

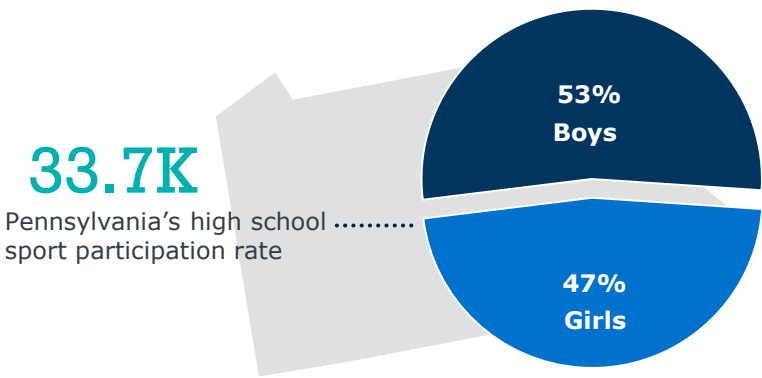
High School Sports Participation State Profile

State Profile: Pennsylvania

Boys Account for Most High School Sport Participation

As of 2023-2024, the high school sports participation rate was 336, 946 in Pennsylvania. Mirroring the national trend, boys accounted for more than half of participation.

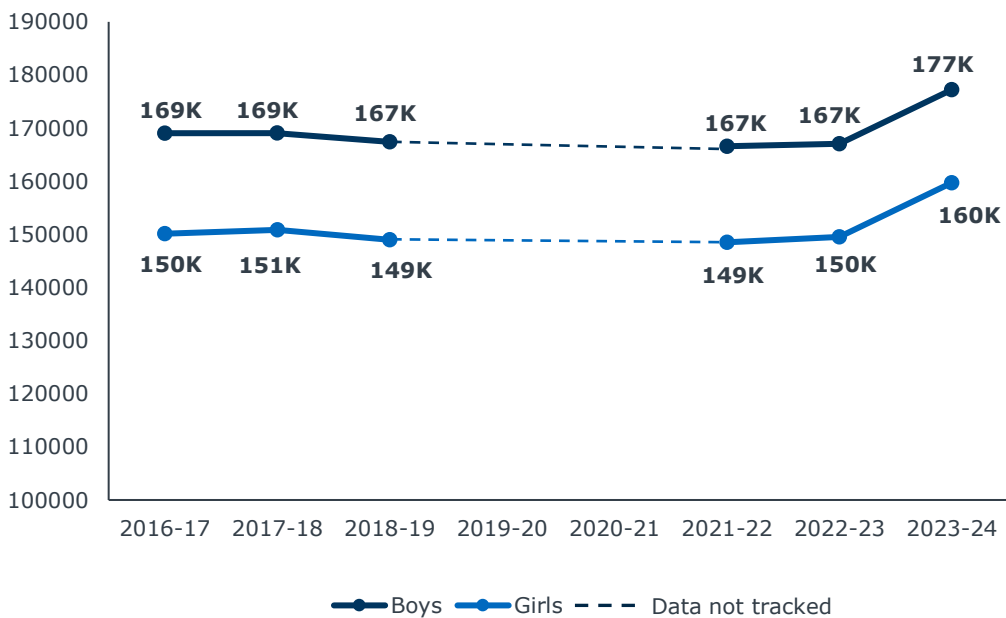
High School Sport Participation, Share of Girls v. Boys, 2023-24
n = 336,946



Gap Between Boys, Girls Persists After Pandemic

Participation in high school sports stagnated but is growing among boys and girls and up dramatically from the first year after pandemic closures.

Change in Girls and Boys Participation Rates, 2016-17 to 2023-24



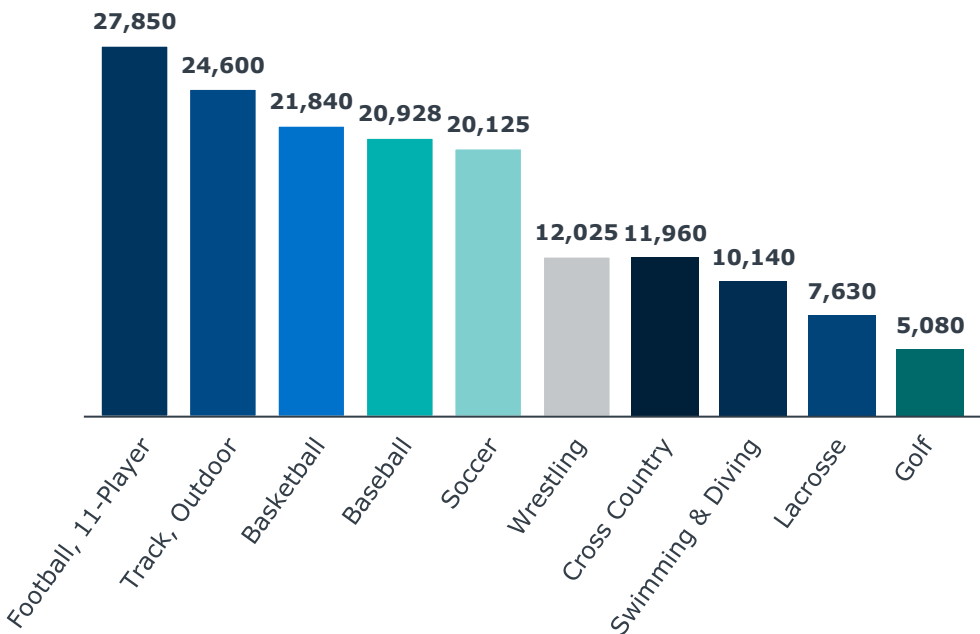
Source: EAB analysis of National Federation of State High School Association data.

Top Boys' and Girls' Sports

Top Boys' Sports Match National Trends

Like most states, football was the biggest boys' sport as of 2023-2024. Nine of the top 10 biggest sports match those nationally. The only exception is lacrosse, which was the ninth largest sport in Pennsylvania and not in the top 10 nationally.

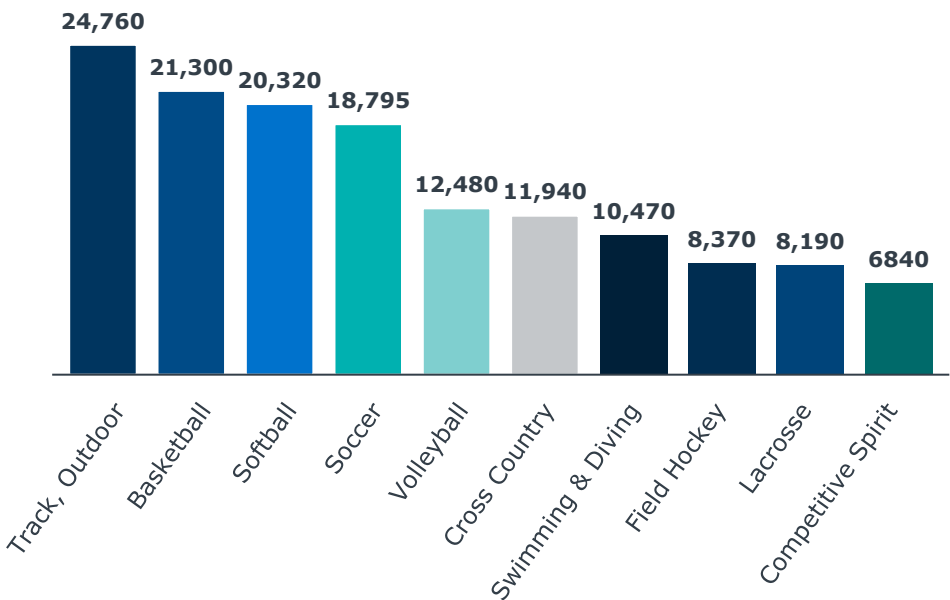
Top 10 Boys' Sports by Participation Rate, 2022-2023
n = 177,234



Largest Girls' Sports Stray from National Rankings

The top girls' sports in Pennsylvania vary more from national trends. For example, volleyball, which is the second largest sport nationally, is the fifth sport by participation in the state. Otherwise, the biggest deviations was field hockey. While field hockey is the eighth largest sports among girls in Pennsylvania, it is not in the top 10 nationally.

Top 10 Girls' Sports by Participation Rate, 2023-2024
n = 159,712



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

Short- and Long-Term Changes in Participation

Boys

Areas of Consistent Growth

Eleven 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
- Bowling
- Cross Country
- Football
- Lacrosse
- Swimming and Diving
- Track & Field
- Volleyball
- Water Polo
- Wrestling

Areas of Steady Decline

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

- Riflery

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

Sport	2023-2024 Participation	Change, 2022-23 to 2023-24	Change, 2016-17 to 2023-24
Football, 11-Player	27,850	12%	8%
Track & Field, Outdoor	24,600	2%	1%
Basketball	21,840	2%	1%
Baseball	20,928	1%	-2%
Soccer	20,125	2%	0%
Wrestling	12,025	27%	24%
Cross Country	11,960	3%	4%
Swimming & Diving	10,140	6%	4%
Lacrosse	7,630	15%	15%
Golf	5,080	1%	-1%
Volleyball	5,040	30%	32%
Tennis	4,296	0%	-6%
Track & Field, Indoor	3,060	10%	19%
Bowling	1,770	4%	26%
Water Polo	440	28%	17%
Riflery	350	-35%	-33%
Competitive Spirit	100	N/A	N/A

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

Biggest, Fastest Growth, Largest Decline

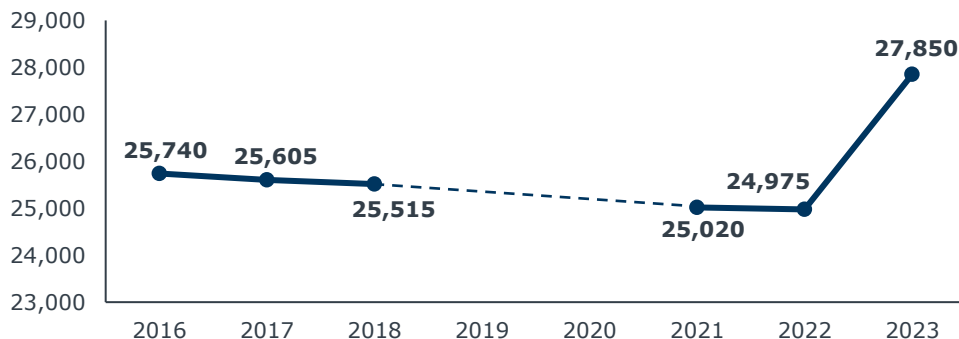
Boys

Biggest Sport

Football Growing After Steady Decline

Participation in football increased 8% between 2016 and 2023. Most of that growth came between 2022 and 2023 (+12%). Prior to 2022, participation fell slightly every year.

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

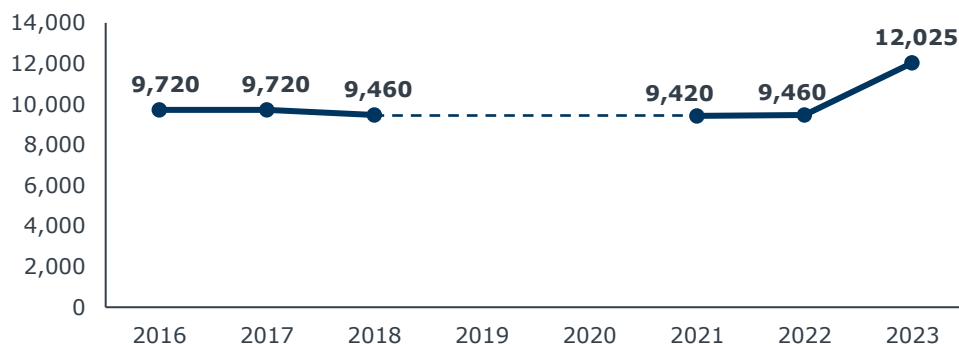


Fastest Growth

Steady Growth in Wrestling

Similarly, participation in wrestling grew rapidly from 2022 to 2023 (+27% after declining before the pandemic and leveling off through 2022).

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

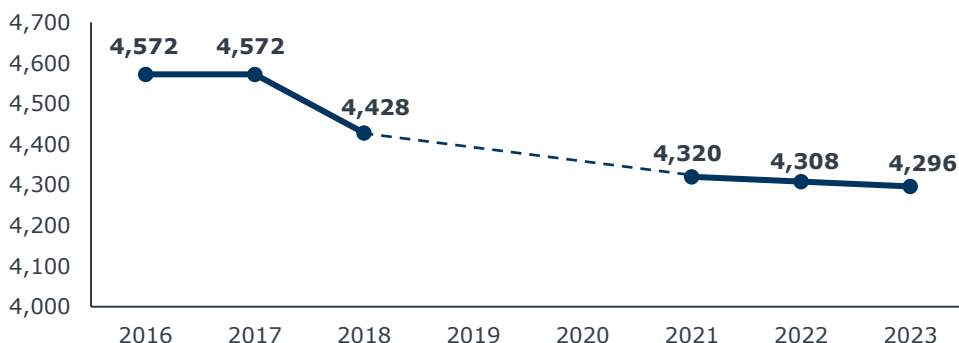


Largest Declining Sport

Tennis Declines After Pre-Pandemic Drop

Participation in tennis fell 6% between 2016 and 2023. The largest drop occurred before the pandemic and has been declining since.

Change in Boys' Tennis 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

Eleven 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:

- Bowling
- Competitive Spirit
- Cross Country
- Gymnastics
- Lacrosse
- Softball
- Swimming and Diving
- Track & Field
- Volleyball
- Water Polo

Areas of Steady Decline

In comparison, participation fell in the last year and across the last eight years among three sports.

- Field Hockey
- Golf
- Riflery

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	Change, 2016-17 to 2023-24
Track & Field, Outdoor	24,760	2%	2%
Basketball	21,300	2%	0%
Softball	20,320	8%	4%
Soccer	18,795	1%	-1%
Volleyball	12,480	14%	19%
Cross Country	11,940	3%	5%
Swimming & Diving	10,470	7%	4%
Field Hockey	8,370	-10%	-15%
Lacrosse	8,190	10%	14%
Competitive Spirit	6,840	48%	49%
Tennis	4,572	0%	-4%
Track & Field, Indoor	3,075	8%	17%
Flag Football	2,160	N/A	N/A
Wrestling	2,140	98%	N/A
Golf	1,799	-22%	-33%
Bowling	1,690	6%	28%
Water Polo	420	27%	22%
Gymnastics	360	64%	71%
Riflery	25	-94%	-94%
Football, 11-Player	6	N/A	N/A

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

Biggest, Fastest Growth, Largest Decline

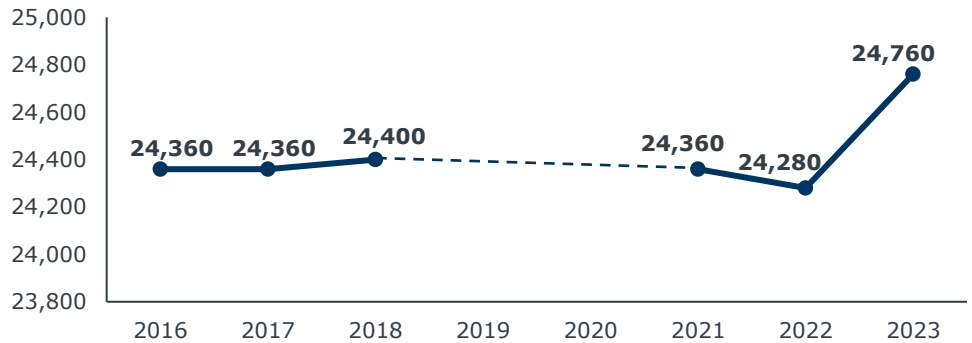
Girls

Biggest Sport

Track and Field Up After Mostly Level Participation

Participation in track increased 2% between 2016 and 2023. Most of this growth occurred between 2022 and 2023. Prior to the pandemic, participation remained steady.

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

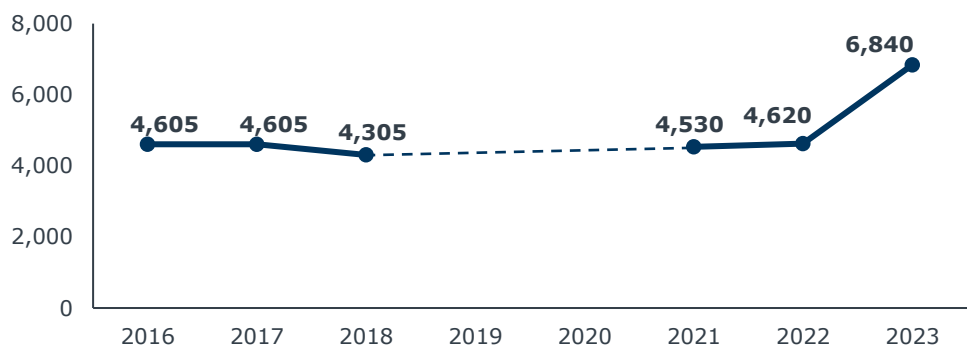


Fastest Growth

Accelerating Growth in Competitive Spirit

Competitive spirit is showing signs of growth. After steady participation between 2016 and 2022, participation increased 48% between 2022 and 2023.

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

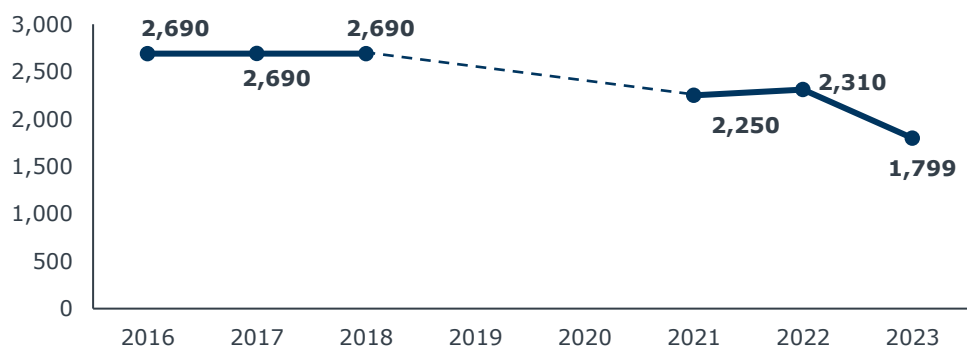


Largest Decline

Golf on the Decline

Participation in golf dropped 33% between 2016 and 2023, with the decline starting after the pandemic closures.

Change in Girls' Golf 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.