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'S SPORTS						
Baseball	472,598	41,580	**8.8%**	2.7%	2.6%	3.5%
Basketball	540,704	19,617	**3.6%**	1.1%	1.1%	1.5%
Cross Country	241,565	15,425	**6.4%**	2.2%	1.8%	2.4%
Football	1,029,588	83,794	**8.1%**	3.4%	2.1%	2.6%
Golf	162,357	8,818	**5.4%**	1.8%	1.5%	2.1%
Ice Hockey	32,253	4,558	**14.1%**	5.2%	0.9%	8.0%
Lacrosse	113,696	16,691	**14.7%**	3.4%	3.3%	7.9%
Soccer	484,908	28,746	**5.9%**	1.4%	1.7%	2.8%
Swimming	119,102	10,131	**8.5%**	3.3%	1.5%	3.7%
Tennis	158,667	7,473	**4.7%**	1.5%	1.0%	2.1%
Track & Field	644,235	34,747	**5.4%**	1.9%	1.5%	2.0%
Volleyball	95,972	3,478	**3.6%**	0.6%	0.9%	2.2%
Water Polo	21,756	1,245	**5.7%**	3.3%	0.8%	1.6%
Wrestling	300,214	9,056	**3.0%**	0.9%	0.8%	1.3%
WOMEN'S SPORTS						
Basketball	356,240	16,823	**4.7%**	1.4%	1.4%	1.9%
Cross Country	191,733	15,396	**8.0%**	3.3%	2.0%	2.7%
Field Hockey	50,764	6,610	**13.0%**	3.9%	1.9%	7.2%
Golf	85,385	5,861	**6.9%**	2.7%	1.9%	2.3%
Ice Hockey	9,589	3,074	**32.1%**	9.3%	2.0%	20.7%
Lacrosse	99,292	13,906	**14.0%**	4.4%	3.3%	6.3%
Soccer	393,048	31,200	**7.9%**	2.8%	2.2%	3.0%
Softball	338,315	21,916	**6.5%**	2.1%	1.9%	2.5%
Swimming	138,303	12,998	**9.4%**	4.2%	1.6%	3.6%
Tennis	204,721	8,137	**4.0%**	1.4%	0.9%	1.7%
Track & Field	513,808	33,519	**6.5%**	2.8%	2.7%	2.0%
Volleyball	492,799	19,810	**4.0%**	1.3%	1.2%	1.6%
Water Polo	18,023	1,333	**7.4%**	4.5%	1.1%	1.7%

Sources: High school figures from the 2024-25 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 2024-25 Sports Sponsorship and Participation Rates Report.

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Estimated Probability of Competing in College Athletics

Methodology and Notes

High school to NCAA

- High school figures come from the 2024-25 High School Athletics Participation Survey conducted by the National Federation of State High School Associations. College numbers are from the NCAA's 2024-25 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 2024-25 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 2024-25 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 1.1% 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., gymnastics, rowing, skiing) 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	41,580	9,240	615	452	**4.9%**	
M Basketball	19,617	4,359	58	43	**1.0%**	21.8%
W Basketball	16,823	3,738	36	30	**0.8%**	9.1%
Football	83,794	18,621	257	257	**1.4%**	
M Ice Hockey	4,558	1,013	224	76	**7.5%**	
W Ice Hockey	3,074	683	48	43	**6.3%**	
M Lacrosse	16,691	3,709	32	31	**0.8%**	

Note: Major Pro is defined as being drafted into the following U.S. professional leagues: MLB, NBA, WNBA, NFL, NHL, PWHL, and PLL. NWSL and WPF were previously included, but the leagues have since discontinued their drafts. Men's soccer is not included because of the numerous professional opportunities available (e.g., MLS, USL). 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 College Athletics

Methodology and Notes

General

- College participation numbers are from the NCAA's 2024-25 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 2025. There were 615 draft picks in 2025; 452 of those picked were from NCAA schools (source: MLB Draft Tracker). Of the 452, Division I student-athletes comprised 431 of those selected, Division II provided 19 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 452 / 9,240 = 4.9%). 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 15.3% of draft-eligible Division I players were selected in the 2025 MLB draft (431 / 2,811). Additionally, 40.8% of the draft-eligible players from the four Division I conferences with autonomous governance (ACC, Big Ten, Big 12 and SEC) were selected in the 2025 MLB Draft (258 / 632)

Men's basketball

- NBA draft data from 2024. There were 58 draft slots in 2024 and 43 went to NCAA athletes (twelve others were international players not attending U.S. colleges and three were from the U.S. club team G League Ignite). Percentage NCAA to Major Pro calculated using the 43 NCAA selections (calculated as 43 / 4,359 = 1.0%). Since 2015, 10 international players have been drafted on average each year.

- We estimate that 3.4% of draft-eligible Division I players were chosen in the 2024 NBA draft (43 / 1,282). Additionally, 8.1% of draft-eligible players from the four Division I conferences with autonomous governance (ACC, Big Ten, Big 12 and SEC) were drafted by the NBA in 2024 (20 / 248).

- Data on other professional opportunities in men's basketball were analyzed by NCAA staff with the assistance of eurobasket.com. Tracking 2024-25 international opportunities for the 2024 draft cohort, it was determined that an additional 906 former NCAA student-athletes played internationally, in the G-League or in the NBA as undrafted players (623 from Division I, 225 from Division II and 58 from Division III) after leaving college; this includes international student-athletes who attended NCAA institutions. These numbers were combined with the 2024 NBA draftees to calculate an approximate NCAA to Total Professional opportunities figure (calculated as [43 + 906] / 4,359 = 21.8%). Note that the overseas opportunities for the 2025 draft cohort were not used for this analysis because their signing information remained incomplete when data were shared (May 2025).

- We estimate that 52.0% of the 2024 Division I draft cohort competed professionally (NBA, G-League or internationally) in their first year post college (calculated as [43 + 623] / 1,282). We also estimate that 63.7% of the 2024 draft cohort from the four Division I conferences with autonomous governance (ACC, Big Ten, Big 12 and SEC) played professionally somewhere during the 2025-26 season (calculated as [20 + 138] / 248).

Women's basketball

- WNBA draft data from 2024. There were 36 draft slots in the 2024 draft, 30 of which went to NCAA athletes (the other six selections were international players not attending U.S. colleges). All 30 NCAA selections came from Division I schools. Percentage NCAA to Major Pro calculated using the 30 NCAA selections (calculated as 30 / 3,738 = 0.8%).

- We estimate that 2.6% of draft-eligible Division I players were chosen in the 2024 WNBA draft (30 / 1,145), while approximately 12.6% of draft-eligible players from the four Division I conferences with autonomous governance (ACC, Big Ten, Big 12, and SEC) were drafted by the WNBA in 2024 (27/ 214).

- 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 2024 draft cohort. It was determined that an additional 309 former NCAA student-athletes from the cohort played internationally in 2024-25 (257 from Division I, 46 from Division II and 6 from Division III). These numbers were combined with the 2024 WNBA draftees to calculate an approximate NCAA to Total Professional opportunities figure (calculated as [30 + 309] / 3,738 = 9.1%). Note that the overseas opportunities for the 2024 draft cohort were not used for this analysis because their signing information remained incomplete when data were shared (May 2025).

- Using these figures, we estimate that 25.1% of draft-eligible Division I players competed professionally (WNBA or internationally) in their first year post college (calculated as [30 + 257] / 1,145). We also estimate that 43.5% of the 2024 draft cohort from the four Division I conferences with autonomous governance (ACC, Big Ten, Big 12, and SEC) played professionally somewhere during the 2025-26 season (calculated as [27 + 66] / 214).

Football

- NFL draft data from 2025. There were 257 draft picks in the 2025 draft, all of whom were former NCAA athletes. NCAA to Major Pro figure calculated using these data (calculated as 257 / 18,621 = 1.4%).

- NCAA divisional breakdown of the 257 NCAA student-athletes selected in the 2025 NFL draft: Division I FBS (249), Division I FCS (8). The four football conferences with autonomous governance accounted for 223 of the 257 NCAA draft picks (SEC=79, Big Ten=71, ACC=42 [does not include Notre Dame], Big 12=31).

- We estimate that 3.3% of draft-eligible Division I athletes were chosen in the 2025 NFL draft (257 / 7,764). Calculating this by subdivision, 5.7% of FBS players were estimated to be drafted (249 / 4,333), as compared to 0.2% of FCS players (8 / 3,432). Narrowing further to the four Division I conferences with autonomous governance (ACC, Big Ten, Big 12, and SEC), we estimate that 9.9% were drafted (223 / 2,244).

- 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 2025 (source: hockeydb.com). There were 224 draft picks in the 2025 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 2025 draftees (hockeydb.com), College Hockey Inc. reported that 76 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 76 / 1,013 = 7.5%). Note that only a small subset of players drafted ever plays in an NHL game (e.g., of the 224 draftees in 2025, only 5 have played in the NHL during the 2025-26 season thus far). 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 2024-25, 33% of players on active NHL rosters played college hockey (all Division I), up from 21% in the year 2003 (source: collegehockeyinc.com). Additionally, 65% of former college players in the NHL played at least three college seasons, and 26% played at least four.

- See College Hockey Inc.'s 2025 NHL Draft Guide for more details on the pathway from NCAA college hockey to the NHL.

Women's ice hockey

- PWHL Draft Data from 2025 (Source: College Hockey Inc » 2025 PWHL Draft Picks). There were 48 draft picks in the 2025 draft, 43 of whom were former NCAA athletes who played in the 2024-25 NCAA Women's Ice Hockey season. NCAA to Major Pro figure calculated using these data (calculated as 43 / 683 = 6.3%).

- We estimate that 21.7% of draft-eligible Division I athletes were chosen in the 2025 PWHL draft (43 / 198), all of whom came from NCAA women's hockey conferences (e.g., Western Collegiate Hockey Association).

- There were two PWHL draftees who played at NCAA universities before the 2024-25 season. These players were not included in the overall calculation.

Men's lacrosse

- PLL Draft Data from 2025 (Source: Draft - Premier Lacrosse League). There were 32 draft picks in the 2025 draft, 31 of whom were former NCAA athletes. NCAA to Major Pro figure calculated using these data (calculated as 31 / 3,709 = 0.8%).

- We estimate that 3.6% of draft-eligible Division I athletes were chosen in the 2025 PLL draft (31 / 862), while approximately 24.1% of draft eligible players from the four DI conferences with autonomous governance (ACC, Big Ten, Big 12, and SEC) were drafted by the PLL in 2025 (31 / 128).

- Additional professional or semi-professional opportunities exist in the U.S. and other countries. Estimations for opportunities beyond the PLL are not included in our table.