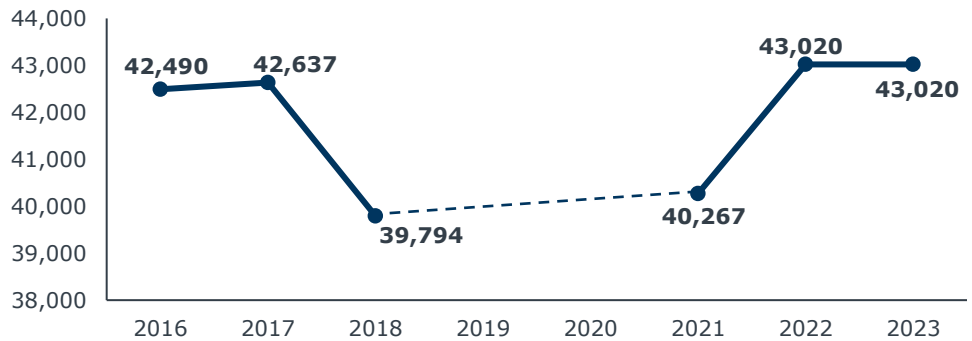
Boys

Biggest Sport

Football Recovers from Pre-Pandemic Drop

Participation in football increased 1% between 2016 and 2023, after seeing a sharper drop (-6%) from 2017 to 2018.

Change in Boys' Football Participation, 2016-17 to 2023-24¹

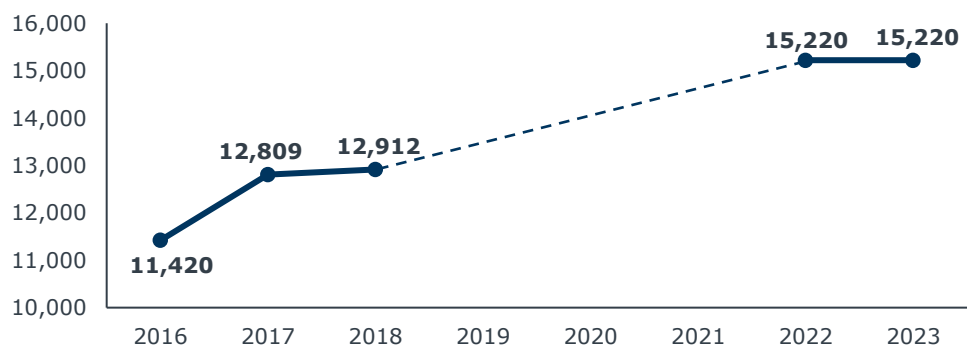


Fastest Growth

In Contrast To Many States, Cross Country Growing

Participation in cross country increased 33% between 2016 and 2023².

Change in Boys' Cross Country Participation, 2016-17 to 2023-24¹

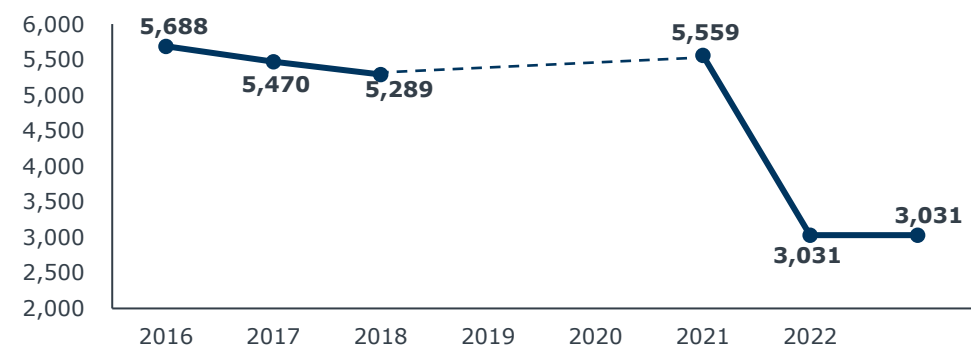


Largest Decline

Swimming Drops Sharply After Sign of Recovery

Participation in swimming and diving decreased every year from 2016 to 2018. It rebounded slightly in 2021 but then dropped sharply, for a total decline of 47% between 2016 and 2023.

Change in Boys' Swimming & Diving Participation, 2016-17 to 2023-24¹



1) Ohio reported the same participation numbers in 2022 and 2023.
2) Cross country data for 2021 omitted due to reporting error.

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

Long-Term Changes in Participation

Girls

More Sports Growing than Declining

Areas of Consistent Growth

Nine sports grew across the last eight years. This trend may signal emerging and/or sustainable recruitment areas. They included:

- Basketball
- Bowling
- Cross Country
- Field Hockey
- Golf
- Lacrosse
- Outdoor Track & Field
- Softball
- Wrestling

Areas of Steady Decline

In contrast, participation fell across the last eight years among five sports.

- Gymnastics
- Soccer
- Swimming & Diving
- Tennis
- Volleyball

Because the participation rate double counts multi-sport athletes, it is possible some of these declines may be attributed to growing specialization.

Sport	2023-2024 Participation	Change, 2022-23 to 2023-24 ¹	Change, 2016-17 to 2023-24
Track and Field, Outdoor	24,660	N/A	7%
Softball	16,962	N/A	0.3%
Basketball	16,048	N/A	4%
Cross Country	15,200	N/A	50%
Volleyball	14,508	N/A	-25%
Soccer	12,144	N/A	-20%
Lacrosse	5,577	N/A	33%
Tennis	4,848	N/A	-25%
Wrestling	4,380	N/A	2,146%
Bowling	3,856	N/A	5%
Golf	3,500	N/A	1%
Swimming & Diving	3,115	N/A	-55%
Field Hockey	1,350	N/A	11%
Gymnastics	830	N/A	-24%

1) Ohio reported the same participation numbers in 2022 and 2023.

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

Biggest, Fastest Growth, Largest Decline

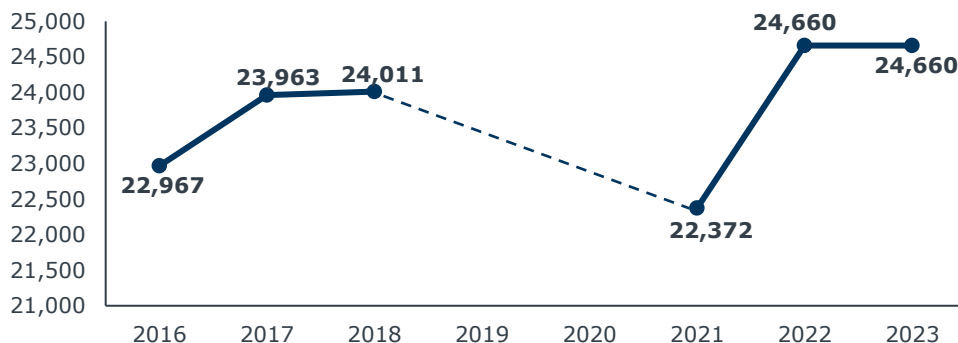
Girls

Biggest Sport

Volatile Growth for Outdoor Track and Field

Participation in track is up 7% since 2016, despite two years of decline.

Change in Girls' Outdoor Track and Field Participation, 2016-17 to 2023-24¹

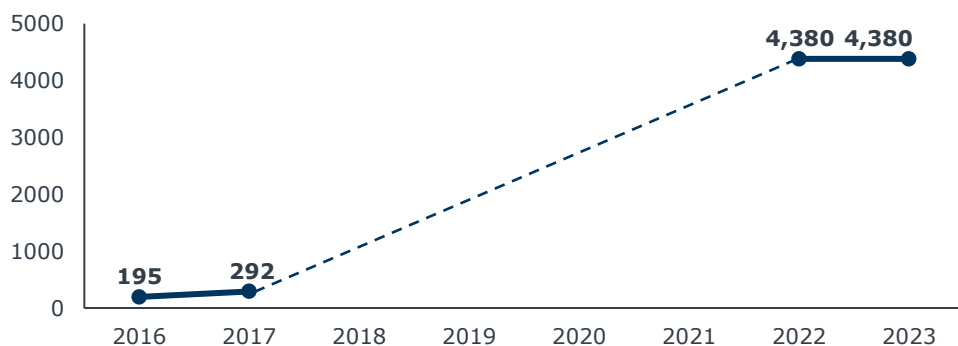


Fastest Growth

Wrestling Small but Growing Fast Among Girls

Participation in wrestling increased more than 2,000% between 2016 and 2023, bringing it into the top 10 sports².

Change in Girls' Wrestling Participation, 2016-17 to 2023-24¹

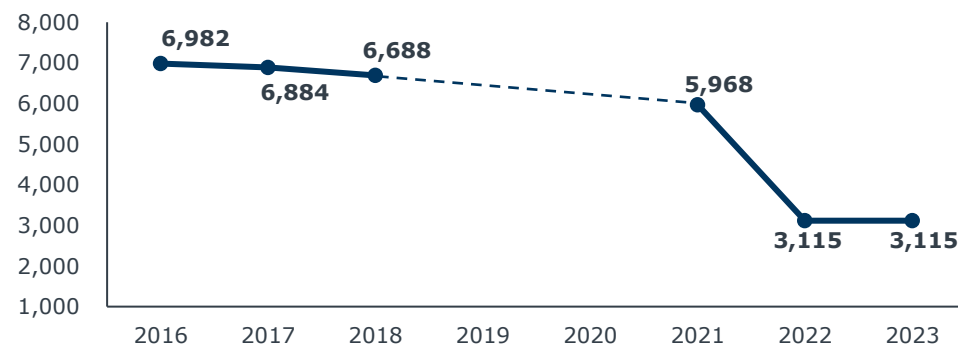


Largest Decline

Steady Decline for Swimming and Diving

Participation in swimming and diving decreased 55% between 2016 and 2023.

Change in Girls' Swimming & Diving Participation, 2016-17 to 2023-24¹



1) Ohio reported the same participation numbers in 2022 and 2023.
2) Wrestling data for 2018 and 2021 omitted due to reporting error.

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.