

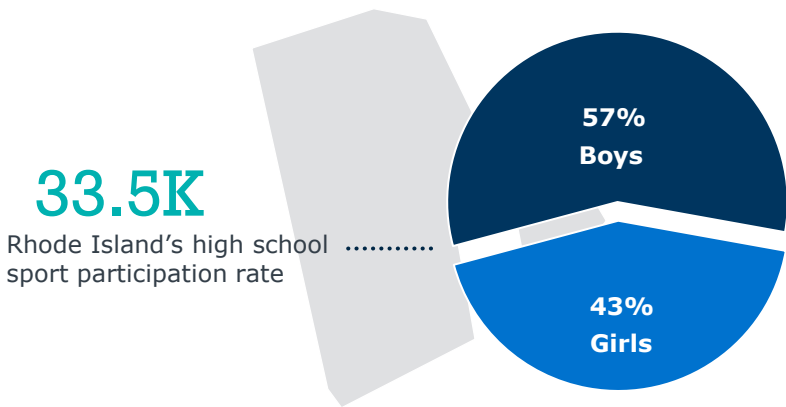
High School Sports Participation State Profile

State Profile: Rhode Island

Boys Account for Most High School Sport Participation

As of 2023-2024, the high school sports participation rate was 33,510 in Rhode Island. Mirroring the national trend, boys accounted for more than half of participation.

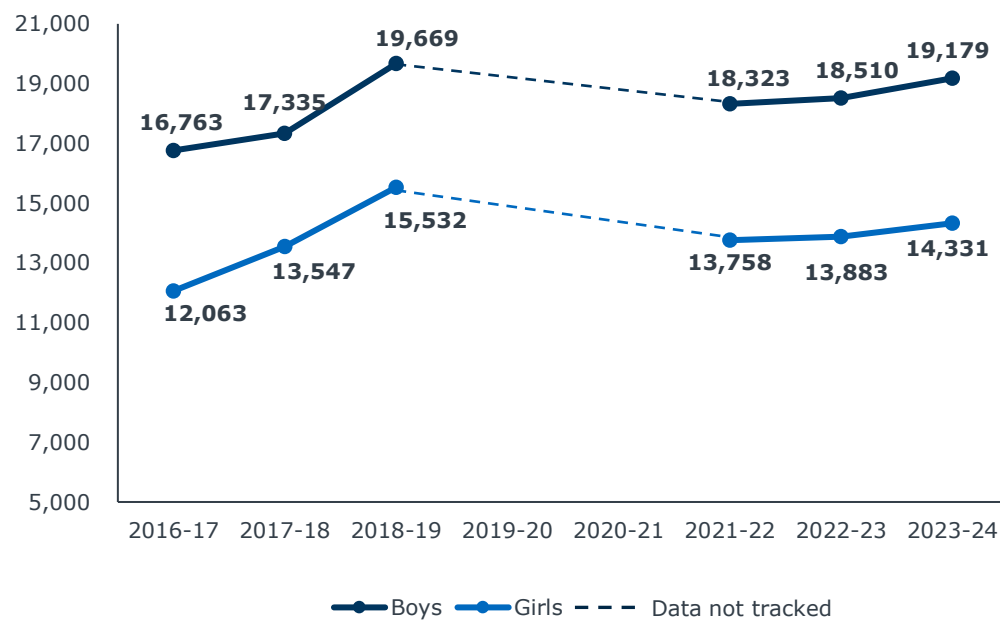
High School Sport Participation, Share of Girls v. Boys, 2023-24
n = 33,510



Gap Between Boys, Girls Persists After Pandemic

Participation in high school sports is growing among boys and girls over the last eight years but has not yet recovered to pre-pandemic levels.

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



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

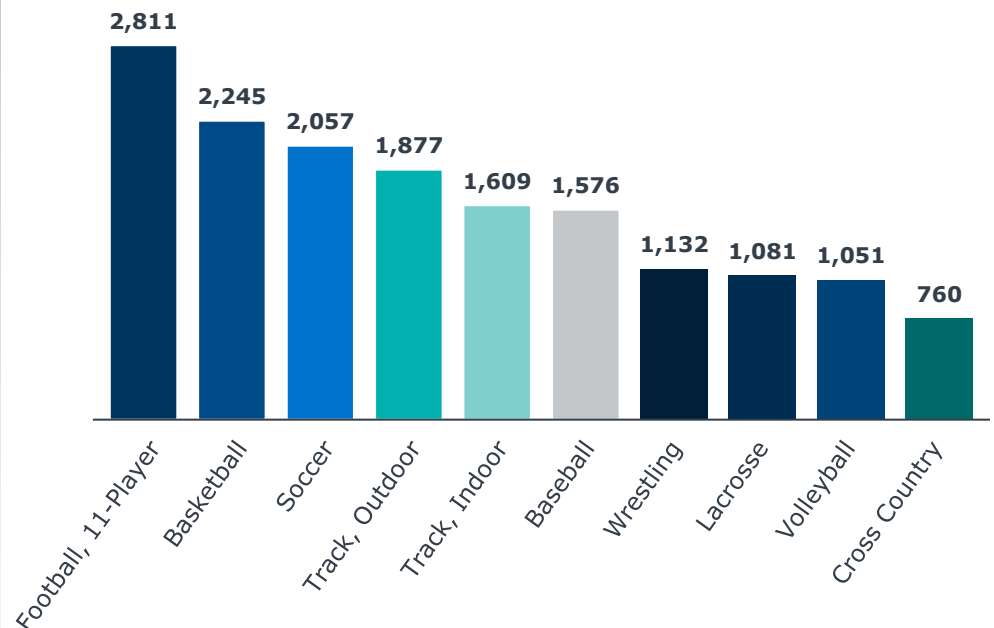
Top Boys' and Girls' Sports

Top Boys' Sports Largely Reflect National Trends

Like most states, football was the biggest boys' sport as of 2023-2024. While most other sports also reflected national trends, there were three exceptions: indoor track, lacrosse, and volleyball. These sports are not in the top ten nationally.

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

n = 19,179

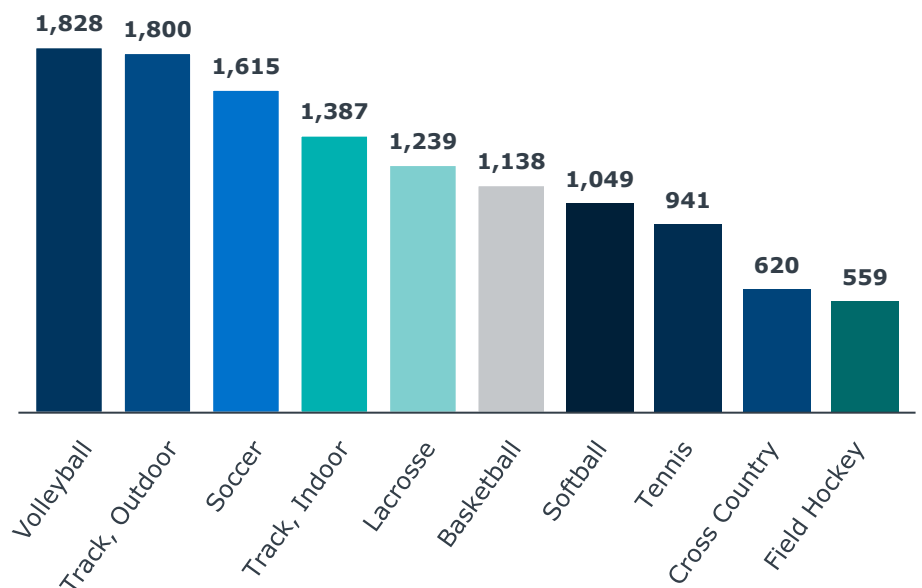


Top Girls' Sports Also Reflect National Trends

The top girls' sports in Rhode Island also largely match national trends. For example, volleyball, which is the second largest sport nationally, is the top sport by participation in the state. Otherwise, the biggest deviations were indoor track and field hockey. While both sports are among the largest in Rhode Island, they are not in the top 10 nationally.

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

n = 14,331



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

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:

- Basketball
- Golf
- Indoor Track & Field
- Outdoor Track & Field
- Soccer
- Wrestling

Areas of Steady Decline

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

- Football
- Ice Hockey
- Lacrosse
- Swimming & Diving

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 |
|------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Football, 11-Player | 2,811 | -4% | -4% |
| Basketball | 2,245 | 1% | 45% |
| Soccer | 2,057 | 13% | 13% |
| Track & Field, Outdoor | 1,877 | 3% | 20% |
| Track & Field, Indoor | 1,609 | 5% | 6% |
| Baseball | 1,576 | -7% | 5% |
| Wrestling | 1,132 | 16% | 52% |
| Lacrosse | 1,081 | -1% | -15% |
| Volleyball | 1,051 | 18% | 78% |
| Cross Country | 760 | 8% | -17% |
| Ice Hockey | 720 | -1% | -14% |
| Tennis | 680 | 6% | -7% |
| Golf | 578 | 26% | 51% |
| Unified Basketball | 338 | 1% | N/A |
| Swimming & Diving | 284 | -11% | -29% |
| Unified Volleyball | 218 | 17% | N/A |
| E-Sports | 147 | 0% | N/A |
| Competitive Spirit | 15 | 50% | 0% |

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

Biggest, Fastest Growth, Largest Decline

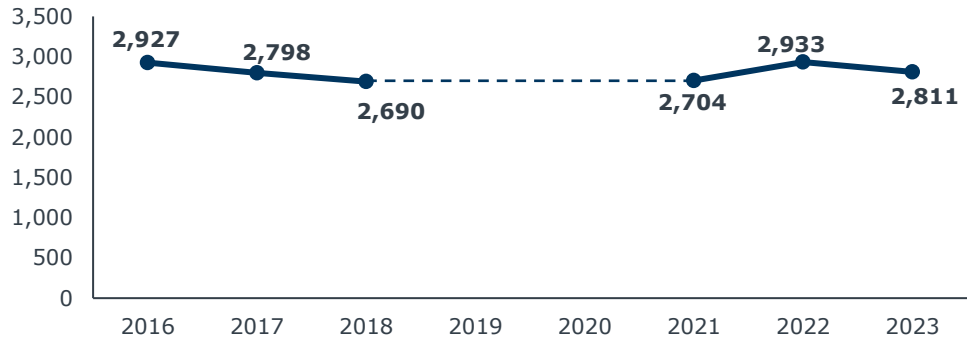
Boys

Biggest Sport

Football in Slow Decline

Participation in football decreased 4% between 2016 and 2023. While participation recovered slightly from the pandemic, it fell again from 2022 to 2023 (-4%).

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

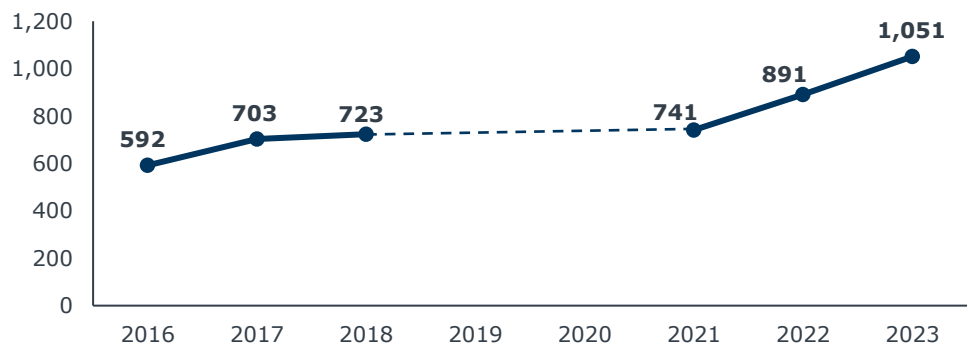


Fastest Growth

Steady Growth in Volleyball

Participation in volleyball grew every year between 2016 and 2023, for a 72 total increase of 72%.

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

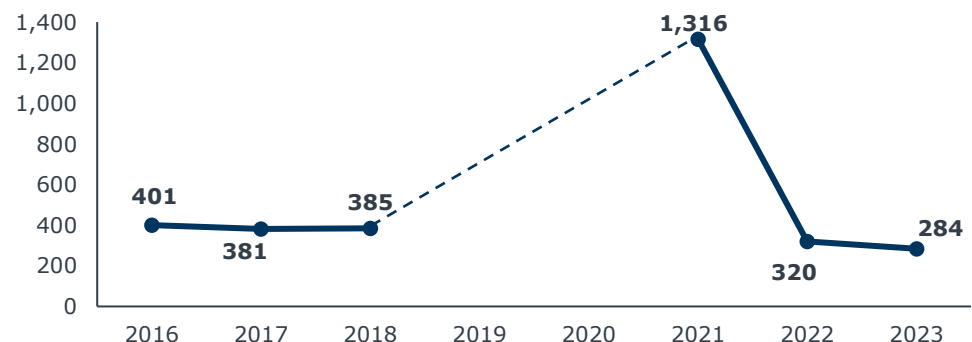


Largest Decline

Swimming Participation Down After Spike

Participation in swimming and diving is down 10% from 2016, despite a large spike in 2021.

Change in Boys' Swimming & 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 Girls' Participation

Girls

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:

- Basketball
- Lacrosse
- Outdoor Track & Field
- Soccer
- Softball
- Tennis
- Volleyball

Areas of Steady Decline

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

- Field Hockey
- Ice Hockey
- Swimming and Diving

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 |
|------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Volleyball | 1,828 | 14% | 65% |
| Track & Field, Outdoor | 1,800 | 17% | 26% |
| Soccer | 1,615 | 7% | 17% |
| Track & Field, Indoor | 1,387 | 11% | -2% |
| Lacrosse | 1,239 | 5% | 6% |
| Basketball | 1,138 | 5% | 13% |
| Softball | 1,049 | 5% | 4% |
| Tennis | 941 | 3% | 17% |
| Cross Country | 620 | 7% | -4% |
| Field Hockey | 559 | -4% | -13% |
| Swimming & Diving | 513 | -2% | -10% |
| Competitive Spirit | 423 | -30% | 19% |
| Unified Basketball | 298 | 31% | N/A |
| Gymnastics | 225 | -11% | 15% |
| Unified Volleyball | 220 | 82% | N/A |
| Ice Hockey | 180 | -10% | -15% |
| Golf | 154 | 19% | 100% |
| Wrestling | 93 | 16% | 323% |
| Football, 11-Player | 22 | -51% | 120% |
| eSports | 15 | -25% | N/A |
| Baseball | 12 | 20% | 500% |

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

Biggest, Fastest Growth, Largest Decline

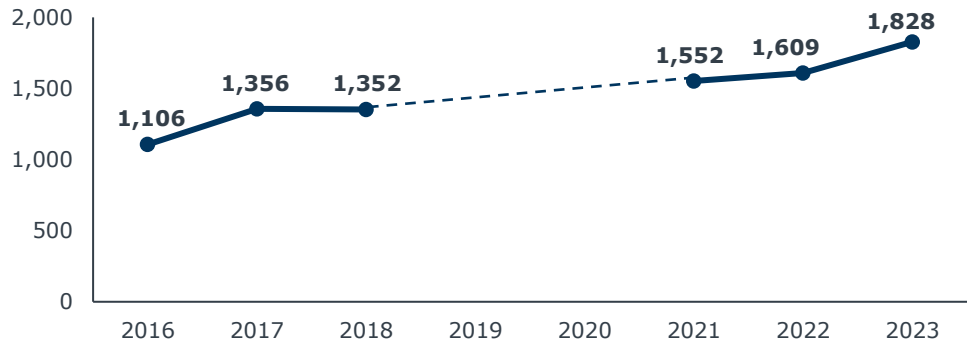
Girls

Biggest Sport

Steady Growth in Volleyball

Participation in volleyball grew every year but one between 2016 and 2023, for total increase of 65%.

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

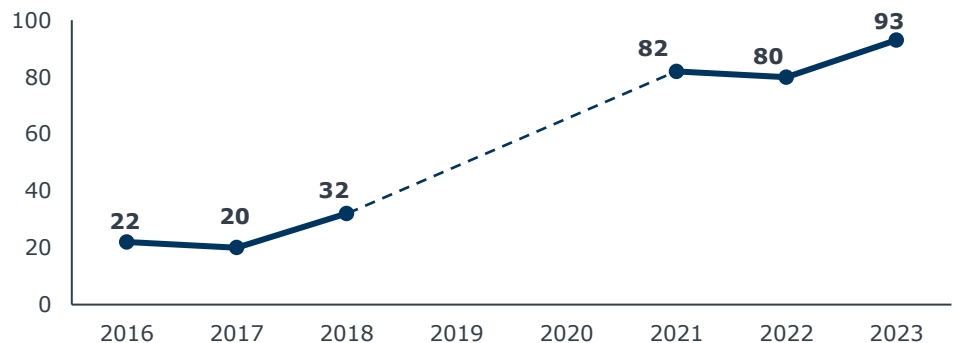


Fastest Growth

Wrestling Small but Growing Fast Among Girls

Wrestling is showing signs of quick growth in Rhode Island. Specifically, participation increased over 300% between 2016 and 2023.

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

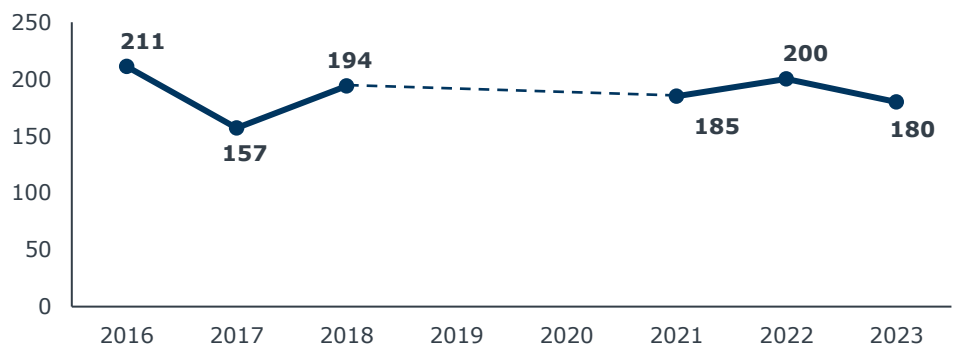


Largest Decline

Ice Hockey Participation Sees Ups and Downs

Participation in ice hockey fell 15% between 2016 and 2023, despite two years of increases.

Change in Girls' Ice Hockey 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.