NCAA SNAP (Student-Athlete Needs, Aspirations and Perspectives) Study
April 2026 Survey, Executive Summary

Overview. From April 26 to May 3, 2026, NCAA research distributed a 3-minute, confidential survey of Division I student-athletes through the Teamworks platform. Student-athletes were asked about career preparation, transition out of sport, summer plans, team travel and competition. Survey participation was voluntary, and the data provided to the NCAA were de-identified. Results from the study will inform NCAA national office and Division I governance committee education efforts and policy-making into the 2026-27 academic year.

Survey Response. All Division I schools were invited to participate in the survey. Most invitations were distributed to campus athletics directors and senior compliance administrators via the Teamworks platform. NCAA Research sent invitations to the 18 Division I member schools not utilizing Teamworks. All Division I faculty athletics representatives, student-athlete affairs administrators and conference commissioners were made aware of the study. In total, 177 schools (48%) agreed to participate. On April 26, over 56,000 NCAA student-athletes at participating schools received a push notification about the survey availability and saw it listed under their daily to-dos on the Teamworks app. Among the non-Teamworks users, participating schools were asked to circulate a survey link to their student-athletes.

The survey was open for eight days and responses from 5,603 student-athletes (10% of those receiving the survey link) were received. Women's sports student-athletes were overrepresented in the sample compared to annually reported Division I participation and demographics rates.

Key Findings.

Career Preparation. Nearly two-thirds of study participants reported feeling positive or very positive about their career prospects in today's evolving economy. Men's sports athletes were more likely to have a positive outlook (69%) than women's sports athletes (60%), and feelings of positivity were lower for those in their junior year of college and later (65% among men's sports and 55% among women's sports). Career optimism also varied by major, with those in the health professions expressing the highest level of optimism (73% for men's sports, 63% for women's sports).

When discussing future plans, over 90% of participants in their junior year or later indicated reaching out to family, over 80% connect with friends, and nearly 40% talk with coaches. Women's sports athletes discuss future plans with both athletic and major academic advisors at rates 10 percentage points higher than men's sports athletes.

Men's sports participants believe it is likely they'll be professional or Olympic athletes at a rate three times that of women's sports study participants (33% vs. 11%, respectively). Those without professional sports expectations were more likely to endorse having taken a range of career preparation actions by junior year or later, often at rates 10-20 percentage points higher than their peers with professional sports expectations.

Transition Out of Sport. Among participants in their junior year and above, 60% in men's sports and 53% in women's sports agreed or strongly agreed that they feel prepared to make their transition out of sport. Over half of the study participants indicated concerns about finding career opportunities and the cost-of-living post-college. These were the top two areas of concern regardless of sport gender or year in school. Concerns about staying fit, managing weight and eating healthy as well as finding identity outside of sport were higher among students further along in college. Women's sports athletes in their junior year and later endorsed these concerns at higher rates than men's sports athletes (staying fit/managing weight, 49% W, 21%M; finding identity, 44% W, 30% M).

While all NCAA athletes have access to post-eligibility health insurance, only 23% of men's sports athletes and 14% of women's sports athletes in the sample indicated awareness of the program. Seniors and postgraduates had the lowest rates of awareness as compared to those earlier in their college athletics careers.

Summer Plans. Over half of student-athlete study participants intend to focus on their sport this summer, with about a third overall working in a job or internship related to their major. Women's sports athletes were twice as likely to be traveling for fun this summer (33% as compared to 16% of men's sports athletes) and men's sports athletes anticipated focusing on NIL engagements at 2.5 times the rate of women's sports athletes (11% as compared to 4%).

Travel and Competition. A majority of student-athlete participants indicated that their most common mode of competition travel this season was via bus or van (56% men's sports; 68% of women's sports). Men's sports athletes in the sample were five times more likely to commonly take charter flights than women's sports athletes (30% as compared to 6%). Football participants, who comprised just over 50% of the men's sports athletes in the sample, indicated the highest rates of charter travel (63% among FBS and 42% among FCS).

Study participants from autonomy conferences were more likely than nonautonomy to charter. The difference in magnitude was most pronounced among women's sports athletes, with 14% from autonomy conferences indicating primarily chartering as compared to 3% of their nonautonomy peers.

Participants reported a median of 6 hours spent on their sport during a typical day of competition. Among men's sports with over 50 athletes in the study, men's swim and dive reported the highest median number of hours (7), while soccer reported the lowest (4). Among women's sports participants, women's golf reported the highest median number of hours (9), while women's soccer and field hockey reported the lowest (5).

Full results can be found here:
https://ncaaorg.s3.amazonaws.com/research/snap/2026RES_SNAP-AprilFullReport.pdf