



Research

An underwater photograph of several swimmers in a pool, captured in motion during a race. The swimmers are seen from below, with their arms and legs extended. The water is clear blue, and the pool lane lines are visible at the bottom.

# NCAA RESEARCH AND RESOURCES TO SUPPORT DIVISION III STUDENT-ATHLETE MENTAL WELL BEING

January 2020

**Student mental health  
concerns have become a  
priority at campuses  
nationwide.**

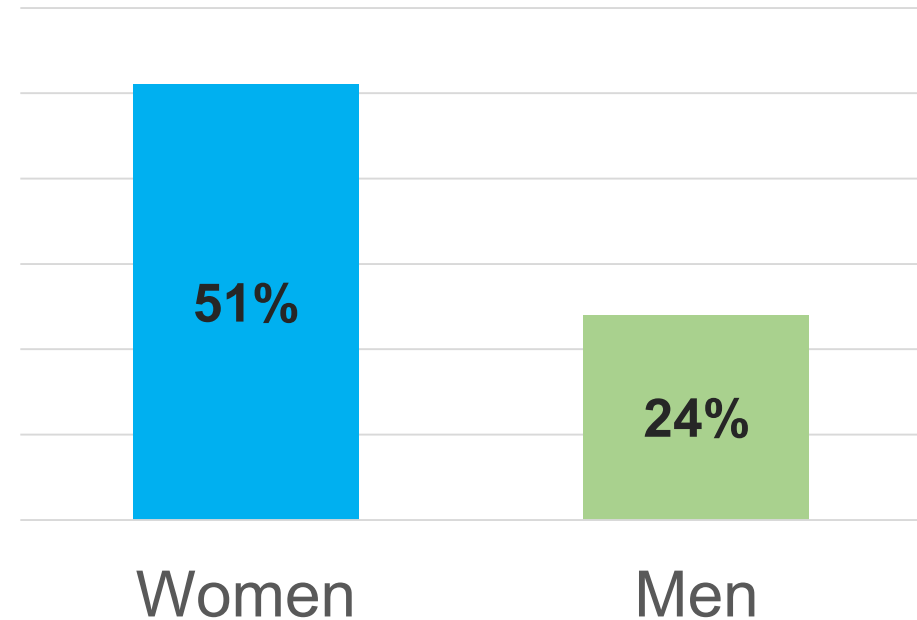


# Many students enter college already feeling overwhelmed

**39%**

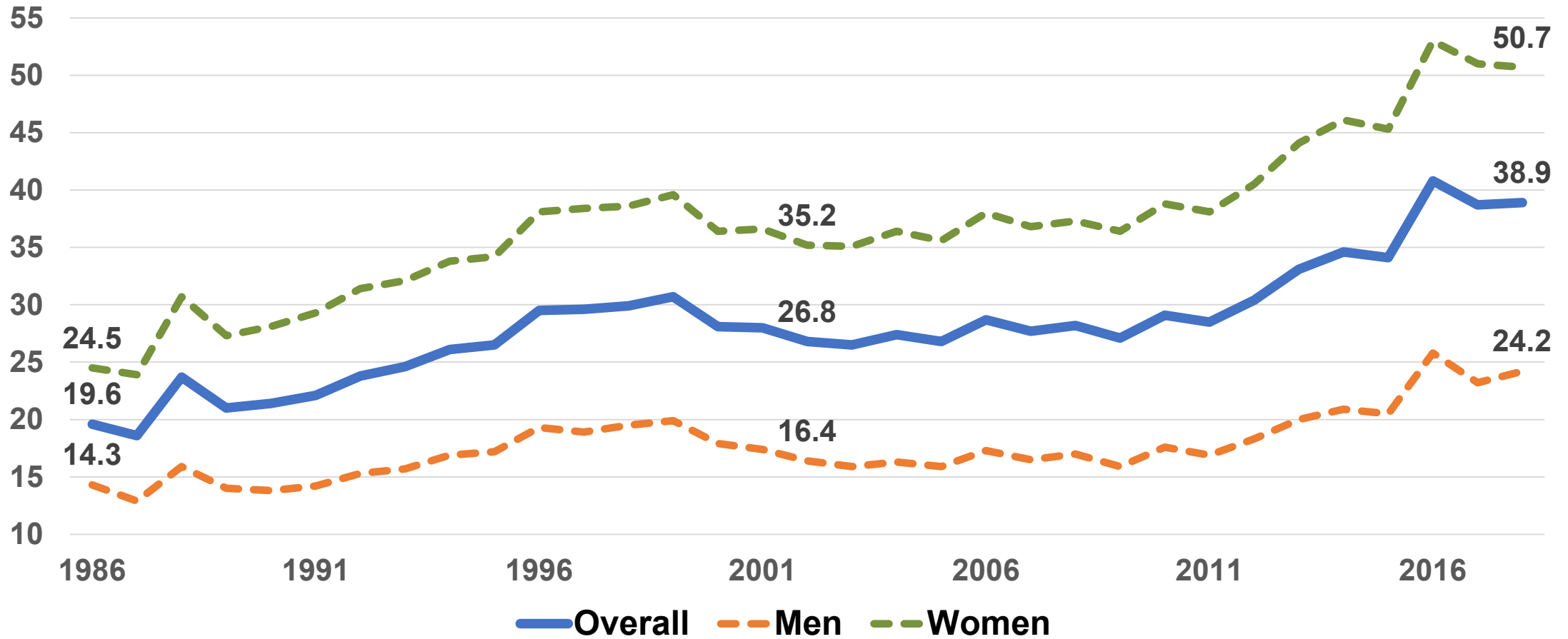


**were frequently overwhelmed by all that they had to do as high-school seniors, women more so than men.**



Data source: CIRP Freshman Survey 2018  
(Higher Education Research Institute) [www.heri.ucla.edu](http://www.heri.ucla.edu)

# Percent of incoming first-years indicating that they were “frequently overwhelmed” by all they had to do in the past year, 1985-2018.



Data sources: CIRP Freshman Survey.  
Higher Education Research Institute, [www.heri.ucla.edu](http://www.heri.ucla.edu)

# 2017 Freshmen



Created by Gan Khoon Lay  
from Noun Project

**33%**

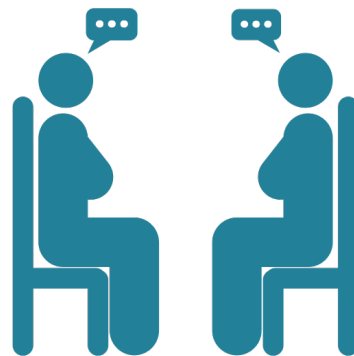
“frequently”  
anxious their  
senior year of  
high school



Created by Gan Khoon Lay  
from Noun Project

**12%**

“frequently”  
depressed their  
senior year of  
high school



Created by IconTrack  
from Noun Project

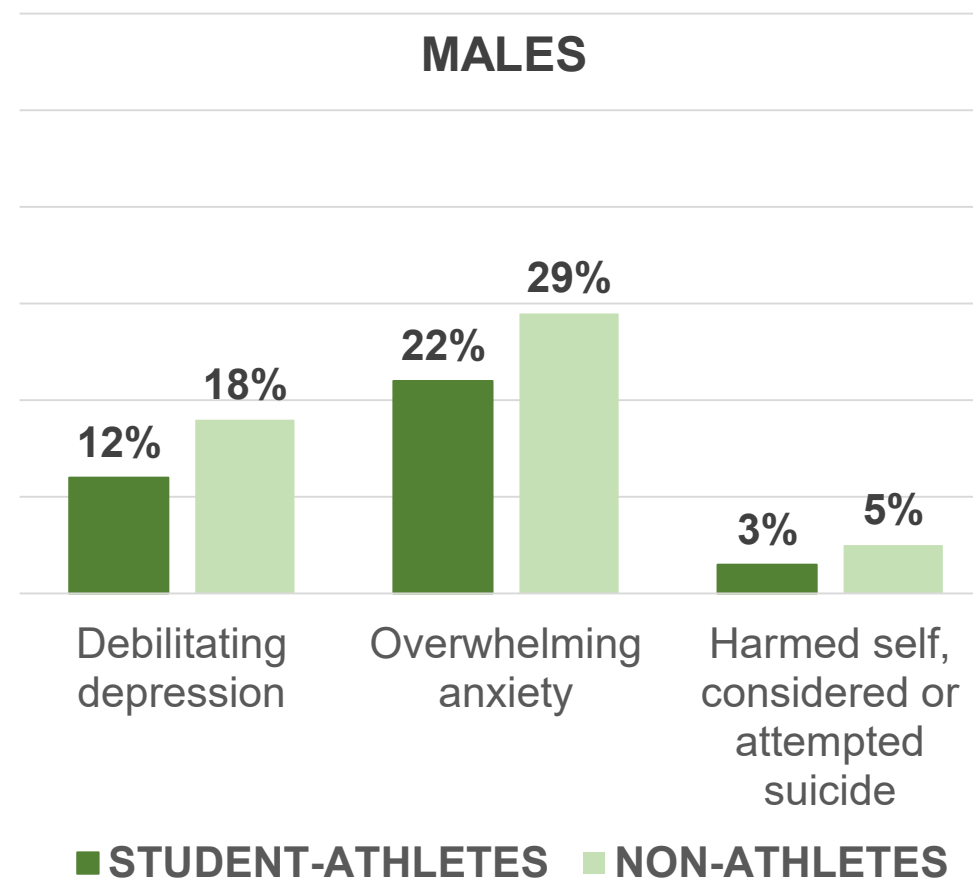
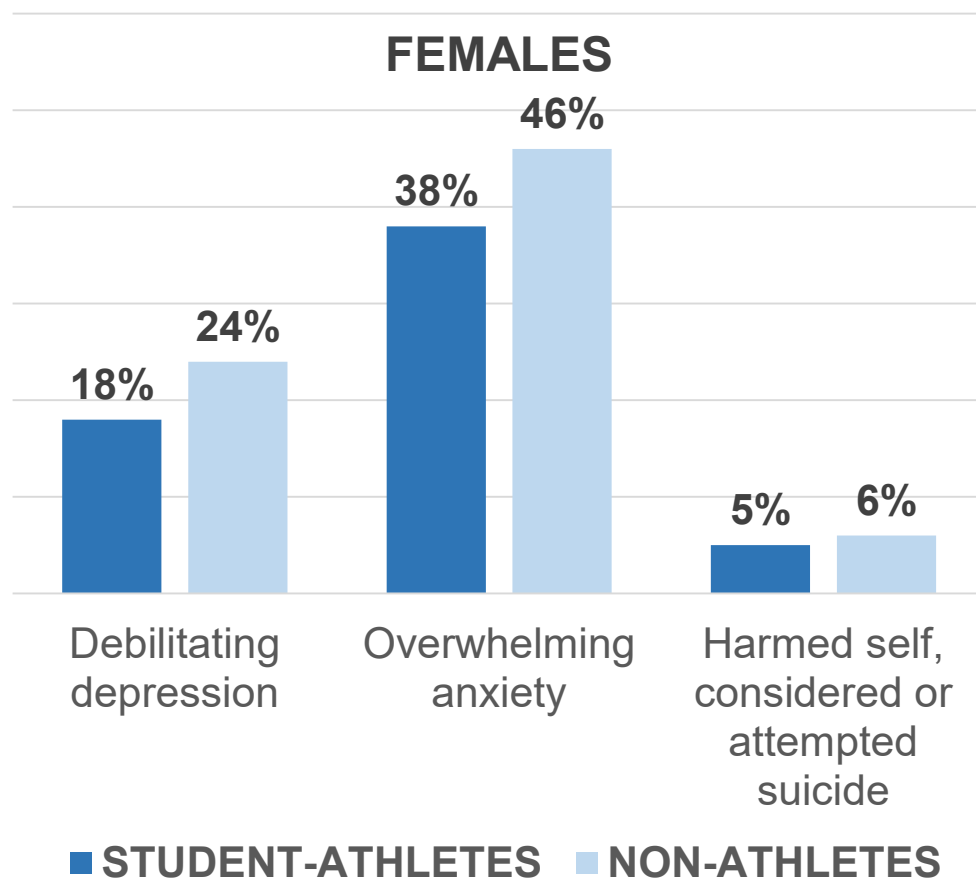
**14%**

“very good chance”  
they would seek  
personal  
counseling their  
freshman year

**Athletics departments have become increasingly aware of student-athlete mental health concerns.**

# Mental Well-Being, Comparison Data

(Experienced within the last 30 days)



American College Health Association. American College Health Association-National College Health Assessment, Fall 2015, Spring 2016, Fall 2016, Spring 2017, Fall 2017 [data file]. Hanover, MD: American College Health Association [producer and distributor]; (2018-11-15).

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# Student-Athlete Mental Well-Being

- ▶ Student-Athlete Context
  - ▶ Identity
  - ▶ Time demands
  - ▶ Sleep
  - ▶ Coaches
  - ▶ Social environment / Support networks

**Intersecting identities impact  
student-athlete mental well-being.**

# Have you felt so depressed that it was difficult to function?

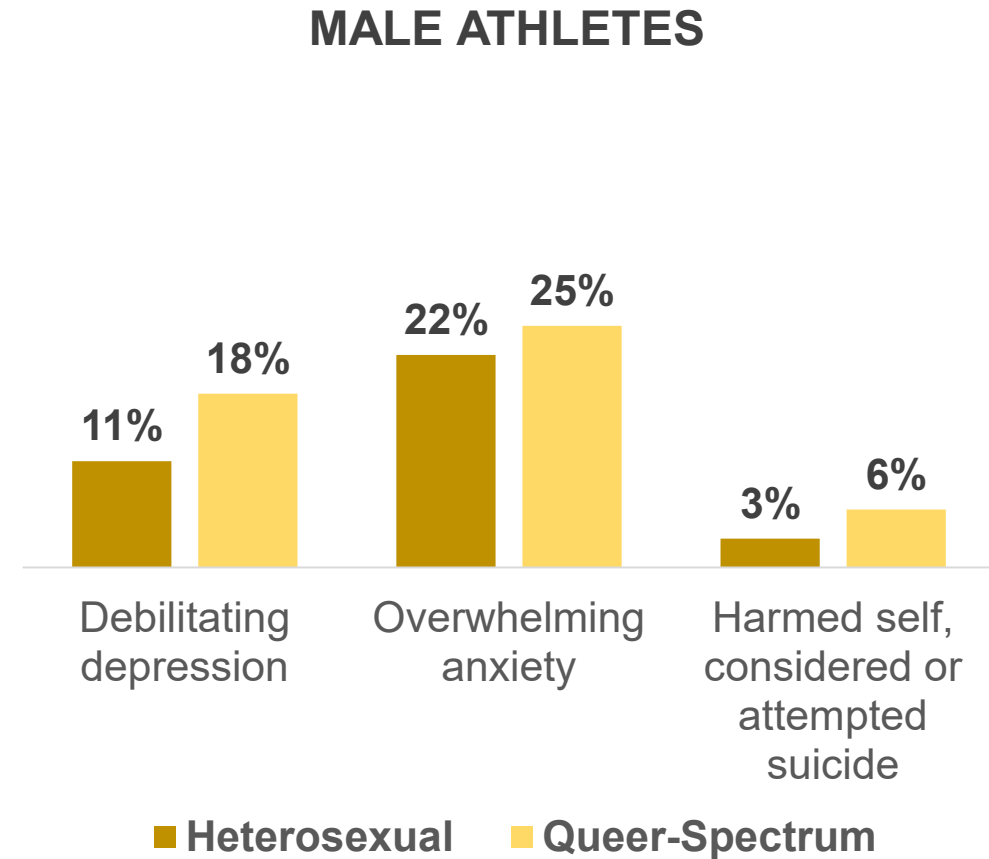
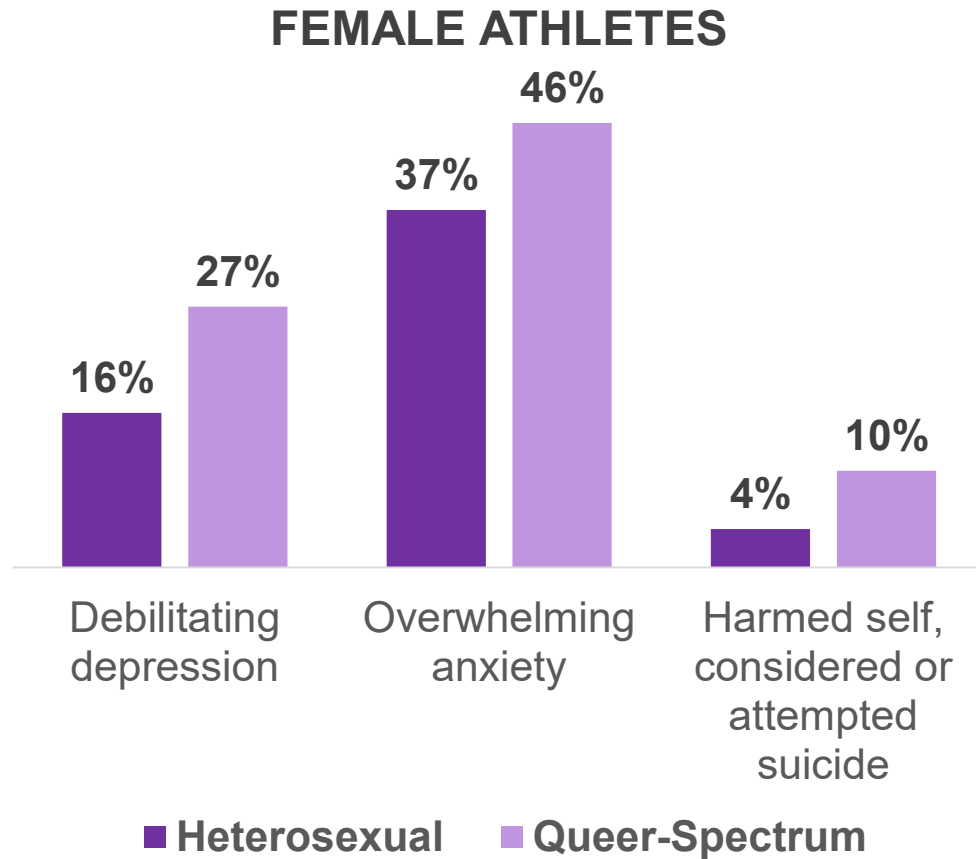
(Yes, in the last 30 days)

	STUDENT-ATHLETES	NON-ATHLETES*	ATHLETE NON-ATHLETE GAP
Male	12%	18%	+6%
Female	18%	24%	+6%
White Males	10%	17%	+7%
Males of Color	16%	19%	+3%
White Females	16%	23%	+7%
Females of Color	23%	26%	+3%
*Non-athletes are full-time undergraduate students between the ages of 18-24 attending NCAA-member institutions who do not identify as varsity athletes.			

American College Health Association. American College Health Association-National College Health Assessment, Fall 2015, Spring 2016, Fall 2016, Spring 2017, Fall 2017 [data file]. Hanover, MD: American College Health Association [producer and distributor]; (2018-11-15).

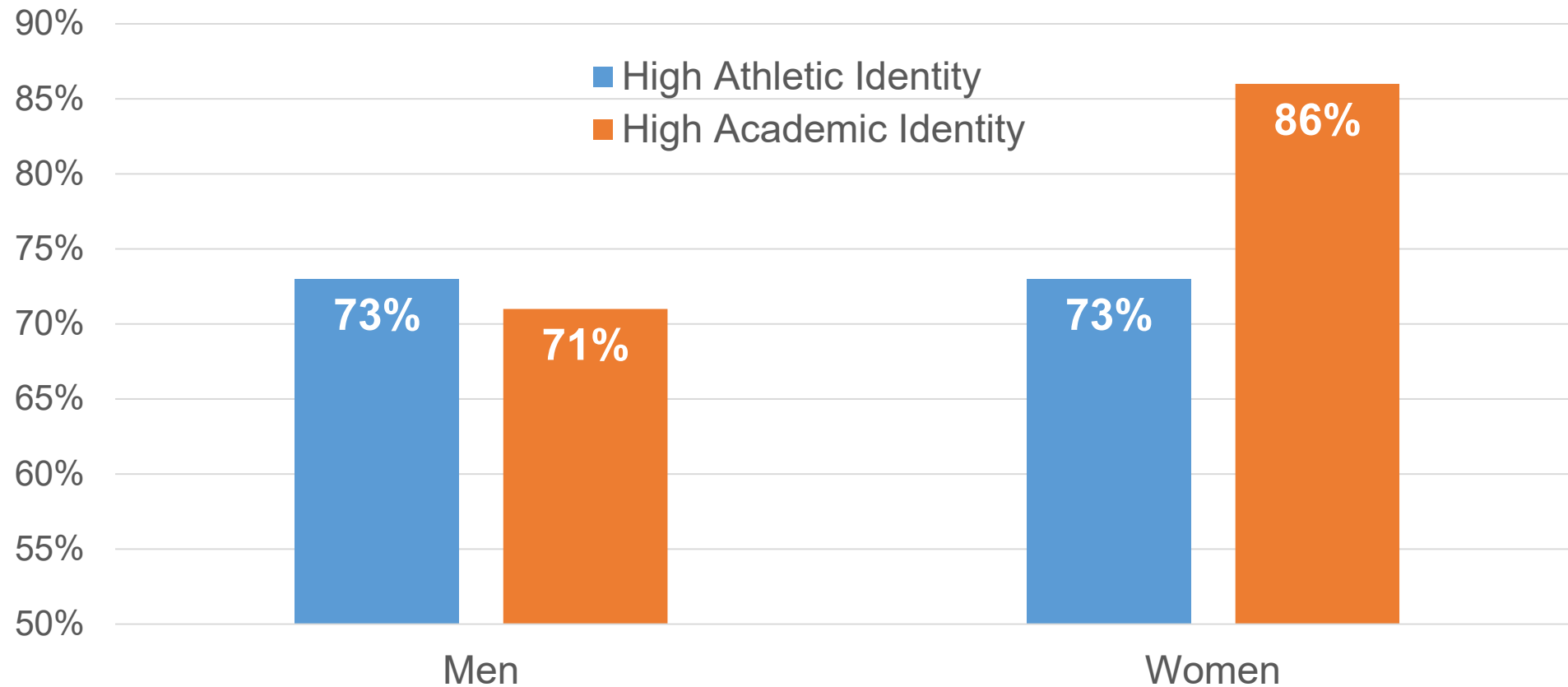
# Mental Well-Being of Queer-Spectrum Athletes, Comparison Data

(Experienced within the last 30 days)



American College Health Association. American College Health Association-National College Health Assessment, Fall 2015, Spring 2016, Fall 2016, Spring 2017, Fall 2017 [data file]. Hanover, MD: American College Health Association [producer and distributor]; (2018-11-15).

## Athletic and Academic Identity (Division III)



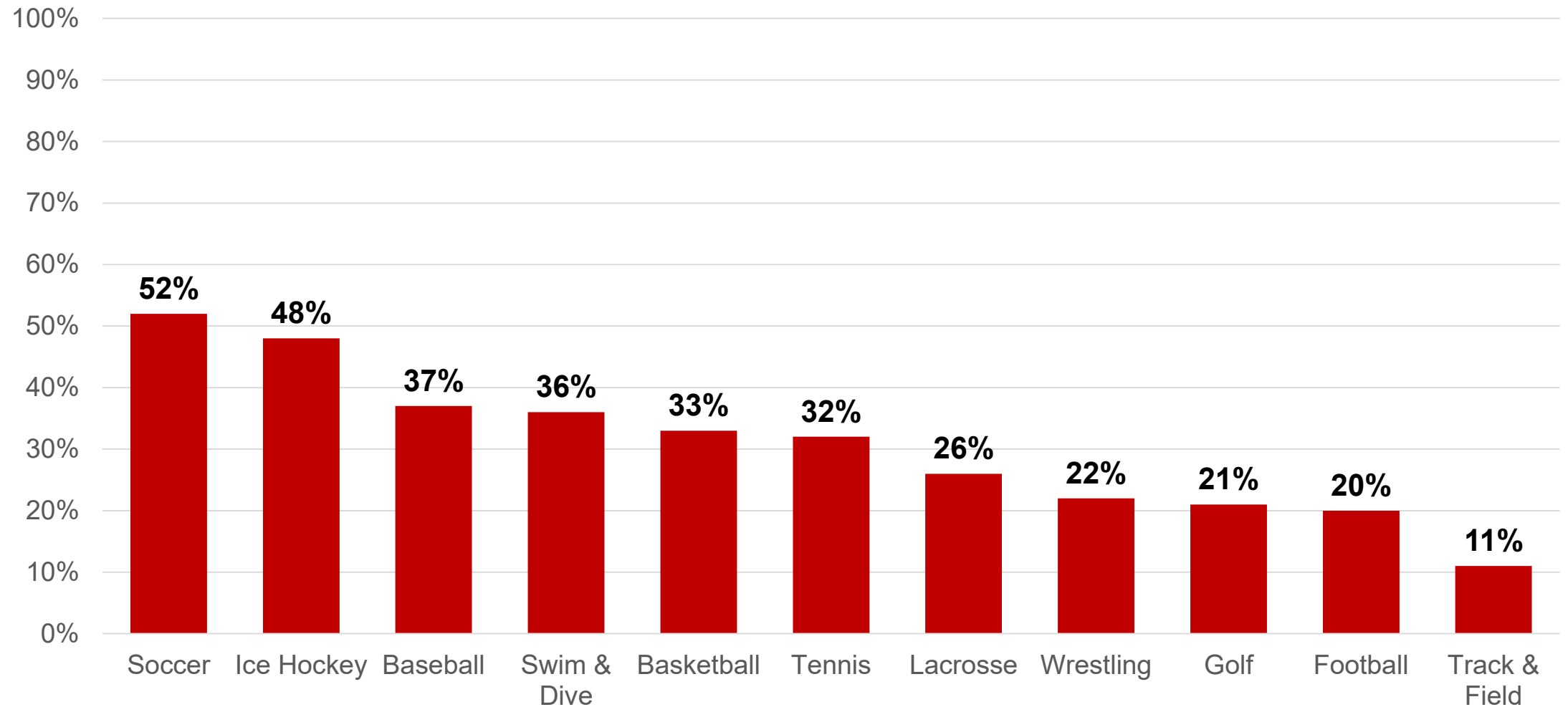
- **In Division III, 57% of men and 67% of women had both high athletic and high academic identity.**

Source: NCAA GOALS Study, 2019.

**Athletic identity is forged at an early age.**



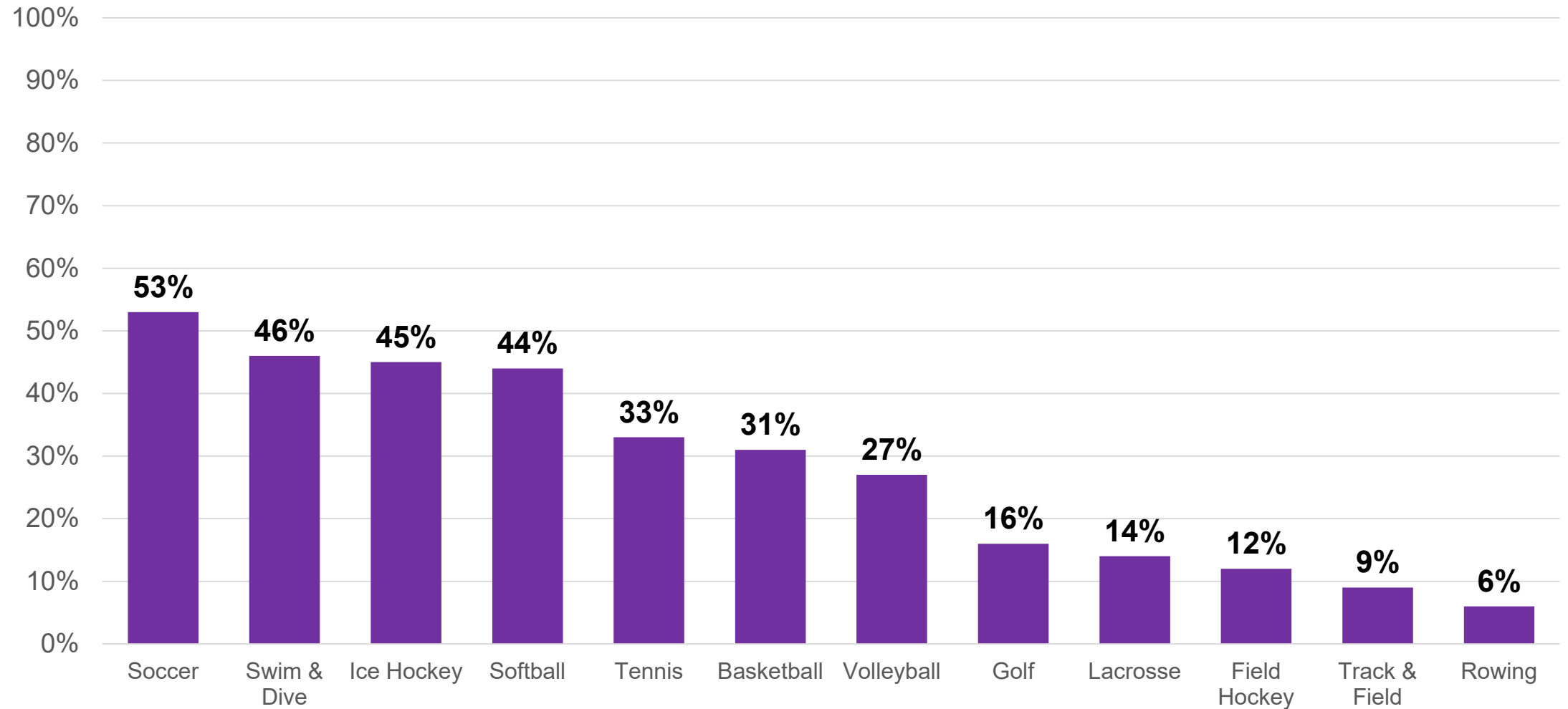
## Percent of Men Who Specialized in their Sport by Age 12 (Division III)



Source: NCAA GOALS Study, 2019.

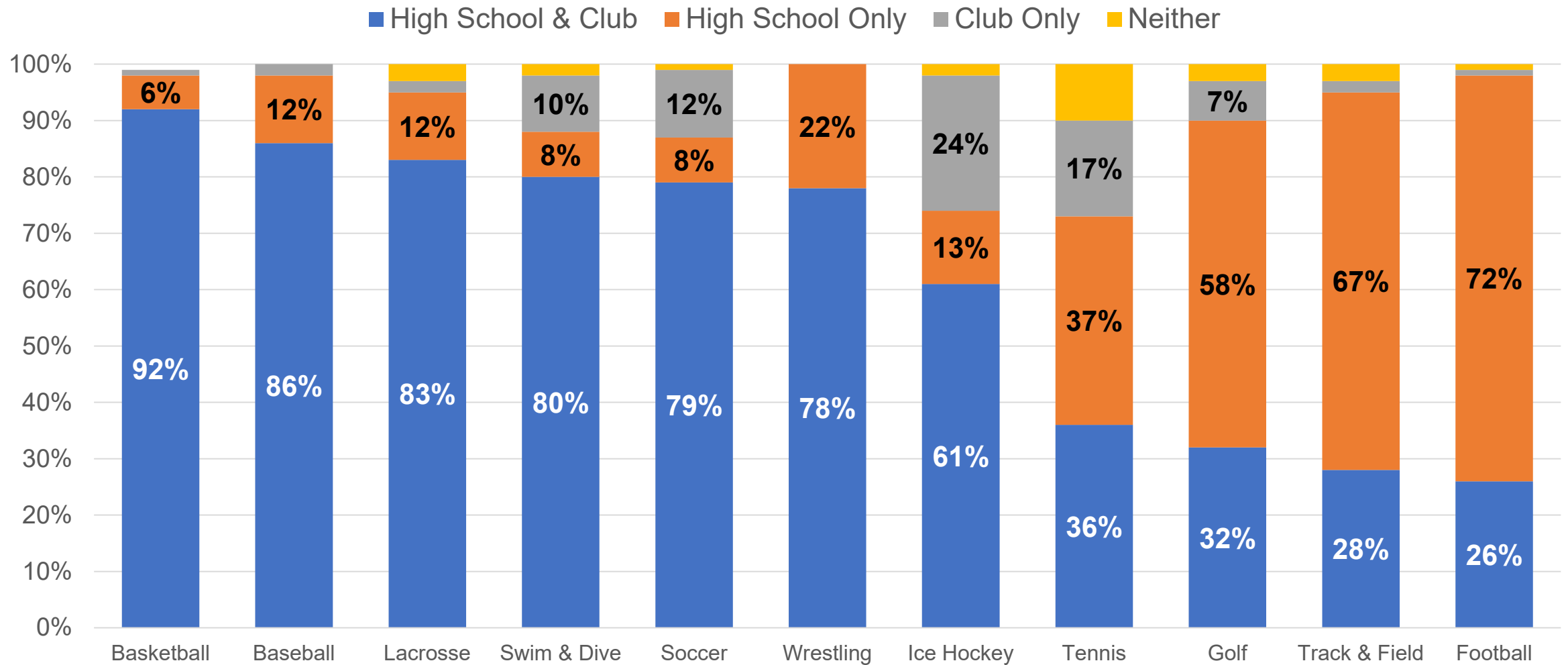
# Percent of Women Who Specialized in their Sport by Age 12

(Division III)



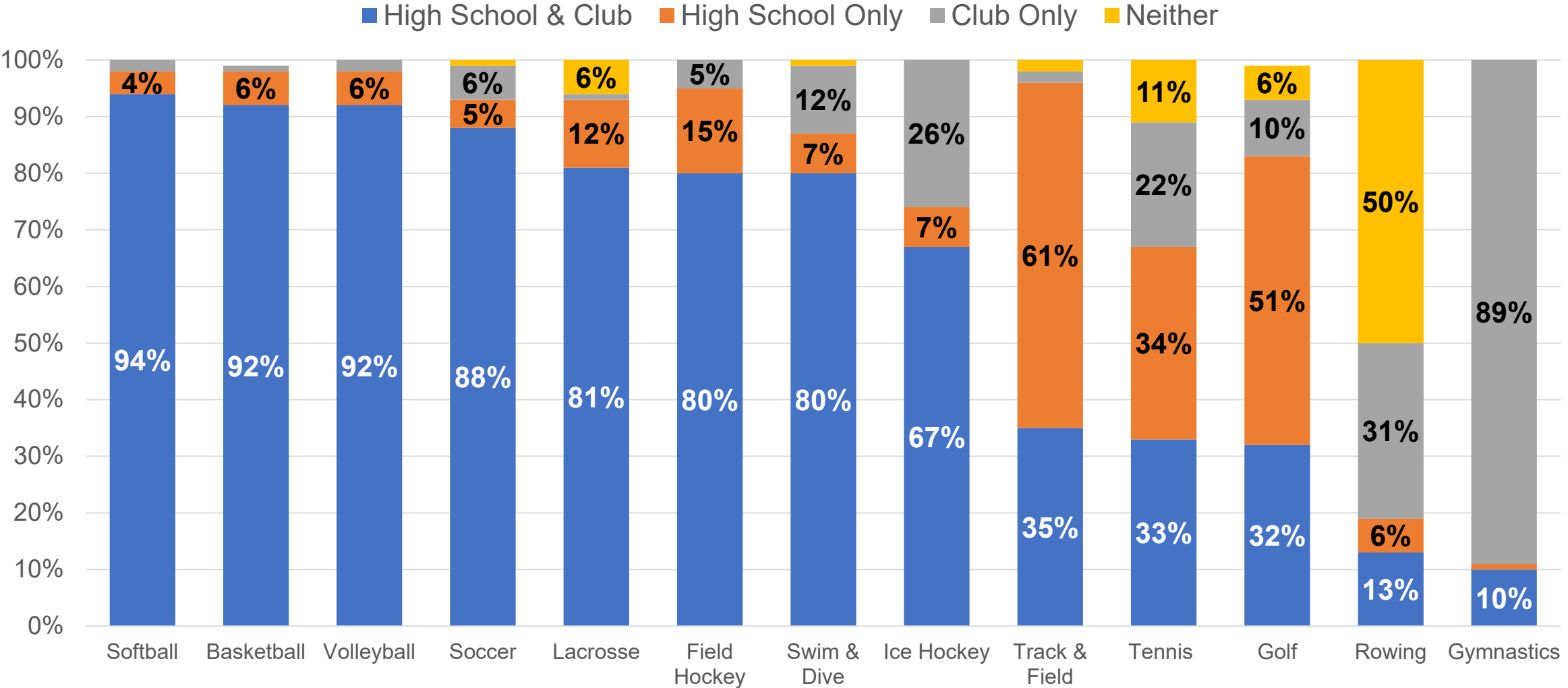
Source: NCAA GOALS Study, 2019.

# Pre-College Participation of NCAA Student-Athletes: Men's Sports



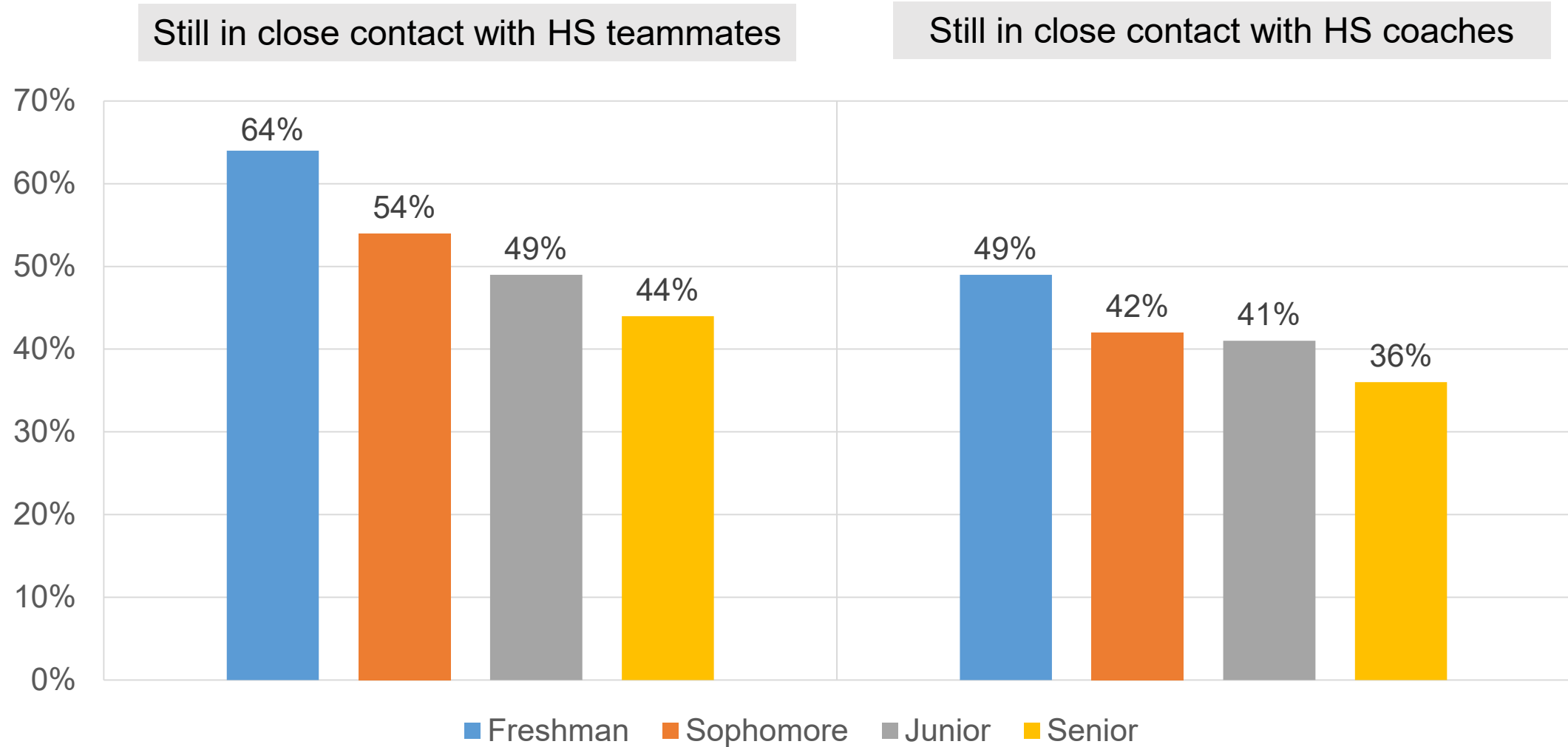
Note: Self-report from NCAA GOALS study, 2019. Club participation includes AAU, national, academy or other elite teams not affiliated with the high school. Categories labeled if 5% or higher.

# Pre-College Participation of NCAA Student-Athletes: Women's Sports



Note: Self-report from NCAA GOALS study, 2019. Club participation includes AAU, national, academy or other elite teams not affiliated with the high school. Categories labeled if 5% or higher.

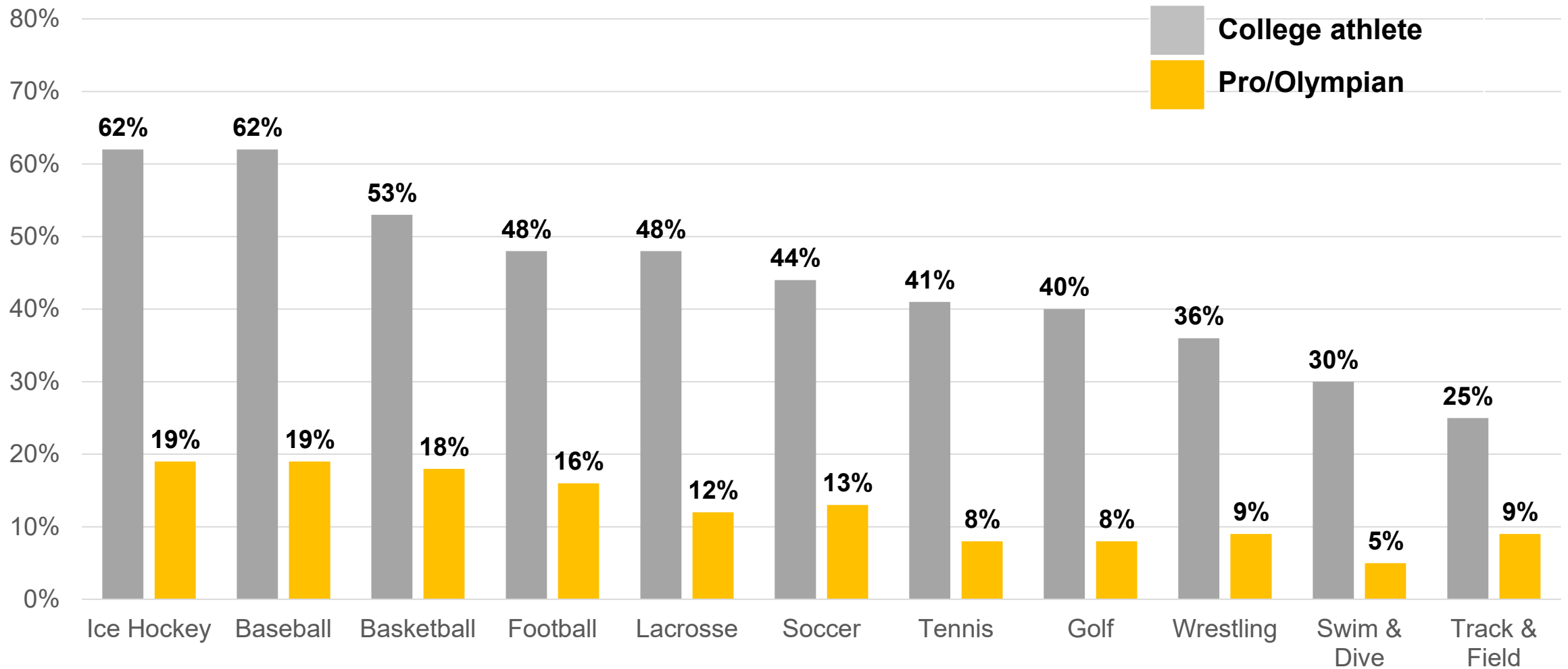
# Connections with High School Teammates and Coaches



Note: Endorsement of top two scale points on a 6-point scale, aggregated by gender and division.  
NCAA Study of Student-Athlete Social Environments, 2016.

# Since I was young, my family expected I would be...

(% Responding Agree or Strongly Agree, Division III Men's Sports)

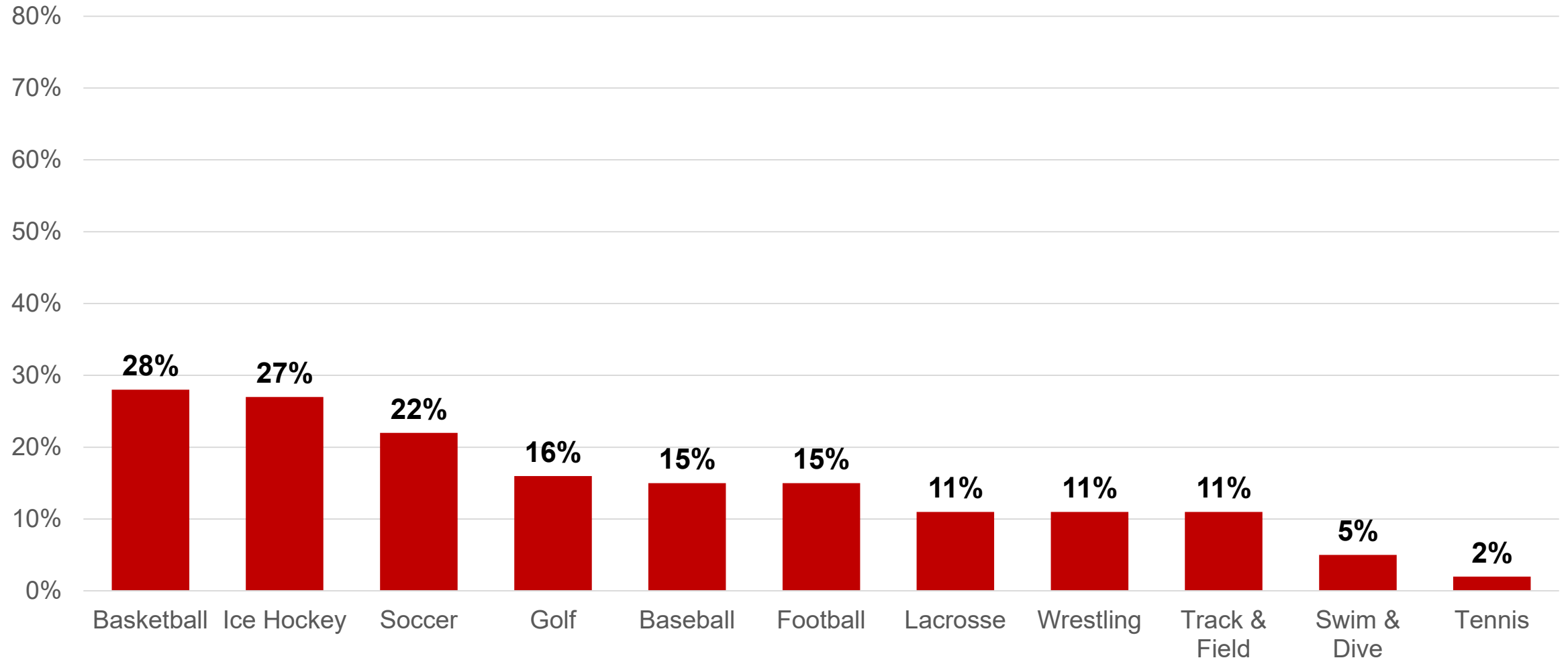


Source: NCAA GOALS Study, 2019.



# Being a Professional or Olympic Athlete is at least “somewhat likely”

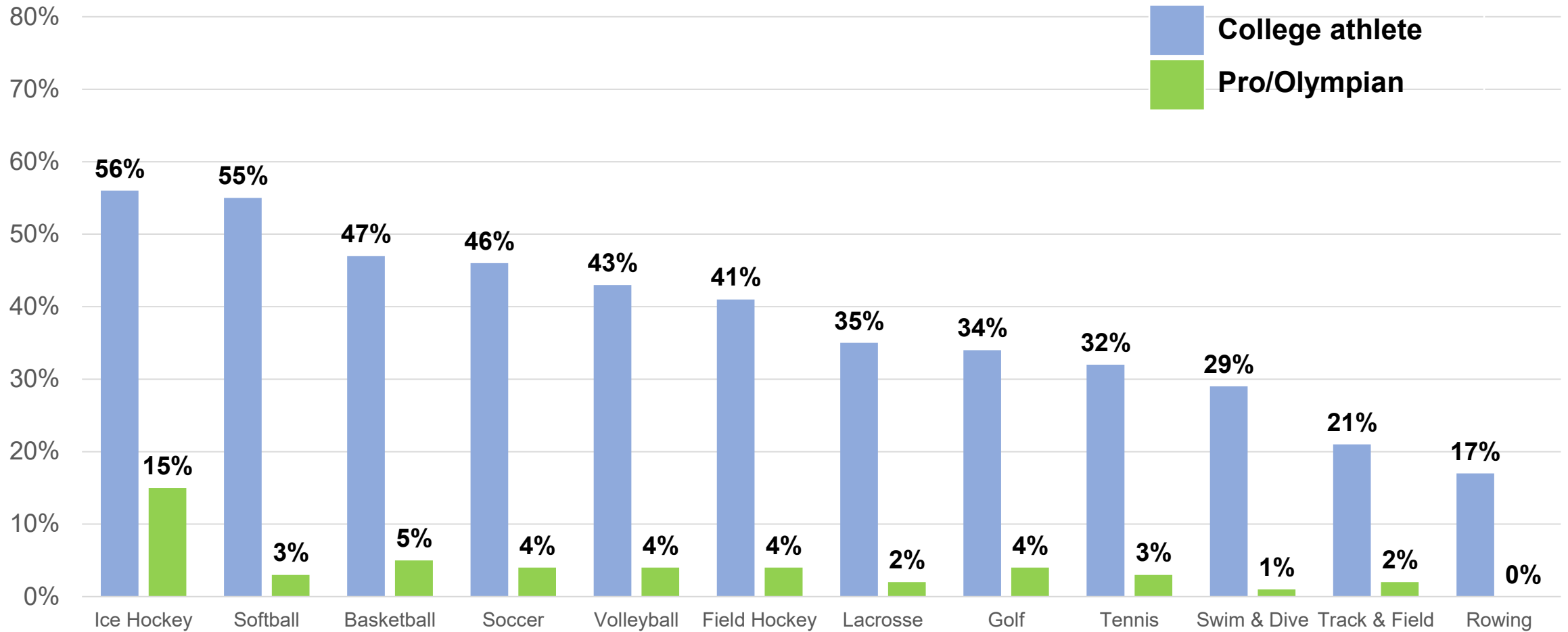
(Men’s Sports, Division III)



Source: NCAA GOALS Study, 2019.

# Since I was young, my family expected I would be...

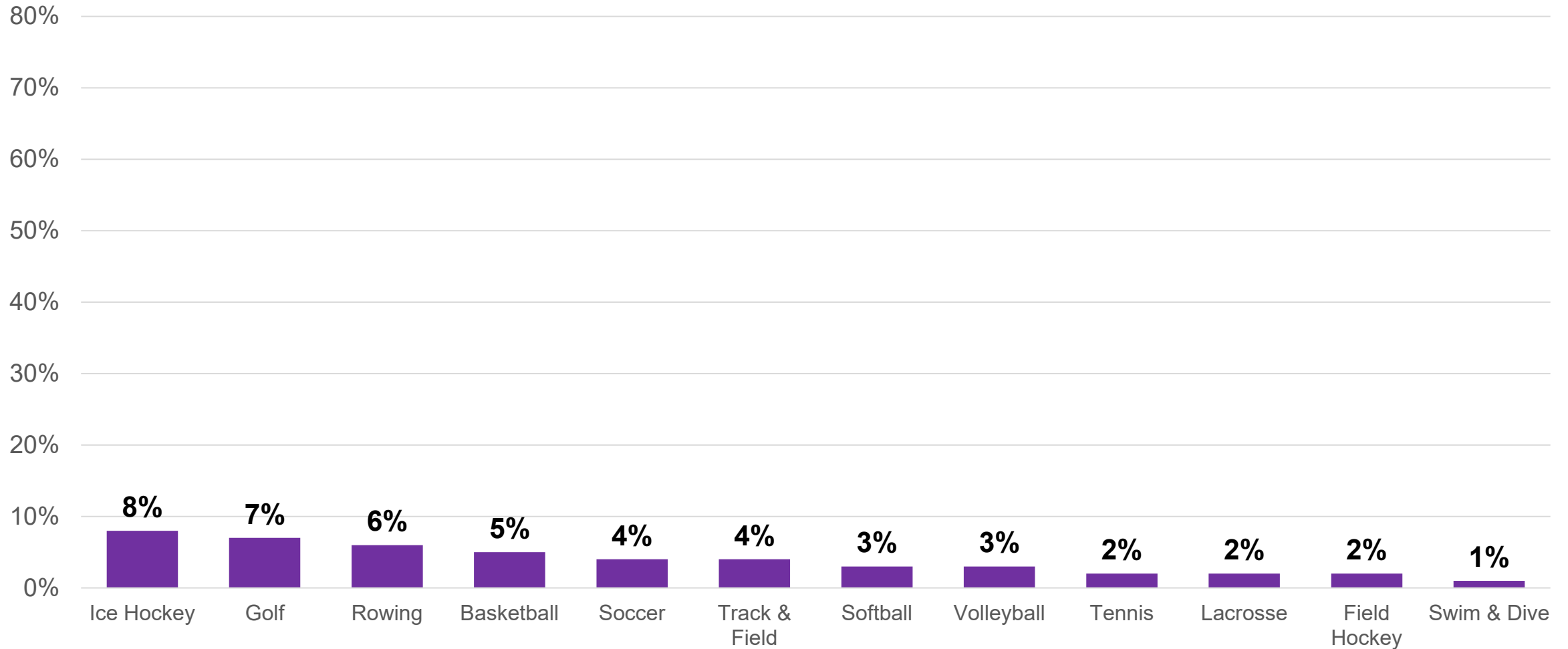
(% Responding Agree or Strongly Agree, Division III Women's Sports)



Source: NCAA GOALS Study.

# Being a Professional or Olympic Athlete is at least “somewhat likely”

(Women’s Sports, Division III)





Source: NCAA GOALS Study, 2019.

**Time commitments and identity  
are inextricably linked.**

# Student-Athlete Time Commitments

(GOALS Survey Data, 2019)

	 Athletic hrs./wk.	 Academic hrs./wk.
Division I	33.0	35.5
Division II	31.0	37.0
Division III	28.0	40.0

  
Socializing or relaxing




**15.5** hrs. weekly


**6.25** hrs. nightly



# Percentage of Student-Athletes Reporting as Much or More Time on Athletic Activities in Off-Season than In-Season (2019 Self-Report – GOALS Study)

Division I							
	Baseball	Men's Basketball	Football (FBS/FCS)		All Other Men's Sports	Women's Basketball	All Other Women's Sports
% same or more	78%	71%	76%	70%	67%	50%	61%
Division II							
% same or more	74%	69%	74%		65%	45%	54%
Division III							
% same or more	65%	59%	57%		51%	37%	35%

 Yellow indicates an increase of 5 percentage points or more from 2015

 Green indicates a decrease of 5 percentage points or more from 2015



## Division III student-athletes report they want more time for...

Activity	Men	Women
Academics	58%	64%
Athletics	48%	33%

Source: GOALS Survey Data, 2019.

## But they also want more time for...

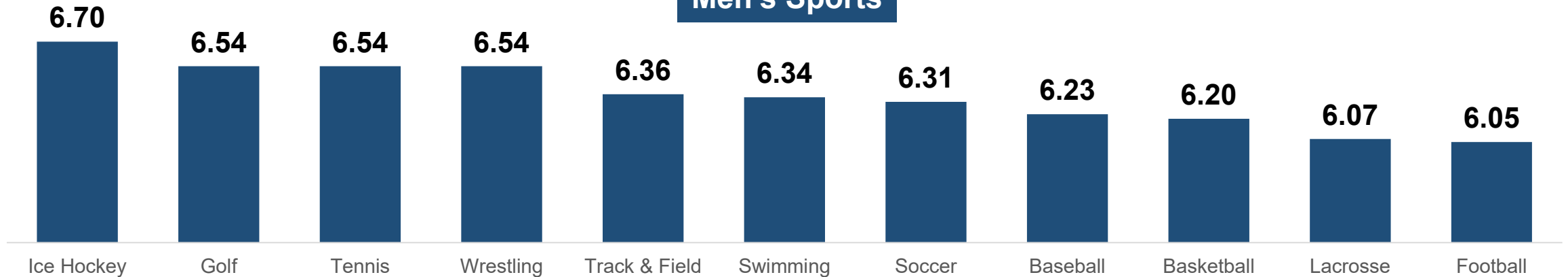
Activity	Division III Men	Division III Women
Sleeping	72%	82%
Relaxing Alone	62%	75%
Socializing with Friends	62%	70%
Visiting Home/Family	61%	66%
Academics	58%	64%
Extracurricular Activities	49%	60%
Athletics	48%	33%
Working at a Job	46%	55%

Source: GOALS Survey Data, 2019.

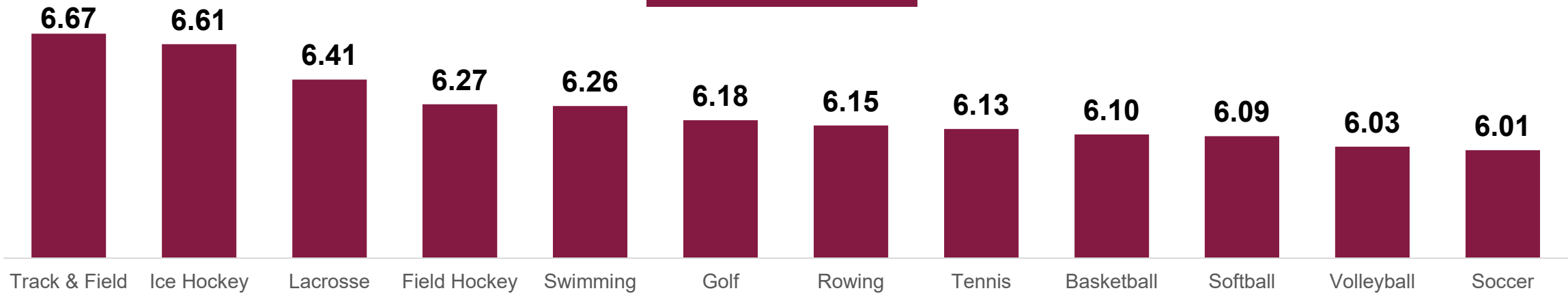
# Average Weekday Hours of Sleep In-Season

(Division III – 2019 SA Self-Report)

## Men's Sports



## Women's Sports



# National Comparison Data on Feeling Rested Upon Waking

On how many of the past 7 days did you get enough sleep that you felt rested when you woke up in the morning?				
	MALES		FEMALES	
	STUDENT-ATHLETES	NON-ATHLETES*	STUDENT-ATHLETES	NON-ATHLETES*
0-3	52%	56%	60%	64%
4-5	34%	31%	31%	27%
6-7	14%	13%	9%	9%
*Non-athletes are full-time undergraduate students between the ages of 18-24 attending NCAA-member institutions who do not identify as varsity athletes.				

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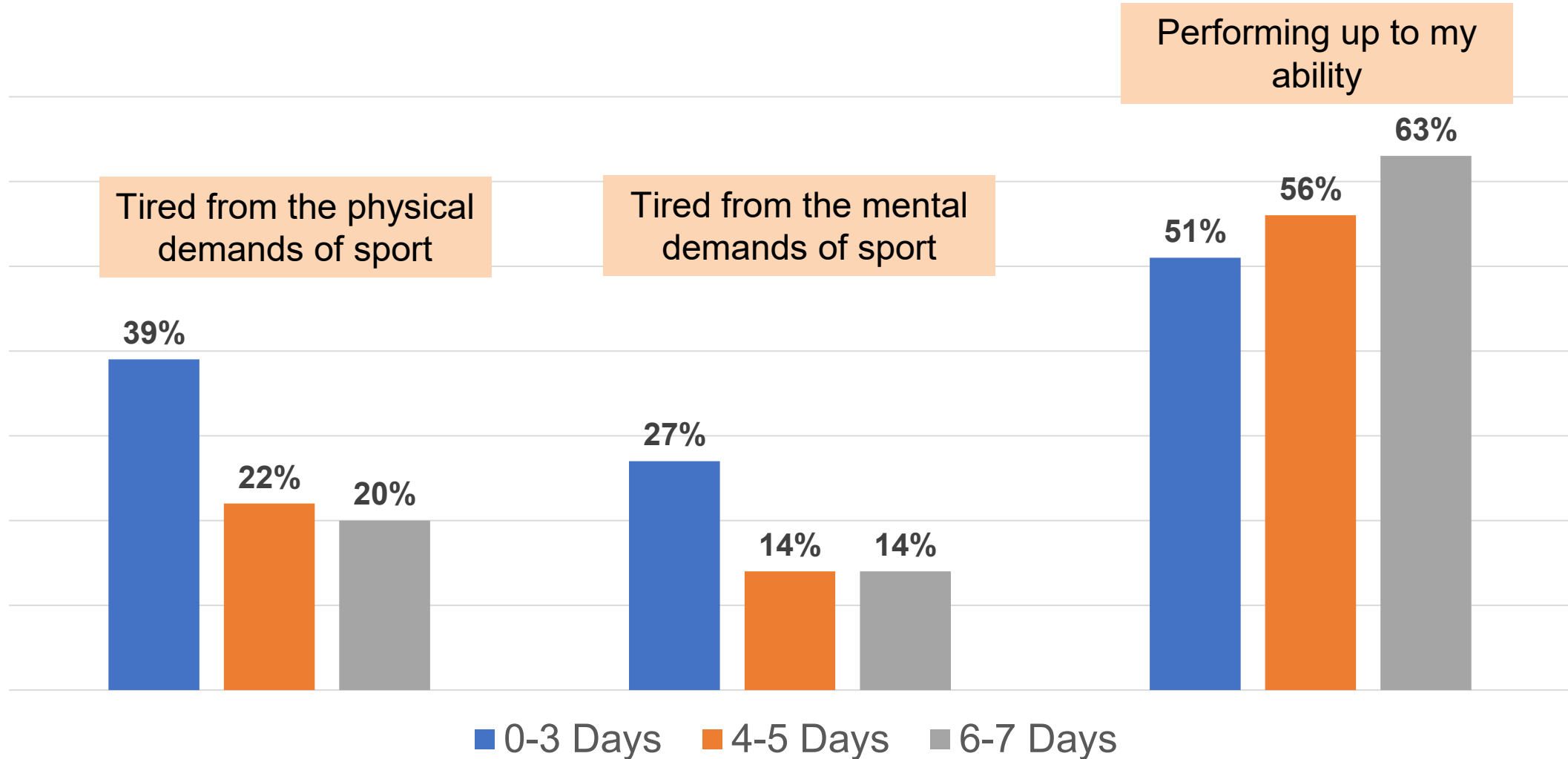
# National Comparison Data on Sleep Behaviors

- **24%** of NCAA student-athletes and 31% of their non-athlete\* peers reported that in the last year sleep difficulties had been difficult to handle.

3+ days within the last week:	STUDENT-ATHLETES	NON-ATHLETES*
Awakened too early and couldn't go back to sleep	16%	17%
Felt tired, dragged out, or sleepy during the day	61%	64%
Had an extremely hard time falling asleep	24%	28%
*Non-athletes are full-time undergraduate students between the ages of 18-24 attending NCAA-member institutions who do not identify as varsity athletes.		

American College Health Association. American College Health Association-National College Health Assessment, Fall 2015, Spring 2016, Fall 2016, Spring 2017, Fall 2017 [data file]. Hanover, MD: American College Health Association [producer and distributor]; (2018-11-15).

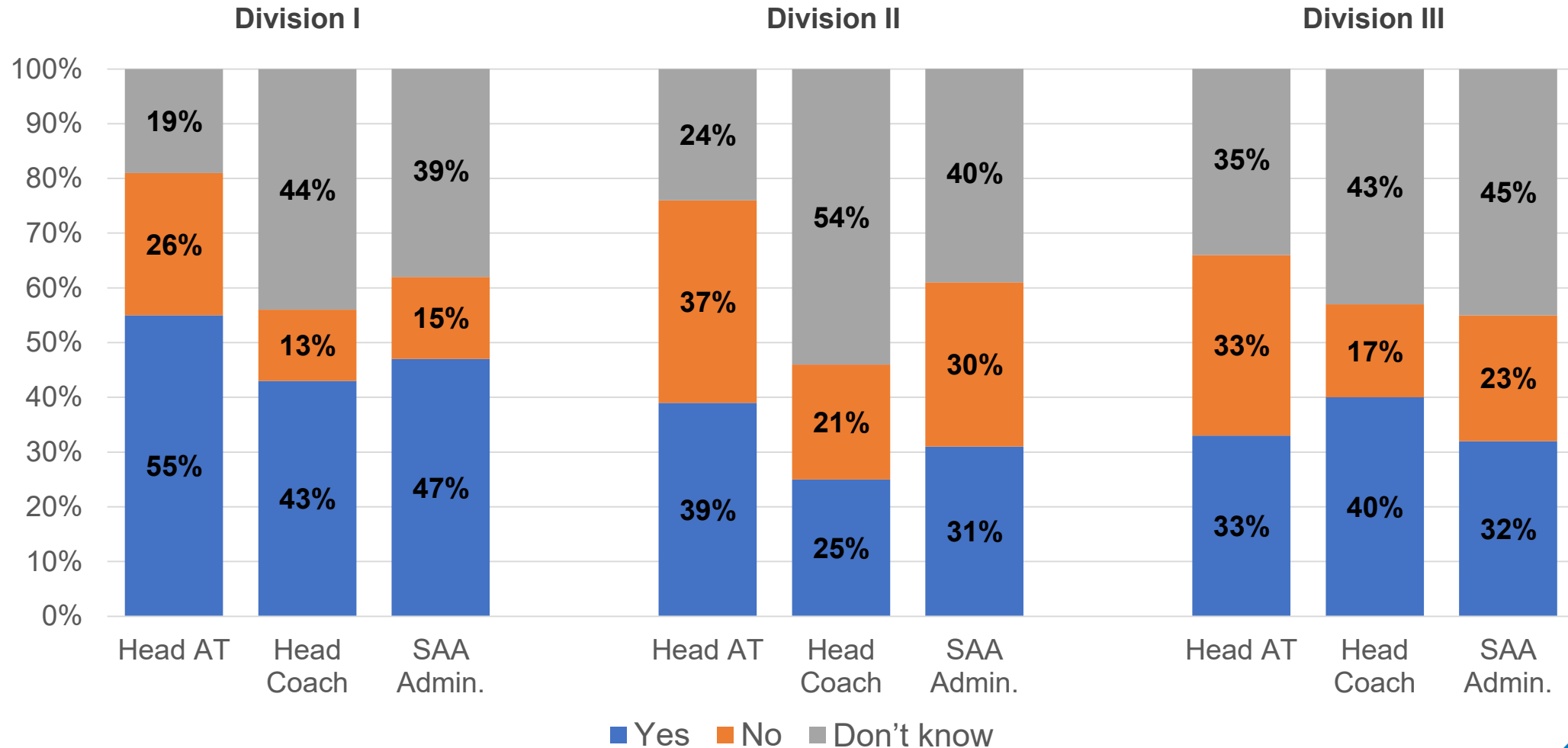
# Student-Athlete Physical/Mental Functioning vs. Days of Restful Sleep in the Past Week



Source: GOALS Survey Data, 2015. Endorsement of top two scale points (Strongly Agree, Agree) on a 6-point scale.



# Are resources available on your campus to address student-athlete sleep concerns?



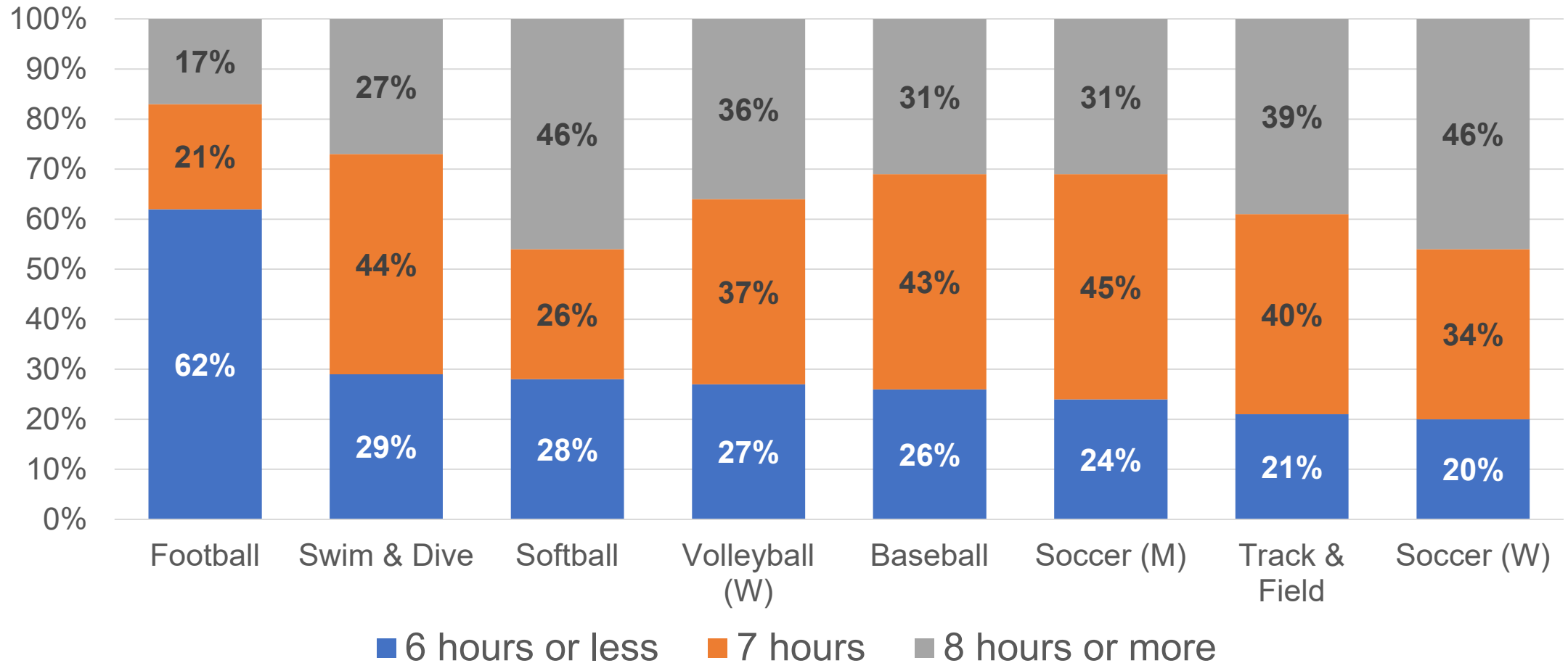
Source: NCAA SSI Sleep Study, Spring 2017

# How much sleep are coaches and administrators getting each night?

	Head Athletic Trainer		Head Coach		Student-Athlete Athletics Administrator	
	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males
Division I	7.0	6.9	7.3	6.8	6.8	6.9
Division II	7.0	6.9	7.4	7.0	6.6	6.8
Division III	7.4	7.3	7.3	7.0	6.8	6.7

Note: Mean response for each item. Actual question: How many hours of sleep do you typically get per night?  
Source: NCAA SSI Sleep Study, Spring 2017

# Coach Sleep – Differences by Sport



Source: NCAA SSI Sleep Study, Spring 2017


**Student-athlete mental health concerns remain.**


# In the last month, how often have you felt difficulties were piling up so high that you could not overcome them?

(% Responding Very Often or Fairly Often)

Baseball	Men's Basketball	Football (FBS / FCS)		Men's Other	Women's Basketball	Women's Other
Division I						
21%	24%	33%	31%	22%	29%	28%
Division II						
20%	26%	27%		25%	27%	31%
Division III						
26%	26%	25%		22%	25%	27%

Note: Endorsement of top two scale points on a 6-point scale. Source: NCAA GOALS Study, 2019.

 Yellow indicates an increase of 5 percentage points or more from 2015

 Green indicates a decrease of 5 percentage points or more from 2015

# I am exhausted by the mental demands in my sport

(% Responding Agree or Strongly Agree)

Baseball	Men's Basketball	Football (FBS / FCS)		Men's Other	Women's Basketball	Women's Other
Division I						
17%	24%	40%	36%	23%	28%	28%
Division II						
20%	22%	29%	21%	27%	22%	
Division III						
20%	23%	21%	18%	19%	14%	

Note: Endorsement of top two scale points on a 6-point scale. Source: NCAA GOALS Study.



Yellow indicates an increase of 5 percentage points or more from 2015



Green indicates a decrease of 5 percentage points or more from 2015


# **Student-athlete support for mental health concerns.**


# My coaches care about my mental well-being

(% Responding Agree or Strongly Agree)

Baseball	Men's Basketball	Football (FBS / FCS)	Men's Other	Women's Basketball	Women's Other
Division I					
69%	77%	66%	69%	56%	65%
Division II					
72%	71%	65%	77%	66%	70%
Division III					
81%	79%	80%	83%	75%	77%

Note: Endorsement of top two scale points on a 6-point scale. Source: NCAA GOALS Study, 2019.

 Yellow indicates an increase of 5 percentage points or more from 2015

 Green indicates a decrease of 5 percentage points or more from 2015



# I would feel comfortable talking to my coaches about mental health issues

(% Responding Agree or Strongly Agree)

Baseball	Men's Basketball	Football (FBS / FCS)		Men's Other	Women's Basketball	Women's Other
Division I						
58%	58%	58%	60%	55%	40%	43%
Division II						
57%	61%	56%		66%	45%	52%
Division III						
67%	67%	67%		68%	52%	56%

Note: Endorsement of top two scale points on a 6-point scale. Source: NCAA GOALS Study, 2019.



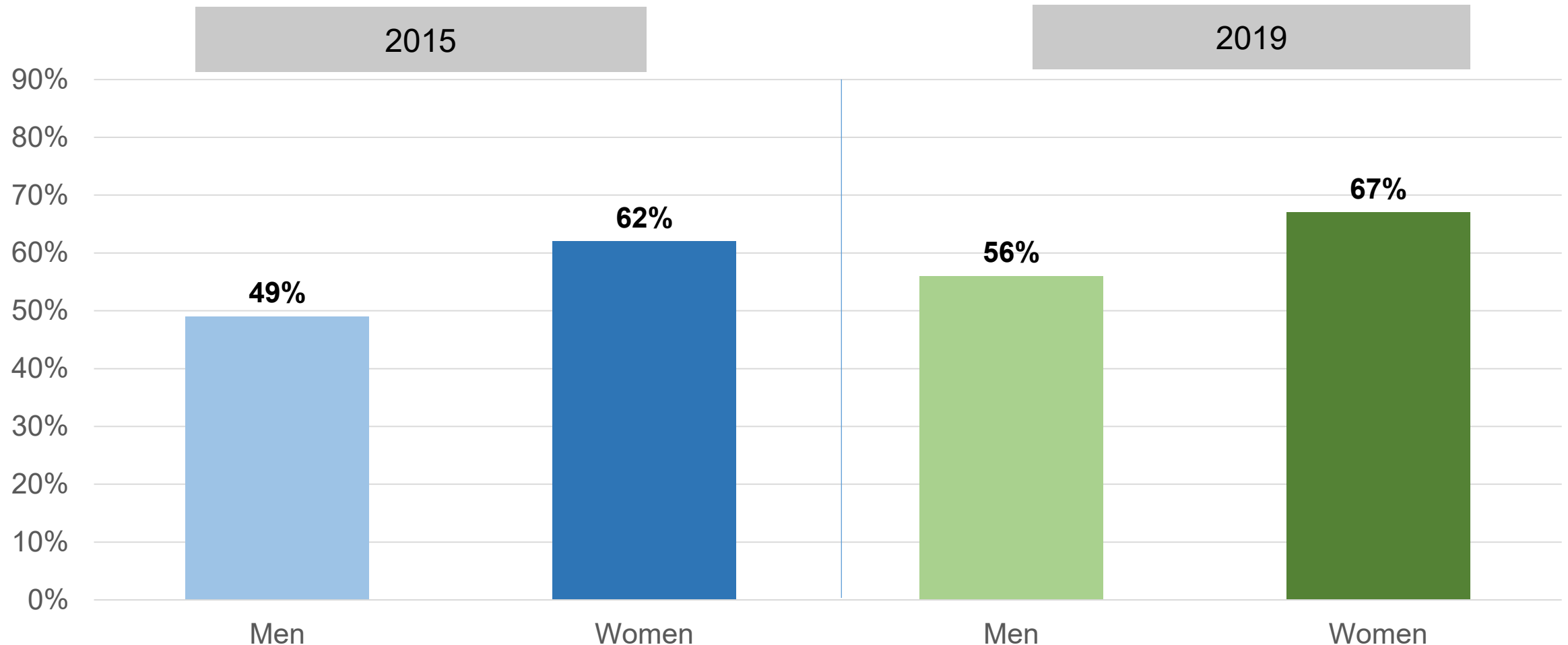
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# I typically communicate with my parents/guardians daily or multiple times per day

(% Responding Multiple Times Daily or Once a Day)



Note: Endorsement of top two scale points on a 6-point scale. Source: NCAA GOALS Study.

# I “often” or “sometimes” ask a family member...

	Division III Men	Division III Women
For help with a bill or a money problem.	73%	79%
For help dealing with stress or other mental well-being issues.	66%	83%
For advice on athletics issues (e.g., training advice, how to deal with coaches).	63%	77%
To help me make academic decisions (e.g., choose classes).	62%	72%
To contact one of my coaches.	15%	10%
To contact one of my professors.	10%	4%

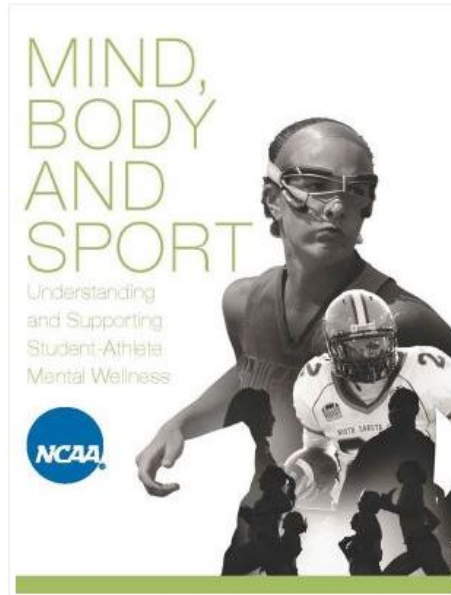
Source: NCAA Study of Student-Athlete Social Environments, 2016.

# Conditions to Increase Mental Health Care Access

(Percent responding “Strongly Agree”, Across Divisions)

	Men	Women
Free services	32%	48%
Practitioner who understands athletes	29%	44%
Online appointment scheduling	28%	41%
Anonymity	27%	39%
24-hour hotline	28%	39%
Flexible hours	31%	39%
Same day appointments	28%	38%
Services within athletics department	25%	36%
Services in less visible area	25%	35%
Online resources	24%	33%

# NCAA Mental Health Resources



<https://www.ncaa.org/sport-science-institute/supporting-student-athlete-mental-wellness>

Mental Health Homepage	Educational Resources	Best Practices for Campuses	Data and Research	Summits and Task Forces
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Home » Sport Science Institute

## Supporting Student-Athlete Mental Wellness

Student-athletes, coaches, and faculty athletics representatives play a critical role in creating an environment that supports the mental health and well-being of college athletes. That's why the Sport Science Institute developed web-based educational modules to help normalize and destigmatize mental health help seeking for college athletes.

If you are an NCAA student-athlete, coach, or faculty athletics representative, the interactive modules will provide information to help you promote mental wellness and resiliency on your campus and to encourage and destigmatize help-seeking for mental health concerns.

Tags: [Sport Science Institute](#)

### Educational Modules

Click on the introductory link below to get started. Once you have completed the introductory module, click on the module that applies to you to learn more about what you can do to support student-athlete mental health.

- [Introduction](#)
- [Student-Athletes](#)
- [Coaches](#)
- [Faculty Athletics Representatives](#)

# NCAA Mental Health Resources

## Mental Health Interdisciplinary Team Planner

This planning tool is designed as a general guide for athletics department staff to support student-athlete mental health in collaboration with their campus partners. The grid provided identifies tasks associated with a comprehensive approach to supporting student-athlete mental health and can assist schools in implementing the **Mental Health Best Practices**.



## Mental Health Workshop Planning Kit

A resource to assist NCAA conference offices in planning and implementing a mental health workshop for member schools.



## Suicide

Suicide is the second-leading cause of death among people age 10-24. By eliminating the misunderstanding and stigma that prevent individuals from speaking up and getting support, the incidence of suicide can be reduced.

### Warning signs — any of the behaviors below indicate an increased risk of suicide:

- Talking, writing or thinking about death.
- Irritability, aggression or reckless behavior.
- Increased alcohol and drug use.
- Social withdrawal from family, friends and the community.
- Dramatic recent weight.

### Signs of imminent danger — any of the behaviors below should prompt immediate interventions:

- Putting efforts in order and giving away possessions.
- Writing goodbye to friends and family.
- Mood shifts from danger to calm.
- Unexplained interest in obtaining firearms or controlled substances.
- Talking about death.
- Self-harming behaviors.

### What student-athletes can do:

- Call the National Suicide Prevention Hotline at 800-273-8255.
- Reach out to a trusted friend, coach or athletic administrator.

### What athletics department staff can do:

- Follow your athletics department's mental health emergency action and management plan.
- Learn more about postvention guidance by reading *A Guide to Postvention in College Campuses* at [www.nacac.edu/resources/postvention](https://www.nacac.edu/resources/postvention).

Content courtesy of NACAC.

### Say this ...

#### Promote the use of stigma-free language:

- "Suicide attempt" or "suicidal."
- "Suicide attempt" or "suicidal."
- "Suicide attempt" or "suicidal."

- "Died by suicide" or "suicide death."
- "Suicide death" or "suicide death."
- "Suicide death" or "suicide death."

- "Took their own life."
- "Suicide death" or "suicide death."
- "Suicide death" or "suicide death."

- "Died as a result of self-inflicted injury."
- "Suicide death" or "suicide death."
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## Depression

Depression is common among people of all ages and all race, ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds. Depression is a treatable mental health condition, and early detection and treatment leads to better outcomes.

### Signs and symptoms:

- Persistent sadness or empty mood.
- Dramatic changes in sleep, appetite, concentration and energy.
- Lack of interest in activities.
- Irritability or guilty thoughts.
- Physical aches and pains.
- Suicidal thoughts.

### What student-athletes can do:

- Recognize depression symptoms and seek help from a licensed mental health provider.
- Develop trust and communicate openly with your health care provider.
- Reach out to a trusted friend, coach or athletic administrator or contact The National Suicide Prevention Hotline at 800-273-8255.
- Practice daily self-care, including getting regular sleep, eating healthy, managing stress and seeking support.

### What athletics department staff can do:

- Recognize signs and symptoms of depression.
- Have your athletics department's written mental health referral protocols.
- Work with campus partners to provide access to licensed mental health providers.

Content courtesy of NACAC.

## Anxiety Disorders

Anxiety disorders are the most common mental health issues in the United States. Data from national surveys show that more than 30 percent of student-athletes have experienced overwhelming anxiety. By understanding that anxiety is common and by addressing it, student-athletes can better manage anxiety and its impact on their health and performance.

### Signs and symptoms:

#### EMOTIONAL SYMPTOMS

- Feelings of apprehension or stress.
- Feeling tense or jittery.
- Restlessness or irritability.
- Anticipating the worst and being worried for signs of danger.

#### PHYSICAL SIGNS

- Flushing or racing heart and increase of breath.
- Trembling, lightheadedness and dizziness.
- Headaches, fatigue and insomnia.
- Rapid heartbeat, frequent urination and diarrhea.

### What student-athletes can do:

- Recognize signs and symptoms and seek help from a licensed mental health provider.
- Actively participate in your treatment and develop a plan that works for you.
- Be mindful of triggers and emotions that can impact your anxiety.
- Practice daily self-care, including getting regular sleep, eating healthy, managing stress and seeking support.

### What athletics department staff can do:

- Recognize signs and symptoms of anxiety.
- Work with campus partners to provide access to licensed mental health providers.
- Be mindful of triggers and emotions that can impact student-athlete anxiety.
- Have your athletics department's written mental health referral protocols.

Content courtesy of NACAC.

## Eating Disorders

Some individuals become so preoccupied with food and weight issues that they find it difficult to focus on other aspects of their life. It is important for student-athletes to seek balance in their relationship with food, as this impacts all aspects of physical and mental health.

### Signs and symptoms:

- Obsession with food and calories.
- Denying self of food to the point of starvation.
- Binge eating and purging behaviors.
- Compulsive exercise beyond what is good for sport performance and health.
- Social withdrawal.
- Fear of eating in public.

### What student-athletes can do:

- Assess yourself. It is important to understand how the "diet" may impact each individual's physical and mental health. It is important to seek support with others recovering from an eating disorder.

### What athletics department staff can do:

- Recognize signs and symptoms of eating disorders.
- Partner with campus health care providers and licensed mental health providers to support healthy eating and the prevention and treatment of eating disorders.

Content courtesy of NACAC.

<https://www.ncaa.org/sport-science-institute/mental-health-educational-resources>



# NCAA Mental Health Resources

- ▶ Education modules for student-athletes, coaches, FARs



<https://www.ncaa.org/sport-science-institute/supporting-student-athlete-mental-wellness>

# Innovations Grants

- ▶ \$100,000 in grants annually to support research and data-driven pilot programs to enhance student-athlete psychosocial well-being and mental health (grants have ranged from \$10,000-\$50,000).
- ▶ Since 2014:
  - 632 grant applications, \$16.7 million in funding requests.
  - 32 projects/pilot programs funded, \$600,000 distributed.
- ▶ Proposals have sought funding for:
  - First-year orientation programs
  - Career mentoring/exploration programs
  - Improving campus racial climate
  - Substance abuse prevention
  - Sexual violence prevention
  - Addressing depression & disordered eating
  - Fostering resiliency and mindfulness
  - Transition into and out of college athletics
  - Sleep promotion
  - Positive parent involvement



# Selected Innovations Grant Projects

- ▶ **Athletes Connected** (mental health videos and support groups) Michigan, 2014.  
[www.athletesconnected.org](http://www.athletesconnected.org)
- ▶ **Bodies in Motion** (on-line body image enhancement and disordered eating intervention for male and female SAs) West Virginia, 2016
- ▶ **Injured Athlete Support Group**, Stanford, 2014.
- ▶ **Moving On!** (training program for SAs transitioning out of sport—strategies for nutrition and exercise post-competitive sports, includes trainer and SA handbooks as well as online support) UNCG, 2015 & 2016. [www.athletesmovingon.org](http://www.athletesmovingon.org)
- ▶ **Parent Involvement** (administrator/coach and parent manuals for promoting positive parent involvement in sport; website also created with educational videos and parent modules), Utah State/Purdue/Clark, 2014 & 2016. <http://ncaaparenteducation.com/>
- ▶ **Support for Sport** (online program to help SAs have conversations with peers they believe are struggling with anxiety, depression, substance use, or disordered eating) Springfield College, 2014. [www.supportforsport.org](http://www.supportforsport.org)





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