



NEWS RELEASE

Participation in High School Sports Hits Record High with Sizable Increase in 2024-25

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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INDIANAPOLIS, IN (August 18, 2025) — High school athletics participation increased by nearly 200,000 in 2024-25, continuing an upward trajectory since the pandemic and registering an all-time high for participation.

The NFHS High School Athletics Participation Survey indicated that 8,260,891 participants were involved in high school sports in 2024-25, which is up 198,589 from the previous year and tops the previous record of 8,062,302 set in 2023-24. The total includes 4,723,907 boys and 3,536,984 girls — both record highs — according to figures obtained from the 51 NFHS member state associations, which includes the District of Columbia.

The 2024-25 total marked the third consecutive notable increase after numbers fell during the pandemic. Since the initial survey after the pandemic, participation in high school sports has increased 642,837 in three years and represents a turnaround from the decline that started the year before the COVID-19 pandemic.

“It is wonderful to see the interest in high school sports reach new heights,” said Dr. Karissa Niehoff, CEO of the NFHS. “The immense value of high school sports is reflected in these impressive numbers. As high school students have consistently demonstrated their desire to play with their peers and represent their schools and community, state and school administrators have stepped up to offer more participation opportunities to meet that demand.”

The biggest gains in 2024-25 were mainly found in girls sports, with flag football leading the way. The rapid rise of girls flag football programs across the country led to 68,847 girls participating in the sport last year – an impressive 60 percent increase from the previous year. In addition, schools sponsoring the sport increased by nearly 1,000.

Girls wrestling topped 74,000 participants for the first time, jumping 15 percent from a year ago and adding nearly 1,000 schools with a girls wrestling program. Boys wrestling participation is also enjoying a rebound in numbers, recording an increase of 8,340 to top 300,000 for the first time.

The number of participants in Unified Sports and Esports also registered increases in 2024-25. The survey indicated a total of 70,006 participants in the 15 Unified Sports, up from 51,502 in 2023-24. A total of 30,440 students participated in Esports last year – an increase of 2,939 participants from the previous year.

Outdoor track and field, volleyball and soccer all registered increases and remained the top three participatory sports for girls. Track and field participation increased to 513,808, followed by volleyball at 492,799 (up 2.85%) and soccer at 393,048 (up 2.38%). Basketball (356,240) remained in the No. 4 spot followed by fast-pitch softball (331,306). Competitive spirit (206,262) jumped to the sixth-most popular girls sport with a nearly 14-percent increase, while tennis (204,721) also increased by more than four percent. Cross country (189,260), swimming and diving (138,303) and lacrosse (99,292) round out the top 10.

Outdoor track and field, soccer and golf had significant gains on the boys side, and all 10 of the most popular sports held steady or registered gains. After 11-player football (1,031,039) and outdoor track and field (644,235), the rest of the boys top 10 includes basketball (540,704), soccer (484,908), baseball (472,598), wrestling (300,214), cross country (238,685), golf (162,357), tennis (158,667) and swimming and diving (119,102).

Texas (879,403) and California (852,575) remained atop the list of state participation. Ohio (335,808) jumped to third, followed by Pennsylvania (333,123), Illinois (328,362), New York (327,068) Florida (308,396), Michigan (298,246), New Jersey (281,971) and Minnesota (232,347).

TEN MOST POPULAR BOYS PROGRAMS

Schools			Participants	
1.	Basketball	19,190	1.	Football – 11-Player 1,031,039
2.	Track and Field – Outdoor	17,390	2.	Track and Field – Outdoor 644,235
3.	Baseball	16,110	3.	Basketball 540,704
4.	Cross Country	15,837	4.	Soccer 484,908
5.	Football – 11-Player	14,269	5.	Baseball 472,598
6.	Golf	14,023	6.	Wrestling 300,214
7.	Soccer	12,969	7.	Cross Country 238,685
8.	Wrestling	11,526	8.	Golf 162,357
9.	Tennis	10,373	9.	Tennis 158,667
10.	Swimming & Diving	8,105	10.	Swimming & Diving 119,102

TEN MOST POPULAR GIRLS PROGRAMS

Schools			Participants	
1.	Basketball	18,208	1.	Track and Field – Outdoor 513,808
2.	Track and Field – Outdoor	17,373	2.	Volleyball 492,799
3.	Volleyball	17,027	3.	Soccer 393,048
4.	Cross Country	15,586	4.	Basketball 356,240
5.	Softball – Fast Pitch	15,324	5.	Softball – Fast Pitch 331,306
6.	Soccer	12,516	6.	Competitive Spirit 206,262
7.	Tennis	12,175	7.	Tennis 204,721
8.	Golf	11,116	8.	Cross Country 189,260
9.	Competitive Spirit	8,465	9.	Swimming & Diving 138,303
10.	Swimming & Diving	8,357	10.	Lacrosse 99,292

The NFHS High School Athletics Participation Survey was started in 1971 and was compiled in its current form through the 2018-19 school year, resuming annually with the 2021-22 survey. The complete 2024-25 NFHS High School Athletics Participation Survey will be available soon on the NFHS website at www.nfhs.org.

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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 18 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 19,800 high schools and 12 million participants in high school activity programs, including more than 8 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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