



# Comparing the Mental Well-Being of Student-Athletes and Other Students at NCAA Colleges

September 2022



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# Methods

- ▶ Using data from the American College Health Association's National College Health Assessment IIc (ACHA-NCHA IIc), we examined self-reported mental health concerns of NCAA student-athletes in comparison with their nonathlete peers.
- ▶ The ACHA-NCHA is a semi-annual survey of college students that covers several mental and physical health topics. Institutions have authority over sampling, survey method and time of administration. The ACHA-NCHA IIc instrument was used from fall 2015-spring 2019 and was replaced by the ACHA-NCHA III in Fall 2019.
- ▶ The data used in this report span three administrations from spring 2018 through spring 2019. However, only one administration from each NCAA-member school was part of the dataset to avoid including participants multiple times in the sample. An institution's selected survey administration was that which had the largest sample of varsity athletes. For example, if the survey results from University A included 85 varsity athletes in spring 2018, 93 in fall 2018 and 77 in spring 2019, only University A's results from fall 2018 were included in the dataset.
- ▶ Through a data-sharing agreement with the ACHA, the 2019-20 NCAA primary division of each participant's institution was merged into the dataset before it was deidentified and shared with the NCAA.
- ▶ To compare student-athletes to their nonathlete peers, we further limited the sample to full-time undergraduate students, ages 18-24, attending NCAA-member institutions. The sample contained 106,374 nonathletes and 9,057 self-identified varsity athletes.



## ACHA-NCHA Data Disclaimer

- ▶ *The opinions, findings, and conclusions presented/reported in this article/presentation are those of the author(s), and are in no way meant to represent the corporate opinions, views, or policies of the American College Health Association (ACHA). ACHA does not warrant nor assume any liability or responsibility for the accuracy, completeness, or usefulness of any information presented in this article/presentation.*



# **Mental Well-Being Comparison Data**



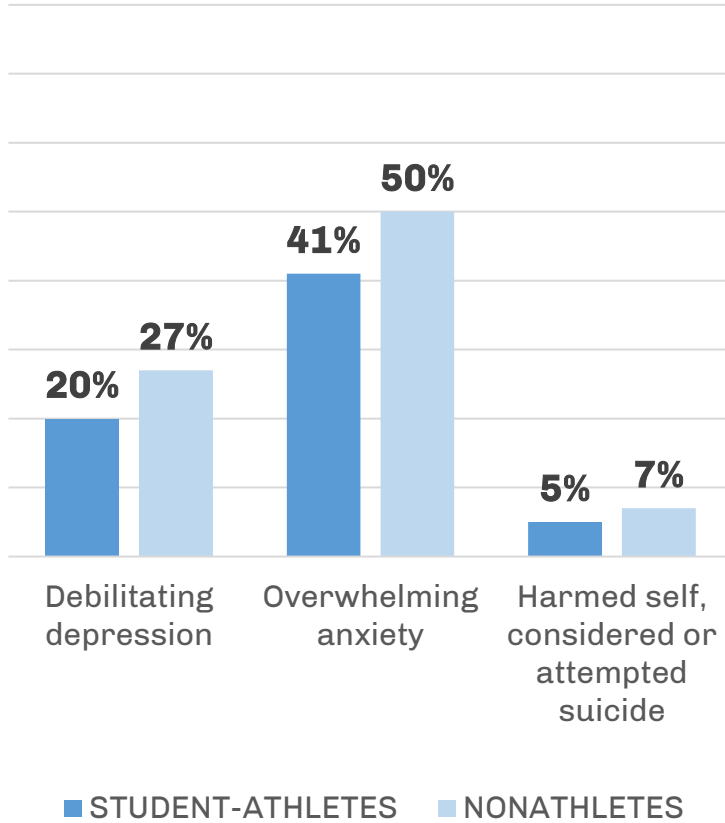
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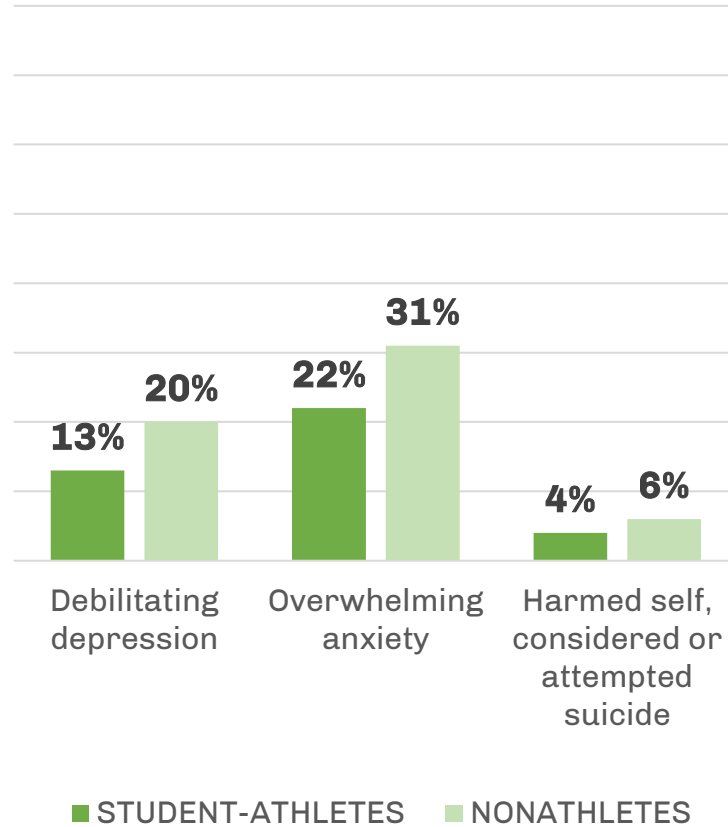
# Mental Well-Being, Comparison Data

## (Experienced Within the Previous 30 Days)

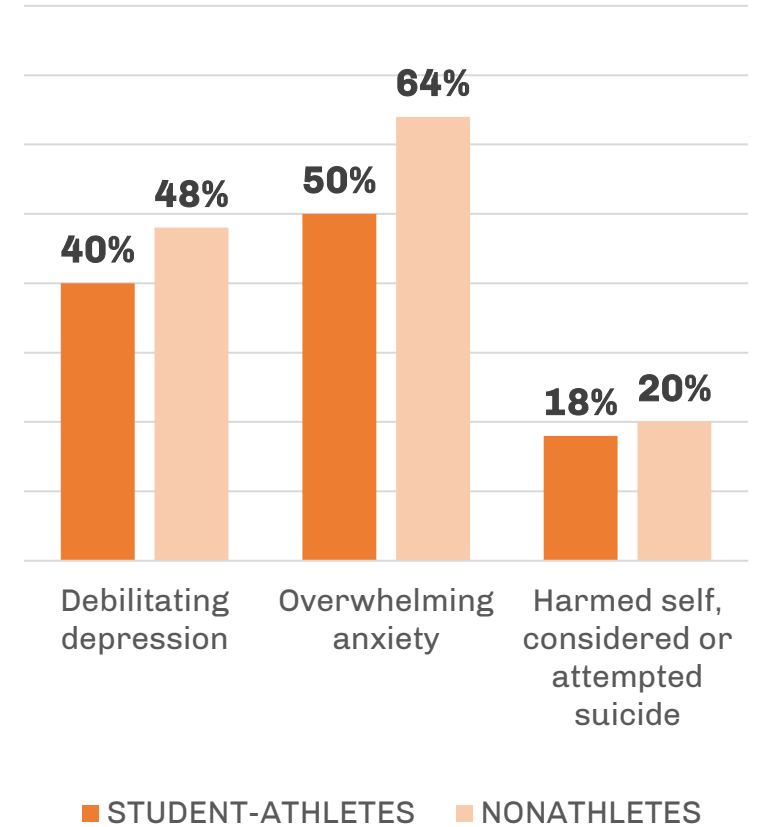
### FEMALE



### MALE



### NON-BINARY



**Note: Number of athletes in the sample is 5,803 females, 3,033 males and 173 non-binary participants. Non-binary is an ACHA computed variable that includes participants who identify as transgender on one question and/or those who identify with a gender that does not match their sex at birth (2 separate questions).**

# Comparison of Mental Health Concerns Between Athletes and Nonathletes

(Percent of Participants Who Endorsed “Yes, in the Last 30 Days” or More Often)

	Female		Male		Non-Binary	
	Nonathletes (N=73,572)	Athletes (N=5,803)	Nonathletes (N=29,200)	Athletes (N=3,033)	Nonathletes (N=3,166)	Athletes (N=173)
Felt overwhelmed by all you had to do	78%	74%	61%	52%	80%	68%
Felt mentally exhausted	76%	68%	61%	49%	80%	68%
Felt sad	52%	46%	38%	28%	66%	53%
Felt overwhelming anxiety	50%	41%	31%	22%	64%	50%
Felt very lonely	48%	41%	38%	26%	63%	46%
Felt things were hopeless	37%	28%	28%	19%	53%	42%
Felt so depressed it was difficult to function	27%	20%	20%	13%	48%	40%
Felt overwhelming anger	25%	22%	20%	17%	35%	33%
Harmed self, considered or attempted suicide	7%	5%	6%	4%	20%	18%

\*Nonathletes are full-time undergraduate students between the ages of 18-24 attending NCAA-member institutions who indicated that they were not varsity athletes. Non-binary is an ACHA computed variable that includes participants who identify as transgender on one question and/or those who identify with a gender that does not match their sex at birth (2 separate questions).

# **Mental Well-Being Comparison Data by NCAA Division**



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# Comparison of Mental Health Concerns Between Athletes and Nonathletes

(Percent of Division I Participants Who Endorsed “Yes, in the Last 30 Days” or More Often)

	Female		Male	
	Nonathletes (N=44,814)	Athletes (N=2,004)	Nonathletes (N=19,270)	Athletes (N=940)
Felt overwhelmed by all you had to do	78%	71%	61%	51%
Felt mentally exhausted	75%	65%	61%	48%
Felt sad	52%	47%	37%	30%
Felt overwhelming anxiety	49%	41%	30%	21%
Felt very lonely	48%	42%	38%	28%
Felt things were hopeless	36%	29%	28%	20%
Felt so depressed it was difficult to function	27%	20%	19%	13%
Felt overwhelming anger	25%	23%	19%	17%
Harmed self, considered or attempted suicide	7%	5%	6%	4%
*Nonathletes are full-time undergraduate students between the ages of 18-24 attending NCAA-member institutions who indicated that they were not varsity athletes.				



# Comparison of Mental Health Concerns Between Athletes and Nonathletes

(Percent of Division II Participants Who Endorsed “Yes, in the Last 30 Days” or More Often)

	Female		Male	
	Nonathletes (N=14,327)	Athletes (N=1,393)	Nonathletes (N=4,554)	Athletes (N=714)
Felt overwhelmed by all you had to do	77%	72%	58%	47%
Felt mentally exhausted	74%	65%	58%	43%
Felt sad	51%	44%	37%	23%
Felt overwhelming anxiety	51%	38%	32%	19%
Felt very lonely	46%	37%	37%	21%
Felt things were hopeless	35%	29%	28%	17%
Felt so depressed it was difficult to function	28%	21%	20%	13%
Felt overwhelming anger	28%	24%	21%	17%
Harmed self, considered or attempted suicide	7%	4%	6%	3%
*Nonathletes are full-time undergraduate students between the ages of 18-24 attending NCAA-member institutions who indicated that they were not varsity athletes.				

# Comparison of Mental Health Concerns Between Athletes and Nonathletes

(Percent of Division III Participants Who Endorsed “Yes, in the Last 30 Days” or More Often)

	Female		Male	
	Nonathletes (N=14,431)	Athletes (N=2,406)	Nonathletes (N=5,376)	Athletes (N=1,379)
Felt overwhelmed by all you had to do	80%	77%	63%	55%
Felt mentally exhausted	78%	71%	63%	53%
Felt sad	55%	47%	41%	30%
Felt overwhelming anxiety	52%	42%	33%	23%
Felt very lonely	51%	42%	41%	28%
Felt things were hopeless	39%	28%	29%	19%
Felt so depressed it was difficult to function	28%	19%	21%	14%
Felt overwhelming anger	25%	19%	20%	16%
Harmed self, considered or attempted suicide	8%	6%	6%	3%
*Nonathletes are full-time undergraduate students between the ages of 18-24 attending NCAA-member institutions who indicated that they were not varsity athletes.				

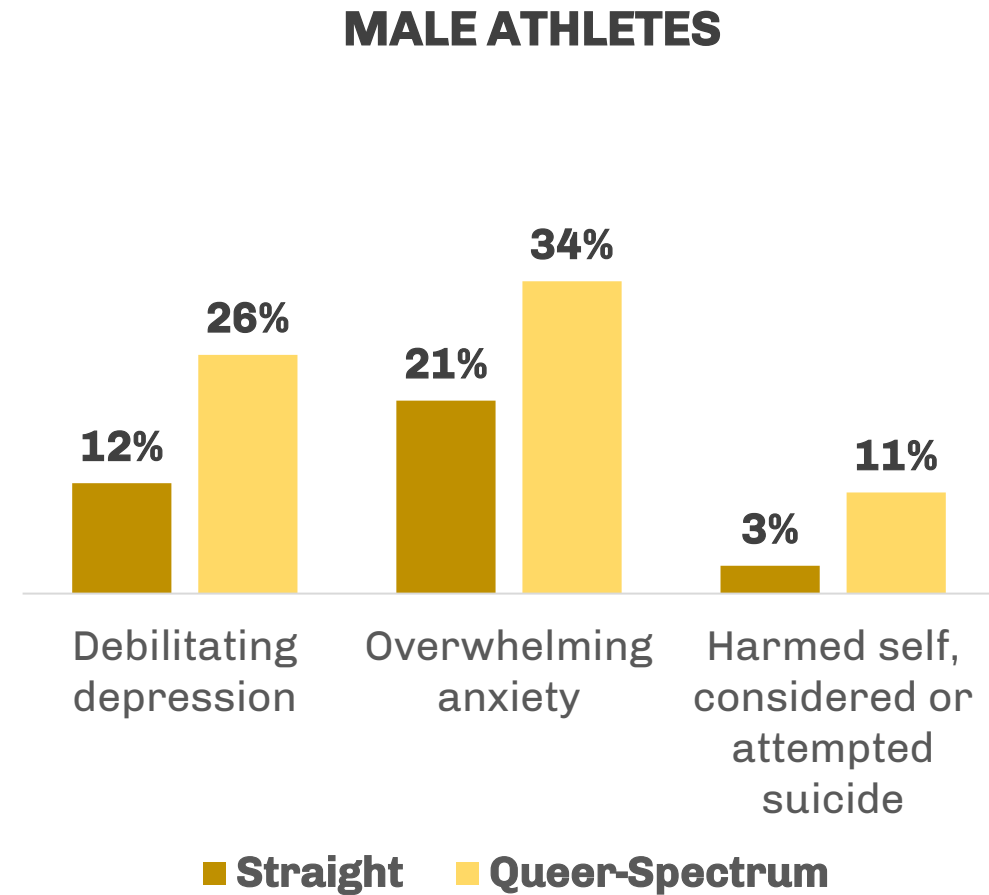
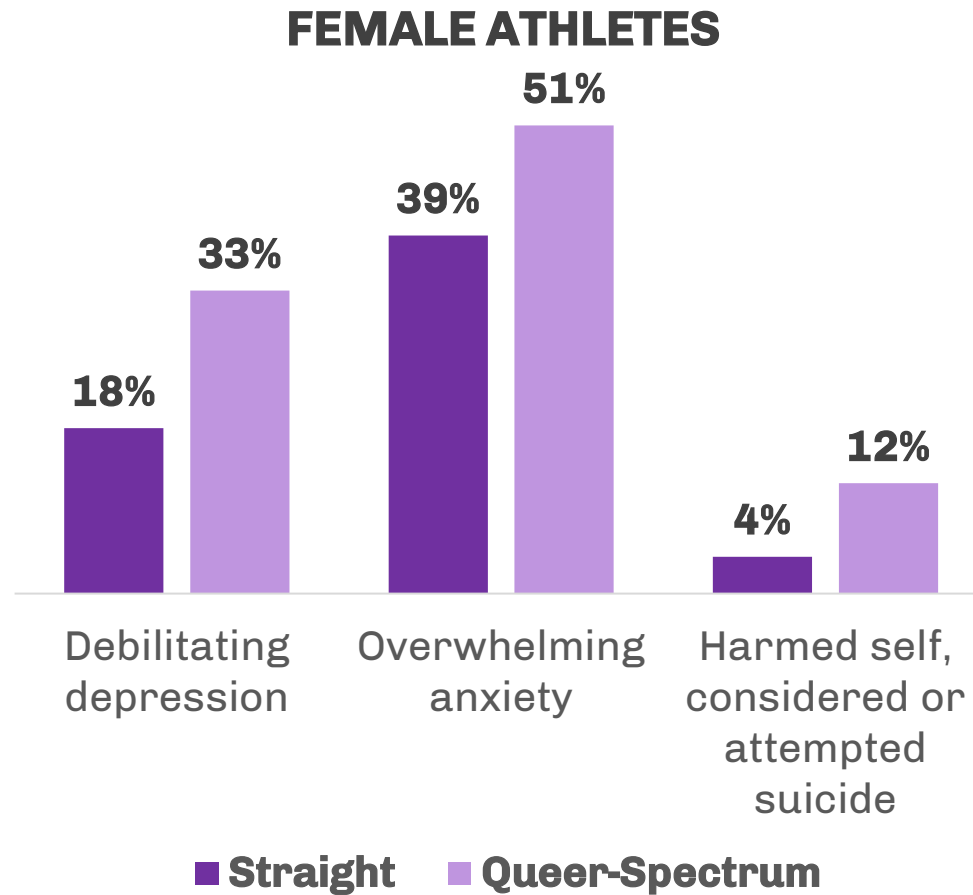
# **Mental Well-Being Comparison Data by Sexual Orientation**



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# Mental Well-Being of Queer-Spectrum Athletes Compared to Straight Athlete Peers

(Experienced Within the Previous 30 Days)



**Note:** Number of queer-spectrum cisgender athletes in the sample is 721 females and 156 males. Queer-spectrum includes those self-identifying as asexual, bisexual, gay, lesbian, pansexual, queer, questioning, same gender loving or another identity.

# Comparison of Mental Health Concerns Between Queer-Identifying Athletes and Nonathletes

(Percent of Participants Who Endorsed “Yes, in the Last 30 Days” or More Often)

	Female		Male		Non-Binary	
	Nonathletes (N=14,286)	Athletes (N=721)	Nonathletes (N=3,898)	Athletes (N=156)	Nonathletes (N=2,245)	Athletes (N=85)
Felt mentally exhausted	83%	74%	73%	60%	85%	80%
Felt overwhelmed by all you had to do	83%	76%	73%	61%	84%	80%
Felt sad	66%	57%	54%	46%	72%	68%
Felt overwhelming anxiety	64%	51%	47%	34%	71%	64%
Felt very lonely	62%	55%	55%	48%	70%	64%
Felt things were hopeless	50%	37%	42%	26%	60%	53%
Felt so depressed it was difficult to function	44%	33%	33%	26%	57%	56%
Felt overwhelming anger	34%	29%	27%	22%	40%	47%
Harmed self, considered or attempted suicide	15%	12%	11%	11%	25%	26%
*Nonathletes are full-time undergraduate students between the ages of 18-24 attending NCAA-member institutions who indicated that they were not varsity athletes. Queer-spectrum includes those self-identifying as asexual, bisexual, gay, lesbian, pansexual, queer, questioning, same gender loving or another identity. Non-binary is an ACHA computed variable that includes participants who identify as transgender on one question and/or those who identify with a gender that does not match their sex at birth (2 separate questions).						

# **Mental Well-Being Comparison Data by Race/Ethnicity**



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

(Percent of Participants Who Endorsed “Yes, in the Last 30 Days” or More Often)

	STUDENT-ATHLETES	NONATHLETES*	ATHLETE NONATHLETE GAP
Female	20%	27%	+7%
Male	13%	20%	+7%
BIPOC Female	23%	29%	+6%
White Female	19%	27%	+8%
BIPOC Male	16%	20%	+4%
White Male	12%	19%	+7%
*Nonathletes are full-time undergraduate students between the ages of 18-24 attending NCAA-member institutions who do not identify as varsity athletes.			

**Note: BIPOC refers to Black, Indigenous and people of color.**

American College Health Association. American College Health Association-National College Health Assessment, Spring 2018, Fall 2018, Spring 2019 [data file]. Silver Springs, MD: American College Health Association [producer and distributor]; (2021-09-20).

# Have you felt overwhelming anxiety?

(Percent of Participants Who Endorsed “Yes, in the Last 30 Days” or More Often)

	STUDENT-ATHLETES	NONATHLETES*	ATHLETE NONATHLETE GAP
Female	41%	50%	+9%
Male	22%	31%	+9%
BIPOC Female	40%	48%	+8%
White Female	41%	51%	+10%
BIPOC Male	22%	31%	+9%
White Male	22%	31%	+9%
*Nonathletes are full-time undergraduate students between the ages of 18-24 attending NCAA-member institutions who do not identify as varsity athletes.			

**Note: BIPOC refers to Black, Indigenous and people of color.**

American College Health Association. American College Health Association-National College Health Assessment, Spring 2018, Fall 2018, Spring 2019 [data file]. Silver Springs, MD: American College Health Association [producer and distributor]; (2021-09-20).



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# Comparison of Mental Health Concerns Between Female Athletes and Nonathletes by Race

(Percent of Participants Who Endorsed “Yes, in the Last 30 Days” or More Often)

	BIPOC Females		White Females	
	Nonathletes (N=31,020)	Athletes (N=1,489)	Nonathletes (N=42,552)	Athletes (N=4,314)
Felt overwhelmed by all you had to do	75%	72%	80%	74%
Felt mentally exhausted	72%	66%	78%	68%
Felt sad	53%	49%	52%	45%
Felt overwhelming anxiety	48%	40%	51%	41%
Felt very lonely	48%	41%	48%	41%
Felt things were hopeless	40%	33%	34%	27%
Felt so depressed it was difficult to function	29%	23%	27%	19%
Felt overwhelming anger	28%	25%	24%	20%
Harmed self, considered or attempted suicide	7%	6%	7%	5%
*Nonathletes are full-time undergraduate students between the ages of 18-24 attending NCAA-member institutions who indicated that they were not varsity athletes. BIPOC refers to Black, Indigenous and people of color.				

# Comparison of Mental Health Concerns Between Female Athletes and Nonathletes by Race

(Percent of Participants Who Endorsed “Yes, in the Last 30 Days” or More Often)

	Black		Hispanic/Latinx		Other		White	
	Nonathletes (N=3,155)	Athletes (N=273)	Nonathletes (N=9,632)	Athletes (N=289)	Nonathletes (N=18,095)	Athletes (N=923)	Nonathletes (N=42,552)	Athletes (N=4,314)
Felt overwhelmed by all you had to do	73%	72%	73%	71%	76%	73%	80%	74%
Felt mentally exhausted	70%	62%	70%	63%	74%	68%	78%	68%
Felt sad	52%	48%	50%	47%	54%	50%	52%	45%
Felt very lonely	49%	42%	44%	40%	49%	41%	48%	41%
Felt overwhelming anxiety	46%	43%	47%	39%	49%	40%	51%	41%
Felt things were hopeless	41%	38%	38%	36%	41%	31%	34%	27%
Felt overwhelming anger	29%	31%	28%	28%	27%	22%	24%	20%
Felt so depressed it was difficult to function	28%	29%	27%	26%	30%	20%	27%	19%
Harmed self, considered or attempted suicide	7%	6%	6%	6%	7%	6%	7%	5%
*Nonathletes are full-time undergraduate students between the ages of 18-24 attending NCAA-member institutions who indicated that they were not varsity athletes. Other includes those who selected Asian or Pacific Islander, American Indian, Alaskan Native, or Native Hawaiian, biracial, multiracial and other racial identities.								

# Comparison of Mental Health Concerns Between Male Athletes and Nonathletes by Race

(Percent of Participants Who Endorsed “Yes, in the Last 30 Days” or More Often)

	BIPOC Males		White Males	
	Nonathletes (N=11,996)	Athletes (N=935)	Nonathletes (N=17,204)	Athletes (N=2,098)
Felt overwhelmed by all you had to do	58%	49%	63%	53%
Felt mentally exhausted	58%	48%	63%	49%
Felt sad	38%	32%	38%	27%
Felt very lonely	38%	27%	39%	26%
Felt overwhelming anxiety	31%	22%	31%	22%
Felt things were hopeless	31%	22%	27%	17%
Felt overwhelming anger	21%	18%	19%	16%
Felt so depressed it was difficult to function	20%	16%	19%	12%
Harmed self, considered or attempted suicide	6%	5%	6%	3%
*Nonathletes are full-time undergraduate students between the ages of 18-24 attending NCAA-member institutions who indicated that they were not varsity athletes. BIPOC refers to Black, Indigenous and people of color.				

# Comparison of Mental Health Concerns Between Male Athletes and Nonathletes by Race

(Percent of Participants Who Endorsed “Yes, in the Last 30 Days” or More Often)

	Black		Hispanic/Latinx		Other		White	
	Nonathletes (N=84,682)	Athletes (N=8,228)	Nonathletes (N=37,072)	Athletes (N=4,247)	Nonathletes (N=84,682)	Athletes (N=8,228)	Nonathletes (N=3,517)	Athletes (N=206)
Felt overwhelmed by all you had to do	57%	46%	57%	49%	58%	50%	63%	53%
Felt mentally exhausted	54%	41%	55%	45%	59%	52%	63%	49%
Felt very lonely	38%	27%	35%	24%	39%	28%	39%	26%
Felt sad	37%	32%	36%	28%	39%	33%	38%	27%
Felt overwhelming anxiety	30%	19%	30%	26%	31%	22%	31%	22%
Felt things were hopeless	29%	19%	28%	23%	32%	23%	27%	17%
Felt overwhelming anger	22%	20%	20%	18%	21%	18%	19%	16%
Felt so depressed it was difficult to function	20%	18%	19%	12%	21%	17%	19%	12%
Harmed self, considered or attempted suicide	6%	4%	5%	6%	6%	6%	6%	3%
*Nonathletes are full-time undergraduate students between the ages of 18-24 attending NCAA-member institutions who indicated that they were not varsity athletes. Other includes those who selected Asian or Pacific Islander, American Indian, Alaskan Native, or Native Hawaiian, biracial, multiracial and other racial identities.								





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