

High School Sports Participation State Profile

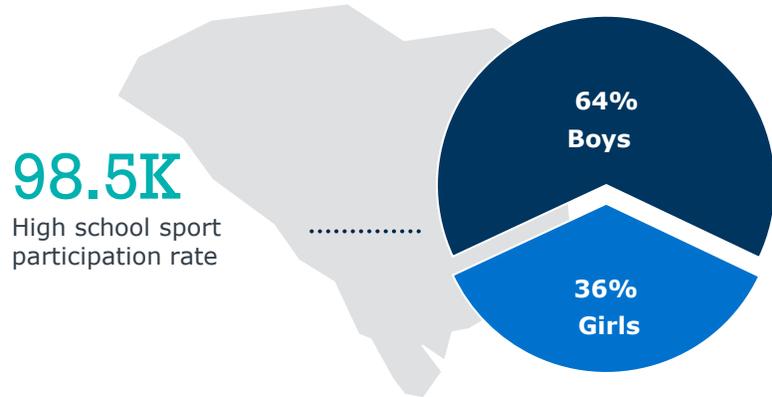
State Profile: South Carolina

Boys Account for Most High School Sport Participation

As of 2023-2024, the high school sports participation rate was 98,483 in South Carolina. Mirroring the national trend, boys accounted for more than half of participation.

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

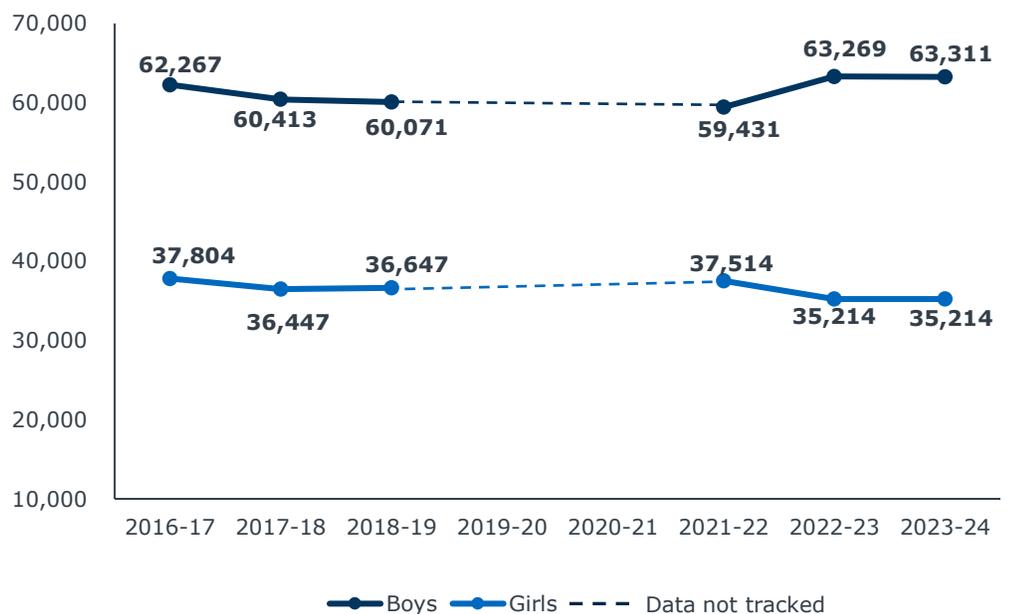
n = 98,483



Gap Between Boys, Girls Expands After Pandemic

Participation in high school sports is growing among boys and shrinking among girls over the last eight years, contributing to one of the largest gaps in participation in the country.

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



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

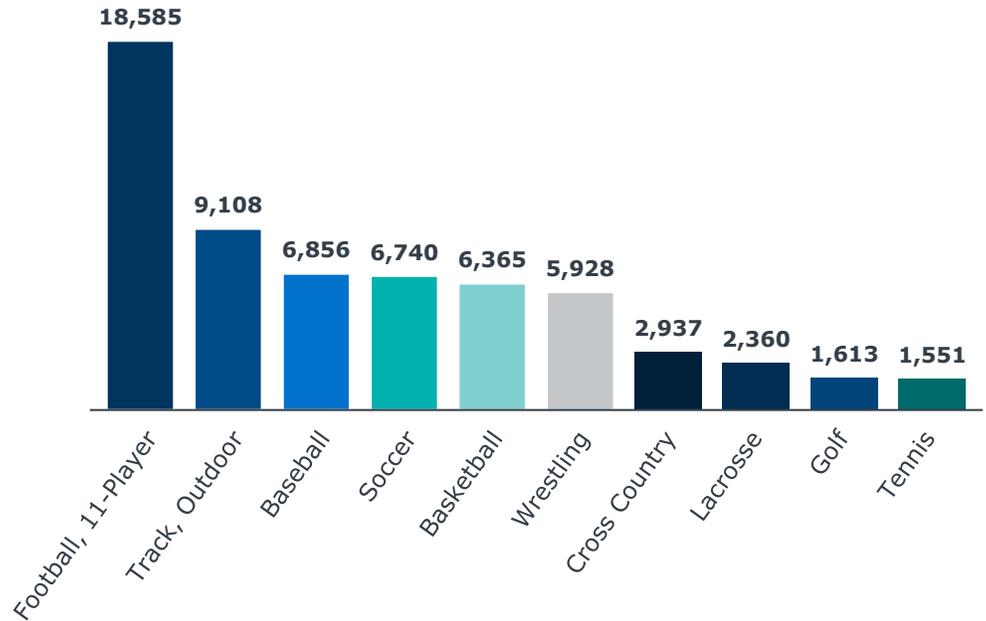
Top Boys' and Girls' Sports

Top Boys' Sports Mostly Reflect National Trends

Like most states, football was the biggest boys' sport as of 2023-2024. Overall, nine of the biggest sports in South Carolina closely reflect those nationally. The only exception was lacrosse, which was the eighth largest sport in South Carolina and not in the top 10 nationally.

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

n = 63,269

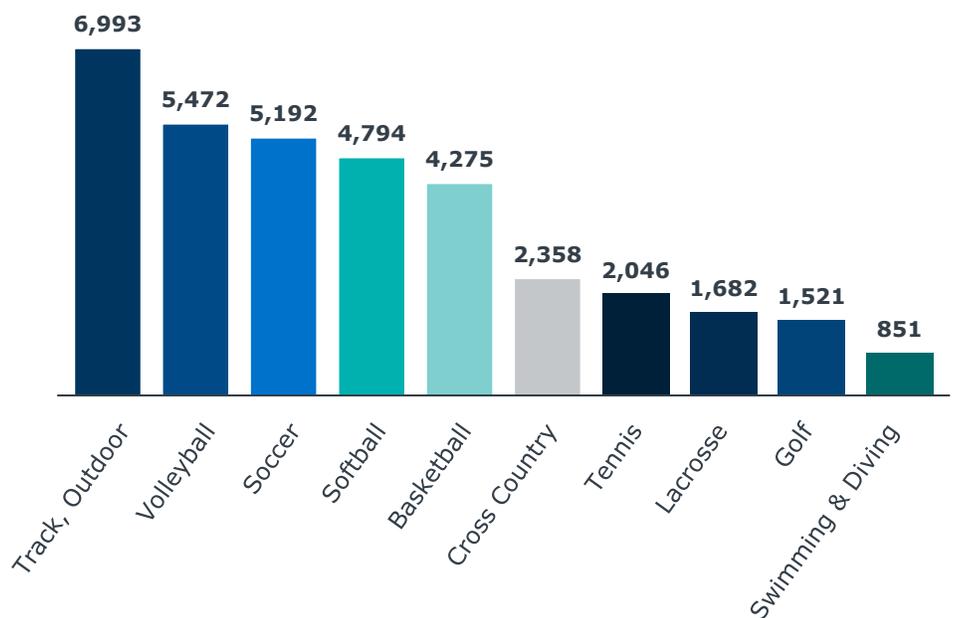


Top Girls' Sports Also Reflect National Trends

The top girls' sports in South Carolina also reflect national trends. The biggest deviation was golf, which was the 10th largest sport in South Carolina and not in the top 10 nationally.

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

n = 35,214



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

Short- and Long-Term Changes in Participation

Boys

Some Growth, But More Long-Term Decline

Areas of Consistent Growth

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

- Lacrosse
- Outdoor Track & Field
- Soccer
- Wrestling

Areas of Steady Decline

In comparison, participation fell across the last eight years among six sports.

- Baseball
- Basketball
- Cross Country
- Golf
- Swimming & Diving
- Tennis

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	18,585	N/A	0%
Track & Field, Outdoor	9,1083	N/A	7%
Baseball	6,856	N/A	-4%
Soccer	6,740	N/A	7%
Basketball	6,365	N/A	-7%
Wrestling	5,928	N/A	28%
Cross Country	2,937	N/A	-22%
Lacrosse	2,360	N/A	31%
Golf	1,613	N/A	-9%
Tennis	1,551	N/A	-3%
Swimming & Diving	1,226	N/A	-2%

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

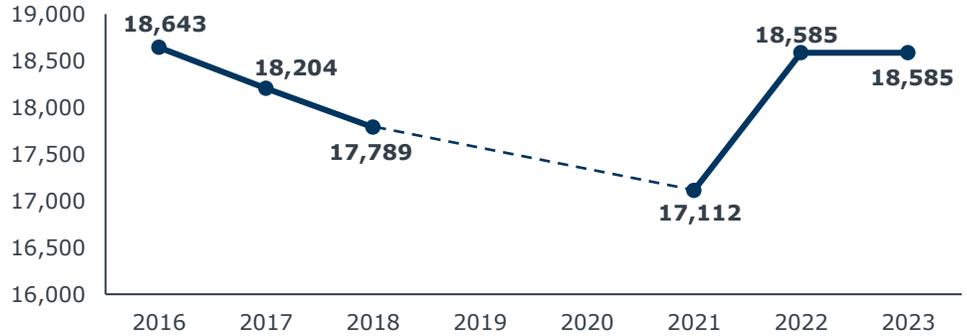
Boys

Biggest Sport

Football Recovering After Steady Decline

Participation in football is down slightly from 2016. However, it has almost fully rebounded from an 8% decline between 2016 and 2021.

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

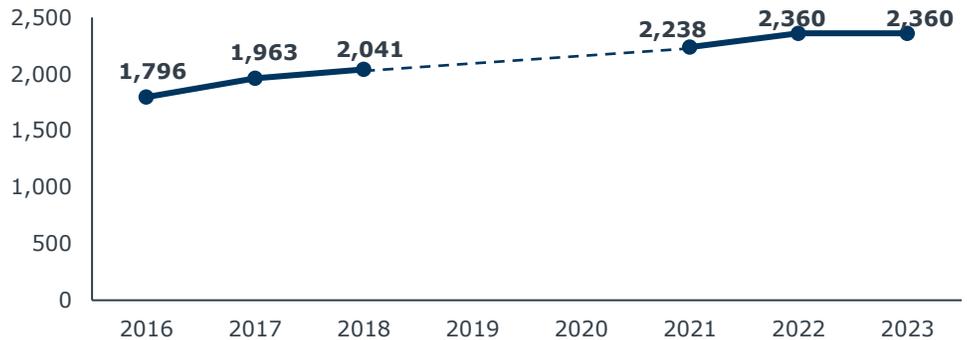


Fastest Growth

Steady Growth in Lacrosse

Participation in lacrosse increased every year since 2016, for a total increase of 31%.

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

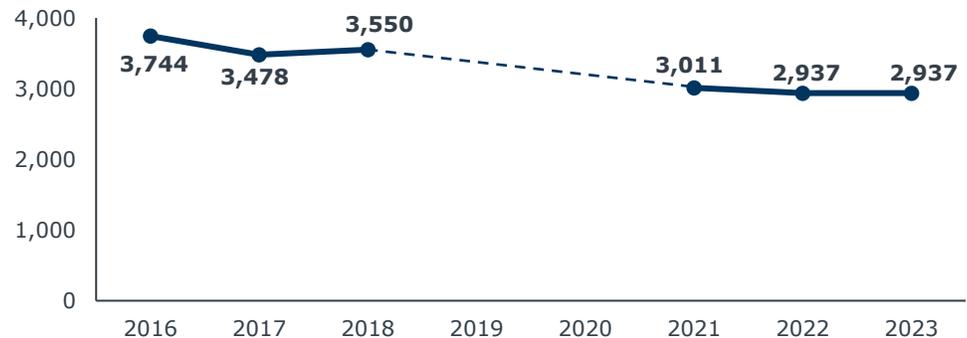


Largest Decline

Mostly Declines for Cross Country

Participation in cross country is down 22% since 2016, with only one year of growth.

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



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

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

Short- and Long-Term Changes in Participation

Girls

Some Growth, But More Long-Term Decline

Areas of Consistent Growth

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

- Lacrosse
- Outdoor Track & Field
- Soccer
- Volleyball

Areas of Steady Decline

In comparison, participation fell across the last eight years among six sports.

- Basketball
- Cross Country
- Golf
- Softball
- Swimming & Diving
- Tennis

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 & Field, Outdoor	6,993	N/A	12%
Volleyball	5,472	N/A	8%
Soccer	5,192	N/A	2%
Softball	4,794	N/A	-7%
Basketball	4,275	N/A	-11%
Cross Country	2,358	N/A	-11%
Tennis	2,046	N/A	-1%
Lacrosse	1,682	N/A	24%
Swimming & Diving	1,521	N/A	-1%
Golf	851	N/A	-1%
Wrestling	30	N/A	N/A

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

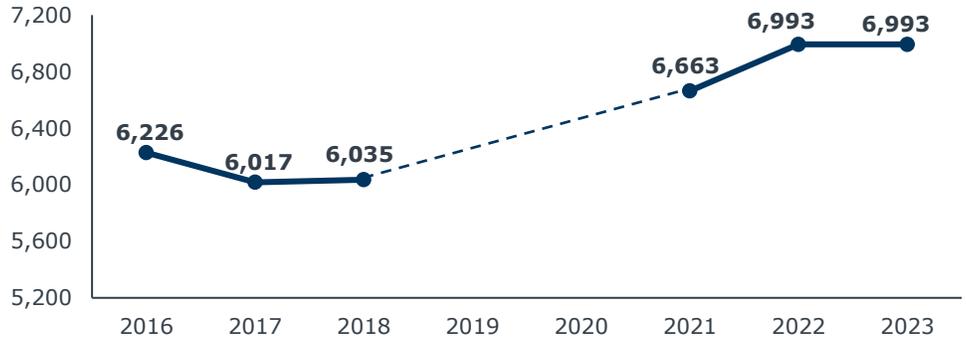
Girls

Biggest Sport

Track Reverses Downward Trend in Participation

Participation in outdoor track and field increased 12% between 2016 and 2023. Most growth occurred after the pandemic.

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

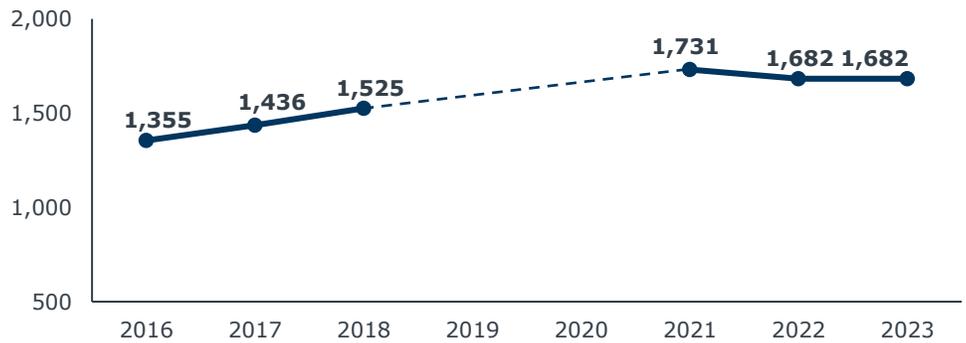


Fastest Growth

Lacrosse Participation Up But Leveling Off

Participation in lacrosse increased 24% between 2016 and 2023. Most growth occurred before the pandemic.

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

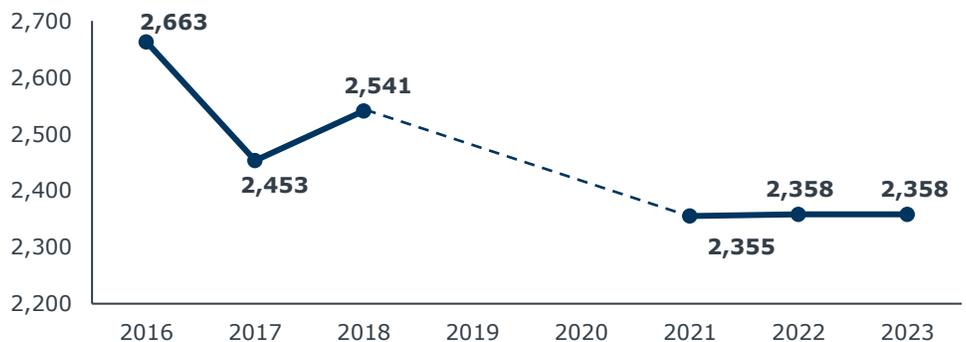


Largest Decline

Participation Declines Slow Down for Cross Country

Participation in cross country is down 11% since 2016 but has since tapered off.

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



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

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.