

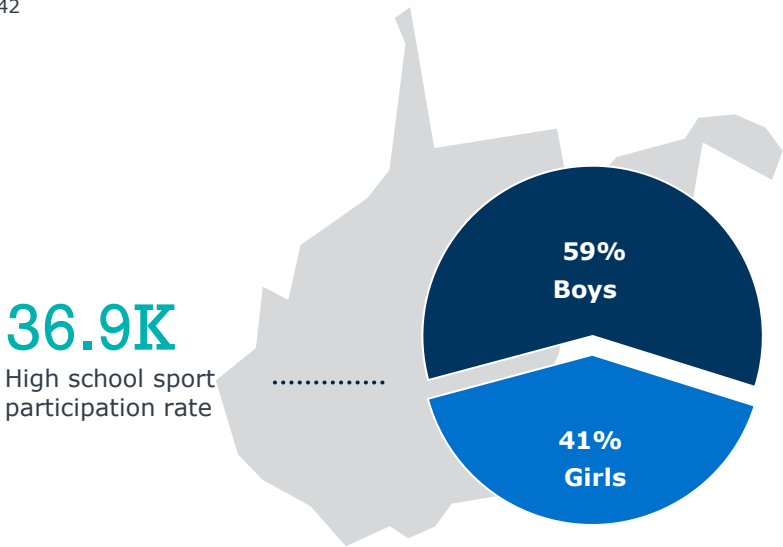
# High School Sports Participation State Profile

## State Profile: West Virginia

### Boys Account for Most High School Sport Participation

As of 2023-2024, the high school sports participation rate was over 36,394 in West Virginia. Mirroring the national trend, boys accounted for more than half of participation.

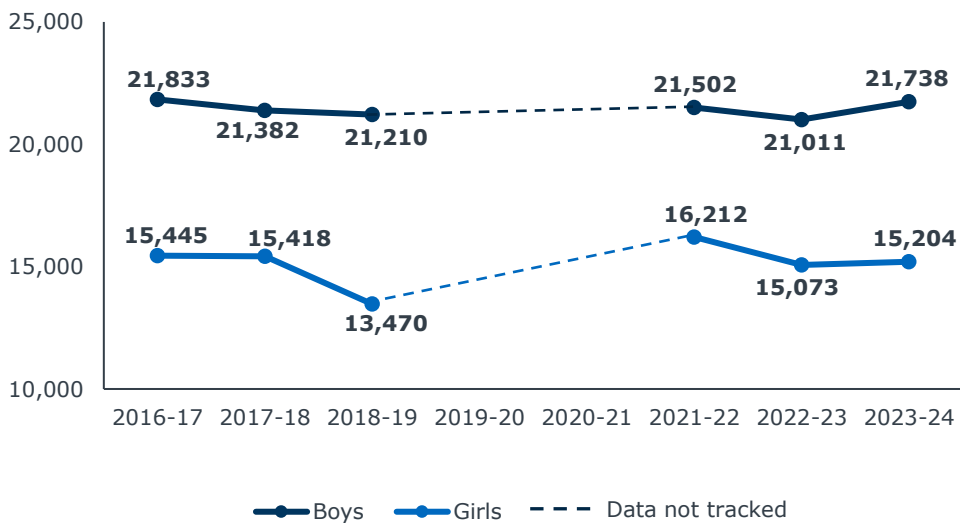
High School Sport Participation, Share of Girls v. Boys, 2023-24  
n = 36,942



### Gap Between Boys, Girls Grows After Pandemic

Participation in high school sports is down slightly among boys and girls over the last eight years. While the gap in participation closed immediately following the pandemic, it has started growing again.

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



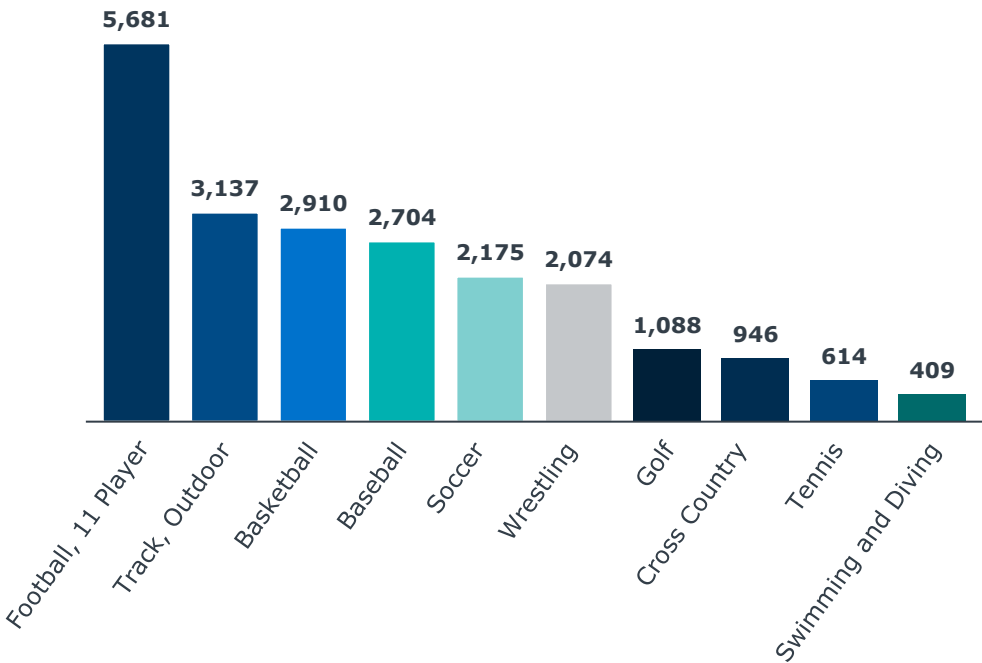
# Top Boys' and Girls' Sports

## Top Boys Sports Mirror National Trends

Like most states, football was the biggest boys' sport as of 2023-2024. Overall, the remaining top sports in West Virginia closely reflected national trends.

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

n= 21,738

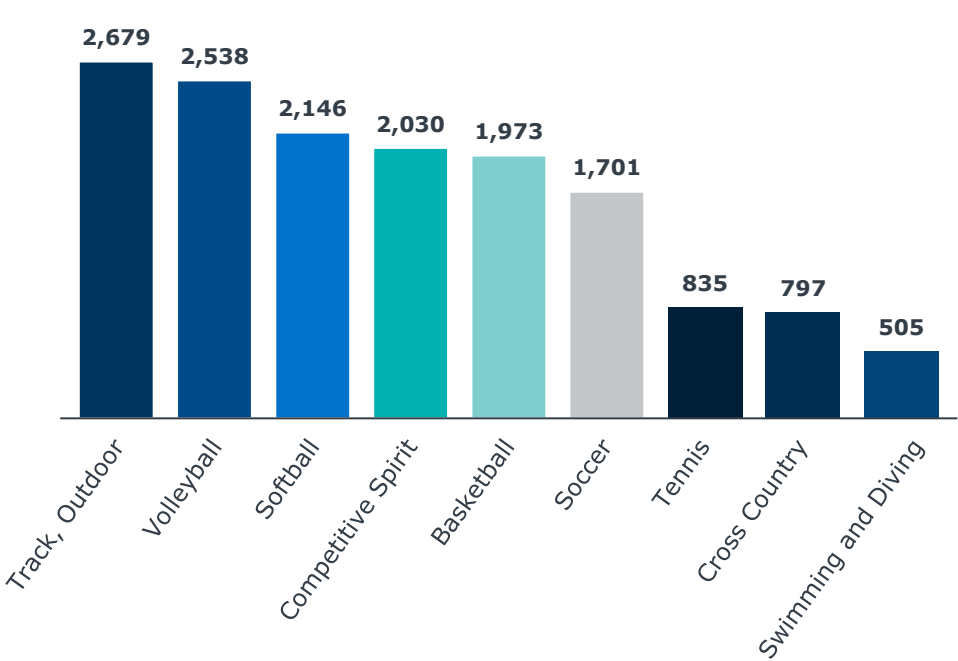


## Top Girls' Sports Also Reflect National Trends

The top girls' sports in West Virginia similarly reflected national trends, with track and volleyball taking the top two spots.

Top 9<sup>1</sup> Girls Sports' by Participation Rate, 2023-2024

n= 15,204



1) West Virginia reported only nine girls' sports to the NFHS survey.

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

# Short- and Long-Term Changes in Participation

## Boys

### Areas of Consistent Growth

Four sports grew both in the last year and across the last 10 years. This trend may signal emerging and/or sustainable recruitment areas. They included:

- Golf
- Outdoor Track and Field
- Soccer
- Wrestling

### Areas of Steady Decline

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

- Basketball

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	5,681	4%	-5%
Track and Field, Outdoor	3,137	2%	1%
Basketball	2,910	-3%	-8%
Baseball	2,704	2%	-3%
Soccer	2,175	4%	7%
Wrestling	2,074	19%	33%
Golf	1,088	7%	19%
Cross Country	946	1%	-15%
Tennis	614	1%	-11%
Swimming and Diving	409	0%	-18%

# Biggest, Fastest Growth, Largest Decline

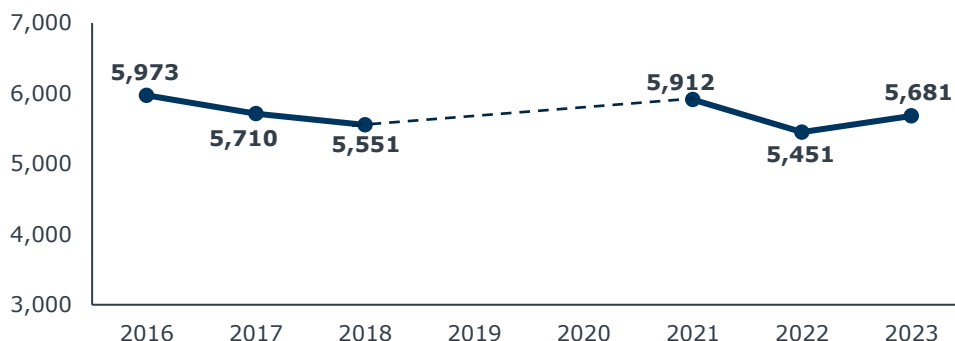
## Boys

### Biggest Sport

#### Slight Decline in Football Participation

Participation in 11-player football fell 5% between 2016 and 2023.

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

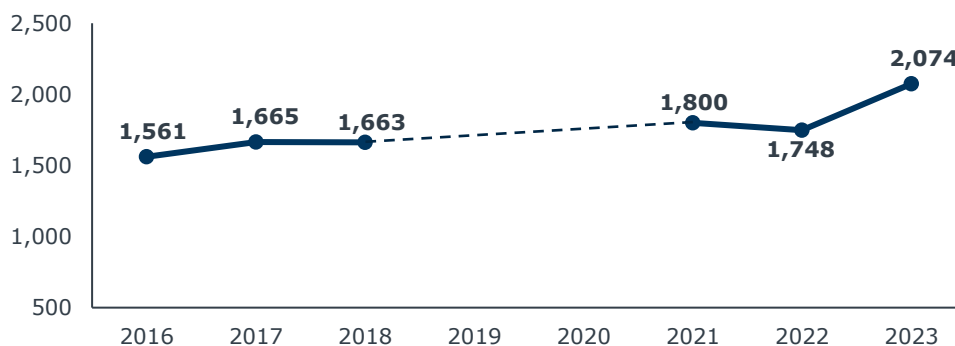


### Fastest Growth

#### Wrestling Participation Spikes

Participation in boys' wrestling increased 33% between 2016 and 2023. The most growth occurred in the last year.

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

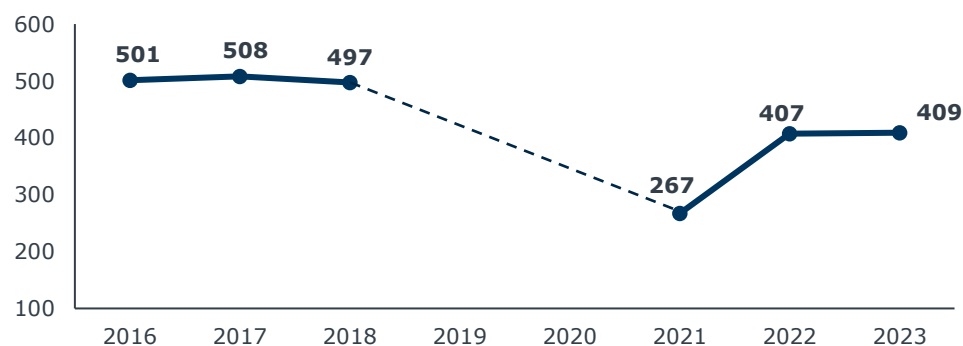


### Largest Decline

#### Swimming Down But Recovering

Participation in swimming and diving fell 18% between 2016 and 2023. However, it showed signs of recovering immediately after the pandemic.

Change in Boys' Swimming and 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 Participation

## Girls

### Areas of Consistent Growth

There is one sport that grew both in the last year and across the last 10 years. This trend may signal emerging and/or sustainable recruitment areas. They included:

- Outdoor Track and Field

### Areas of Steady Decline

In comparison, participation has fallen in the last year and across the last decade among three sports.

- Basketball
- Soccer
- 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
Track and Field, Outdoor	2,679	9%	5%
Volleyball	2,538	-2%	7%
Softball	2,146	4%	-4%
Competitive Spirit	2,030	0%	3%
Basketball	1,973	-3%	-9%
Soccer	1,701	-3%	-3%
Tennis	835	3%	-4%
Cross Country	797	1%	-1%
Swimming and Diving	505	-11%	-29%

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

# Biggest, Fastest Growth, Largest Decline

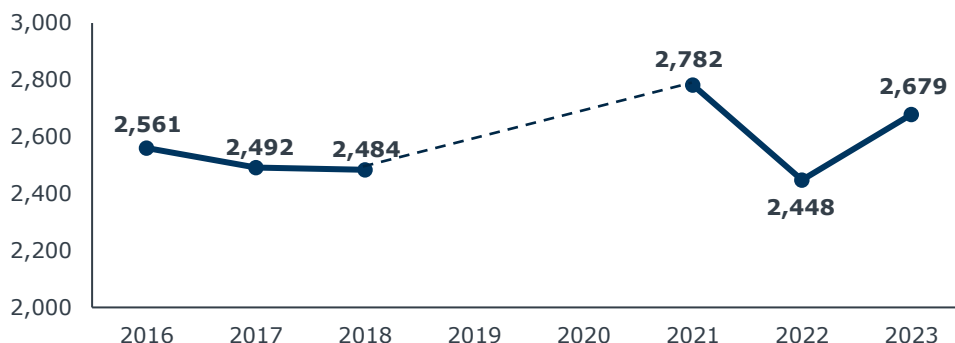
## Girls

### Biggest Sport

#### Outdoor Track and Field Participation on the Rise

Participation in outdoor track and field is up 5% since 2016, despite steadily falling between 2016 and 2018 and an additional 12% decline from 2021 to 2022.

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

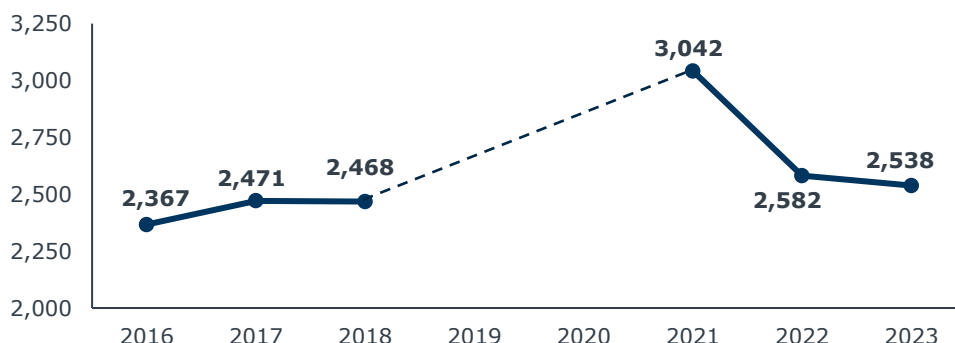


### Fastest Growth

#### Volleyball Up But Showing Signs of Decline

Participation in volleyball increased 7% between 2016 and 2023. However, it has show signs of decline since peaking in 2021.

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

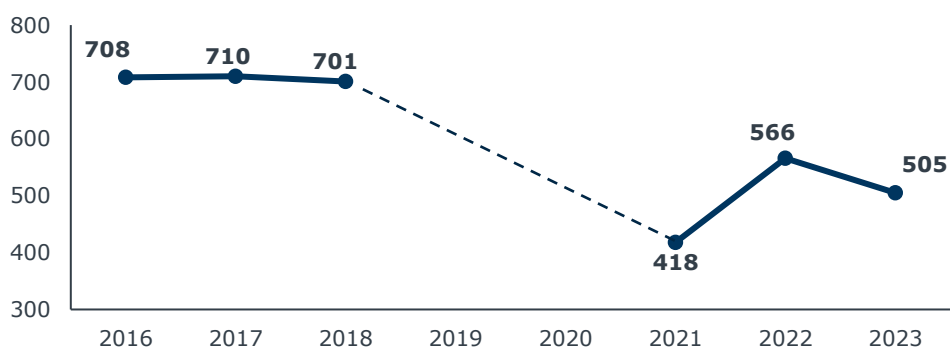


### Largest Decline

#### Swimming Slow To Recover From Pandemic Decline

After staying steady before the pandemic, participation has fallen 29% since 2016. The decrease accelerated through the pandemic, and participation has yet to recover despite a slight bump in 2022.

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



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

# Appendix: About the Data

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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
<b>Total Boys' Participation</b>	<b>4,638,785</b>

### 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
<b>Total Girls' Participation</b>	<b>3,423,517</b>

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