

**SUMMARY REPORT**

**MICHIGAN HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION  
TASK FORCE ON MULTI-SPORT PARTICIPATION  
MULTI-SPORT PARTICIPATION SURVEY**

**2020-21 School Year**

## **Introduction:**

With the rise of overuse injuries and burnout among young athletes that tend to cause a lifetime of chronic injuries and related health problems, early sport specialization has become one of the most serious issue related to health and safety in all of youth sports. In early 2016, the Michigan High School Athletic Association appointed the Task Force on Multi-Sport Participation as part of continued efforts to promote and protect participant health and work to address the issues leading to early sport specialization.

The MHSAA Task Force on Multi-Sport Participation has undertaken the initiative of measuring multi-sport participation in MHSAA member schools for the dual purposes of identifying significant broad themes and recognizing “achievers” – that is, schools that surpass the norm given their enrollment, location and other factors that affect school sports participation. Identifying schools with high levels of multi-sport participation, as well as trends, and questions that might be researched will help point school-sponsored sports leadership toward policies, procedures, and programming that will tend to increase multi-sport participation and improve the experience of students in interscholastic athletic programs of Michigan and beyond.

With data not collected for the 2019-20 school year as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Spring of 2021 marked the third year of data collection on multi-sport participation among athletes at MHSAA member schools. As done previously, all 746 MHSAA member schools were surveyed regarding multi-sport participation among their athletes – schools were simply asked to identify the total number of individuals that were members of athletic teams in MSHAA sponsored sports and the number of those athletes who participated in more than one MHSAA sponsored sport. As in 2018-19, the 2020-21 survey also asked specifically how many sports each athlete played. This summary is based on usable data from the 608 schools responding to the survey.

## **Observations:**

- Overall response rate was 81.5% (Table 1). This is consistent with the 82.9% response rate for 2018-19 and the 79.9% response rate for 2017-18.
  - 84.4% of all Class B schools responded to the survey, which was the highest response rate among all classes. The lowest response rate again was Class D at 79.7 % (2017-18 – 76.7%). Prior to the first year of data collection, there was an expectation that Class A schools would have the lowest response rate given how difficult it could be for schools with large enrollment and large athletic programs to track and subsequently submit the data for this survey. This continues not to be the case. In fact, Class D schools, which presumably would have had an easier time tracking the multi-sport participation data because of they have fewer students involved in their programs, had the lowest response rate in both years of data collection. The difference in response rate does not appear to be significant, but may be related to the differences between personnel and resources among large and small schools.

- Just as in the first two years of data collection, smaller schools tend to have a higher percentage of their students participating in athletics. This tendency not only holds across classes (Table 2), but also across different enrollments within Class A (Table 5).
- Similarly, smaller schools tend to have a higher percentage of athletes participating on multiple sports teams. This tendency not only holds across classes (Table 3), but also across different enrollments within Class A (Table 6). In fact, there is a nearly 20 percentage point difference in the of multi-sport athletes between Class A schools with fewer than 1,000 students and Class A schools with over 2,000 students. This is the same as the previous year of data collection.
- The percentage of athletes participating in multiple sports is higher among boys than girls – this holds across all classes (Table 3) and different enrollments within Class A (Table 6) – the only exception is Class D, which shows a nearly equal proportion of athletes at these schools are multi-sport athletes (Table 3). Again, this is the same as the 2017-18 data.
- The percentage of athletes participating in multiple sports has remained consistent across all classes over the three years data has been collected:
  - Class A – 35.9% in 2017-18; 35.4% in 2018-19; 36.4% in 2020-21
  - Class B – 46.7% in 2017-18; 48.7% in 2018-19; 48.4% in 2020-21
  - Class C – 55.2% in 2017-18; 56.7% in 2018-19; 57.3% in 2020-21
  - Class D – 58.1% in 2017-18; 61.8% in 2018-19; 62.9% in 2020-21
- Table 4 shows how many sports athletes participated in during the 2020-21 school year. These data support the tendencies described above. Schools with larger enrollments tend to have a higher percentage of single sport athletes, and the percentage of single sport athletes is higher among girls than boys.
- The percentage of 2 sport athletes is somewhat similar among all classes – approximately one-third (between 29.9% and 26.7%) of athletes participate in two sports (Table 4).
- There is a significant difference in the percentage of 3 sport athletes between classes – schools with lower enrollments have a much higher percentage of athletes participating in 3 sports (Table 4).
- Two schools have appeared in the top 10% of their class with regard to multi-sport participation for 2017-18, 2018-19, and 2020-21 school years: New Baltimore Anchor Bay in Class A, and Athens in Class D

## Survey Data:

Table 1. Multi-Sport Participation Survey Responses by Class

	Class A	Class B	Class C	Class D	Combined
Number of schools surveyed	186	186	187	187	746
Number of responding schools*	149	157	153	149	608
Response rate (# surveyed / # responding)	80.1%	84.4%	81.8%	79.7%	81.5%

\*The term "responding schools" refers to schools submitting surveys with usable data – 647 schools submitted responses, but data from 28 schools that was clearly inaccurate based on the size of the school was excluded from analysis, as it would have skewed the data. From this point forward, in order to avoid needless repetition, "responding schools" will just be referred to as "schools".

Table 2. Sport Participation among General Student Population by Class and Gender – (%) of Student Enrollment (Total # Athletes / Total # Students Enrolled)

Gender	Class A			Class B			Class C			Class D			Classes Combined		
	Total Athletes	Student Enrollment	%	Total Athletes	Student Enrollment	%									
Boys	42,282	108,449	39.0%	19,731	47,077	41.9%	10,293	22,065	46.6%	4,025	7,632	52.7%	76,331	185,223	41.2%
Girls	31,422	103,064	30.5%	16,278	45,697	35.6%	8,546	21,321	40.1%	3,630	7,543	48.1%	59,876	177,625	33.7%
Combined	73,704	211,513	34.8%	36,009	92,774	38.8%	18,839	43,386	43.4%	7,655	15,175	50.4%	136,207	362,848	37.5%

Table 3. Multi-Sport Participation among Athlete Population by Class and Gender – (%) of Athlete Population (# of Multi-Sport Athletes / Total # Athletes)

Gender	Class A			Class B			Class C			Class D			Classes Combined		
	# Multi-Sport Athletes	Total Athletes	%	# Multi-Sport Athletes	Total Athletes	%	# Multi-Sport Athletes	Total Athletes	%	# Multi-Sport Athletes	Total Athletes	%	# Multi-Sport Athletes	Total Athletes	%
Boys	16,212	42,282	38.3%	9,970	19,731	50.5%	6,132	10,293	59.6%	2,576	4,025	64.0%	34,890	76,331	45.7%
Girls	10,614	31,422	33.8%	7,444	16,278	45.7%	4,660	8,546	54.5%	2,239	3,630	61.7%	24,957	59,876	41.7%
Combined	26,826	73,704	36.4%	17,414	36,009	48.4%	10,792	18,839	57.3%	4,815	7,655	62.9%	59,847	136,207	43.9%

Table 4. Number of Sports Played among Athlete Population by Class and Gender - (%) of Athlete Population (# of athletes participating in that number of sports / total # of athletes)

Class A											
Gender	Total Athletes	Single Sport	%	2 Sports	%	3 Sports	%	4 or More Sports	%	TOTAL Multi-sport Athletes	%
Boys	42,282	26,153	61.9%	12,633	29.9%	3,180	7.5%	183	0.4%	16,212	38.3%
Girls	31,422	20,808	66.2%	8,609	27.4%	1,904	6.1%	101	0.3%	10,614	33.8%
Combined	73,704	46,961	63.7%	21,242	28.8%	5,084	6.9%	284	0.4%	26,826	36.4%
Class B											
Gender	Total Athletes	Single Sport	%	2 Sports	%	3 Sports	%	4 or More Sports	%	TOTAL Multi-sport Athletes	%
Boys	19,731	9,761	49.5%	6,871	34.8%	2,940	14.9%	159	0.8%	9,970	50.5%
Girls	16,278	8,834	54.3%	5,378	33.0%	1,973	12.1%	93	0.6%	7,444	45.7%
Combined	36,009	18,595	51.6%	12,249	34.0%	4,913	13.6%	252	0.7%	17,414	48.4%
Class C											
Gender	Total Athletes	Single Sport	%	2 Sports	%	3 Sports	%	4 or More Sports	%	TOTAL Multi-sport Athletes	%
Boys	10,293	4,175	40.6%	3,776	36.7%	2,131	20.7%	211	2.0%	6,132	59.6%
Girls	8,546	3,886	45.5%	3,022	35.4%	1,507	17.6%	131	1.5%	4,660	54.5%
Combined	18,839	8,061	42.8%	6,798	36.1%	3,638	19.3%	342	1.8%	10,792	57.3%
Class D											
Gender	Total Athletes	Single Sport	%	2 Sports	%	3 Sports	%	4 or More Sports	%	TOTAL Multi-sport Athletes	%
Boys	4,025	1,452	36.1%	1,418	35.2%	941	23.4%	215	5.3%	2,576	64.0%
Girls	3,630	1,392	38.3%	1,249	34.4%	818	22.5%	172	4.7%	2,239	61.7%
Combined	7,655	2,844	37.2%	2,667	34.8%	1,759	23.0%	387	5.1%	4,815	62.9%
Classes Combined											
Gender	Total Athletes	Single Sport	%	2 Sports	%	3 Sports	%	4 or More Sports	%	TOTAL Multi-sport Athletes	%
Boys	76,331	41,541	54.4%	12,633	16.6%	3,180	4.2%	768	1.0%	34,890	45.7%
Girls	59,876	34,920	58.3%	8,609	14.4%	1,904	3.2%	497	0.8%	24,957	41.7%
Combined	136,207	76,461	56.1%	21,242	15.6%	5,084	3.7%	1,265	0.9%	59,847	43.9%

Table 5. Sport Participation among General Student Population at Class A Schools by Enrollment and Gender – (%) of Student Enrollment (Total # Athletes / Total # Students Enrolled)

Gender	Enrollment less than 1,000			Enrollment 1,000-1,500			Enrollment 1,501-2,000			Enrollment over 2,000			All Class A Combined		
	Total Athletes	Student Enrollment	%	Total Athletes	Student Enrollment	%	Total Athletes	Student Enrollment	%	Total Athletes	Student Enrollment	%	Total Athletes	Student Enrollment	%
Boys	6,759	13,205	51.2%	16,708	42,805	39.0%	8,807	24,340	36.2%	10,008	28,099	35.6%	42,282	108,449	39.0%
Girls	3,787	10,567	35.8%	12,892	41,269	31.2%	6,863	23,381	29.4%	7,880	27,847	28.3%	31,422	103,064	30.5%
Combined	10,546	23,772	44.4%	29,600	84,074	35.2%	15,670	47,721	32.8%	17,888	55,946	32.0%	73,704	211,513	34.8%

Table 6. Multi-Sport Participation among Athlete Population at Class A Schools by Class and Gender – (%) of Athlete Population (# of Multi-Sport Athletes / Total # Athletes)

Gender	Enrollment less than 1,000			Enrollment 1,000-1,500			Enrollment 1,501-2,000			Enrollment over 2,000			All Class A Combined		
	# Multi-Sport Athletes	Total Athletes	%	# Multi-Sport Athletes	Total Athletes	%	# Multi-Sport Athletes	Total Athletes	%	# Multi-Sport Athletes	Total Athletes	%	# Multi-Sport Athletes	Student Enrollment	%
Boys	2,864	6,759	42.4%	7,023	16,708	42.0%	3,126	8,807	35.5%	3,199	10,008	32.0%	16,212	42,282	38.3%
Girls	1,413	3,787	37.3%	4,507	12,892	35.0%	2,314	6,863	33.7%	2,380	7,880	30.2%	10,614	31,422	33.8%
Combined	4,277	10,546	40.6%	11,530	29,600	39.0%	5,440	15,670	34.7%	5,579	17,888	31.2%	26,826	73,704	36.4%

Table 7. Top 10% of Class A Schools with Regard to Multi-Sport Participation (Ranked by % of Multi-Sport Athlete Population – Boys and Girls Data Combined)

Rank	School	Total Boy Athletes	# Boy Multi-Sport Athletes	% Multi-Sport Boy Athletes	Total Girl Athletes	# Girl Multi-Sport Athletes	% Multi-Sport Girl Athletes	Total Athletes	Total Multi-Sport Athletes	% Multi-Sport Athletes
1	Gibraltar Carlson	223	200	89.7%	186	168	90.3%	409	368	90.0%
2	Grand Rapids Northview	273	241	88.3%	245	190	77.6%	518	431	83.2%
3	Bloomfield Hills Brother Rice	516	383	74.2%	0	0	0.0%	516	383	74.2%
4	Battle Creek Lakeview	416	304	73.1%	288	172	59.7%	704	476	67.6%
5	Orchard Lake St Mary's	370	245	66.2%	34	22	64.7%	404	267	66.1%
6	Taylor	260	165	63.5%	158	97	61.4%	418	262	62.7%
7	Hamtramck	87	54	62.1%	29	18	62.1%	116	72	62.1%
8	Dearborn Fordson	279	164	58.8%	180	115	63.9%	459	279	60.8%
9	Rochester Hills Stoney Creek	406	248	61.1%	396	223	56.3%	802	471	58.7%
10	Bay City Western	163	109	66.9%	138	67	48.6%	301	176	58.5%
11	Temperance Bedford	408	260	63.7%	353	182	51.6%	761	442	58.1%
12	Holland West Ottawa	619	353	57.0%	506	294	58.1%	1,125	647	57.5%
13	New Baltimore Anchor Bay	363	210	57.9%	366	201	54.9%	729	411	56.4%
14	Warren Fitzgerald	164	104	63.4%	149	69	46.3%	313	173	55.3%
15	Middleville Thornapple Kellogg	163	94	57.7%	143	74	51.7%	306	168	54.9%
16	East Grand Rapids	278	150	54.0%	204	95	46.6%	482	245	50.8%

Table 8. Top 10% of Class B Schools with Regard to Multi-Sport Participation (Ranked by % of Multi-Sport Athlete Population – Boys and Girls Data Combined)

Rank	School	Total Boy Athletes	# Boy Multi-Sport Athletes	% Multi-Sport Boy Athletes	Total Girl Athletes	# Girl Multi-Sport Athletes	% Multi-Sport Girl Athletes	Total Athletes	Total Multi-Sport Athletes	% Multi-Sport Athletes
1	Warren Michigan Collegiate	100	90	90.0%	40	30	75.0%	140	120	85.7%
2	Hillsdale	137	113	82.5%	92	83	90.2%	229	196	85.6%
3	Ovid-Elsie	165	145	87.9%	135	110	81.5%	300	255	85.0%
4	Three Rivers	203	164	80.8%	187	136	72.7%	390	300	76.9%
5	Ecorse	32	17	53.1%	38	35	92.1%	70	52	74.3%
6	Dowagiac	91	64	70.3%	82	64	78.0%	173	128	74.0%
7	Dearborn Heights Robichaud	57	46	80.7%	41	26	63.4%	98	72	73.5%
8	Edwardsburg	183	163	89.1%	141	69	48.9%	324	232	71.6%
9	Detroit Cody	57	45	78.9%	38	23	60.5%	95	68	71.6%
10	Manistee	73	57	78.1%	73	47	64.4%	146	104	71.2%
11	Harper Woods Chandler Park	130	90	69.2%	110	80	72.7%	240	170	70.8%
12	Kingsford	196	137	69.9%	203	138	68.0%	399	275	68.9%
13	Grand Rapids West Michigan Aviation Academy	56	42	75.0%	34	20	58.8%	90	62	68.9%
14	Dundee	173	126	72.8%	109	64	58.7%	282	190	67.4%
15	Charlotte	165	114	69.1%	121	78	64.5%	286	192	67.1%

Table 9. Top 10% of Class C Schools with Regard to Multi-Sport Participation (Ranked by % of Multi-Sport Athlete Population – Boys and Girls Data Combined)

Rank	School	Total Boy Athletes	# Boy Multi-Sport Athletes	% Multi-Sport Boy Athletes	Total Girl Athletes	# Girl Multi-Sport Athletes	% Multi-Sport Girl Athletes	Total Athletes	Total Multi-Sport Athletes	% Multi-Sport Athletes
1	Tawas	178	181	101.7%	179	161	89.9%	357	342	95.8%
2	Manistique	68	63	92.6%	53	43	81.1%	121	106	87.6%
3	Traverse City St Francis	93	84	90.3%	85	67	78.8%	178	151	84.8%
4	Adrian Madison	58	48	82.8%	61	51	83.6%	119	99	83.2%
5	Grand Traverse Academy	31	26	83.9%	31	24	77.4%	62	50	80.6%
6	Lawton	61	50	82.0%	54	42	77.8%	115	92	80.0%
7	L'Anse	20	15	75.0%	21	17	81.0%	41	32	78.0%
8	Manton	48	35	72.9%	43	35	81.4%	91	70	76.9%
9	Hancock	39	31	79.5%	47	35	74.5%	86	66	76.7%
10	Burton Bendle	49	34	69.4%	31	26	83.9%	80	60	75.0%
11	Pontiac Arts & Technology Academy	29	27	93.1%	15	6	40.0%	44	33	75.0%
12	Kalamazoo Christian	94	73	77.7%	89	64	71.9%	183	137	74.9%
13	Allen Park Cabrini	63	44	69.8%	77	58	75.3%	140	102	72.9%
14	St Ignace	56	40	71.4%	39	29	74.4%	95	69	72.6%
15	Muskegon Western Michigan Christian	83	57	68.7%	81	61	75.3%	164	118	72.0%

Table 10. Top 10% of Class D Schools with Regard to Multi-Sport Participation (Ranked by % of Multi-Sport Athlete Population – Boys and Girls Data Combined)

Rank	School	Total Boy Athletes	# Boy Multi-Sport Athletes	% Multi-Sport Boy Athletes	Total Girl Athletes	# Girl Multi-Sport Athletes	% Multi-Sport Girl Athletes	Total Athletes	Total Multi-Sport Athletes	% Multi-Sport Athletes
1	McBain Northern Michigan Christian	34	34	100.0%	25	24	96.0%	59	58	98.3%
2	Ontonagon	23	21	91.3%	17	16	94.1%	40	37	92.5%
3	Holland Calvary	16	16	100.0%	14	11	78.6%	30	27	90.0%
4	Colon	36	32	88.9%	36	32	88.9%	72	64	88.9%
5	Walkerville	20	18	90.0%	16	14	87.5%	36	32	88.9%
6	Waterford Our Lady of the Lakes	36	32	88.9%	22	19	86.4%	58	51	87.9%
7	Manistee Catholic Central	20	20	100.0%	19	14	73.7%	39	34	87.2%
8	Mayville	41	36	87.8%	36	31	86.1%	77	67	87.0%
9	Norway	67	60	89.6%	34	27	79.4%	101	87	86.1%
10	Carney-Nadeau	36	31	86.1%	34	29	85.3%	70	60	85.7%
11	Hillsdale Academy	34	29	85.3%	41	35	85.4%	75	64	85.3%
12	Pittsford	41	34	82.9%	38	32	84.2%	79	66	83.5%
13	Rock Mid Peninsula	12	10	83.3%	16	13	81.3%	28	23	82.1%
14	Athens	26	19	73.1%	28	25	89.3%	54	44	81.5%