

NATIONAL FEDERATION OF STATE
HIGH SCHOOL ASSOCIATIONS



NEWS RELEASE

High School Sports Participation Increases for 28th Consecutive Year, Draws Close to Eight Million Mark

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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INDIANAPOLIS, IN (August 8, 2017) — Led by the largest one-year increase in girls participation in 16 years, the overall number of participants in high school sports increased for the 28th consecutive year in 2016-17, according to the annual High School Athletics Participation Survey conducted by the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS).

Based on figures from the 51 NFHS member state high school associations, which includes the District of Columbia, the number of participants in high school sports reached an all-time high of 7,963,535. The increase of 94,635 participants from 2015-16 is the largest one-year jump in overall participation since the 2008-09 school year.

Thanks to increases in all of the top 10 participatory sports, the number of girls participants reached an all-time high of 3,400,297. The increase of 75,971 from the previous year is the largest one-year jump since the 2000-01 sports participation report.

Competitive spirit registered the largest increase among girls sports with an additional 18,712 participants, followed by outdoor track and field (8,508), volleyball (8,470), soccer (6,810) and lacrosse (5,423).

“As we celebrate the 45th anniversary of Title IX this year, this report on girls participation numbers underscores the significance of that important decision in 1972,” said Bob Gardner, NFHS executive director. “It is great to see an ever-increasing number of girls taking advantage of that opportunity to compete in high school sports.”

Seven of the top 10 boys sports registered increases from the previous year, led by soccer (9,912), outdoor track and field (9,003), and cross country (8,580). Overall participation for boys in 2016-17 was 4,563,238, an increase of 18,664 from the previous year.

Participation in 11-player football was down 25,901 from the previous year, although the numbers in 6- and 8-player football were up from the 2015-16 season. The overall number of participants in football (6, 8, 9 and 11 player) in 2016-17 was 1,086,748, down 25,503 from the 1,112,251 in the 2015-16 season.

While the number of participants in high school football declined, the number of schools offering the sport increased by 52 schools in 11-player – from 14,047 to 14,099 – and by nine schools in 6-, 8- and 9-player – from 1,349 to 1,358.

With 14,099 high schools offering 11-player football, the decrease of 25,901 participants amounts to fewer than two individuals (1.8) per school, and an overall decrease of 2.5 percent.

Football remains the No. 1 participatory sport for boys at the high school level by a large margin. Track and field is second with 600,136 participants, followed by basketball (550,305), baseball (491,790) and soccer (450,234).

“While we are concerned when any sport experiences a decline in participation, the numbers do not substantiate that schools are dropping the sport of football,” Gardner said. “The NFHS and its member state high school associations have worked hard to reduce the risk of injury in high school football, and we are pleased at the continued strength of the sport across the country.”

Amazingly, this year’s survey indicated that more than 60 different sports were offered by high schools nationwide, from judo and kayaking, to fencing and rugby, to snowboarding and rodeo. Some of the more popular non-traditional high school sports were badminton (17,184), archery (9,767), crew (5,179) and fencing (4,100).

The top 10 states by participants remained the same; however, Florida moved ahead of Michigan to seventh position this year. Texas and California topped the list again with 834,558 and 800,364 participants, respectively, followed by New York (367,849), Illinois (341,387), Ohio (340,146), Pennsylvania (319,153), Florida (310,567), Michigan (295,647), New Jersey (283,655) and Minnesota (239,289).

The participation survey has been compiled since 1971 by the NFHS through numbers it receives from its member associations. The top 10 sports for boys and girls and the year-by-year participation totals are listed below. The complete 2016-17 High School Athletics Participation Survey is available at <http://www.nfhs.org/ParticipationStatistics/ParticipationStatistics/>

TEN MOST POPULAR BOYS PROGRAMS

Schools		Participants	
1. Basketball	18,214	1. Football – 11-Player	1,057,407
2. Track and Field – Outdoor	16,699	2. Track and Field – Outdoor	600,136
3. Baseball	15,979	3. Basketball	550,305
4. Cross Country	15,087	4. Baseball	491,790
5. Football – 11-Player	14,099	5. Soccer	450,234
6. Golf	13,223	6. Cross Country	266,271
7. Soccer	12,188	7. Wrestling	244,804
8. Wrestling	10,629	8. Tennis	158,171
9. Tennis	9,725	9. Golf	141,466
10. Swimming & Diving	7,342	10. Swimming & Diving	138,364

TEN MOST POPULAR GIRLS PROGRAMS

Schools		Participants	
1. Basketball	17,934	1. Track and Field – Outdoor	494,477
2. Track and Field – Outdoor	16,658	2. Volleyball	444,779
3. Volleyball	15,992	3. Basketball	430,368
4. Softball – Fast Pitch	15,440	4. Soccer	388,339
5. Cross Country	14,880	5. Softball – Fast Pitch	367,405
6. Soccer	11,823	6. Cross Country	226,039
7. Tennis	10,121	7. Swimming & Diving	170,797
8. Golf	10,076	8. Tennis	158,171
9. Swimming & Diving	7,721	9. Competitive Spirit Squads	144,243
10. Competitive Spirit Squads	6,541	10. Lacrosse	93,473

ATHLETICS PARTICIPATION SURVEY TOTALS

Year	Boys Participants	Girls Participants	Total	Year	Boys Participants	Girls Participants	Total
1971-72	3,666,917	294,015	3,960,932	1995-96	3,634,052	2,367,936	6,001,988
1972-73	3,770,621	817,073	4,587,694	1996-97	3,706,225	2,474,043	6,180,268
1973-74	4,070,125	1,300,169	5,370,294	1997-98	3,763,120	2,570,333	6,333,453
1975-76	4,109,021	1,645,039	5,754,060	1998-99	3,832,352	2,652,726	6,485,078
1977-78	4,367,442	2,083,040	6,450,482	1999-00	3,861,749	2,675,874	6,537,623
1978-79	3,709,512	1,854,400	5,563,912	2000-01	3,921,069	2,784,154	6,705,223
1979-80	3,517,829	1,750,264	5,268,093	2001-02	3,960,517	2,806,998	6,767,515
1980-81	3,503,124	1,853,789	5,356,913	2002-03	3,988,738	2,856,358	6,845,096
1981-82	3,409,081	1,810,671	5,219,752	2003-04	4,038,253	2,865,299	6,903,552
1982-83	3,355,558	1,779,972	5,135,530	2004-05	4,110,319	2,908,390	7,018,709
1983-84	3,303,599	1,747,346	5,050,945	2005-06	4,206,549	2,953,355	7,159,904
1984-85	3,354,284	1,757,884	5,112,168	2006-07	4,321,103	3,021,807	7,342,910
1985-86	3,344,275	1,807,121	5,151,396	2007-08	4,372,115	3,057,266	7,429,381
1986-87	3,364,082	1,836,356	5,200,438	2008-09	4,422,662	3,114,091	7,536,753
1987-88	3,425,777	1,849,684	5,275,461	2009-10	4,455,740	3,172,637	7,628,377
1988-89	3,416,844	1,839,352	5,256,196	2010-11	4,494,406	3,173,549	7,667,955
1989-90	3,398,192	1,858,659	5,256,851	2011-12	4,484,987	3,207,533	7,692,520
1990-91	3,406,355	1,892,316	5,298,671	2012-13	4,490,854	3,222,723	7,713,577
1991-92	3,429,853	1,940,801	5,370,654	2013-14	4,527,994	3,267,664	7,795,658
1992-93	3,416,389	1,997,489	5,413,878	2014-15	4,519,312	3,287,735	7,807,047
1993-94	3,472,967	2,130,315	5,603,282	2015-16	4,544,574	3,324,326	7,868,900
1994-95	3,536,359	2,240,461	5,776,820	2016-17	4,563,238	3,400,297	7,963,535

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About the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS)

The NFHS, based in Indianapolis, Indiana, is the national leadership organization for high school sports and performing arts activities. Since 1920, the NFHS has led the development of education-based interscholastic sports and performing arts activities that help students succeed in their lives. The NFHS sets direction for the future by building awareness and support, improving the participation experience, establishing consistent standards and rules for competition, and helping those who oversee high school sports and activities. The NFHS writes playing rules for 17 sports for boys and girls at the high school level. Through its 50 member state associations and the District of Columbia, the NFHS reaches more than 19,000 high schools and 11 million participants in high school activity programs, including more than 7.9 million in high school sports. As the recognized national authority on interscholastic activity programs, the NFHS conducts national meetings; sanctions interstate events; offers online publications and services for high school coaches and officials; sponsors professional organizations for high school coaches, officials, speech and debate coaches, and music adjudicators; serves as the national source for interscholastic coach training; and serves as a national information resource of interscholastic athletics and activities. For more information, visit the NFHS website at www.nfhs.org.

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