Academic Impact of Multiple Transfers in Division I

Fall 2026

RESEARCH

Background and Research Question

- Given an NCAA legislative change in spring 2024, there has been increased interest in understanding the impact of multiple transfers on students' progress-toward-degree and eventual graduation rates.

- In prior work for Division I governance bodies, in the absence of academic data from a sufficient number of multiple transfers, NCAA Research initially concluded in 2023 that "the loss of academic credit is expected to compound with multiple transfers." However, today there is sufficient data to directly examine this question:

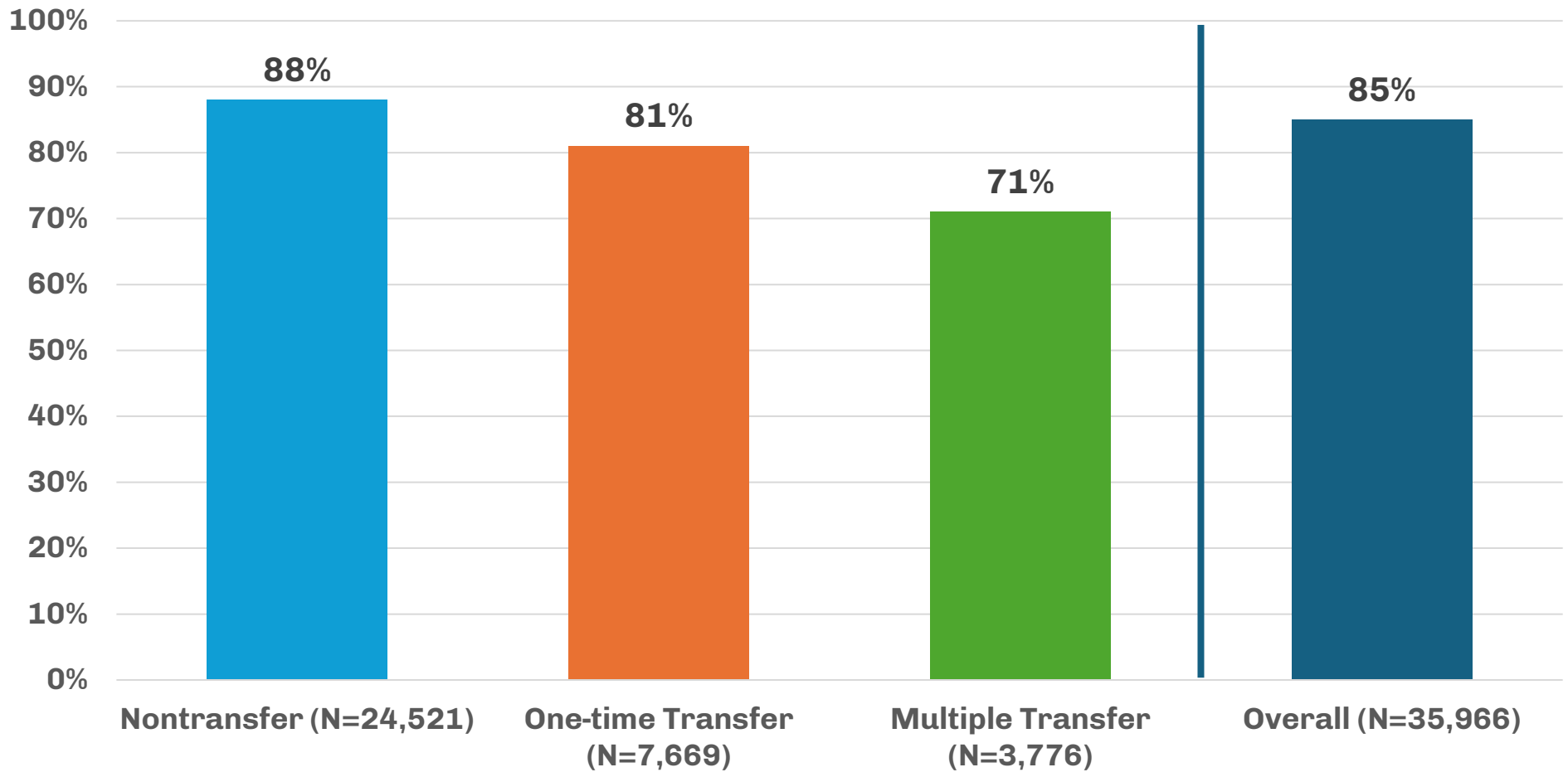
  Do academic outcomes for undergraduates who have transferred twice or more (multiple transfers) differ from nontransfers and those who have transferred once?

Graduation Outcomes Study

- Combing both NCAA and National Student Clearing House data, NCAA Research compiled six years of term-by-term academic enrollment and graduation records for nearly 36,000 Division I student-athletes who began college in the 2018-19 academic year.
- Using these data sources, 24,500 student-athletes with no record of transfer were identified along with nearly 7,700 who had transferred one time (either from/to a 2-year or 4-year institution) and about 3,800 who had attended three or more institutions.
- Bachelor's degree attainment within the six-year time frame was examined by transfer status.
- **Key Finding**: Regardless of race, gender or sport, multiple transfers typically graduated at rates 10 percentage points lower than peers who transferred once and 15-20 percentage points lower than peers who never transferred.

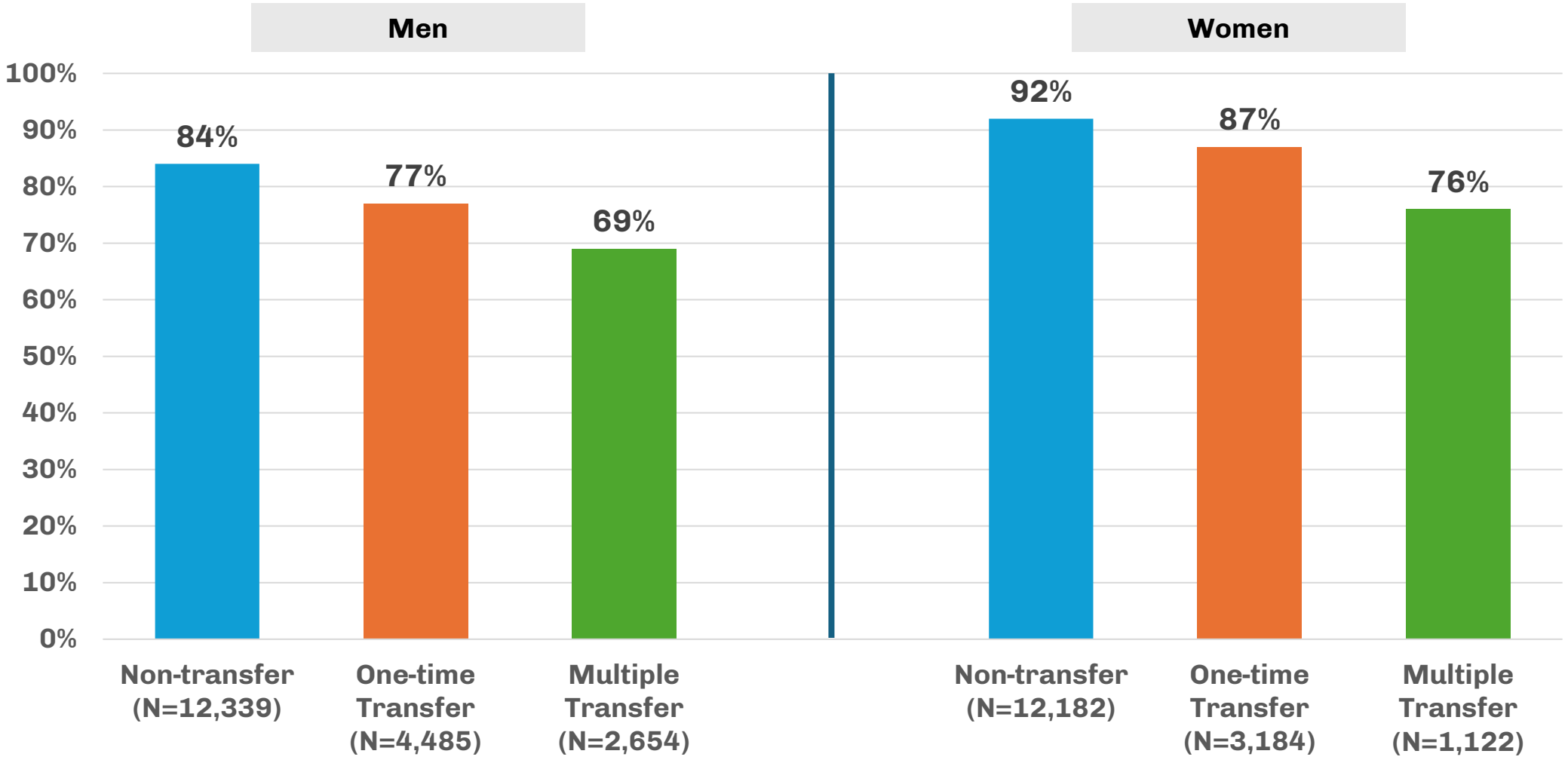
NCAA RESEARCH

Six-Year Graduation Rates of the 2018-19 Division I Cohort by Transfer Status



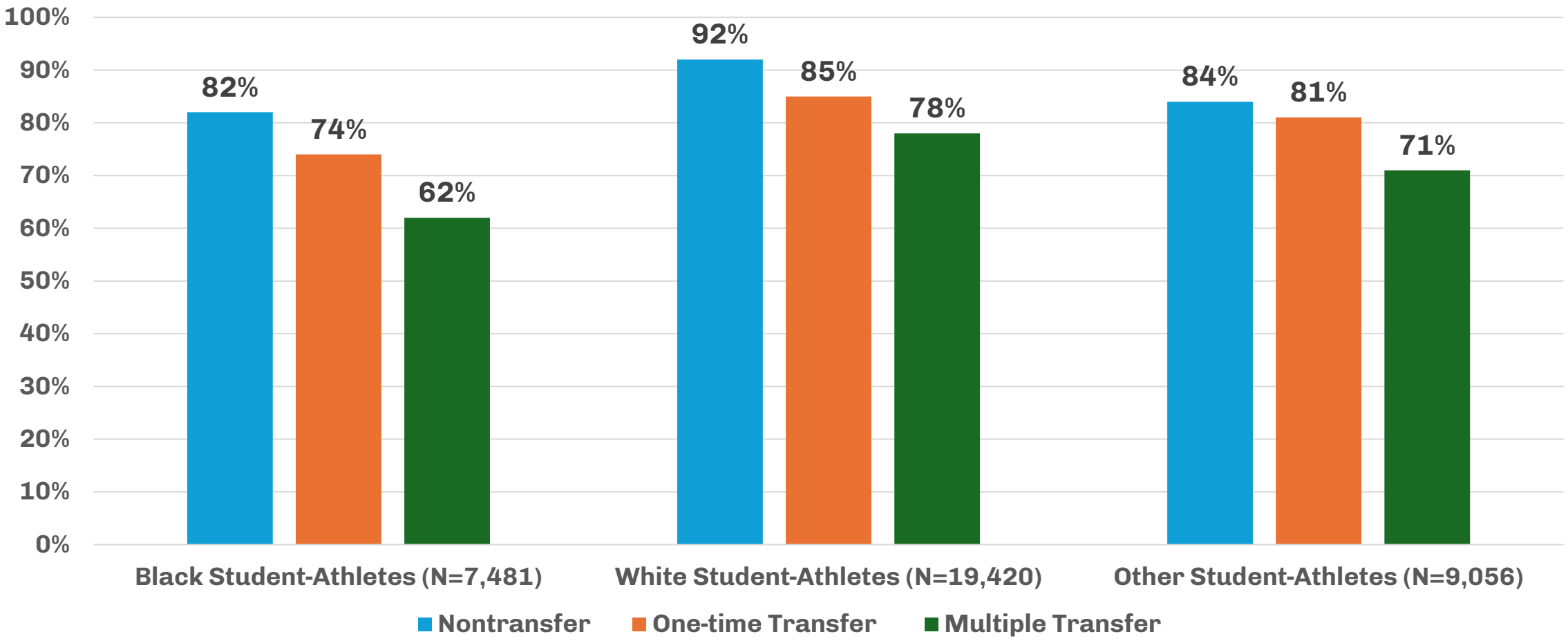
NCAA RESEARCH

Six-Year Graduation Rates of the 2018-19 Division I Cohort by Gender and Transfer Status



NCAA RESEARCH

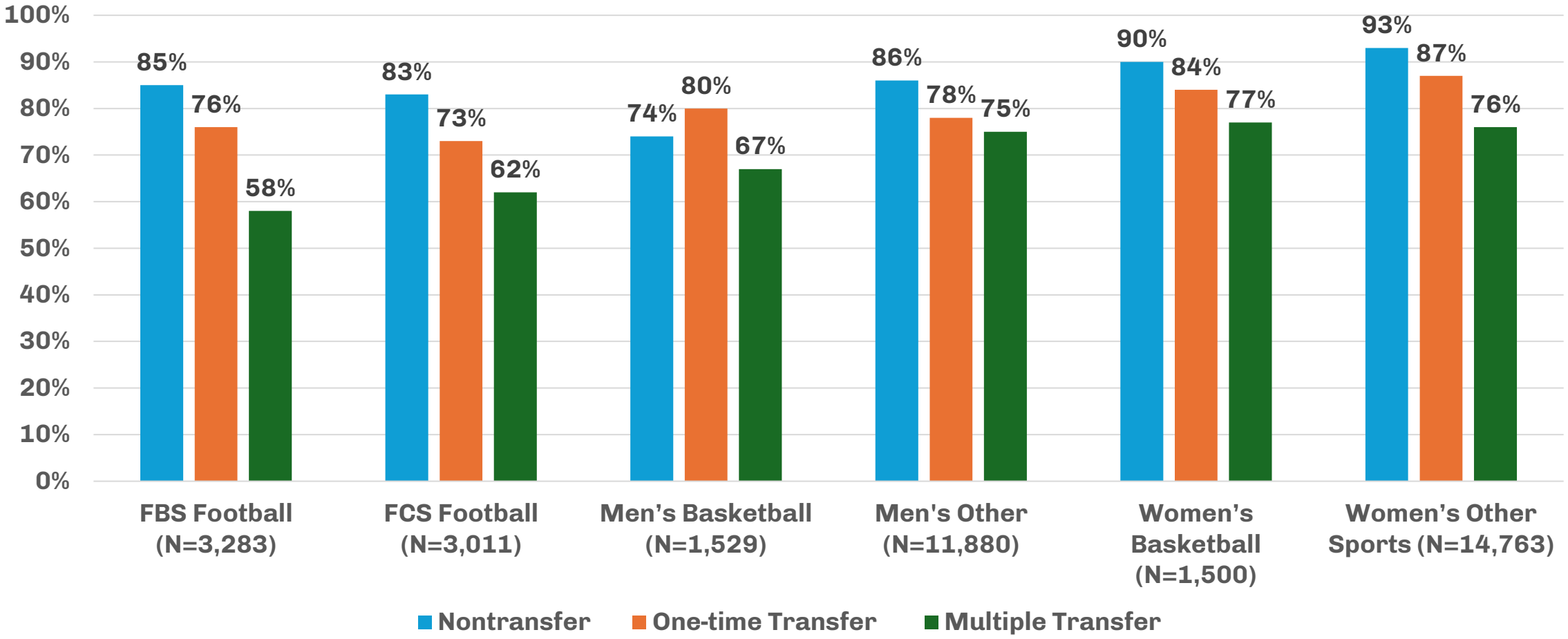
Six-Year Graduation Rates of the 2018-19 Division I Cohort by Race and Transfer Status



Note: "Other" includes Asian, Indigenous, Latinx, International, Multiracial and Unknown. All racial groups listed above had over 850 multiple transfers within the 2018-19 Division I cohort (year of initial enrollment).

NCAA RESEARCH

Six-Year Graduation Rates of the 2018-19 Division I Cohort by Sport and Transfer Status



Note: All sports listed above had over 200 multiple transfers within the within the 2018-19 Division I cohort (year of initial enrollment).

NCAA RESEARCH

Additional Insight from the 2025 APP Cohort

2025 Division I Academic Portal Outcomes Study

- NCAA Research used 2025 Division I Academic Performance Program (APP) data as a base file and merged in each student-athlete's previous Division I APP institutional enrollment records (2021 to present), allowing for a review of the number of Division I schools attended.
- The transfer status field in the APP record was also used to capture two-year or four-year transfer from a school outside Division I.
- In combination, these data made it possible to calculate the transfer status of each sophomore through fifth-year senior in the 2025 cohort. A multiple transfer had a record of either attending three or more four-year colleges or a two-year college and at least two four-year institutions.
- Excluding freshmen and postgraduates, there were over 89,000 students in the study: about 63,000 non-transfers, 22,700 one-time transfers and 3,500 multiple transfers.
- Outcomes in terms of progress toward degree and degree completion were examined by transfer status.

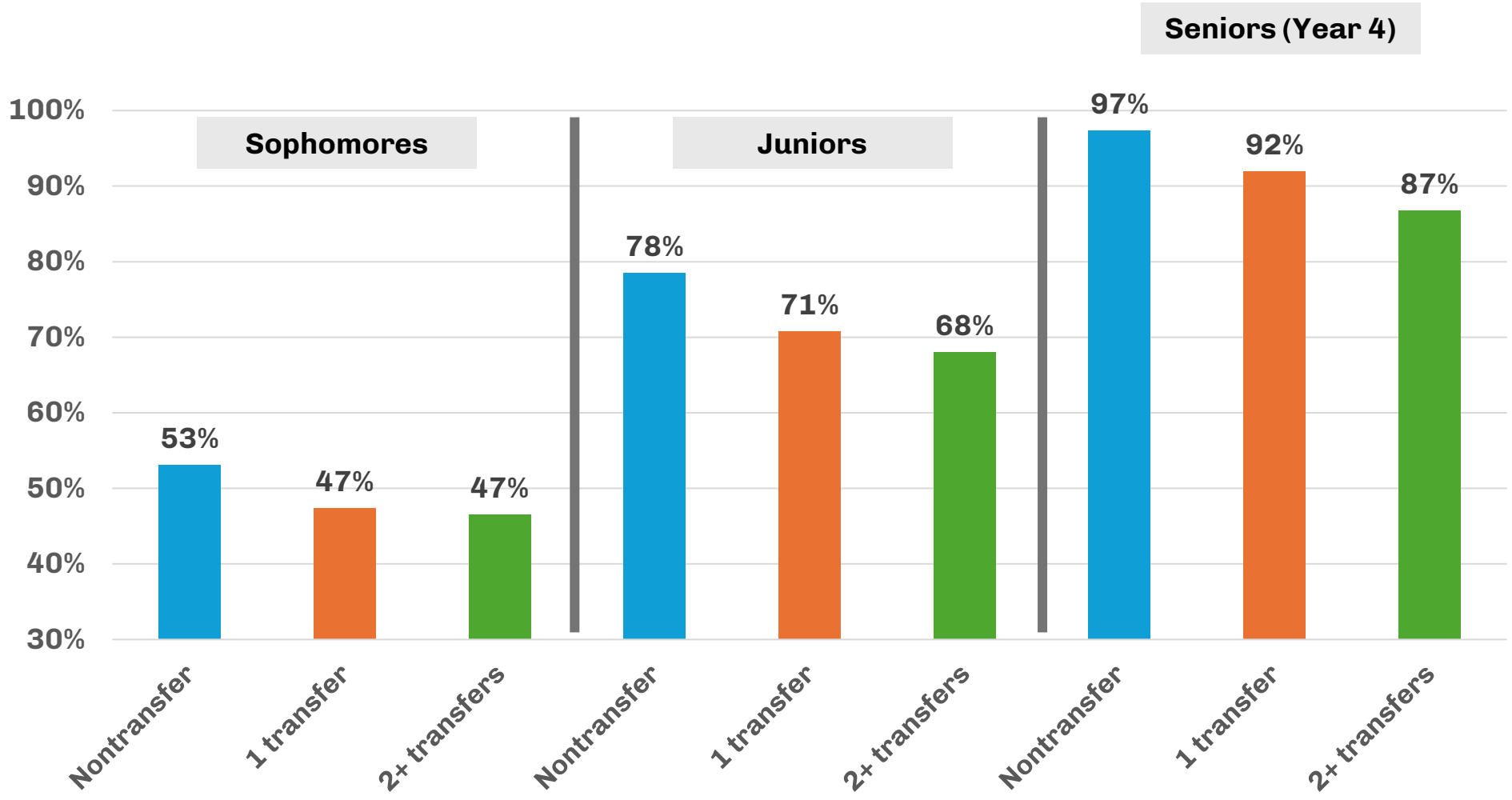
Composition of 2025 APP Cohort Undergraduates by Transfer Status

	Total	FBS Football	FCS Football	Men's Basketball	Men's Other	Women's Basketball	Women's Other
5th Year Seniors							
Nontransfer	44% (2,938)	36%	45%	8%	48%	21%	55%
1 Transfer	43% (2,879)	44%	42%	49%	43%	52%	41%
2+ Transfers	13% (849)	20%	13%	43%	8%	27%	4%
4th Year Seniors							
Nontransfer	66% (16,112)	41%	50%	28%	67%	42%	79%
1 Transfer	28% (6,727)	40%	39%	46%	28%	46%	20%
2+ Transfers	6% (1,485)	19%	11%	26%	5%	12%	1%
Juniors							
Nontransfer	67% (19,396)	45%	59%	31%	68%	50%	77%
1 Transfer	29% (8,447)	45%	34%	57%	29%	46%	22%
2+ Transfers	3% (998)	10%	7%	11%	3%	4%	1%

Source: 2025 DI Academic Performance Program Data. Notes: Analyses restricted to undergraduates in the 2025 sport cohort. Transfer status defined using the transfer status field in the Academic Portal and any record of institutional change in longitudinal APP transfer files from 2022 to current. Fifth-year seniors were in their fifth year of college; their initial enrollment was in 2020-21.

NCAA RESEARCH

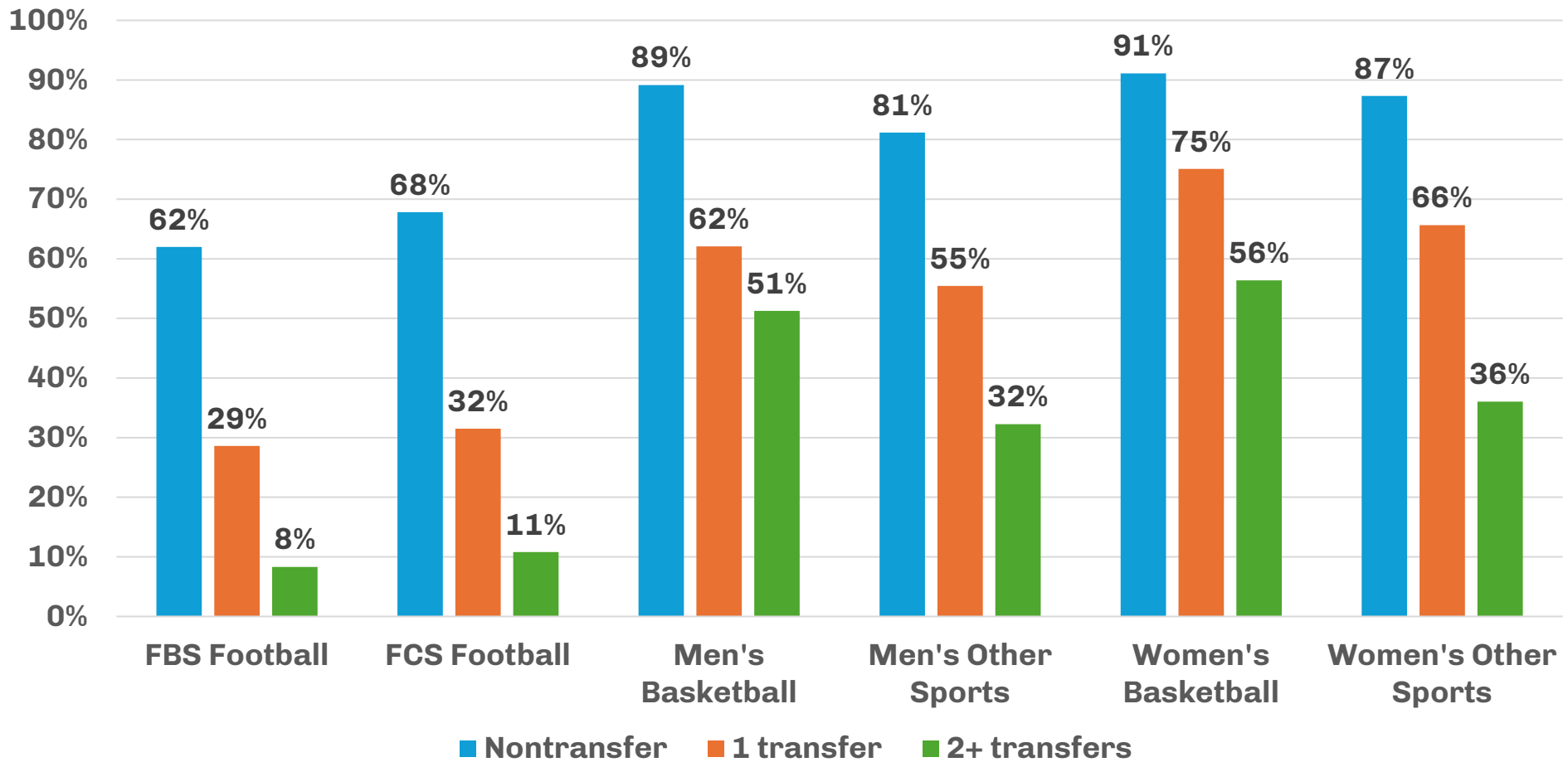
Average Percentage of Degree Completed at End of 2025 Academic Year by Transfer Status



Source: 2025 DI Academic Performance Program Data. Notes: Analyses restricted to undergraduates in the 2025 sport cohort. Transfer status defined using the transfer status field in the Academic Portal and any record of institutional change in longitudinal APP transfer files from 2022 to current. Seniors are in their fourth year of college and their initial enrollment was in 2021-22.

NCAA RESEARCH

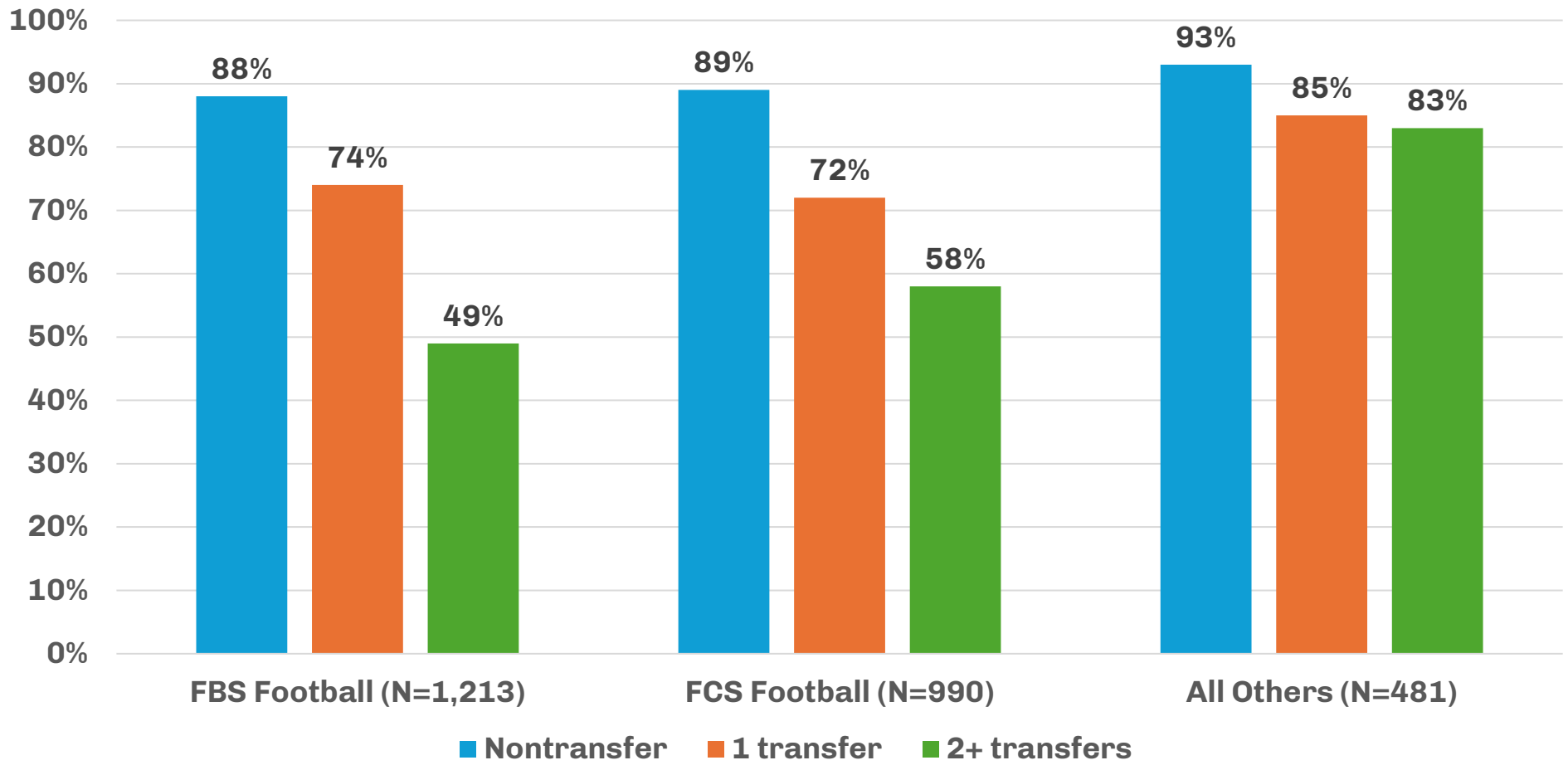
Percentage of Seniors (Year 4) Earning a Bachelor's Degree in 2025 by Transfer Status



Source: 2025 DI Academic Performance Program Data. Notes: Analyses restricted to undergraduates in the 2025 sport cohort. Transfer status defined using the transfer status field in the Academic Portal and any record of institutional change in longitudinal APP transfer files from 2022 to current. The initial enrollment for fourth-year students was in 2021-22.

NCAA RESEARCH

Percentage of Fifth-Year Seniors Earning a Bachelor's Degree in 2025 by Transfer Status



Source: 2025 DI Academic Performance Program Data. Notes: Analyses restricted to undergraduates in the 2025 sport cohort. Transfer status defined using the transfer status field in the Academic Portal and any record of institutional change in longitudinal APP transfer files from 2022 to current. The initial enrollment for fifth-year students was in 2020-21.

NCAA RESEARCH

Conclusion

- With the move to a five-year eligibility model for all sports and an increasing pool of multiple transfers, the NCAA will continue to monitor academic progress-toward-degree and degree completion rates.
- However, these two studies provide insight that support earlier predictions that transferring multiple times compounds credit loss and negatively impacts bachelor's degree attainment.
- In light of these data, it is anticipated that overall graduation rates will decline, given the increase in both one-time and multiple transfers competing in Division I athletics.



RESEARCH

ncaa.org/research

@ncaaresearch |

NCAA is a trademark of the National Collegiate Athletic Association.