# WOMEN AND GIRLS IN SPORTS

## High School Athletics:

Sports activity is important to the **physical, social, mental and developmental health of children** and adolescents. Children who report no exercise are **twice as likely** to have mental health problems related to anxiety and depression. [1]

When it comes to daily activity, **26**% of 9th and 11th grade boys are physically active for 60+ minutes each day, compared to **12**% of girls of the same age.[2]

**Track and Field** is the most equally played sport by gender in Minnesota. [3]

**49%** **51%**

Percent of girls who **participate in sports at least once a week** according to race and ethnicity [2]

- 59% White
- 41% Native American
- 35% Asian
- 35% Latina
- 34% Black

Rank in the US for per capita girls participation:

**2nd**

Percent of high school athletes that are girls:

**44%** [3]

Total girls in high school sports in Minnesota:

**103,559**

Nationwide girls participation in 2025:

**3.2 million**

### Sports with highest girls participation rates: [3]

For example, 86% of high school volleyball players in the state are girls.

- Volleyball - 87%
- Dance - 84%
- Swim & Dive - 60.6%
- Tennis - 60.5%
- Lacrosse - 55%
- Track and Field - 49%
- Cross Country - 43%
- Soccer - 42.7%
- Basketball- 40%
- Ice Hockey - 39.9%

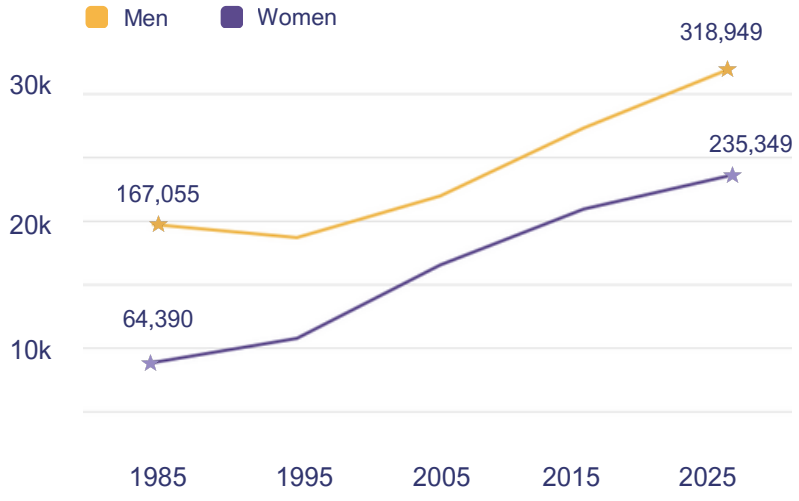
*Of sports where both boys and girls participate, either on separate or co-ed teams.

Those who play sports as children and adolescents also reap the benefits throughout life. An active childhood also is associated with **lower rates of obesity**, **smoking** and **drug use**, and **higher rates of college attendance**, **test scores**, and even **annual earnings later in life**.[1]

1 Project Play, Aspen Institute
2 Minnesota Women's Foundation, Status Report on Women & Girls 2022
3 National Federation of State High School Associations 2024-25

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## Collegiate Athletics




Nationwide since 1985, the number of girls participating in NCAA sports has **increased by 170,959**.

In 1985, **27**% of college athletes were women.

In 2025, **42**% of college athletes are women. [4]

**Title IX:**

Title IX is part of the Education Amendments of 1972 and "**prohibits discrimination based on sex in education programs that receive federal financial assistance**". Provision of equal athletic opportunity is one part of what Title IX aims to achieve. Title IX does not require that institutions offer identical sports for men and women, but that men and women have an **equal opportunity to play**. [5]

In Minnesota in **2023**, 43% of all collegiate athletes were women. [6]

**43%** **57%**

## Professional Sports

Data on women's participation in professional sports is limited, but women's leagues are growing in popularity and profitability each year. Minnesota has 6 professional or pre-professional women's sports teams as of 2025, with more coming in 2027:

**Women's National Basketball Association:**
Minnesota Lynx

**United Soccer League:**
Minnesota Aurora

**Premiere Ultimate (Frisbee) League:**
Minnesota Strike

**Professional Women's Hockey League:**
Minnesota Frost

**Women's Elite Rugby:**
TC Gemini

**Women's Flag Football:**
Minnesota Vixen

4 National Collegiate Athletics Association
5 US Department of Education
6 US Department of Education, Equity in Athletics Data Analysis