

Chapter 1: Popularity and Growth of Girls' Basketball

Surprise! Basketball isn't just for boys anymore. Thirty years ago, it was rare for schools to field a girls' basketball team, and it was even more unusual for there to be girls' basketball leagues outside of school...but a lot has changed since then. The game is now enormously popular among girls and women of all ages, from elementary school age up to professionals. What's more, it's no longer *just* a winter sport; now, with the advent of organized fall, spring, and summer leagues, basketball is a year-round activity.

Millions of girls play basketball each year on high school, middle school, elementary school, recreational, and AAU (Amateur Athletic Union) teams combined. Basketball is the most popular girls' high school sport; more than 500,000 young women participate across the country in a given year. It is played at almost 20,000 high schools in all 50 states and in the District of Columbia. That's a lot of athletic young women!

TEAMS AND LEAGUES AVAILABLE

SCHOOL TEAMS

According to a National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) 2002–2003 Athletics Participation Survey, the top ten most popular high school girls' sports programs (in order of participation) are:

1. Basketball
2. Outdoor Track and Field
3. Volleyball
4. Fast-Pitch Softball
5. Soccer
6. Cross-Country
7. Tennis
8. Swimming and Diving
9. Competitive Spirit Squads
10. Golf

