

NATIONAL FEDERATION OF STATE

HIGH SCHOOL ASSOCIATIONS



## NEWS RELEASE

# High School Sports Participation Increases for 28<sup>th</sup> Consecutive Year, Draws Close to Eight Million Mark

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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Contact:

INDIANAPOLIS, IN (August 7, 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 28<sup>th</sup> 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 45<sup>th</sup> 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 are listed in the attached Word document. The complete 2016-17 High School Athletics Participation Survey is available at <http://www.nfhs.org/ParticipationStatistics/ParticipationStatistics/>

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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](http://www.nfhs.org).

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