



Trends in NCAA Division I Graduation Rates

December 2023



RESEARCH

Summary

Notes on the Graduation Rates Presented

- All graduation rates presented here are based on completion within six years of entry into college (see federal Student-Right-To-Know Act, 1990).
- The Federal Graduation Rate (FGR) is required by law to be calculated and published for all full-time college students and separately for student-athletes who receive athletically-related aid.
- The federal calculation has long been considered an outdated graduation measure in part due to its failure to account for transfer (transfers-out are counted as non-graduates; transfers-in are not included in the calculation). FGR is best characterized as the percentage of students entering directly from high school who graduate from their initial college.
- FGR, with these limitations, is the only rate for which we can compare students with student-athletes.



Notes on the Graduation Rates Presented

- The Graduation Success Rate (GSR) is a calculation required by the NCAA for all Division I student-athletes. This rate was designed to approximate a true student-centered measure of graduation (the student graduated from any four-year college within the six-year window) by essentially passing likely transfers from one college's cohort to another's cohort. GSR calculations also deal better with circumstances such as mid-year college entry (such entrants are not included in the FGR).
- For both FGR and GSR, four-cohort aggregations are used here for group comparisons or when describing rates in isolation. Single-cohort rates are more appropriate for examining change over time.
- It is typically not appropriate to compare a GSR with an FGR.



2023 Four-Cohort Division I Graduation Rates

(Aggregate six-year graduation rates for 2013-2016 entering cohorts)

	Student-Athletes		Student Body
	GSR	Federal Rate	Federal Rate
DI Overall	90% <small>+1</small>	69% <small>+0</small>	69% <small>+0</small>
DI Men	86% <small>+1</small>	63% <small>+1</small>	66% <small>+0</small>
DI Women	95% <small>+0</small>	75% <small>+0</small>	72% <small>+1</small>

Notes: GSR = Graduation Success Rate. The four-cohort rates reported above are based on the last four single-year cohorts with six-year outcomes available (those first reported in 2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023). Numbers in blue indicate percentage point differences in four-cohort rates from those reported in 2022.



Summary

- The students in the most-recently added cohort (2016 entry) would typically have been in the second semester of their 4th academic year when the COVID-19 pandemic began in March 2020. Most other members of the latest four-cohort reporting group (e.g., 2013-2015 entry) would have been in years 5 or greater of their graduation window at the beginning of the pandemic. Full pandemic-related impacts on graduation rates will not be completely known for several years.
- Overall Division I student-athlete graduation rates (GSR and FGR) and all subgroup rates are at or near their highest-ever levels.
- Since the implementation of Division I academic reform initiatives in the early 2000s, long-term graduation rate increases have been observed. These initiatives included modified initial eligibility and progress-toward-degree standards, as well as application of the Academic Performance Program.



Summary

- Notable increases in single-cohort Graduation Success Rate (GSR) over the 20 years of calculating this rate in Division I:
 - Overall student-athletes — 74% to 91%.
 - Black student-athletes — 56% to 82%.
 - Hispanic/Latino student-athletes — 64% to 89%.
 - Black FBS football student-athletes — 54% to 81%.
 - Black men's basketball student-athletes — 46% to 83%.



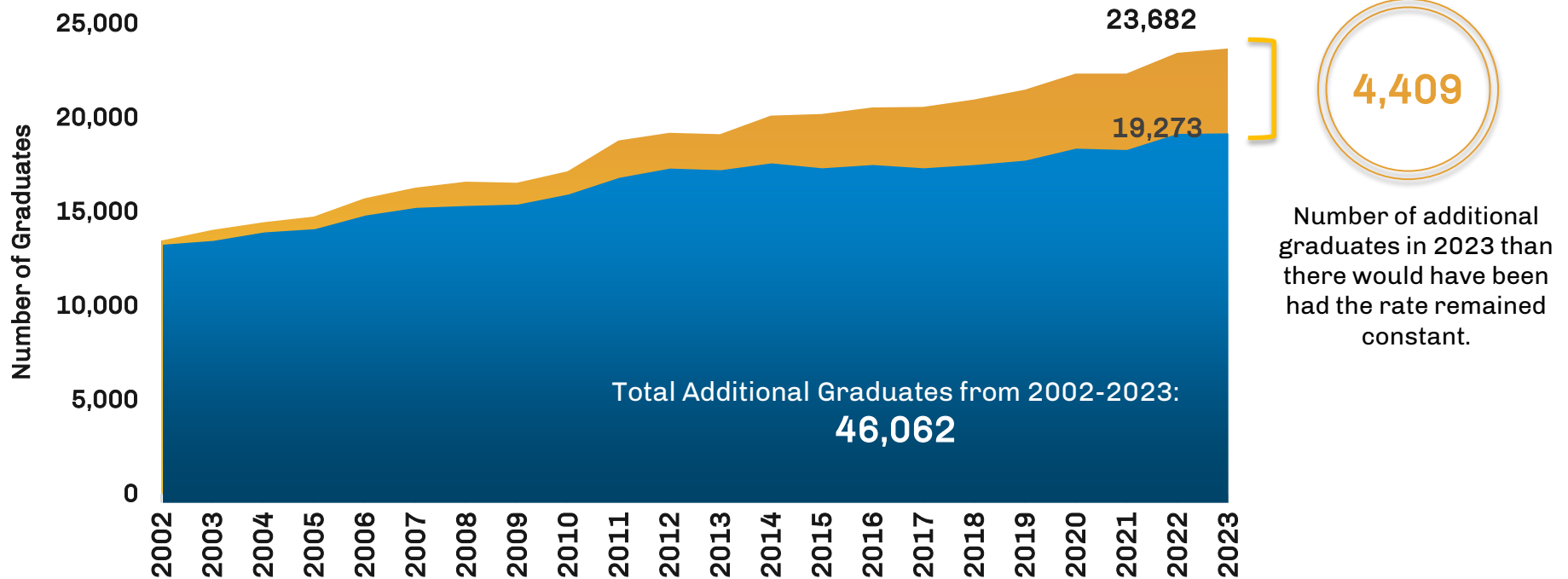
Summary

- Using the Federal Graduation Rate to examine student-athlete vs. student body graduation from initial school in Division I, we see that Black men who are student-athletes have an aggregate federal graduation rate that is 10 percentage points higher than observed among Black men generally at those same schools. The federal rate for Black women favors student-athletes by 12 percentage points.
- Even though Division I has seen an increase in transfer behavior, which negatively impacts the federal graduation rate, many subgroup Federal Graduation Rates continue to trend higher for student-athletes.



Number of Actual Graduates Since 2002 vs. Number Who Would Have Graduated With No Increase in GSR

■ Graduates at 2002 Rate ■ Actual Graduates



Four-Cohort Graduation Success Rates (GSR)

2023 Four-Cohort Division I Graduation Success Rates

(Aggregate six-year graduation rates for 2013-2016 entering cohorts)

Student-Athlete Group	GSR
Overall	90%
Black	81%
Hispanic/Latino	88%
White	94%
Black Men	77%
Hispanic/Latino Men	84%
White Men	91%
Black Women	89%
Hispanic/Latino Women	92%
White Women	97%

2023 Four-Cohort GSR for Division I Women's Sports

(Aggregate six-year graduation rates for 2013-2016 entering cohorts)

SPORT	GSR
Basketball	93%
Bowling	92%
Cross Country/Track	92%
Fencing	98%
Field Hockey	97%
Golf	96%
Gymnastics	98%
Ice Hockey	97%
Lacrosse	98%
Rowing	96%
Skiing	99%
Soccer	96%
Softball	94%
Swimming	97%
Tennis	97%
Volleyball	95%
Water Polo	93%



2023 Four-Cohort GSR for Division I Men's Sports

(Aggregate six-year graduation rates for 2013-2016 entering cohorts)

SPORT	GSR
Baseball	89%
Basketball	85%
Cross Country/Track	84%
Fencing	91%
Football (FBS)	82%
Football (FCS)	79%
Golf	92%
Gymnastics	95%
Ice Hockey	93%
Lacrosse	92%
Rifle	96%
Skiing	94%
Soccer	89%
Swimming	91%
Tennis	93%
Volleyball	90%
Water Polo	89%
Wrestling	86%

2023 Four-Cohort GSR – Division I Football and Basketball

(Aggregate six-year graduation rates for 2013-2016 entering cohorts)

Student-Athlete Group	GSR
Football (FBS)	82%
Black Football (FBS)	79%
White Football (FBS)	92%
Men's Basketball	85%
Black Men's Basketball	82%
White Men's Basketball	93%
Women's Basketball	93%
Black Women's Basketball	90%
White Women's Basketball	97%

Trends in Single-Cohort Graduation Success Rates (GSR)

Division I Graduation Success Rate Trends

(Differences in single-cohort six-year graduation rates since introduction of GSR calculation)

Student-Athlete Group	2002 GSR	2023 GSR
Overall	74%	91%
Black	56%	82%
Hispanic/Latino	64%	89%
White	81%	95%
Black Men	51%	79%
Hispanic/Latino Men	56%	85%
White Men	76%	92%
Black Women	71%	89%
Hispanic/Latino Women	79%	93%
White Women	88%	97%

Division I GSR Trends in Football and Basketball

(Differences in single-cohort six-year graduation rates since introduction of GSR calculation)

Student-Athlete Group	2002 GSR	2023 GSR
Football (FBS)	63%	84%
Black Football (FBS)	54%	81%
White Football (FBS)	76%	94%
Men's Basketball	56%	86%
Black Men's Basketball	46%	83%
White Men's Basketball	76%	94%
Women's Basketball	80%	93%
Black Women's Basketball	70%	89%
White Women's Basketball	87%	98%

GSR Trends for Division I Women's Sports

(Differences in single-cohort six-year graduation rates since introduction of GSR calculation)

SPORT	2002 GSR	2023 GSR
Basketball	80%	93%
Cross Country/Track	82%	92%
Field Hockey	93%	98%
Golf	88%	96%
Gymnastics	93%	98%
Lacrosse	94%	98%
Rowing	90%	97%
Soccer	86%	97%
Softball	82%	95%
Swimming	91%	97%
Tennis	86%	96%
Volleyball	83%	95%

Note: Only those sports with more than 150 Division I graduates in 2023 are shown.

GSR Trends for Division I Men's Sports

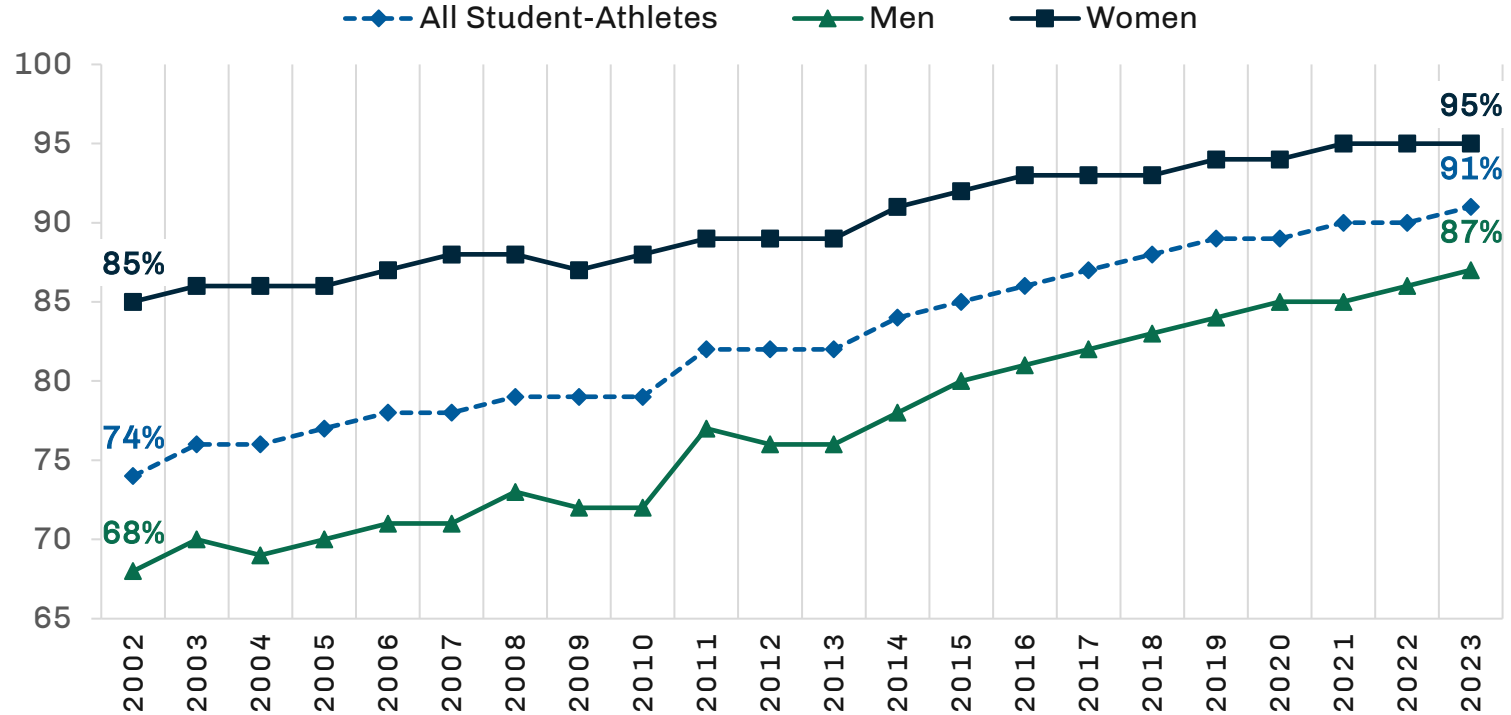
(Differences in single-cohort six-year graduation rates since introduction of GSR calculation)

SPORT	2002 GSR	2023 GSR
Baseball	66%	91%
Basketball	56%	86%
Cross Country/Track	72%	86%
Football (FBS)	63%	84%
Football (FCS)	62%	80%
Golf	77%	95%
Ice Hockey	78%	96%
Lacrosse	91%	94%
Soccer	75%	90%
Swimming	81%	92%
Tennis	85%	95%
Wrestling	61%	88%

Note: Only those sports with more than 150 Division I graduates in 2023 are shown.

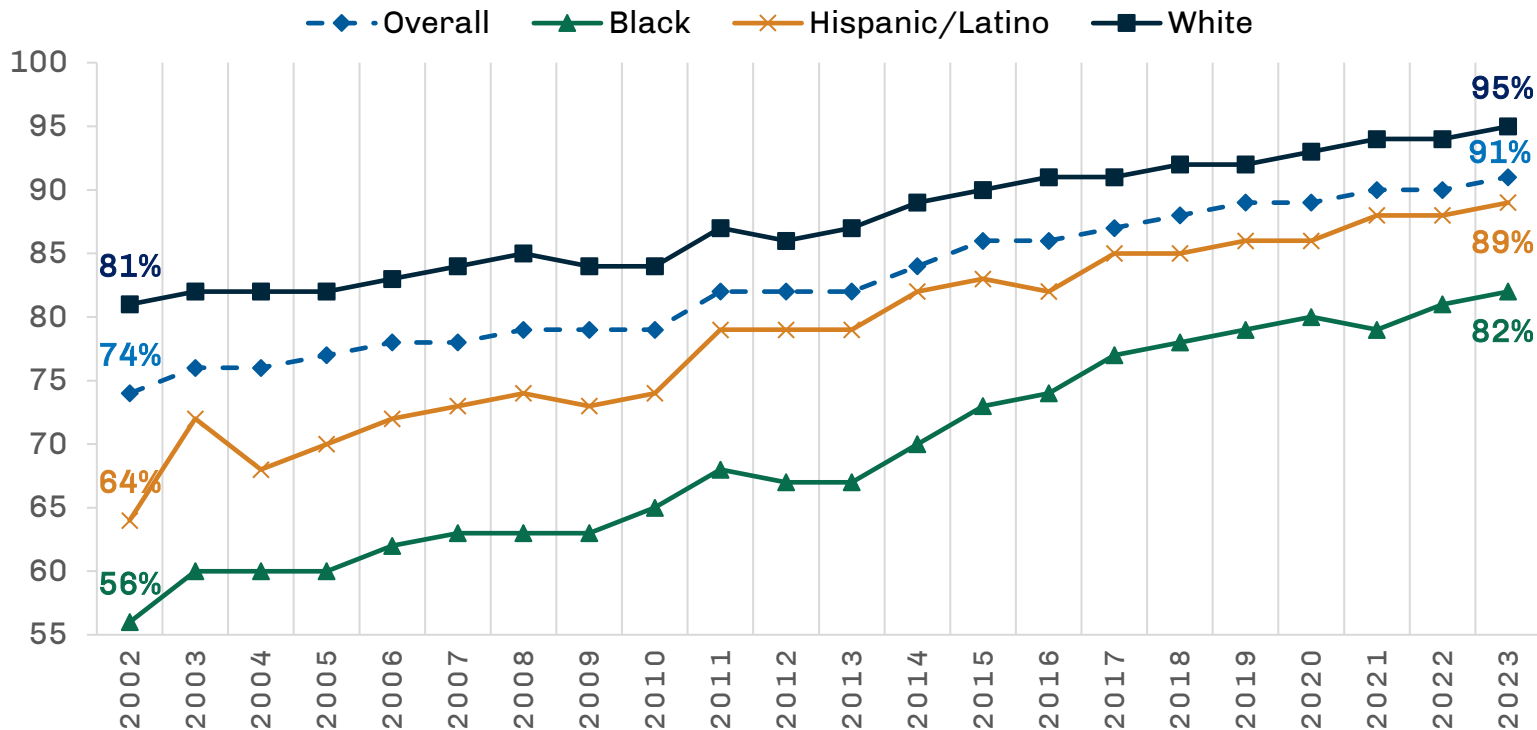
Graduation Success Rate (GSR) Trends of Division I Student-Athletes

(Single-cohort six-year graduation rates)



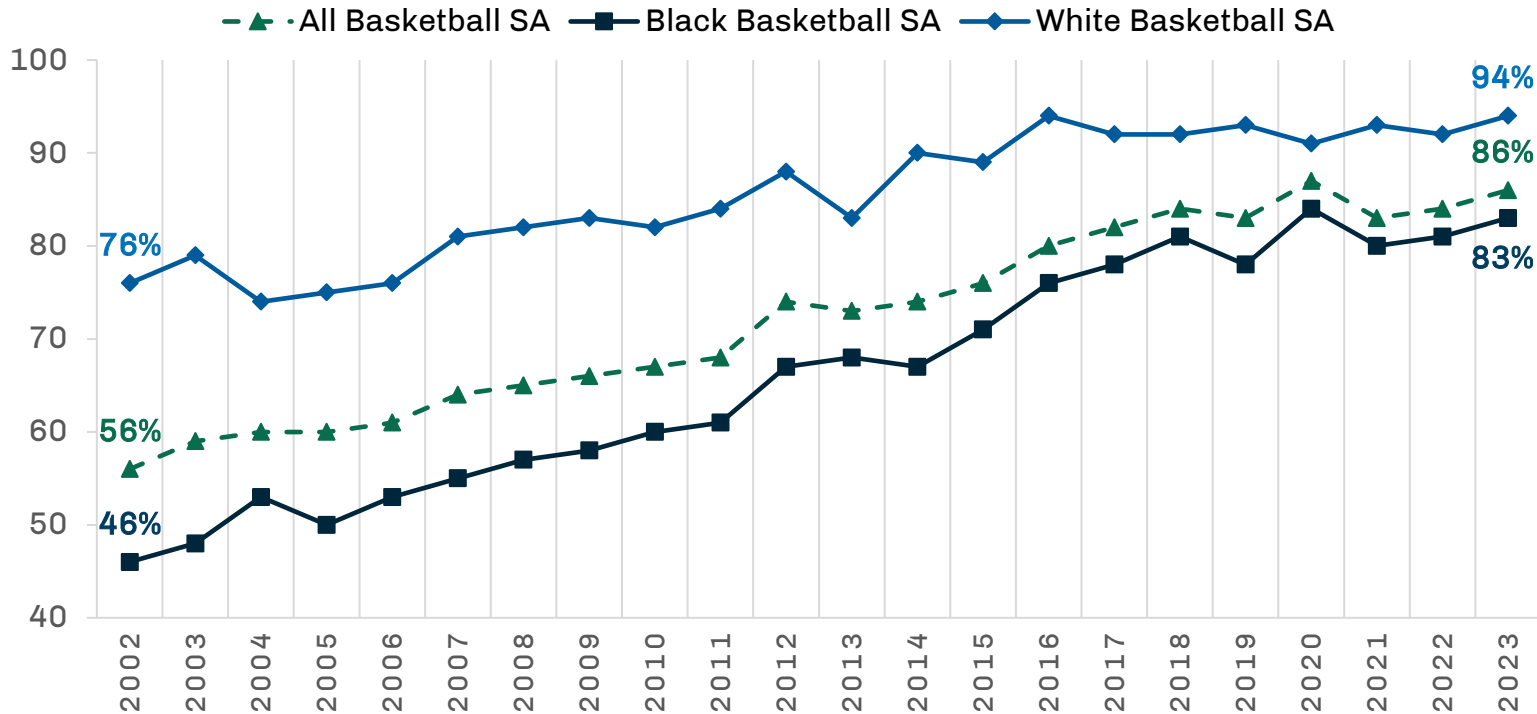
Graduation Success Rate (GSR) Trends of Division I Student-Athletes

(Single-cohort six-year graduation rates by race/ethnicity)



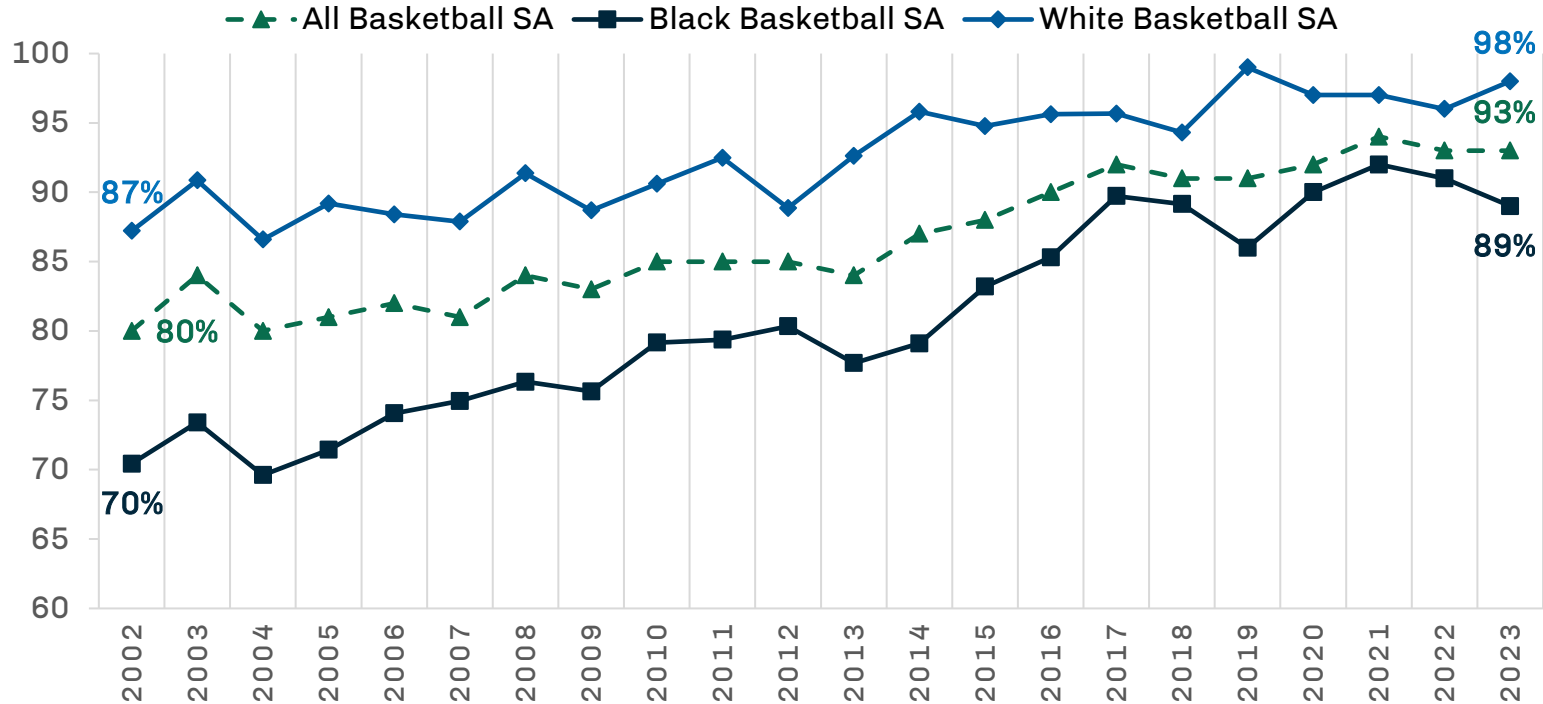
Graduation Success Rate (GSR) Trends of Division I Men's Basketball Players

(Single-cohort six-year graduation rates by race/ethnicity)



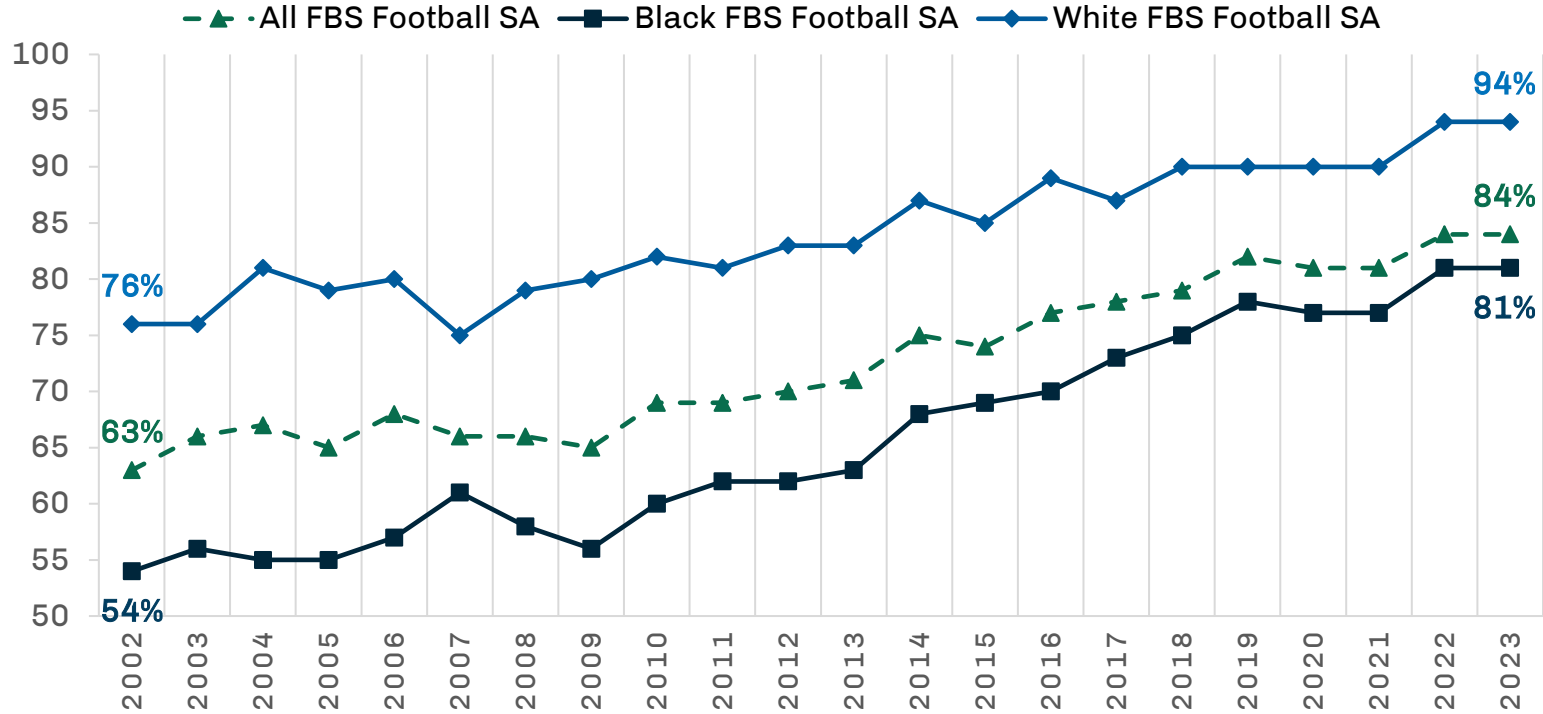
Graduation Success Rate (GSR) Trends of Division I Women's Basketball Players

(Single-cohort six-year graduation rates by race/ethnicity)



Graduation Success Rate (GSR) Trends of FBS Football Players

(Single-cohort six-year graduation rates by race/ethnicity)



Federal Graduation Rates



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2023 Comparison of Four-Cohort Federal Graduation Rates (FGR) of Division I Student-Athletes with Student Body

(Aggregate six-year FGR for 2013-2016 entering cohorts)

Population Group	Student-Athlete Federal Rate	Student Body Federal Rate
Overall	69%	69%
Men	63%	66%
Women	75%	72%
Black	59%	51%
Hispanic/Latino	66%	64%
White	74%	72%
Black Men	55%	45%
Hispanic/Latino Men	60%	59%
White Men	68%	69%
Black Women	67%	55%
Hispanic/Latino Women	72%	67%
White Women	78%	74%

Division I FGR Trends for Student-Athletes

(Differences in single-cohort six-year Federal Graduation Rates)

Student-Athlete Group	1991 Federal Rate	2023 Federal Rate
Overall	52%	69%
Black	35%	59%
Hispanic/Latino	43%	66%
White	59%	74%
Black Men	33%	55%
Hispanic/Latino Men	40%	60%
White Men	55%	69%
Black Women	45%	67%
Hispanic/Latino Women	48%	72%
White Women	66%	78%

Division I FGR Trends in Football and Basketball

(Differences in single-cohort six-year Federal Graduation Rates)

Student-Athlete Group	1991 Federal Rate	2023 Federal Rate
Football (FBS)	47%	64%
Black Football (FBS)	35%	60%
White Football (FBS)	56%	79%
Men's Basketball	38%	44%
Black Men's Basketball	29%	41%
White Men's Basketball	53%	53%
Women's Basketball	57%	64%
Black Women's Basketball	42%	61%
White Women's Basketball	66%	70%

Definitions and Methods

Methods

- Detailed information on graduation reporting requirements and graduation rate calculations, as well as links to school reports and an interactive analysis dashboard, can be found on the NCAA research website (graduation rates tab) or at ncaa.org/about/resources/research/graduation-rates.
- Generally, four-cohort aggregations are used for reporting rates in isolation; single-cohort rates are used for examining trends over time.
- The years 2020-2023 refer to the reporting years of the cohorts that entered college in 2013-2016. In the 2023 reporting year, the 2016-17 entering cohort was added; in the 2022 reporting year, the 2015-16 entering cohort was added, etc.
- Schools can submit student-athlete outcome adjustments for the past four years; all updates are reflected in this report and on the interactive analysis dashboard.



Federal Graduation Rate Calculation

- The Federal Graduation Rate is federally mandated reporting of student body and student-athlete (if on athletics aid) graduation from an initial college/university. The rate essentially measures retention at that school.
- Graduation must occur within six years of initial entry.
- The federal rate makes no accommodation for transfers into or out of a school. Transfers out are recorded as academic failures. Transfers into the school are not tracked.
- The federal rate is the only published rate that allows a direct comparison between student-athletes and the general student body.



Graduation Success Rate Calculation

- This graduation metric was developed by NCAA presidents.
- The calculation is mandated for student-athletes only. It should not be compared with the federal rate.
- Graduation must occur within six years of initial entry.
- The GSR is more inclusive than the federal rate because it includes transfers into the school, midyear enrollees and nonscholarship students at schools that do not offer athletics aid.
- Student-athletes who leave school while academically eligible to compete are removed from the calculation (assumed transfers passed on to another school's cohort). Student-athletes who leave school while ineligible to compete are coded as nongraduates (even though many are known to transfer). Both assumptions are imperfect but lead to a graduation rate that better approximates a true student-centered rate (student earns a degree from some college within six years of entering higher education).



Comparison of Graduation Success Rate and Federal Rate Cohorts

(2020-2023 Reporting Cohorts)

	Federal Rate	GSR
Enrolled (Under Federal Definition)	97,089	97,089
Enrolled as Freshman in January	0	4,056
Two-Year College Transfers	0	10,996
Four-Year College Transfers	0	9,498
Nonscholarship Athletes (Only at Schools Not Offering Aid)	0	11,650
Total Enrolled	97,089	133,289 (+37%)
Allowable Exclusions (Death, Military, Church Mission, etc.)	228	328
Left Eligible	0	27,436
Participants on Teams No Longer Sponsored by School	0	1,862
Total Denominator	96,861	103,663 (+7%)



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