



RESEARCH

Estimated Probability of Competing in College Athletics

	High School Participants	NCAA Participants	Overall % HS to NCAA	% HS to NCAA Division I	% HS to NCAA Division II	% HS to NCAA Division III
Men						
Baseball	478,451	38,849	8.1%	2.4%	2.4%	3.2%
Basketball	537,438	19,213	3.6%	1.0%	1.0%	1.5%
Cross Country	240,201	14,787	6.2%	2.1%	1.7%	2.4%
Football	1,028,761	77,204	7.5%	3.0%	2.0%	2.5%
Golf	150,175	8,602	5.7%	1.9%	1.6%	2.2%
Ice Hockey	33,013	4,388	13.3%	5.0%	0.8%	7.5%
Lacrosse	111,108	16,030	14.4%	3.3%	3.2%	8.0%
Soccer	450,455	27,284	6.1%	1.4%	1.7%	2.9%
Swim & Dive	116,741	9,945	8.5%	3.3%	1.5%	3.7%
Tennis	158,306	7,549	4.8%	1.5%	1.1%	2.2%
Track & Field	604,983	31,278	5.2%	1.9%	1.4%	1.9%
Volleyball	77,287	2,933	3.8%	0.7%	0.8%	2.3%
Water Polo	21,289	1,156	5.4%	3.1%	0.9%	1.4%
Wrestling	259,431	8,309	3.2%	1.0%	0.8%	1.3%
Women						
Basketball	373,366	16,668	4.5%	1.4%	1.3%	1.8%
Cross Country	197,630	14,621	7.4%	2.9%	1.9%	2.6%
Field Hockey	52,962	6,456	12.2%	3.6%	1.9%	6.7%
Golf	80,970	5,733	7.1%	2.8%	2.0%	2.3%
Ice Hockey	8,601	2,888	33.6%	10.2%	2.1%	21.3%
Lacrosse	98,014	13,481	13.8%	4.3%	3.2%	6.3%
Soccer	377,838	29,959	7.9%	2.7%	2.2%	3.0%
Softball	344,952	21,646	6.3%	2.0%	1.9%	2.4%
Swim & Dive	140,711	13,259	9.4%	4.2%	1.6%	3.6%
Tennis	191,036	8,343	4.4%	1.5%	1.1%	1.9%
Track & Field	486,355	31,475	6.5%	2.8%	1.7%	2.0%
Volleyball	470,488	18,569	3.9%	1.2%	1.1%	1.6%
Water Polo	18,728	1,337	7.1%	4.4%	1.2%	1.6%

Sources: High school figures from the [2022-23 High School Athletics Participation Survey](#) conducted by the National Federation of State High School Associations; data from [club teams](#) not included. College numbers from the NCAA [2022-23 Sports Sponsorship and Participation Rates Report](#).

Last Updated: April 1, 2024



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Methodology and Notes

High school to NCAA

- High school figures come from the [2022-23 High School Athletics Participation Survey](#) conducted by the National Federation of State High School Associations. College numbers are from the NCAA's [2022-23 Sports Sponsorship and Participation Rates Report](#). These college numbers account for participation in college athletics at NCAA-member schools only.
- High school-to-NCAA percentages were calculated by dividing the number of NCAA participants in 2022-23 by the number of HS participants in that same year. This assumes that high school and college rosters are turning over at roughly the same rate (e.g., both HS and college participation numbers include four classes of students, and both sets of teams turn over roughly one-quarter of their rosters each year). In prior versions of this table, more complex calculations were used to estimate the number of HS departures and open college roster slots each year; however, these more involved calculations did not lead to substantially different percentages than the simple calculation used currently. Given several potential confounds (e.g., multi-sport participation in high school, frequency of redshirt in NCAA Division I football that would lead to a 5-year rather than 4-year college track), these calculations should be considered approximations and not exact accounting.
- The high school-to-NCAA divisional percentages were calculated by dividing the number of 2022-23 participants within each NCAA division by the total number of HS participants. For example, we estimate that approximately 3.6% of HS boys basketball participants go on to play at an NCAA school (Divisions I, II or III), but only 1.0% of HS participants do so at the Division I level.
- As the high school figures account only for participants on high school teams and not those competing exclusively on club teams or similar, the true pre-college to NCAA percentages could be lower in some sports (e.g., ice hockey, tennis); [see this page](#) for sport-specific information regarding club and high school sport participation). Data for several sports (e.g., rowing, skiing, gymnastics) is not shown due to the low number of high school programs in those sports relative to non-scholastic pre-college participation opportunities.



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Estimated Probability of Competing in Professional Athletics

	NCAA Participants	Approximate # Draft Eligible	# Draft Picks	# NCAA Drafted	% NCAA to Major Pro	% NCAA to Total Pro
Baseball	38,849	8,633	614	444	5.1%	
M Basketball	19,213	4,270	58	46	1.1%	20.6%
W Basketball	16,668	3,704	36	33	0.9%	8.9%
Football	77,204	17,156	259	259	1.5%	
M Ice Hockey	4,388	975	224	69	7.1%	
W Soccer	29,959	6,658	48	47	0.7%	
Softball	21,646	4,810	24	24	0.5%	

Note: Major Pro is defined by being drafted into the following U.S. professional leagues: MLB, NBA, WNBA, NFL, NHL, NWSL and WPF, respectively. As additional opportunities and athlete databases become available, NCAA Research intends to expand the definition of both “Major Pro” and “Total Pro” for future iterations of this document.



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Estimated Probability of Competing in Professional Athletics

Methodology and Notes

General

- College participation numbers are from the NCAA's [2022-23 Sports Sponsorship and Participation Rates Report](#). These college numbers account for participation in college athletics at NCAA-member schools only.
- To estimate the number of NCAA student-athletes in a sport eligible for a particular year's professional draft, the total number of NCAA student-athlete participants in the sport was divided by 4.5. This figure was used to provide a general estimate of the number of student-athletes in a draft cohort (single draft class) in a given year, accounting for redshirting, degree completion delays due to transfer, etc. that extend the average time to graduation to just beyond four years in all sports. In other words, we observe a year-to-year departure rate (whether due to graduation, sport exit, college withdrawal, or departure for a professional sports opportunity) of just below one-quarter of the total number of student-athletes in each sport. Because the sports examined have dramatically different rules for draft eligibility, these calculations should be treated as estimates only.
- Data on available professional opportunities are described below for each sport.

Baseball

- MLB draft data from 2023. There were 614 draft picks in 2023; 444 of those picked were from NCAA schools (source: [MLB Draft Tracker](#)). Of the 444, Division I student-athletes comprised 428 of those selected, Division II provided 14 and Division III had 2.
- Percent NCAA to Pro calculated as number of NCAA student-athletes taken in the draft divided by the approximate number draft eligible (calculated as $444 / 8,633 = 5.1\%$). Not all of the student-athletes drafted go on to play professional baseball and many draftees fail to reach the Major League (see this [July 2023 post](#) from J. Cuda for more information).
- We estimate that 16.4% of draft-eligible Division I players were selected in the 2023 MLB draft ($428 / 2,603$). Additionally, approximately 43.1% of the draft-eligible players from the five Division I conferences with autonomous governance were drafted by the MLB in 2023 ($237 / 550$)

Men's basketball

- NBA draft data from 2023. There were 58 draft slots in 2023 and 46 went to NCAA athletes (six others were international players not attending U.S. colleges and six were from the U.S. club teams G League Ignite and Overtime Elite). Percentage NCAA to Major Pro calculated using the 46 NCAA selections (calculated as $46 / 4,270 = 1.1\%$). Since 2013, 10 international players have been drafted on average each year.

- We estimate that 3.8% of draft-eligible Division I players were chosen in the 2023 NBA draft (46 / 1,226). Additionally, approximately 13.7% of draft-eligible players from the five Division I conferences with autonomous governance (ACC, Big Ten, Big 12, Pac-12 and SEC) were drafted by the NBA in 2023 (31 / 226).
- Data on other professional opportunities in men's basketball were analyzed by NCAA staff with the assistance of eurobasket.com. Tracking 2022-23 international opportunities for the 2022 draft cohort, it was determined that an additional 832 former NCAA student-athletes played internationally, in the G-League or in the NBA as undrafted players (540 from Division I, 227 from Division II and 65 from Division III) after leaving college; this includes international student-athletes who attended NCAA institutions. These numbers were combined with the 2023 NBA draftees to calculate an approximate NCAA to Total Professional opportunities figure (calculated as $[46 + 832] / 4,270 = 21\%$). Note that the overseas opportunities for the 2023 draft cohort were not used for this analysis because their signing information remained incomplete when data were shared (August 2023).
- We estimate that 48% of the 2023 Division I draft cohort will compete professionally (NBA, G-League or internationally) in their first year post college (calculated as $[46 + 540] / 1,226$). We also estimate that 63% of the 2023 draft cohort from the five Division I conferences with autonomous governance (ACC, Big Ten, Big 12, Pac-12 and SEC) will play professionally somewhere during the 2023-24 season (calculated as $[31 + 111] / 226$).

Women's basketball

- WNBA draft data from 2023. There were 36 draft slots in the 2023 draft, 33 of which went to NCAA athletes (other selections were international players not attending U.S. colleges). All 33 NCAA selections came from Division I schools. Percentage NCAA to Major Pro calculated using the 33 NCAA selections (calculated as $33 / 3,704 = 0.9\%$).
- We estimate that 2.9% of draft-eligible Division I players were chosen in the 2023 WNBA draft (33/ 1,126), while approximately 13% of draft-eligible players from the five Division I conferences with autonomous governance (ACC, Big Ten, Big 12, Pac-12 and SEC) were drafted by the WNBA in 2023 (26/ 206).
- Data on international professional opportunities in women's basketball were analyzed by NCAA staff with the assistance of eurobasket.com, and are limited to the 2022 draft cohort. It was determined that an additional 296 former NCAA student-athletes from the cohort played internationally in 2022-23 (246 from Division I, 44 from Division II and 6 from Division III). These numbers were combined with the 2023 WNBA draftees to calculate an approximate NCAA to Total Professional opportunities figure (calculated as $[33 + 296] / 3,704 = 8.9\%$). Note that the overseas opportunities for the 2023 draft cohort were not used for this analysis because their signing information remained incomplete when data were shared (August 2023).
- Using these figures, we estimate that 25% of draft-eligible Division I players will compete professionally (WNBA or internationally) in their first year post college (calculated as $[33 + 246] / 1,126$). We also estimate that 44% of the 2023 draft cohort from the five Division

I conferences with autonomous governance (ACC, Big Ten, Big 12, Pac-12 and SEC) will play professionally somewhere during the 2023-24 season (calculated as $[26 + 64] / 206$).

Football

- NFL draft data from 2023. There were 259 draft picks in the 2023 draft, all of whom were former NCAA athletes. NCAA to Major Pro figure calculated using these data (calculated as $259 / 17,156 = 1.5\%$).
- NCAA divisional breakdown of the 259 NCAA student-athletes selected in the 2023 NFL draft: Division I FBS (247), Division I FCS (10), Division II (2). The five football conferences with autonomous governance accounted for 206 of the 259 NCAA draft picks (SEC=62, Big Ten=55, ACC=32 [does not include Notre Dame], Big 12=30, Pac-12=27).
- We estimate that 3.8% of draft-eligible Division I athletes were chosen in the 2023 NFL draft ($257 / 6,827$). Calculating this by subdivision, 6.7% of FBS players were estimated to be drafted ($247 / 3,705$), as compared to 0.3% of FCS players ($10 / 3,122$). Narrowing further to the five Division I conferences with autonomous governance (ACC, Big Ten, Big 12, Pac-12 and SEC), we estimate that 11% were drafted ($206 / 1,839$).
- Additional professional or semi-professional opportunities exist in leagues such as the Canadian Football League, USFL, XFL and opportunities in other countries. Estimations for opportunities beyond the NFL are not included in our table.

Men's ice hockey

- NHL draft data from 2023 (source: [hockeydb.com](https://www.hockeydb.com)). There were 224 draft picks in the 2023 draft. Only nine players from NCAA rosters were selected in that draft (all from Division I teams). However, this is not indicative of the likelihood of going from a college team to a professional team due to the nature of the NHL draft, where players are typically selected prior to college enrollment.
- In examining the subsequent hockey pathways of the 2023 draftees ([hockeydb.com](https://www.hockeydb.com)), College Hockey Inc. reported that 69 of the 224 were current student-athletes or committed recruits at NCAA schools. These numbers, although not fully comparable to those used in the other sports examined, were used to calculate an approximate NCAA to Major Pro percentage (calculated as $69 / 975 = 7.1\%$). Note that only a small subset of players drafted ever plays in an NHL game (e.g., of the 225 draftees in 2022, only five played in the NHL during the 2022-23 season). Undrafted college players may go on to sign contracts with NHL teams after completing college (those numbers are not part of the current NCAA to Major Pro calculation).
- In 2022-23, 32% of players on active NHL rosters played college hockey (all Division I), up from about 21% in the year 2003 (source: collegehockeyinc.com). Additionally, 66% of former college players in the NHL played at least three college seasons, and 27% played all four.
- College Hockey's [2023 NHL Draft Guide](#) further details the pathway from NCAA college hockey to the NHL.

Women's soccer

- NWSL draft data from 2023 (source: nwslsoccer.com). There were 48 draft slots in the 2023 draft, 47 of which went to players from Division I institutions (the other draftee was a high school athlete). Percentage NCAA to Major Pro calculated using the 47 NCAA selections (calculated as $47 / 6,658 = 0.7\%$).
- We estimate that 2.1% of draft-eligible Division I athletes were chosen in the 2023 NWSL draft ($47 / 2,275$), while approximately 9% of draft-eligible players from the five Division I conferences with autonomous governance (ACC, Big Ten, Big 12, Pac-12 and SEC) were drafted by the NWSL in 2023 ($41 / 452$).
- Additional professional or semi-professional opportunities exist in the U.S. and other countries. Estimations for opportunities beyond the NWSL are not included in our table.

Softball

- Women's Fastpitch Softball draft data from 2023 (source: wprofastpitch.com). There were 24 draft slots in the 2023 WPF draft, all of which went to athletes from Division I schools. Percentage NCAA to Major Pro calculated using the 24 NCAA selections (calculated as $24 / 4,810 = 0.5\%$).
- We estimate that 1.6% of draft-eligible Division I players were chosen in the 2023 WPF draft ($24 / 1,497$), while approximately 7.7% of draft-eligible players from the five Division I conferences with autonomous governance (ACC, Big Ten, Big 12, Pac-12 and SEC) were drafted by the WFP in 2023 ($23 / 299$).