

The Covid Affect in TF

(Written after the 2023 season)

The purpose of this analysis is to follow-up on the numbers examined two years prior, with the objective of assessing the extent of the recovery of the sport of Track & Field in Oregon high schools in the wake of the Covid pandemic. The original evaluation of Covid's impact will follow this re-assessment.

Original datasets were expanded on to chart continuity and change.

The average team size – when comparing schools by school size – has recovered, the participation rates in 2023 roughly equal to that of 2019 for public schools. Private school participation still lags slightly.

By School Size	Total Schools	AVERAGE TEAM SIZE				Change	Change	Change
		2019	2021	2022	2023	from 2019 to 2021	from 2019 to 2022	from 2019 to 2023
Small-sized public schools (population 150-450)	61	37	23	33	37	-37.8%	-10.9%	100.0%
Medium-sized public schools (population 451-1100)	46	76	49	68	79	-35.5%	-10.9%	103.0%
Large-sized public schools (population 1101+)	59	133	74	112	139	-44.3%	-16.0%	104.0%
Private schools (population 150+)	11	86	58	85	85	-32.5%	-1.2%	-1.2%

It must be stressed: When grouping schools by overall student population (above), it appears that school teams have recovered to their pre-Covid average turnout. But then when grouping schools by Free and Reduced Lunch, we receive a much more nuanced view.

Participation numbers in events are all improving, but their recovery remains uneven when considering public schools on Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL).

While the initial post-Covid decline in participation in 2021 was generalized regardless of the socioeconomic status of the population each school serves, the recovery has not been similarly blind.

Public schools with FRL rates of 20% and less were relatively quick to recover to their pre-Covid participation rates, having done so by the second season post-Covid in 2022. In 2023, those with 21%-25% (10 schools) and 66%-70% (3 schools) FRL still average over ten percent fewer than their 2019 turnout rate. With the exception of 56%-60% (9 schools), every other grouping of schools with FRL exceeding 31% only experienced small improvements, if any, to their 2019 numbers.

By 2023 (the third season post-Covid) the correlation between higher FRL rates and lower participation recovery becomes clear.

Free/Reduced Lunch percent	Number of schools	Number of coed participants (raw #'s)				Percent change since pre-Covid 2019		
		2019	2021	2022	2023	2019 to 2021	2019 to 2022	2019 to 2023
		1 year pre-Covid	1 year post-Covid	2 year post-Covid	3 year post-Covid			
0% - 10%	4	578	459	593	722	-20.6%	102.6%	124.9%
11% - 20%	7	1382	930	1624	1679	-32.7%	117.5%	121.5%
11%-15%	4	739	529	921	984	-28.4%	124.6%	133.2%
16%-20%	3	643	401	703	695	-37.6%	109.3%	108.1%
21% - 30%	23	2379	1305	2291	2669	-45.1%	-3.7%	112.2%
21% - 25%	10	1082	578	833	958	-46.6%	-23.0%	-11.5%
26% - 30%	13	1297	727	1458	1711	-43.9%	112.4%	131.9%
31% - 40%	41	3445	2025	3023	3523	-41.2%	-12.2%	102.3%
31% - 35%	13	995	616	986	1004	-38.1%	-0.9%	100.9%
36% - 40%	28	2450	1409	2037	2519	-42.5%	-16.9%	102.8%
41% - 50%	41	2651	1631	2314	2650	-38.5%	-12.7%	100.0%
41% - 45%	21	1432	830	1180	1401	-42.0%	-17.6%	-2.2%
46% - 50%	20	1219	801	1134	1249	-34.3%	-7.0%	102.5%
51% - 60%	22	1610	847	1487	1704	-47.4%	-7.6%	105.8%
51% - 55%	13	1031	546	937	1029	-47.0%	-9.1%	-0.2%
56% - 60%	9	579	301	550	675	-48.0%	-5.0%	116.6%
61% - 70%	18	941	537	828	937	-42.9%	-12.0%	-0.4%
61% - 65%	12	712	424	612	735	-40.4%	-14.0%	103.2%
66% - 70%	3	229	113	216	202	-50.7%	-5.7%	-11.8%
71% - 80%	7	345	225	328	337	-34.8%	-4.9%	-2.3%
81% - 90%	2	163	101	147	166	-38.0%	-9.8%	101.8%
91% - 100%	2	61	33	40	65	-45.9%	-34.4%	106.6%

Recovery of participation rates in specific Track & Field events has also been curious. Student participation in the sprints and throws have recovered the strongest. Several reasons may account for this: (1) a group of nationally-ranked athletes who are celebrated in the news and who are bringing in new fans – and teen athletes – into the sport, (2) certain events (100m, Long Jump) which are common for coaches to push young athletes toward may account for their rise, and (3) the multi-sport crossover (football, wrestling) may strengthen the thrower numbers.

Distance events are the farthest from their pre-Covid norms, which should not be surprising given that this echoes a similar slow-path-to-recovery observed in Cross Country

G I R L S	2019	2021	2022	2023	Change from	Change from	Change from
	1 yr pre-Covid	1 yr post-Covid	2 yr post-Covid	3 yr post-Covid	2019 to 2021	2019 to 2022	2019 to 2023
100m	2698	1738	2708	3103	-35.5%	100.4%	115.0%
200m	2066	1337	1950	2317	-35.2%	-5.6%	112.1%
400m	1416	793	1235	1472	-43.9%	-12.8%	104.0%
800m	1381	879	1170	1275	-36.3%	-15.3%	-7.7%
1500m	1267	807	1064	1137	-36.3%	-16.0%	-10.3%
3000m	770	452	618	645	-41.2%	-19.7%	-16.2%
100m Hurdles	769	511	673	736	-33.3%	-12.5%	-4.3%
300m Hurdles	669	426	608	641	-36.3%	-9.1%	-4.2%
Shot Put	1460	901	1327	1444	-38.2%	-9.1%	-1.1%
Discus	1441	858	1274	1481	-40.4%	-11.6%	102.8%
Javelin	1660	1013	1552	1685	-38.9%	-6.5%	101.5%
High Jump	704	458	603	655	-34.9%	-14.3%	-7.0%
Pole Vault	541	333	486	528	-38.4%	-10.2%	-2.4%
Long Jump	1652	1053	1414	1559	-36.2%	-14.4%	-5.6%
Triple Jump	644	339	463	568	-47.3%	-28.1%	-11.8%

B O Y S	2019	2021	2022	2023	Change from	Change from	Change from
	1 yr pre-Covid	1 yr post-Covid	2 yr post-Covid	3 yr post-Covid	2019 to 2021	2019 to 2022	2019 to 2023
100m	3989	2323	3950	4619	-41.7%	-1.0%	115.8%
200m	3016	1811	3002	3523	-39.9%	-0.5%	116.8%
400m	2401	1296	2099	2454	-46.0%	-12.6%	102.2%
800m	2256	1361	1985	2210	-39.6%	-12.0%	-2.0%
1500m	2302	1404	1935	2109	-39.0%	-15.9%	-8.4%
3000m	1385	790	1094	1216	-42.9%	-21.0%	-12.2%
110m Hurdles	696	381	559	613	-45.2%	-19.7%	-11.9%
300m Hurdles	814	468	716	765	-42.5%	-12.0%	-6.0%
Shot Put	1940	1257	1913	2245	-35.2%	-1.4%	115.7%
Discus	1920	1255	1927	2245	-34.6%	100.4%	116.9%
Javelin	2132	1439	2210	2416	-32.5%	103.7%	113.3%
High Jump	989	621	934	1055	-37.2%	-5.6%	106.7%
Pole Vault	778	402	607	726	-48.3%	-22.0%	-6.7%
Long Jump	2181	1483	2116	2388	-32.0%	-3.0%	109.5%
Triple Jump	898	480	747	845	-46.5%	-16.8%	-5.9%

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(Written after the 2021 season)

Statewide, the total number of student-athletes participating in Track & Field in 2021 was only 59.7% of the number who competed in 2019. This echo's the decline in participation races seen throughout the nation. We sought to tailor our statistical analysis observed in Oregon more narrowly by school size and events.

Regardless of school size, we see at least a 32% decline from 2019 participation numbers across all groups. (Schools in Oregon with student populations of under 150 are not included in this analysis). The only schools to equal or even increase their team roster size in 2021 over 2019 numbers were Lakeridge, Henley, Corbett, Dayton, Sheridan, North Eugene, and North Marion. Only one school who fielded a 2019 team did not do so in 2021. Forty-five schools with rosters exceeding 100 student-athletes in 2019 had less than half that number in 2021.

	<u>Total</u> <u>Schools</u>	<u>AVERAGE</u> <u>TEAM SIZE</u>		<u>Change</u> <u>from 2019</u> <u>to 2021</u>
		<u>2019</u>	<u>2021</u>	
<u>Small-sized public schools</u> <u>(population 150-450)</u>	61	37	23	-37.8%
<u>Medium-sized public schools</u> <u>(population 451-1100)</u>	46	76	49	-35.5%
<u>Large-sized public schools</u> <u>(population 1101 and larger)</u>	59	133	74	-44.3%
<u>Private schools</u> <u>(population 150 and larger)</u>	10	86	58	-32.5%

In this chart we see the differential between the 2019 and 2021 seasons by event participation. While overall program participation decline accounts for some of this, there is another factor in play: the graduation of two groups (class of 2019 and 2020) who by experience were doing multiple events, and the subsequent addition of two classes whose numbers were lower than usual and who have not had enough of a Track & Field background to diversify their events yet. What follows are strictly participation totals for the events, and the change from 2019 to 2021.

GIRLS	<u>2019</u>	<u>2021</u>	<u>Change from</u>	BOYS	<u>2019</u>	<u>2021</u>	<u>Change from</u>
			<u>2019 to 2021</u>				<u>2019 to 2021</u>
100m	2698	1738	-35.5%	100m	3989	2323	-41.7%
200m	2066	1337	-35.2%	200m	3016	1811	-39.9%
400m	1416	793	-43.9%	400m	2401	1296	-46.0%
800m	1381	879	-36.3%	800m	2256	1361	-39.6%
1500m	1267	807	-36.3%	1500m	2302	1404	-39.0%
3000m	770	452	-41.2%	3000m	1385	790	-42.9%
100m Hurdles	769	511	-33.3%	110m Hurdles	696	381	-45.2%
300m Hurdles	669	426	-36.3%	300m Hurdles	814	468	-42.5%
Shot Put	1460	901	-38.2%	Shot Put	1940	1257	-35.2%
Discus	1441	858	-40.4%	Discus	1920	1255	-34.6%
Javelin	1660	1013	-38.9%	Javelin	2132	1439	-32.5%
High Jump	704	458	-34.9%	High Jump	989	621	-37.2%
Pole Vault	541	333	-38.4%	Pole Vault	778	402	-48.3%
Long Jump	1652	1053	-36.2%	Long Jump	2181	1483	-32.0%
Triple Jump	644	339	-47.3%	Triple Jump	898	480	-46.5%

By contrast, here is the participation reduction nationally between 2019 and 2021 in a sampling of events. You will notice that all events experienced a decline in 2021 relative to their 2019 numbers: 100m (girls -17.3%, boys -16.2%), 400m (girls -16.1%, boys -17.2%), 800m (girls -15.1%, boys -18.0%), Long Jump (girls -15.9%, boys -14.7%), High Jump (girls -15.0%, boys 15.3%), Pole Vault (girls -14.5%, boys -21.8%), Shot Put (girls -24.1%, boys -17.7%), and Discus (girls -22.1%, boys -16.6%).

While it is clear that the participation decline in Oregon is significantly more severe than the national numbers, we must exercise caution in extrapolating too much from these numbers, because different states (1) had different Covid mitigation policies in place and with different messages from their state leadership, (2) experienced differing degrees of Covid outbreak, and (3) conducted their Track & Field seasons at different times and under different modifications.

An analysis has further been conducted to determine the extent to which Covid impacted schools based on their socioeconomic status. OSAA was kind to share recent Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL) rates for schools, which enabled us to reveal the following. We are appreciative to OSAA for doing so.

We sought to determine if the impact on participation rates were across the board or more heavily impacted certain schools. To uncover this we listed all public schools by the percent of their population which qualify for FRL, grouped them into collectives of 5% or 10%, and then determined the participation change from 2021 relative to the pre-Covid 2019 season.

You can see the raw data in the chart. It is of Oregon public schools and use FRL percentages from the most recent pre-Covid season. →

Free/Reduced Lunch percentage	Number of Schools	COED PARTICIPANTS		Change 2019 to 2021
		2019 TF	2021 TF	
0% - 10%	4	578	459	▼ -20.5%
11% - 20%	7	1382	930	▼ -32.7%
.....11% - 15%	4	739	529	▼ -28.4%
.....16% - 20%	3	643	401	▼ -37.6%
21% - 30%	23	2379	1305	▼ -45.1%
.....21% - 25%	10	1082	578	▼ -46.5%
.....26% - 30%	13	1297	727	▼ -43.9%
31% - 40%	41	3445	2025	▼ -41.2%
.....31% - 35%	13	995	616	▼ -38.1%
.....36% - 40%	28	2450	1409	▼ -42.5%
41% - 50%	41	2651	1631	▼ -38.5%
.....41% - 45%	21	1432	830	▼ -42.0%
.....46% - 50%	20	1219	801	▼ -34.3%
51% - 60%	22	1610	847	▼ -47.4%
.....51% - 55%	13	1031	546	▼ -47.0%
.....56% - 60%	9	579	301	▼ -48.0%
61% - 70%	18	941	537	▼ -42.9%
.....61% - 65%	12	712	424	▼ -40.4%
.....66% - 70%	3	229	113	▼ -50.6%
71% - 80%	7	345	225	▼ -34.7%
81% - 90%	2	163	101	▼ -38.0%
91% - 100%	2	61	33	▼ -45.9%

Some observations:

- It appears the decline in participation was generalized, across the board regardless of the socioeconomic status of the population each school serves.
- While there are examples within a region of lower FRL rates equaling higher participation turnout (see the Bend region of Bend, Summit and Mountain View), we also find regions in which there is no clear predictable correlation between FRL and turnout (see the Southern Oregon region of Phoenix, Ashland, Crater and both Medford's; one school, for instance, has the same TF participation decline as one of the Medford's in spite of a FRL rate of 12% better than that Medford school).

While this offers a snapshot of the Covid affect, what begs to be asked is what can be done to rebuild the tradition of high student participation in high school Track & Field in Oregon. This answer will be complex and multifaceted, because we must not only address Oregon high schools but also our middle schools, some of which experienced not only their own turnout/participation decline but several did not have a season at all in 2021. Put another way, entering the 2022 season some middle schools may have gone two full seasons without fielding a team.