

NATIONAL FEDERATION OF STATE
HIGH SCHOOL ASSOCIATIONS



NEWS RELEASE

**High School Sports Participation
Increases for 24th Consecutive Year**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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INDIANAPOLIS, IN (August 20, 2013) — Participation in high school sports increased for the 24th consecutive year in 2012-13 and passed the 7.7 million mark for the first time, 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, sports participation for the 2012-13 school year reached an all-time high of 7,713,577 participants – an increase of 21,057 from the previous year.

An additional 15,190 girls participated in high school sports last year, moving the girls all-time record to 3,222,723 and marking the 24th consecutive year for an increase in the number of female participants. After its first decrease in 20 years last year, boys participation started on the upswing again with an additional 5,867 participants. The boys total of 4,490,854 is second all-time to the 4,494,406 in 2010-11.

“While we recognize that many schools are experiencing challenges with funding high school sports programs, we are encouraged that schools are responding to the challenges and that more and more students are involved in high school sports,” said Bob Gardner, NFHS executive director. “Playing sports within the school setting continues to be the desire of more than 55 percent of students enrolled in our nation’s high schools.”

Eight of the top 10 girls sports registered increases in participation in 2012-13, led by competitive spirit squads (8,201), outdoor track and field (4,172), and swimming and diving (3,536). Lacrosse, cross country, volleyball, soccer and tennis also had additional female participants, while basketball and fast-pitch softball had minor declines.

Five of the top 10 boys sports showed increases in participation, led by outdoor track and field (5,044), swimming and diving (4,354), and basketball (3,387). Cross country and baseball also registered gains among top 10 sports.

Eleven-player football remains the top sport for boys with 1,086,627 participants in 2012-13, although the number of players has decreased slightly each of the past four years, including a drop of 9,366 from 2011-12 to 2012-13.

In terms of combined participation, track and field, and swimming and diving registered the best overall gains. Track and field had an increase of more than 9,100 participants when combining girls and boys, while swimming and diving was up almost 8,000 participants.

Girls sports outside the top 10 that recorded increases in participants and could be emerging sports for females are bowling (25,450 participants in 2012-13), ice hockey (9,447), wrestling (8,727) and flag football (7,019).

A sizeable increase in “adapted sports” participation also contributed to the rise in 2012-13 figures. With seven states offering these programs for students with disabilities in 14 sports, the number of participants rose almost 3,000 to 8,747 (girls and boys combined).

The top 10 states by participants remained in the same order as last year, with Texas and California topping the list with 798,333 and 777,545, respectively. The remainder of the top 10 was New York (389,475), Illinois (339,944), Ohio (327,919), Pennsylvania (315,492), Michigan (304,438), New Jersey (270,423), Florida (243,397) and Minnesota (230,421). Although only one of the top 10 states registered an increase in participation (New Jersey), overall, 30 states reported higher figures from the previous year.

The participation survey has been compiled since 1971 by the NFHS through numbers it receives from its member associations. The complete 2012-13 High School Athletics Participation Survey is attached in PDF format and is available on the NFHS Web site 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 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 7.7 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 Web site at www.nfhs.org.

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