



***NCAA Student-Athlete
Well-Being Survey
(Fall 2020)***

NCAA Student-Athlete Well-Being Study

As a follow-up to the NCAA Student-Athlete Well-Being Survey (Spring 2020), NCAA Research collaborated with the NCAA Sport Science Institute and the NCAA's Division I, II and III Student-Athlete Advisory Committees to design and distribute a similar survey in fall 2020. The survey examined the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the physical and mental well-being of 24,974 student-athletes. The full report can be found [here](#).



Photo courtesy of Mountain West Conference



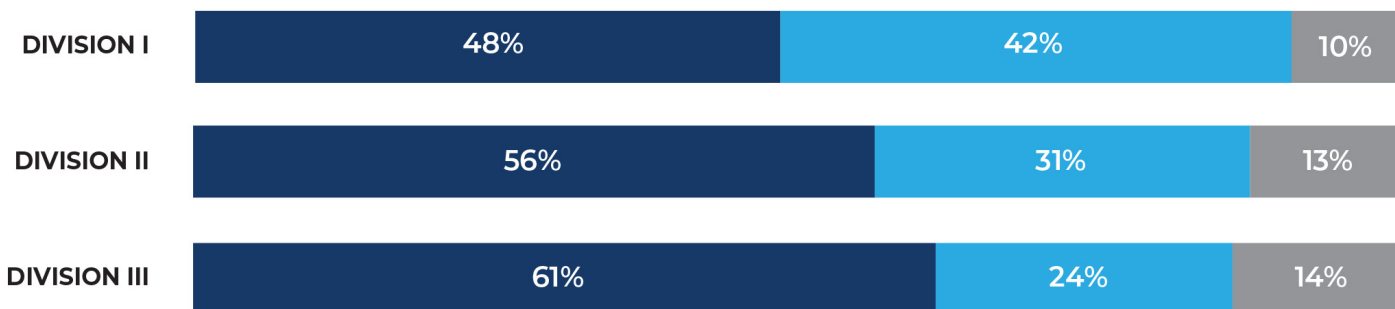
CAMPUS LIVING AND LEARNING AMID THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Academic experiences and mental well-being were related to student-athletes' ability to return to campus and take in-person classes in the fall 2020 academic term. Nearly 90% of student-athletes surveyed across divisions reported living on campus or in their college community and 60% reported attending a blend of virtual and in-person classes in the fall. Fall campus living and learning experiences differed by NCAA division. These findings are drastically different from the spring study, where nearly 80% of respondents were living away from campus with parents, family or a significant other at the time of survey (April 2020) and nearly all student-athletes had moved to online-only education.

Knowing how to access physical and mental health care increased in the fall, while perceptions of food security and confidence in managing personal exposure to COVID-19 decreased from spring levels. Similar to spring survey results, racial disparities were reported in food security and access to health care.

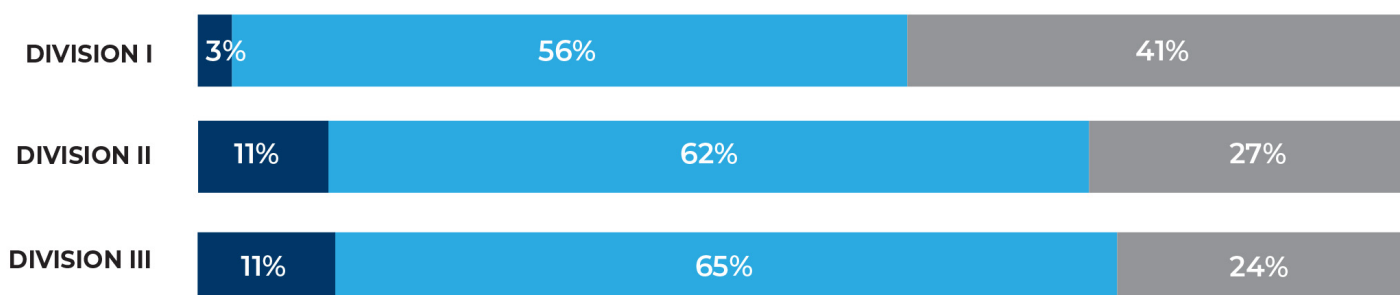
Living Arrangements

■ On campus ■ Off campus in college town ■ In another town



Learning Environment

■ Fully in-person ■ Hybrid (virtual and in-person) ■ Fully virtual



MENTAL HEALTH CONCERNS

Student-athletes reported fewer sleep difficulties and lower levels of loneliness, loss, anger and sadness in fall 2020 than at the outset of the pandemic. However, similar to spring findings, elevated rates of mental exhaustion, anxiety, hopelessness and feelings of being depressed were reported. Mental health concerns remained highest among demographic subgroups typically displaying higher rates of mental distress (for example, women, student-athletes of color, those on the queer spectrum, those living alone or away from campus and those reporting family economic hardship). Student-athletes in their senior year and those attending classes fully virtually displayed heightened mental health concerns in the fall, as well. In most instances, the rates of reported mental health concerns experienced within the last month were 1.5 to two times higher than have been historically reported by NCAA student-athletes in pre-pandemic studies.

Mental Health Concerns by Learning Environment

(Percent of Participants Who Endorsed “Constantly” or “Most Every Day”)

	<i>Fully virtual</i>	<i>Hybrid (virtual/in-person)</i>	<i>Fully in-person</i>
Felt overwhelmed by all you had to do	45%	42%	40%
Felt exhausted (not from physical activity)	35%	32%	31%
Experienced sleep difficulties	26%	24%	21%
Felt overwhelming anxiety	25%	22%	19%
Felt very lonely	23%	16%	14%
Felt sad	21%	17%	15%
Felt things were hopeless	17%	13%	12%
Felt a sense of loss	14%	10%	8%
Felt so depressed that it was difficult to function	10%	7%	6%
Felt overwhelming anger	9%	6%	7%

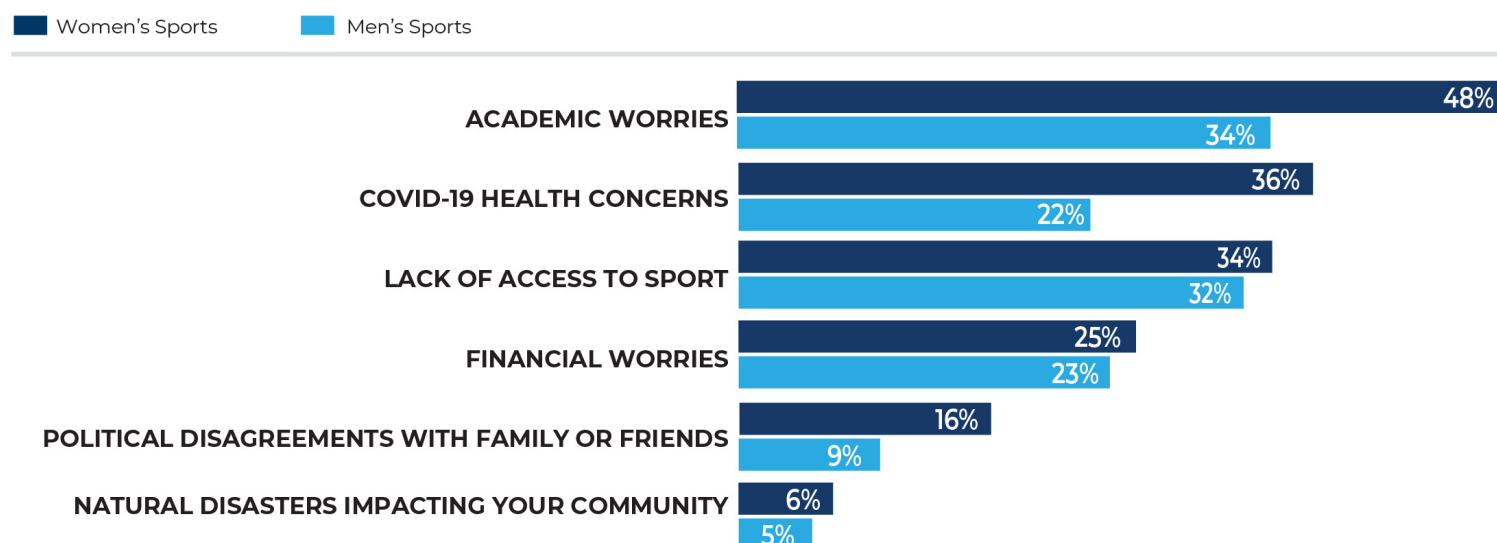
Note: Participants not enrolled in fall 2020 classes excluded.

MENTAL HEALTH CONCERNS

Student-athletes noted academic worries, lack of access to sport, COVID-19 health concerns and financial worries as the top factors negatively impacting their mental health in fall 2020. Women cited COVID-19 health concerns and political disagreements with family or friends 1.5 to two times the rate of men, respectively. Many student-athletes of color cited personal experiences of racism or racial trauma within the last month as negatively impacting their mental health, with levels of endorsement from Black student-athletes more than twice that of other athletes of color.

Factors Negatively Impacting Student-Athlete Mental Health During the Past Month

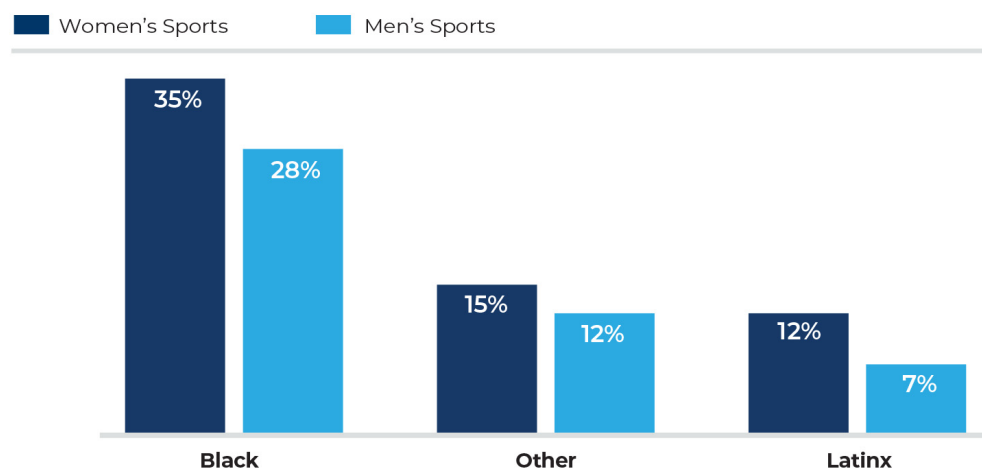
(Percent of Participants Who Responded "Agree" or "Strongly Agree")



Note: Top 2 points on a 6-point scale.

Personal Experiences of Racism or Racial Trauma Impacting Student-Athlete Mental Health in the Month Before the Survey

(Percent of BIPOC Participants Who Responded "Agree" or "Strongly Agree")



Note: Top 2 points on a 6-point scale.

BIPOC refers to Black, Indigenous and people of color. "Other" includes those who selected American Indian/Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, other, and multiple racial identities.



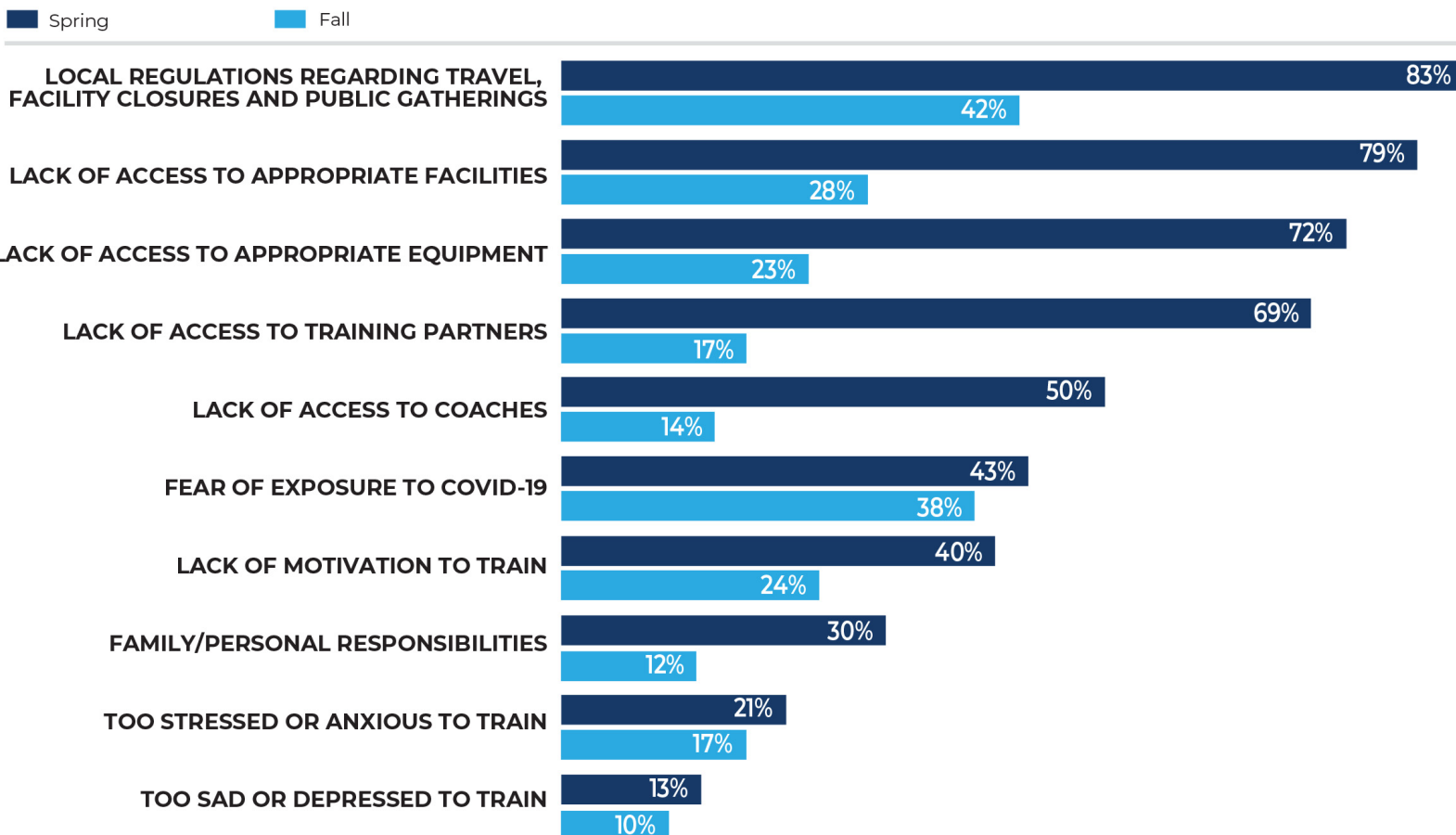
Photo courtesy of Wabash Athletics

BARRIERS TO ATHLETICS TRAINING

With many student-athletes returning to campus and local restrictions on facility use lifted, reported barriers to training were fewer during fall as compared with spring. Slightly more than 80% of student-athletes across divisions reported they were training with their team to some degree at the time of survey. However, the pandemic continued to result in notable training challenges, with more than 40% of student-athletes citing local regulations and one quarter citing lack of access to appropriate facilities and equipment as barriers to their fall training. As we saw in spring, student-athletes continued to indicate that emotional barriers impacted their ability to train, including a fear of exposure to COVID-19, lack of motivation, feelings of stress or anxiety, and sadness or depression. Similar to spring findings, student-athletes of color were more likely than white student-athletes to cite fear of exposure to COVID-19 and family/personal responsibilities as barriers to training.

Barriers to Athletics Training

(Percent of Participants Who “Agree” or “Strongly Agree”)



Note: Top 2 points on a 6-point scale. Those unable to train due to injury were excluded from this item.

COVID TESTING AND PRECAUTIONS

Student-athlete COVID-19 testing experiences varied by division in fall 2020. Division I student-athletes reported being tested more frequently than those in Divisions II and III.

Since the start of the fall 2020 term, 37% of student-athletes reported having had to isolate or quarantine due to COVID-related symptoms, exposure or campus outbreak. Over half (51%) of survey respondents reported having close friends or family test positive and 9% reported having someone close to them hospitalized or die as a result of COVID-19. Black and Latinx student-athletes were twice as likely to report someone close to them being hospitalized or dying as a result of COVID-19 (14% and 13%, respectively) as compared with white student-athletes (7%).

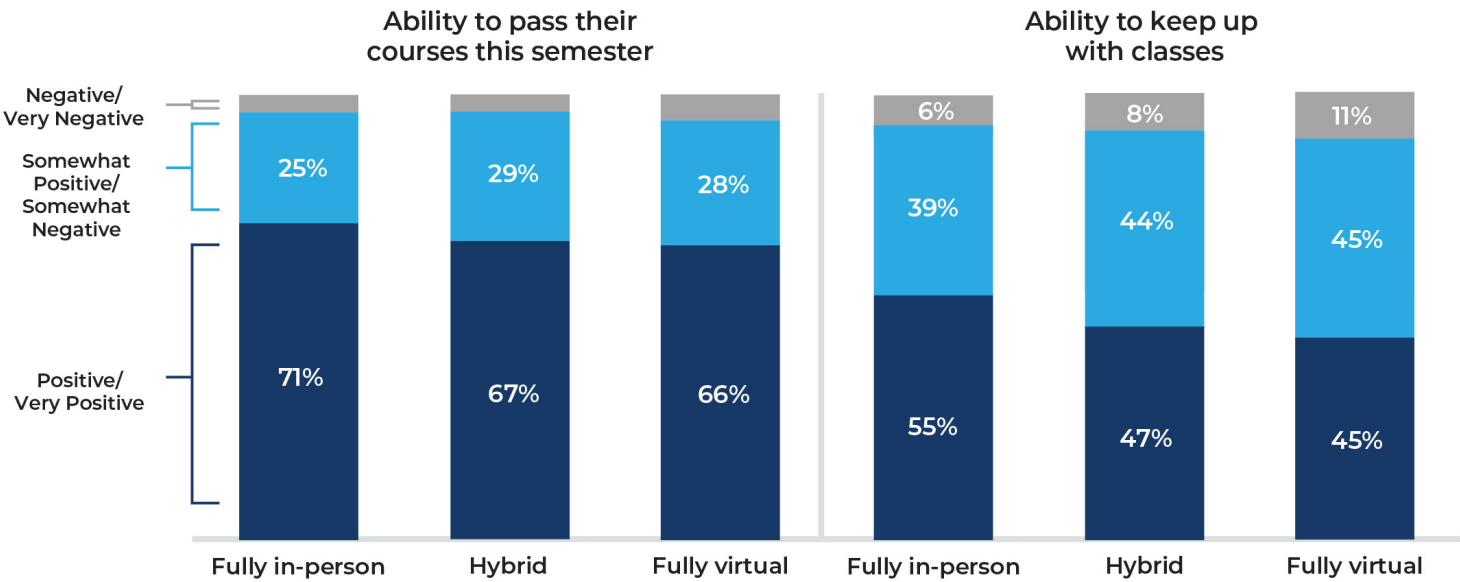
Nearly two-thirds of student-athletes reported almost always following social distancing guidelines, including masking, maintaining physical distance and avoiding large gatherings. This varied by gender, race/ethnicity and division.



IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON ACADEMICS

Fewer student-athletes indicated feeling positive about their ability to keep up with and pass their fall courses as compared with spring. Decreases were most notable among women (down 6 percentage points in both items). Student-athletes attending classes fully virtually in the fall were less likely to feel positive about their ability to keep up with and pass their classes.

Feelings about ...



Note: Participants not enrolled in fall 2020 classes excluded.





IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON GRADUATION AND CAREER PLANNING

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to modified graduation timelines and negatively impacted the career planning of seniors. Among seniors, 18% of men and 12% of women indicated they expect a delayed graduation date, and nearly half of all seniors reported losing or opting out of a job or internship as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. In terms of career preparation, 62% of seniors felt the pandemic negatively impacted their career planning.



DESIRED RESOURCES

Student-athletes indicated greatest interest in receiving NCAA resources that will prepare them for life after sport, including skills transferable from sports to career, leadership training, financial literacy and career planning. Student-athletes were asked how athletics staff and coaches could continue to support their physical and mental well-being. Suggestions fell into five key themes:

- Attend to physical health when reacclimating to sport.
- Continue to provide workouts for those not actively competing/practicing.
- Establish or maintain regular coach-athlete team/individual check-ins and peer support.
- Make modifications that reflect the impact of COVID-19 on individual and team well-being.
- Prioritize student-athlete mental health.

Desired Educational Resources from the NCAA

(Percent of Participants Who Responded "Very Interested" in Receiving Resource)

	Men's Sports	Women's Sports
Preparing for life after sport	45%	51%
Sports to career transferable skills	45%	46%
Leadership skills training	34%	38%
Personal branding	32%	27%
Financial awareness/literacy	30%	29%
Career planning	29%	29%
Health and safety information related to COVID-19	18%	26%
Diversity and inclusion	17%	27%



METHODOLOGY

The NCAA Student-Athlete Well-Being Survey (Fall 2020) was an online survey that examined the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the physical and mental well-being of student-athletes. It was a follow-up to the NCAA Student-Athlete Well-Being Survey (Spring 2020). The survey was designed by NCAA Research in collaboration with the NCAA Sport Science Institute and the NCAA Division I, II and III Student-Athlete Advisory Committees (SAACs). The 15-minute, confidential survey was administered online using QuestionPro survey software and 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 NCAA men and 9% of NCAA women completed the survey. Response rates varied widely by conference and sport. Women and white student-athletes were overrepresented in the sample. Therefore, it is important to examine results disaggregated by gender and race. See the [full slide deck](#) for a detailed look at response rates by division, conference, sport and race.



