

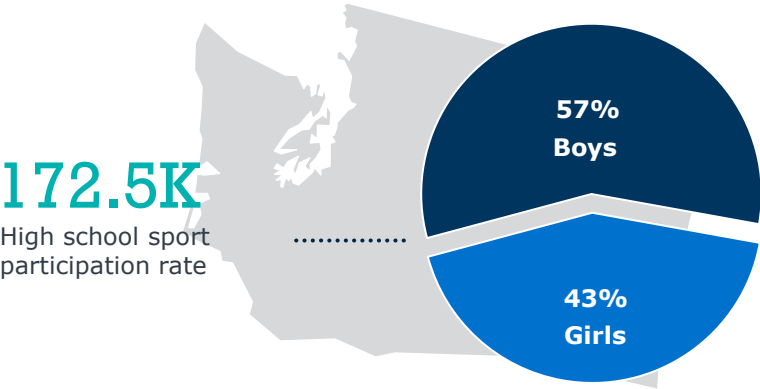
High School Sports Participation State Profile

State Profile: Washington

Boys Account for Most High School Sport Participation

As of 2023-2024, the high school sports participation rate was 172,479 in Washington. Mirroring the national trend, boys accounted for more than half of participation.

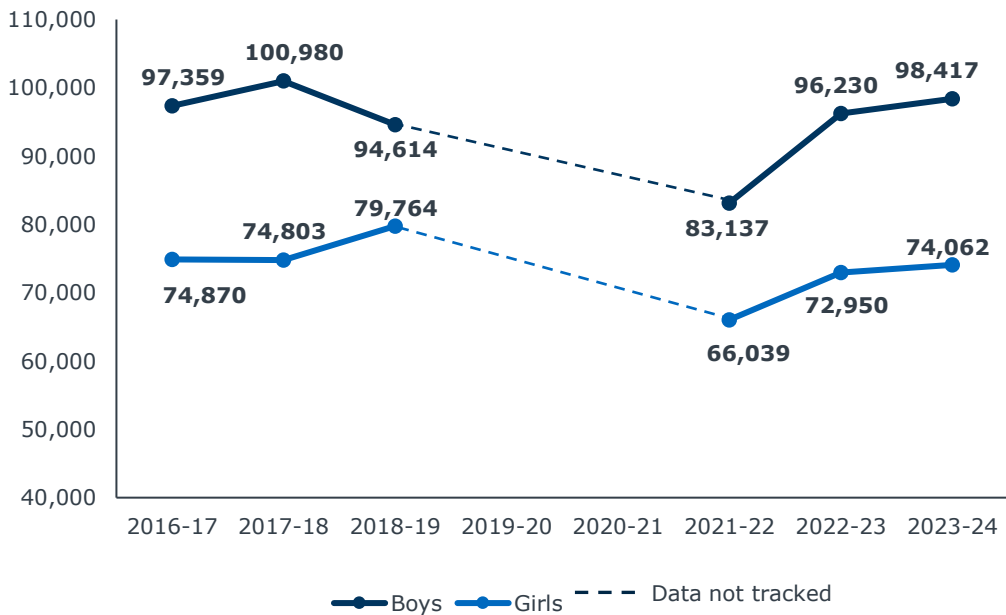
High School Sport Participation, Share of Girls v. Boys, 2023-24
n = 172,479



Gap Between Boys, Girls Expands After Pandemic

Participation in high school sports is growing among boys and down slightly among girls over the last eight years. While the gap in participation was closing in 2018, it has since expanded as boys' participation recovered faster after the pandemic.

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



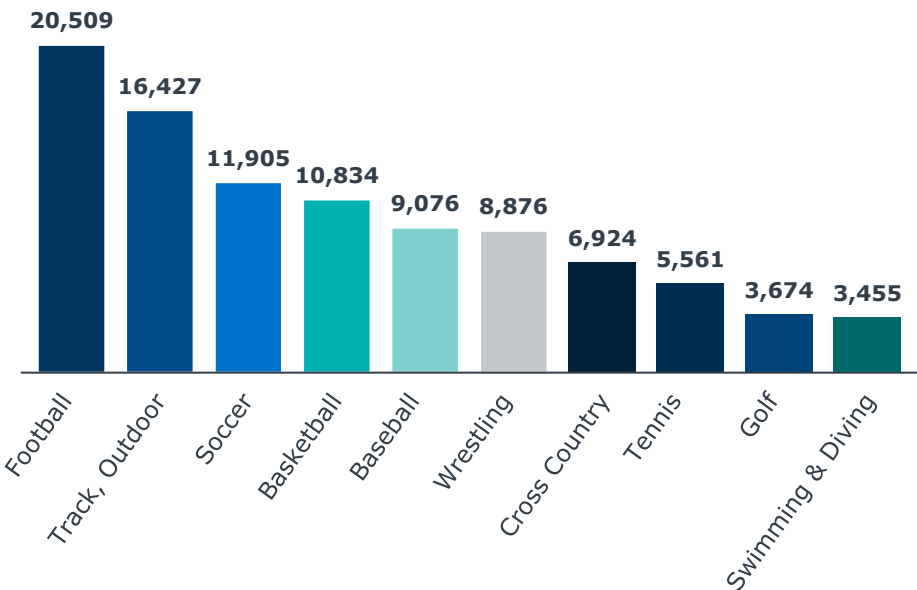
Source: EAB analysis of National Federation of State High School Association data.

Top Boys' and Girls' Sports

Top Boys' Sports Reflect National Trends

Like most states, football was the biggest boys' sport as of 2023-2024. The top 10 biggest sports in Washington are also the most popular boys' sports nationally. However, soccer is more popular in Washington—it ranks third largest in the state compared to fifth largest nationally.

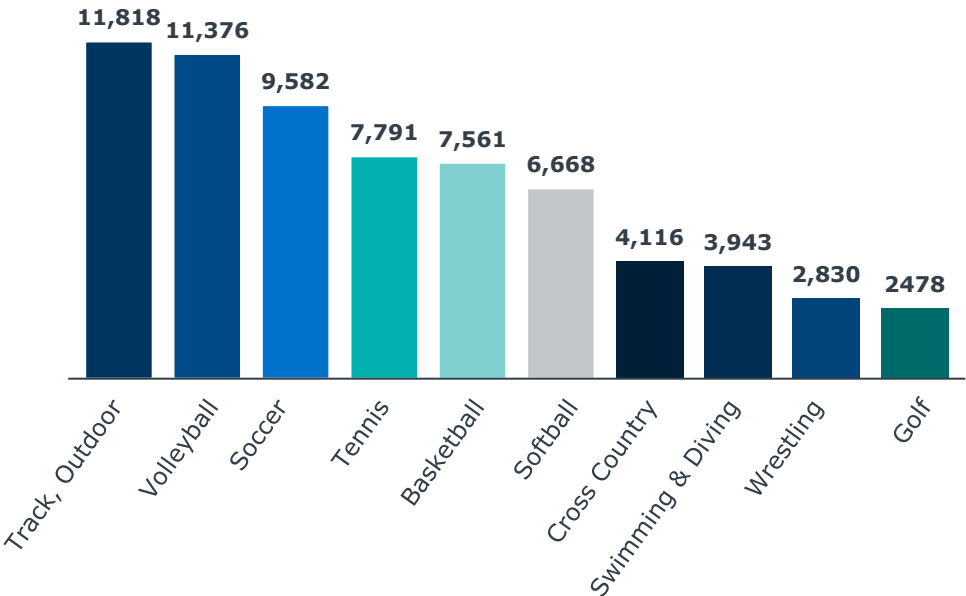
Top 10 Boys' Sports by Participation Rate, 2023-2024
n = 98,417



Wrestling Emerges As a Popular Sport Among Girls

The top girls' sports in Washington also largely reflect national trends. The biggest deviations were wrestling and golf, the ninth and 10th largest sports in the state, respectively. Neither were in the top 10 nationally.

Top 10 Girls' Sports by Participation Rate, 2023-2024
n = 74,062



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 & Field
- Soccer
- Wrestling

Areas of Steady Decline

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

- Baseball
- Basketball
- 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	Change, 2016-17 to 2023-24
Football, 11-Player	20,509	5%	-2%
Track and Field, Outdoor	16,427	6%	7%
Soccer	11,905	1%	5%
Basketball	10,834	-2%	-6%
Baseball	9,076	-6%	-11%
Wrestling	8,876	13%	20%
Cross Country	6,924	6%	-3%
Tennis	5,561	-2%	-1%
Golf	3,674	4%	11%
Swimming and Diving	3,445	0%	-8%
Football, 8-Player	1,103	26%	46%
Dance/Drill	45	29%	N/A
Competitive Spirit	28	N/A	N/A

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

Biggest, Fastest Growth, Largest Decline

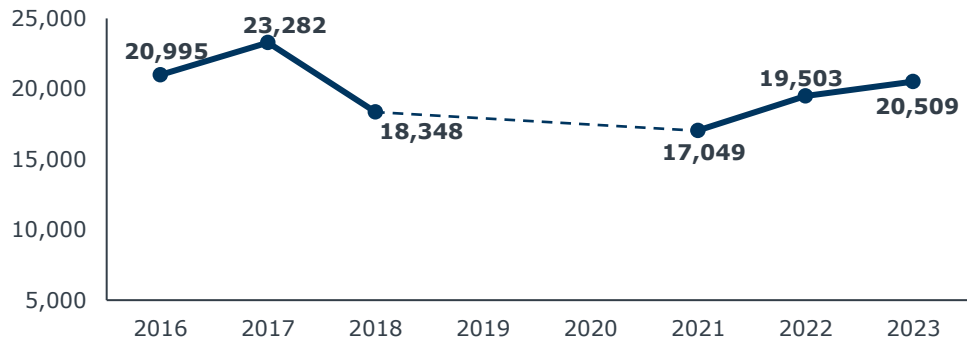
Boys

Biggest Sport

Football Participation Down Slightly Among Boys

Participation in 11-player football fell 2% between 2016 and 2023. The decline was steeper immediately after the pandemic but has since started to rebound.

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

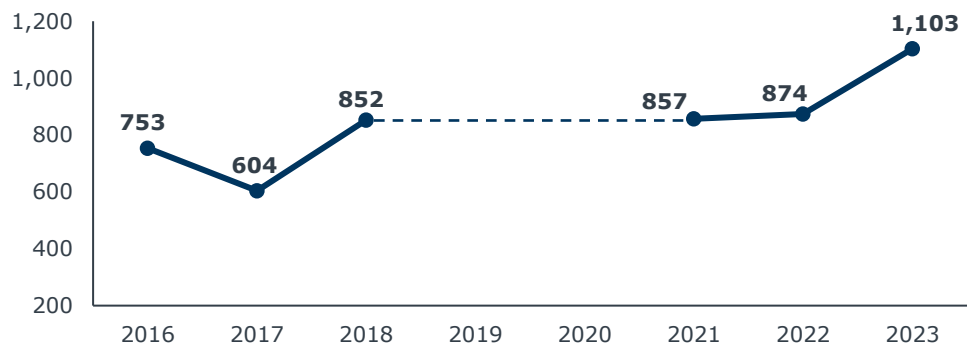


Fastest Growth

8-Player Football Popularity on the Rise

In contrast, participation in 8-player football grew 46% between 2016 and 2023.

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

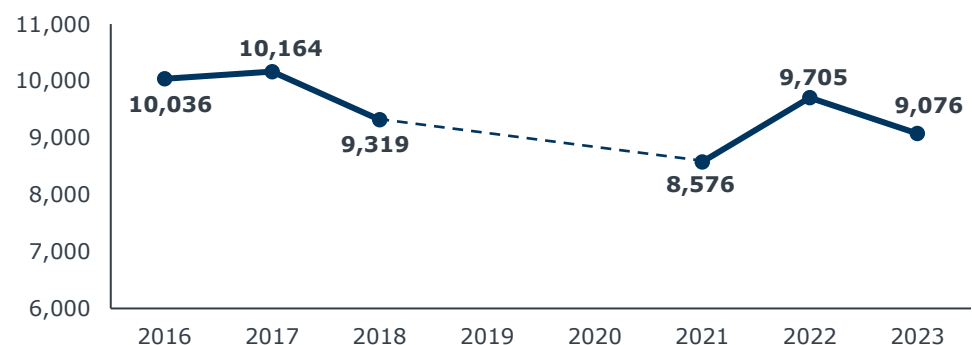


Largest Decline

Baseball Participation in Decline

Participation in baseball fell 11% between 2016 and 2023, but it remains the fifth most popular sport in the state.

Change in Boys' Baseball 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

There are three sports that 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, 11-Player
- Golf
- Wrestling

Areas of Steady Decline

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

- Basketball
- Gymnastics

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 and Field, Outdoor	11,818	4%	0%
Volleyball	11,376	0%	1%
Soccer	9,582	0%	-5%
Tennis	7,791	3%	-4%
Basketball	7,561	-5%	-17%
Softball, Fast Pitch	6,668	0%	-14%
Cross Country	4,116	1%	-17%
Swimming and Diving	3,943	0%	-19%
Wrestling	2,830	17%	87%
Golf	2,478	8%	6%
Bowling	1,555	-5%	16%
Dance/Drill	1,295	-17%	N/A
Lacrosse	1,047	N/A	N/A
Softball, Soft Pitch	1,020	-3%	N/A
Gymnastics	1,019	-7%	-41%
Competitive Spirit	838	N/A	N/A
Football, 11-Player	96	16%	284%
Baseball	65	59%	N/A
Football, 8-Player	11	38%	267%

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

Biggest, Fastest Growth, Largest Decline

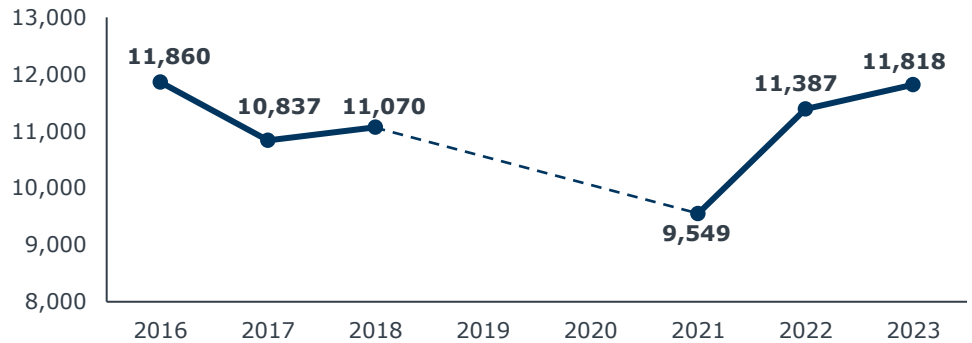
Girls

Biggest Sport

Track Recovers from Pandemic-Era Decline

Participation in outdoor track and field fell 19% between 2016 and 2021. However, it has since nearly fully recovered.

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

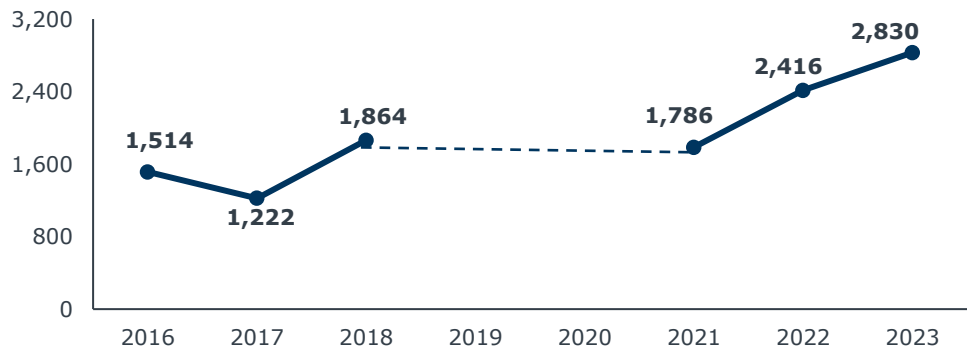


Fastest Growth

Wrestling Growing Fast Among Girls in Washington

Participation in wrestling increased every year but one between 2016 and 2023, for 87% total growth.

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

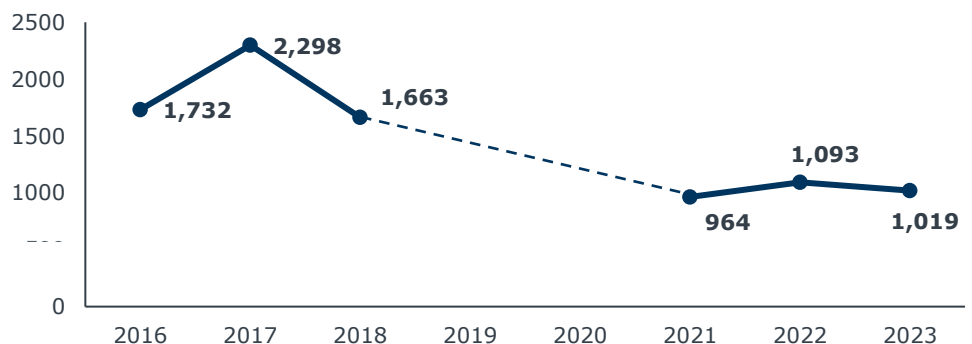


Largest Decline

Gymnastics Down But Leveling Off

Participation in gymnastics fell 41% between 2016 and 2023. Most of the decline occurred during the pandemic and has since leveled off.

Change in Girls' Gymnastics 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.