

***NCAA Student-Athlete
Activism and Racial Justice
Engagement Study***

NCAA Student-Athlete Activism and Racial Justice Engagement Study

In addition to the COVID-19 pandemic, 2020 also saw high levels of engagement in the racial justice movement across the United States and internationally. In early fall, NCAA Research was in the process of designing a follow-up to the spring Student-Athlete Well-Being Survey and decided to expand the questions to examine student-athlete perceptions and experiences in terms of civic engagement, student-athlete activism and racial justice engagement. This report summarizes the study findings from 24,974 student-athletes. The full report can be found [here](#).





CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

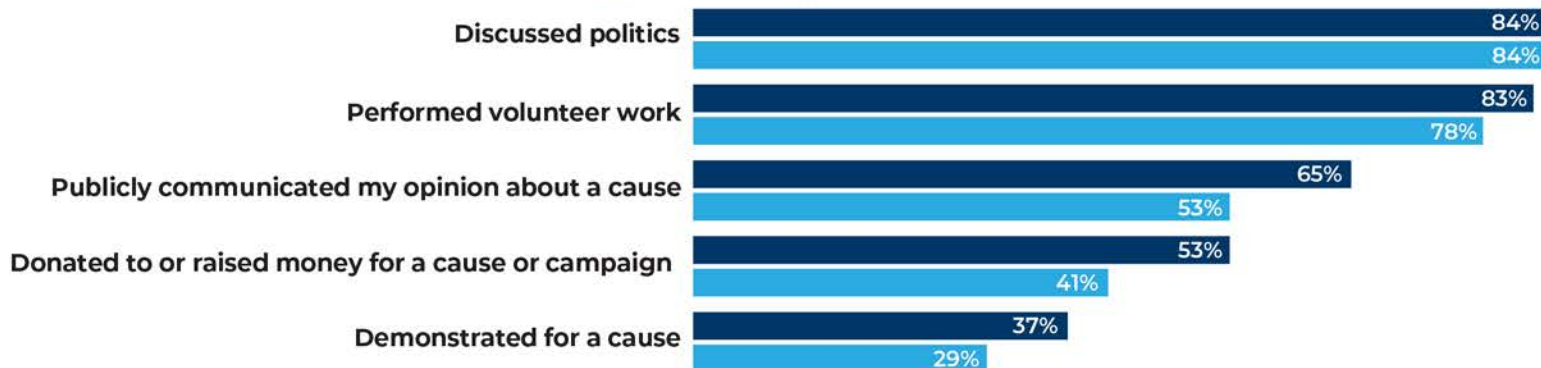
Three-quarters of student-athletes surveyed indicated that it was important to them to be an engaged citizen, and over half believed college athletes have a responsibility to volunteer in the community. Black student-athletes were the most likely to indicate a willingness to take a public stance on a social issue (60%) as compared with Latinx student-athletes (49%), other student-athletes of color (49%) and white student-athletes (41%). A majority believed that their coaches, teammates and athletics department would support them for taking a stance publicly.

More than 80% of student-athletes reported discussing politics and performing volunteer work in the last year, and over a third reported having demonstrated for a cause. Black student-athletes were significantly more likely to have communicated about a cause (77%) or demonstrated for a cause (53%) than their peers across all other racial groups.

Participation in Social and Civic Engagement Activities in the Last Year

(Percent of Participants Who Endorsed "Occasionally" or "Frequently")

■ Women's Sports ■ Men's Sports



Note: Top 2 points on a 3-point scale. "Other" includes American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, other and those who selected multiple racial identities.



Photo courtesy of Louisville Athletics

2020 ELECTION PARTICIPATION

Over 80% of survey respondents indicated intention to vote in the 2020 election. Black women had the highest levels of voting intention (86%) among the demographic groups examined. Additionally, 11% of student-athletes volunteered or intended to volunteer for the 2020 election (e.g., canvassing, registering voters or working at the polls). This was highest among Black student-athletes (19%).



Photo courtesy of Towson Athletics.

2020 Election Participation

(Percent of Participants Who Endorsed "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" by Racial Group)

	I intend to vote in the November 2020 election.	I have or intend to volunteer for this year's election.
Black	82%	19%
Latinx	66%	15%
Other	79%	12%
White	82%	10%

Note: Top 2 points on a 6-point scale. The survey was in the field from Oct. 6, 2020 through Nov. 2, 2020. "Other" includes American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, other and those who selected multiple racial identities.



Photo courtesy of NCCU Athletics.



RACIAL JUSTICE ENGAGEMENT

Nearly 90% of student-athletes surveyed indicated that they had conversations focused on race or racial justice with family or friends within the prior six months. Approximately 80% indicated that they had made an effort to learn more about race and racial justice on their own. Overall, just over half of all participants indicated having conversations with their coaches about race and racial justice. Among Black student-athletes that rate was 67%.

Many student-athletes also publicly participated in the racial justice movement within the prior six months. Over half posted content about race or racial justice on social media and over one-quarter participated in a protest or rally about racial justice. Black student-athletes reported the highest levels of racial justice engagement across all items.

Racial Justice Engagement in the Last 6 Months by Race

(Percent of Participants Who Endorsed "Occasionally" or "Frequently")

	Black	Latinx	Other	White
Had conversations with family or friends focused on race or racial justice	94%	87%	91%	88%
Made an effort to learn more about race or racial justice on my own	89%	83%	86%	80%
Posted or shared content on social networking sites about race or racial justice	83%	67%	68%	51%
Had conversations with coaches focused on race or racial justice	67%	49%	56%	51%
Attended a protest or rally about racial justice	49%	29%	36%	23%
Contributed money to an organization focused on racial justice	43%	33%	39%	28%
Contacted a public official to express my opinion about racial justice	27%	19%	22%	16%

Note: Top 2 points on a 3-point scale. "Other" includes American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, other and those who selected multiple racial identities.



TEAM AND CAMPUS SUPPORT FOR RACIAL JUSTICE ENGAGEMENT

Student-athletes indicated being most comfortable discussing issues of race on campus within their own teams. The highest level of comfort was among teammates (67%), while a majority also reported being comfortable discussing these issues with their coaches (58%). Most participants reported feeling that the student-athlete voice was being taken into account when making efforts to advance racial equity at the campus, conference and national level.

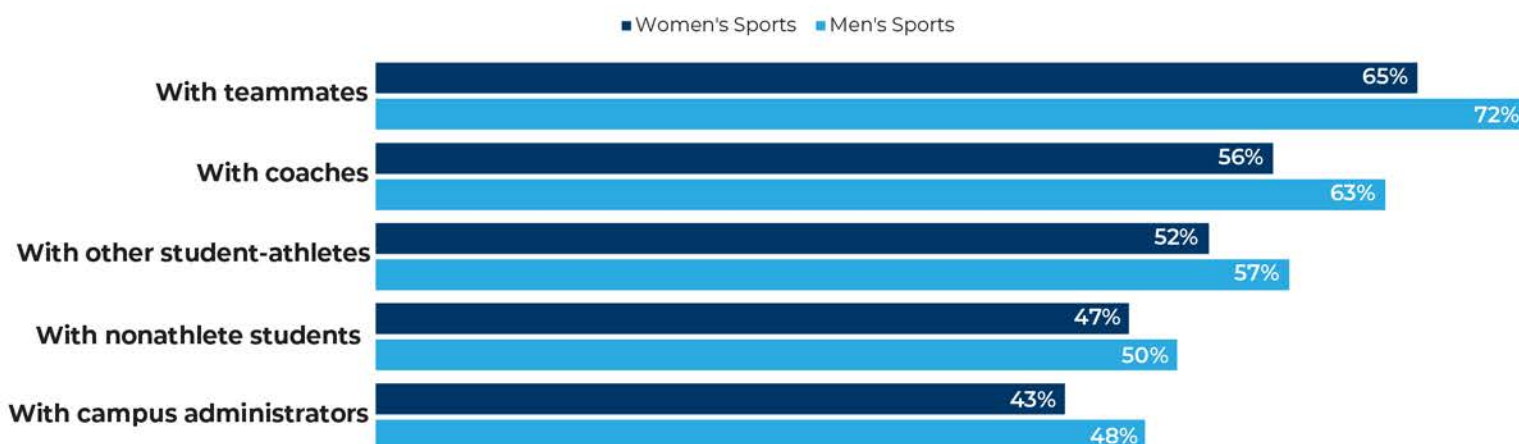
In an open-ended question, participants were asked what more they would like to see their athletics department (staff and coaches) do to address racial justice. Key themes included:

- Listen to student-athlete voices.
- Demonstrate support for student-athletes.
- Take action through:
 - Hosting education sessions and honest conversations.
 - Recruiting and hiring more student-athletes and athletics staff who are Black, Indigenous or people of color.
 - Taking a public stance via statements, departmentwide actions, or social media content that promotes civic engagement and racial justice.

While most comments, within all racial groups, provided suggestions for furthering racial justice engagement, there was a subset of predominantly white survey participants who commented that athletics departments should not play a role in addressing racial justice. Some felt that such engagement could be divisive and silence a group of student-athletes, while others felt such engagement was outside the mission of the athletics department. Thus, conversations and collective actions to promote racial justice may continue to be challenging for some teams and athletics departments.

Participants' Level of Comfort Discussing Issues of Race on Campus

(Percent of Participants Who Responded "Mostly Comfortable" or "Extremely Comfortable")



Note: Top 2 points on a 6-point scale. "Other" includes American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, other and those who selected multiple racial identities.

METHODOLOGY

The NCAA Student-Athlete Activism and Racial Justice Engagement Study survey items were embedded within the NCAA Student-Athlete Well-Being Survey in fall 2020. The survey was designed by NCAA Research in collaboration with the NCAA Sport Science Institute and the NCAA's Division I, II and III Student-Athlete Advisory Committees (SAAC). It was a 15-minute, confidential survey administered online through QuestionPro survey software, designed to be taken via cellphone, tablet or computer. The survey opened Oct. 6, 2020, and closed Nov. 2, 2020. A snowball sampling technique was used. National SAAC representatives forwarded the link through conference and campus SAACs to student-athletes. Conference SAAC liaisons were also made aware of the survey and encouraged student-athletes to participate. In all, 24,974 student-athletes representing all NCAA-member conferences completed the survey. We estimate that 4% of student-athletes in men's sports and 9% of student-athletes in women's sports completed the survey. Response rates varied widely by conference and sport. Women's sports participants and white student-athletes were overrepresented in the sample. Therefore, it is important to examine results disaggregated by gender and race. See full slide deck for a detailed look at response rates by division, conference, sport and race.



