

**NATIONAL FEDERATION OF STATE  
HIGH SCHOOL ASSOCIATIONS**



**NEWS RELEASE**

**High School Sports Participation  
Increases for 20<sup>th</sup> Consecutive Year**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Contact: Bruce Howard or John Gillis**

INDIANAPOLIS, IN (September 15, 2009) — Despite cutbacks in funding in many high schools across the country, participation in high school sports has never been higher — increasing for the 20<sup>th</sup> consecutive year and establishing records for both girls and boys participants.

Based on figures from the 50 state high school athletic/activity associations, plus the District of Columbia, that are members of the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS), participation for the 2008–09 school year set an all-time high of 7,536,753, according to the 2008–09 High School Athletics Participation Survey conducted by the NFHS.

In addition, boys and girls participation figures reached all-time highs, with 3,114,091 girls and 4,422,662 boys participating in 2008–09. The girls figure increased by 56,825 this year, while the boys figure increased by 50,547.

Based on the survey, it was also determined that 55.2 percent of students enrolled in high schools participate in athletics – a slight increase from last year’s 54.8 percent.

“Given the state of the economy, this year’s survey makes a great statement about the interest in high school sports in our nation’s schools,” said NFHS Executive Director Robert F. Kanaby. “The record participation levels for boys and girls reflect the fact that participation in high school sports is of great value to our nation’s young people. Also, the survey’s results support the NFHS 2008–2011 Strategic Plan, in which the organization vowed to provide stronger leadership and support for high school athletics and fine arts activities.”

In addition to its chief task of writing playing rules for high school sports, the NFHS — through its “Take Part, Get Set for Life” initiative — is striving to promote participation and gain awareness and support from state and local governments, media, corporate partners, and especially students and their parents.

Swimming and diving gained the most combined participants in 2008–09, with an increase of 29,967, followed by outdoor track and field with 19,396 and cross

country with an additional 18,193 participants. Lacrosse, one of the emerging sports in recent years, had an additional 9,579 participants in 2008–09.

With an increase of 4,017 participants, 11–player football again was No. 1 for boys this year with 1,112,303 participants, followed by track and field (558,007), basketball (545,145), baseball (473,184), soccer (383,824), wrestling (267,378), cross country (231,452), tennis (157,165), golf (157,062) and swimming and diving (130,182).

Outdoor track and field supplanted basketball as the most popular girls sport with 457,732 participants. Basketball was in second place with 444,809 participants, followed by volleyball (404,243), fast pitch softball (368,921), soccer (344,534), cross country (198,199), tennis (177,593), swimming and diving (158,878), competitive spirit squads (117,793) and golf (69,223).

Texas remained the state with the most participants with a combined total of 781,000. California was second with 771,465 participants, followed by New York (380,870), Illinois (341,763), Ohio (330,056), Pennsylvania (321,324), Michigan (311,277), New Jersey (257,798), Florida (242,356) and Minnesota (242,220).

The participation survey has been compiled since 1971 by the NFHS through numbers it receives from its member associations. The complete 2008–09 Participation Survey is available on the NFHS Web site <[www.nfhs.org](http://www.nfhs.org)>.

## TEN MOST POPULAR BOYS PROGRAMS

### Schools

1. Basketball	17,869
2. Track and Field – Outdoor	15,936
3. Baseball	15,699
4. Football – 11–player	14,105
5. Cross Country	13,647
6. Golf	13,543
7. Soccer	11,139
8. Wrestling	10,254
9. Tennis	9,499
10. Swimming and Diving	6,556

### Participants

1. Football – 11–player	1,112,303
2. Track and Field – Outdoor	558,007
3. Basketball	545,145
4. Baseball	473,184
5. Soccer	383,824
6. Wrestling	267,378
7. Cross Country	231,452
8. Tennis	157,165
9. Golf	157,062
10. Swimming and Diving	130,182

## TEN MOST POPULAR GIRLS PROGRAMS

### Schools

1. Basketball	17,582
2. Track and Field – Outdoor	15,864
3. Softball – Fast Pitch	15,172
4. Volleyball	15,069
5. Cross Country	13,457
6. Soccer	10,548
7. Tennis	9,693
8. Golf	9,344
9. Swimming and Diving	6,902
10. Competitive Spirit Squads	4,748

### Participants

1. Track and Field – Outdoor	457,732
2. Basketball	444,809
3. Volleyball	404,243
4. Softball – Fast Pitch	368,921
5. Soccer	344,534
6. Cross Country	198,199
7. Tennis	177,593
8. Swimming and Diving	158,878
9. Competitive Spirit Squads	117,793
10. Golf	69,223

*This press release was written by Allison Brown, a fall intern in the NFHS*

*Publications/Communications Department and a senior at Butler (Indiana) University.*

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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 fine arts activities. Since 1920, the NFHS has led the development of education-based interscholastic sports and fine 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 almost 7.5 million in high school sports. As the recognized national authority on interscholastic activity programs, the NFHS conducts national meetings; sanctions interstate events; produces publications for high school coaches, officials and athletic directors; sponsors professional organizations for high school coaches, officials, spirit coaches, speech and debate coaches and music adjudicators; and serves as a national information resource of interscholastic athletics and activities. For more information, visit the NFHS Web site at [www.nfhs.org](http://www.nfhs.org).

**MEDIA CONTACTS:** Bruce Howard or John Gillis, 317-972-6900  
National Federation of State High School Associations  
PO Box 690, Indianapolis, Indiana 46206  
[bhoward@nfhs.org](mailto:bhoward@nfhs.org) or [jgillis@nfhs.org](mailto:jgillis@nfhs.org)