

A blue and white pennant flag with the NCAA logo is positioned diagonally across the right side of the image. The background is a blurred crowd of spectators in a stadium.

Current Findings on Student-Athlete Mental Health

NCAA Student-Athlete Health and Wellness Study (December 2023)



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Summary of Methodology

- This mental health study is based on data collected in a comprehensive study of student-athlete health and wellness during the 2022-23 academic year.
- The study was administered by NCAA faculty athletics representatives (FARs) on behalf of NCAA Research.
- 23,272 current student-athletes participated in the study.
- Final data weighted based on 2022-23 NCAA participation rates to ensure the representativeness of findings.

Student-Athlete Mental Health Concerns



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Findings

- Mental health problems (e.g., anxiety, feeling sad or overwhelmed) for student-athletes generally have improved since 2020, but are still at relatively high levels.
- Women, BIPOC and LGBTQ+ student-athletes reported the highest rates of mental health struggles.
- The factors most cited as negatively impacting one's mental health were academics, planning for the future, and finances.

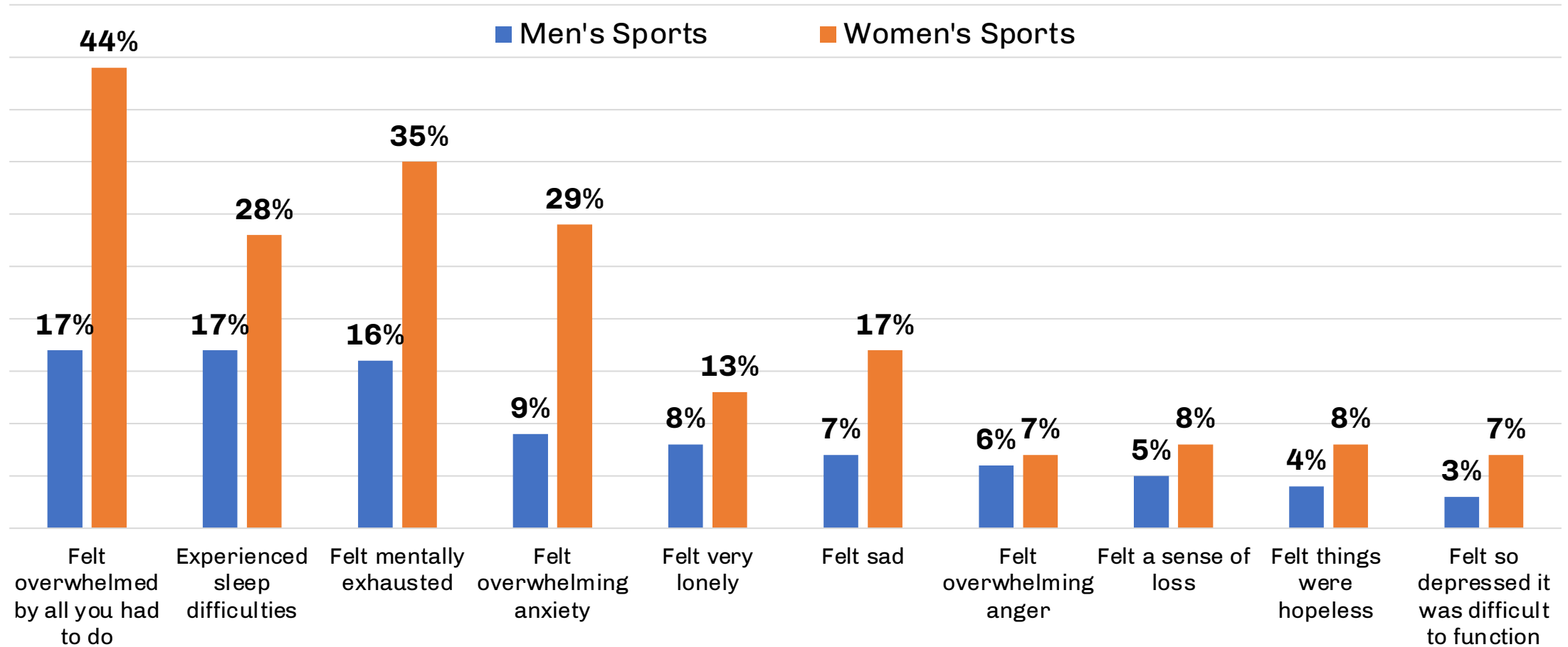
Note: BIPOC refers to Black, Indigenous, People of color; LGBTQ+ refers to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and more.



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Mental Health Concerns During 2022-23 Academic Year

(Percentage of Participants Who Endorsed “Constantly” or “Most Every Day”)



Mental Health Concerns

(Percentage of Men's Sports Participants Who Endorsed “Constantly” or “Most Every Day”)

	COVID-19 Well-Being Studies			Health and Wellness Study
	Spring 2020	Fall 2020	Fall 2021	2022-23
Felt overwhelmed by all you had to do	31%	27%	25%	17%
Experienced sleep difficulties	31%	18%	19%	17%
Felt mentally exhausted	26%	21%	22%	16%
Felt overwhelming anxiety	14%	11%	12%	9%
Felt very lonely	22%	12%	11%	8%
Felt sad	17%	11%	11%	7%
Felt overwhelming anger	11%	6%	6%	6%
Felt a sense of loss	21%	8%	8%	5%
Felt things were hopeless	11%	10%	6%	4%
Felt so depressed it was difficult to function	7%	5%	6%	3%

Green indicates a decrease of 5 percentage points or more from Fall 2021

Note: The spring 2020 survey asked, “As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, have you...,” and was in the field approximately a month after the pandemic led to the cancelation of winter and spring championships (Mar. 12, 2020) and the closure of most campuses. The fall 2020/2021 and 2023 surveys asked, “Within the last month, have you...” Spring 2020 survey N=15,148 men’s sports participants; Fall 2020 survey N=8,799; Fall 2021 survey N = 3,137; 2023 survey N=14,001. Sources: [NCAA Student-Athlete Well-Being Studies](#) (2020 and 2021) and NCAA Student-Athlete Health and Wellness Study (2023).



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Mental Health Concerns

(Percentage of Women's Sports Participants Who Endorsed “Constantly” or “Most Every Day”)

	COVID-19 Well-Being Studies			Health and Wellness Study
	Spring 2020	Fall 2020	Fall 2021	2022-23
Felt overwhelmed by all you had to do	50%	51%	47%	44%
Experienced sleep difficulties	42%	28%	28%	28%
Felt mentally exhausted	39%	39%	38%	35%
Felt overwhelming anxiety	27%	29%	29%	29%
Felt very lonely	33%	21%	16%	13%
Felt sad	31%	22%	19%	17%
Felt overwhelming anger	11%	8%	8%	7%
Felt a sense of loss	31%	13%	11%	8%
Felt things were hopeless	16%	16%	10%	8%
Felt so depressed it was difficult to function	9%	9%	9%	7%

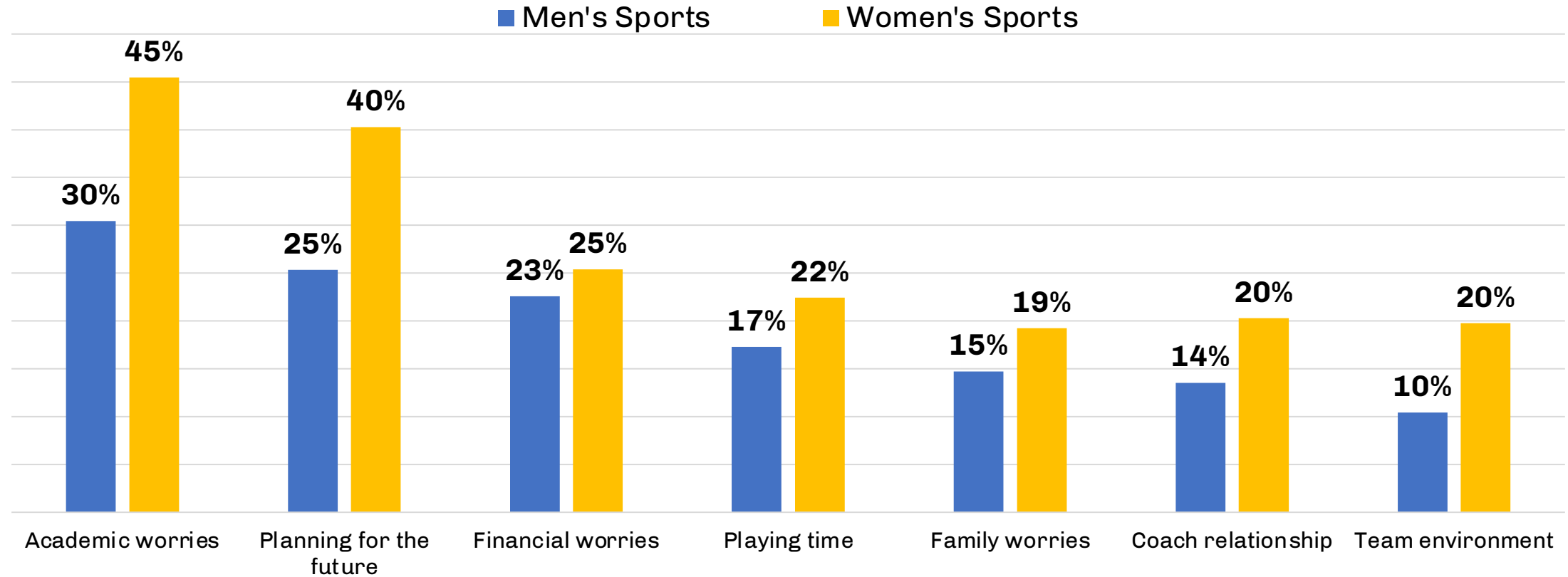
Note: The spring 2020 survey asked, “As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, have you...,” and was in the field approximately a month after the pandemic led to the cancelation of winter and spring championships (Mar. 12, 2020) and the closure of most campuses. The fall 2020/2021 and 2023 surveys asked, “Within the last month, have you...” Spring 2020 survey N= 22,472 women’s sports participants; Fall 2020 survey N= 16,100; Fall 2021 survey N = 6,663; 2023 survey N=9,271. Sources: [NCAA Student-Athlete Well-Being Studies](#) (2020 and 2021) and NCAA Student-Athlete Health and Wellness Study (2023).



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Factors Negatively Impacting Student-Athlete Mental Health in the Month Before the Survey

(Percentage of Participants Who Responded “Agree” or “Strongly Agree”)



Note: Top 2 points on a 6-point scale. The survey asked, “How much do you agree or disagree that the following have negatively impacted your mental health within the last month?” Other factors endorsed at rates ranging from 3-4% included COVID-19 health concerns and political disagreements with family/friends. Source: NCAA Student-Athlete Health and Wellness Study (2023).



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Student-Athlete Mental Health Concerns

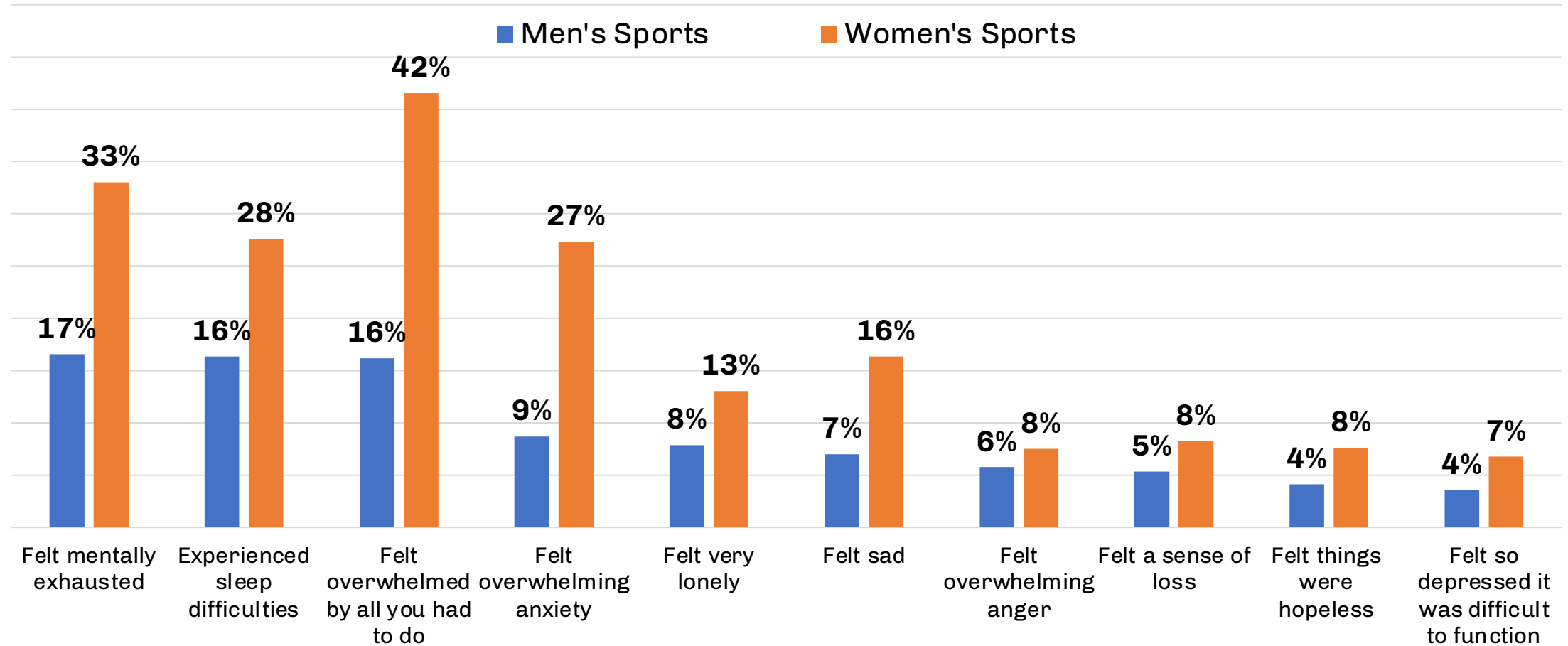
BY DIVISION



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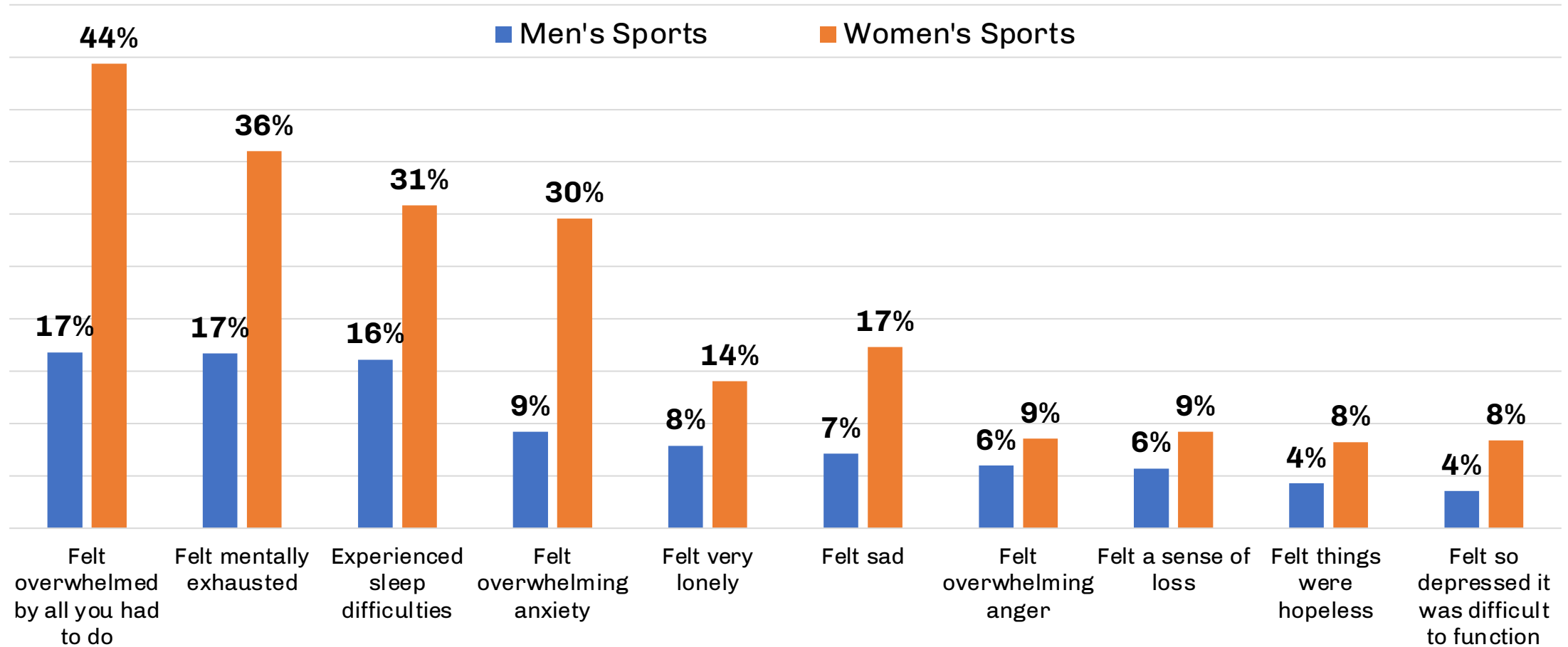
Mental Health Concerns During 2022-23 Academic Year

(Percentage of Division I Participants Who Endorsed “Constantly” or “Most Every Day”)



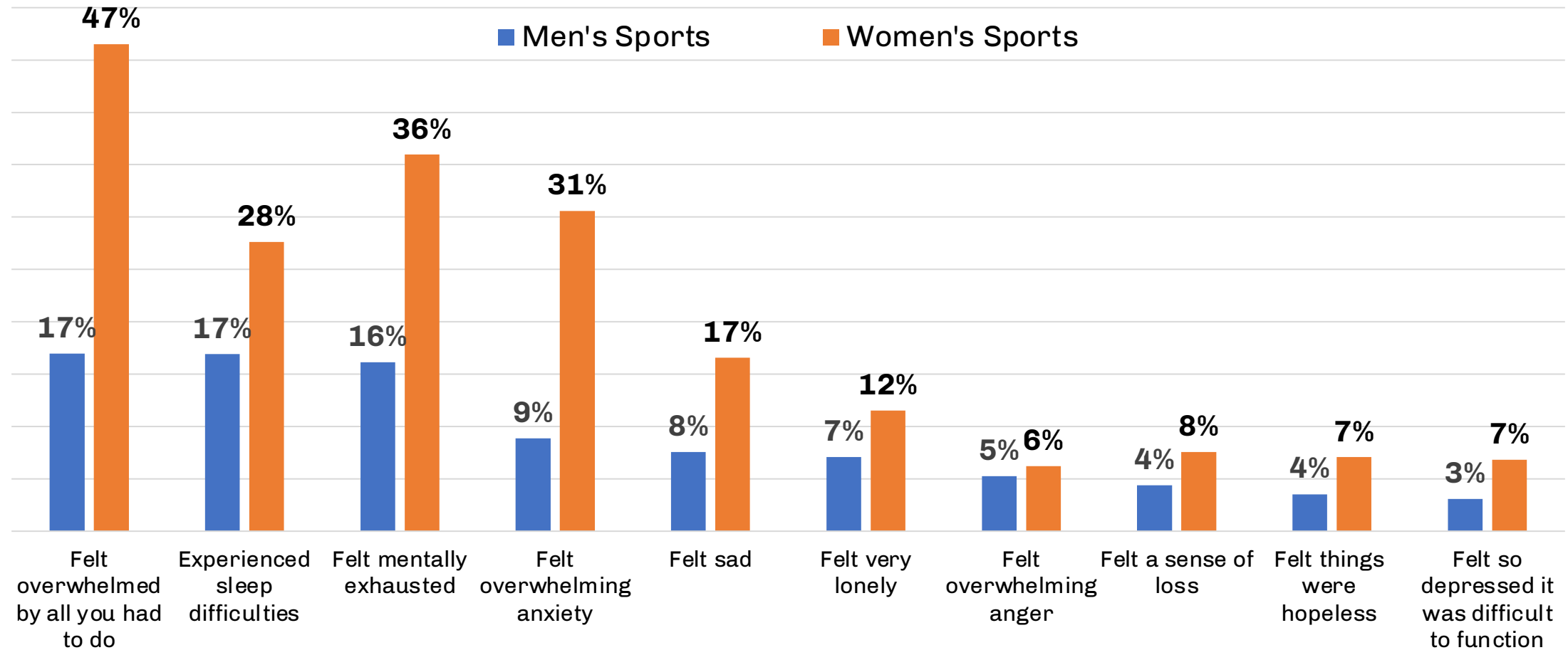
Mental Health Concerns During 2022-23 Academic Year

(Percentage of Division II Participants Who Endorsed “Constantly” or “Most Every Day”)



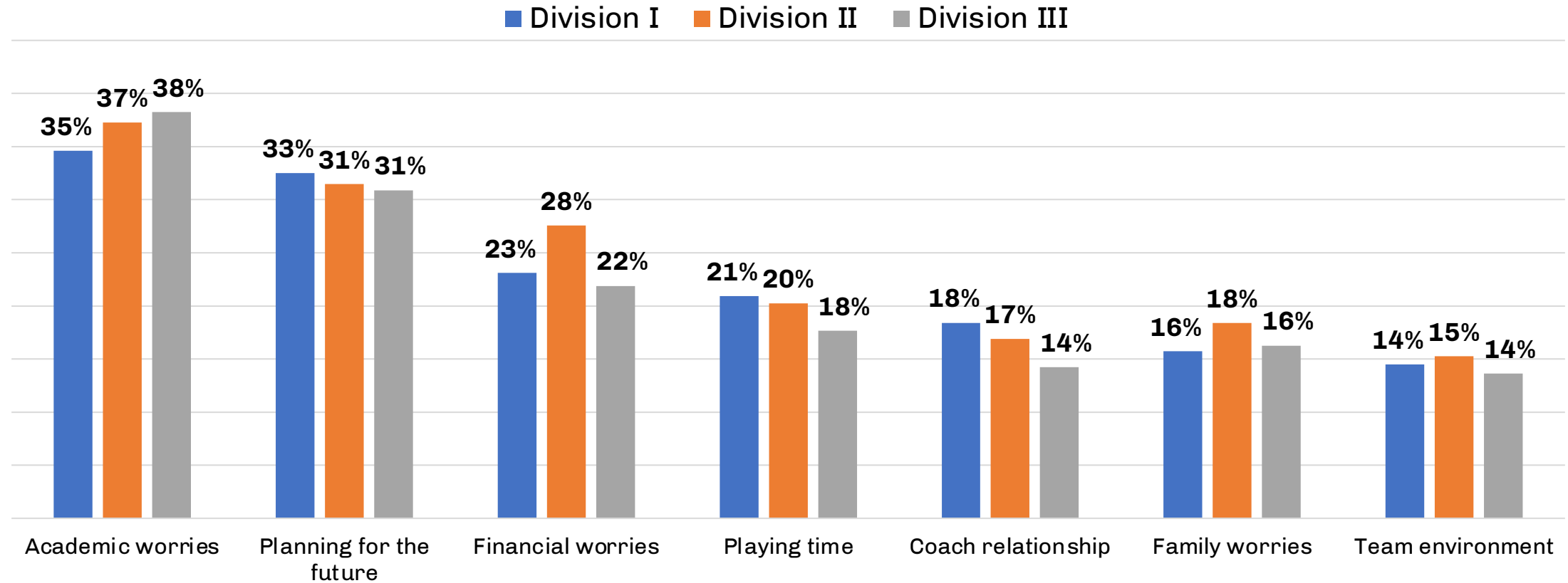
Mental Health Concerns During 2022-23 Academic Year

(Percentage of Division III Participants Who Endorsed “Constantly” or “Most Every Day”)



Factors Negatively Impacting Student-Athlete Mental Health in the Month Before the Survey

(Percentage of Participants Who Responded “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” by Division)



Note: Top 2 points on a 6-point scale. The survey asked, “How much do you agree or disagree that the following have negatively impacted your mental health within the last month?” Other factors endorsed at rates ranging from 3-4% included COVID-19 health concerns and political disagreements with family/friends. Source: NCAA Student-Athlete Health and Wellness Study (2023).



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Student-Athlete Mental Health Concerns

BY DEMOGRAPHIC SUBGROUP



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Mental Health Concerns During 2022-23 Academic Year

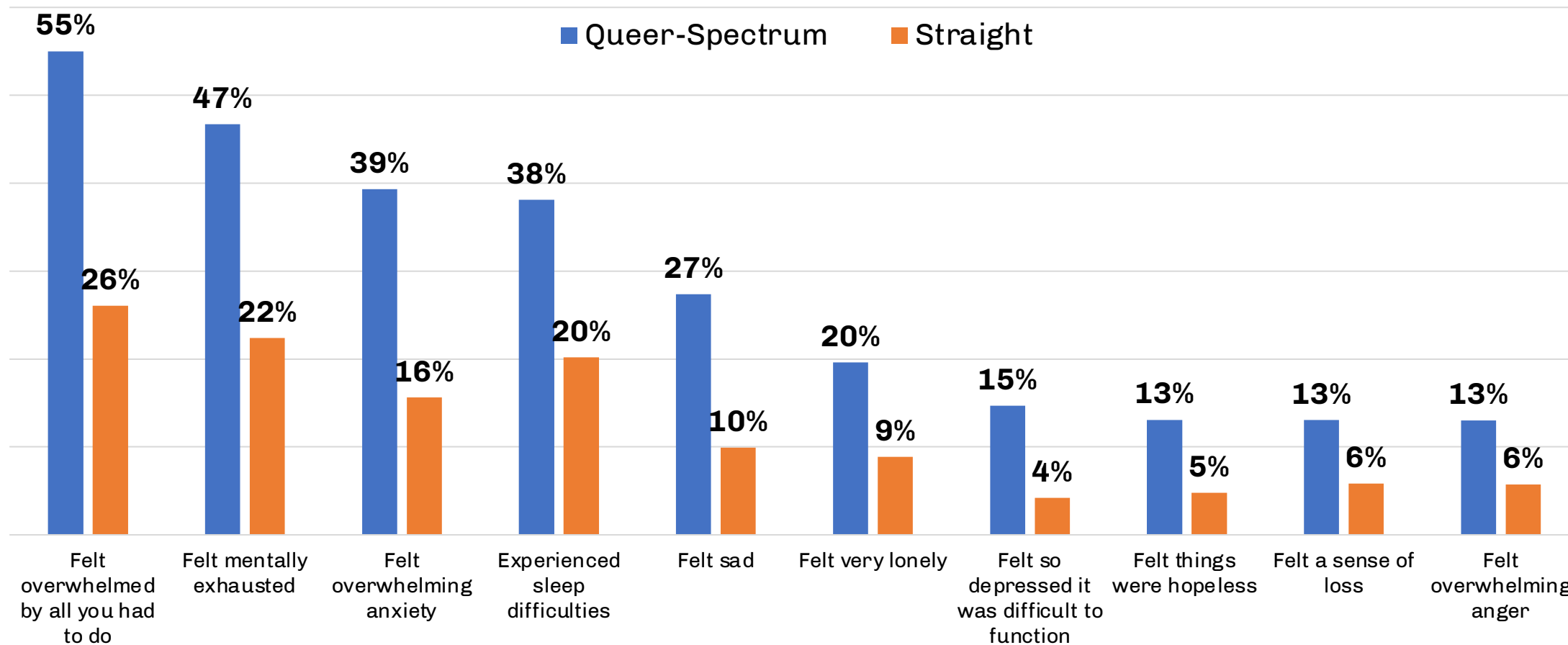
(Percentage of Participants Who Endorsed “Constantly” or “Most Every Day” by Racial Group)

	Black	Latinx	Other	White
Felt overwhelmed by all you had to do	26%	29%	32%	28%
Experienced sleep difficulties	23%	24%	25%	20%
Felt mentally exhausted	24%	27%	29%	23%
Felt overwhelming anxiety	15%	18%	20%	17%
Felt very lonely	12%	11%	14%	8%
Felt sad	12%	12%	15%	10%
Felt overwhelming anger	10%	7%	9%	5%
Felt a sense of loss	9%	8%	9%	5%
Felt things were hopeless	8%	6%	7%	4%
Felt so depressed it was difficult to function	7%	6%	8%	4%

Note: “Other” includes those who selected American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, Middle Eastern/North African, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, Other or multiple racial identities. Source: NCAA Student-Athlete Health and Wellness Study (2023).

Mental Health Concerns During 2022-23 Academic Year

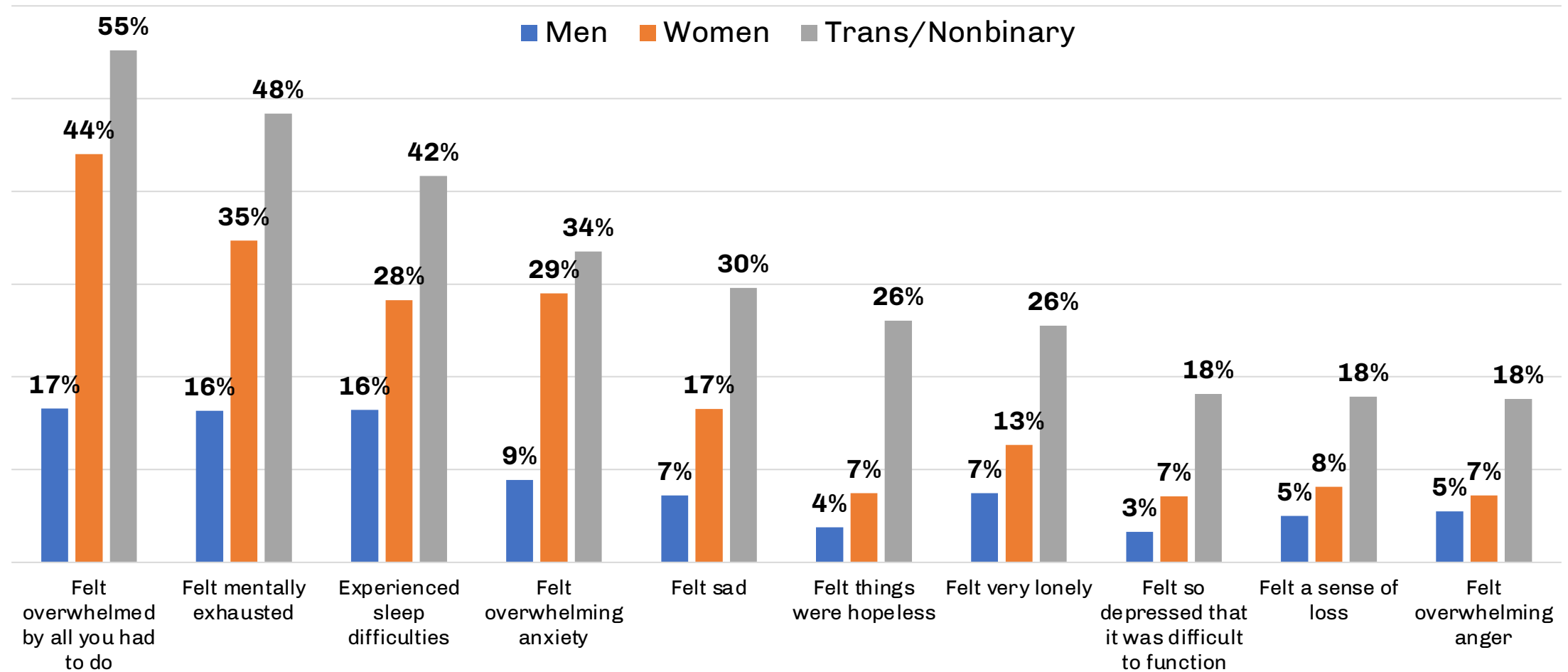
(Percentage of Participants Who Endorsed “Constantly” or “Most Every Day” by Sexual Orientation)



Note: Queer-spectrum includes those self-identifying as gay, lesbian, bisexual, pansexual, queer, questioning/unsure, another sexual identity or multiple sexual identities. Queer-spectrum participants represented 7% of the sample (N=1,495). Source: NCAA Student-Athlete Health and Wellness Study (2023).

Mental Health Concerns During 2022-23 Academic Year

(Percentage of Participants Who Endorsed “Constantly” or “Most Every Day” by Gender Identity)



Note: Trans/Nonbinary includes those self-identifying as genderqueer, nonbinary, transgender, another gender identity or multiple gender identities. Nonbinary participants represented <1% of the sample (N=148). Source: NCAA Student-Athlete Health and Wellness Study (2023).

Factors Negatively Impacting Student-Athlete Mental Health in the Month Before the Survey

(Percentage of Participants Who Responded “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” by Racial Group)

	Black	Latinx	Other	White
Planning for the future	36%	37%	38%	29%
Financial worries	35%	33%	30%	19%
Academic worries	35%	42%	41%	36%
Family worries	24%	24%	22%	13%
Playing time	21%	24%	22%	18%
Coach relationship	19%	18%	19%	15%
Team environment	17%	17%	17%	13%
Personal experiences of racism/racial trauma	10%	6%	7%	--
COVID-19 health concerns	7%	5%	4%	3%
Political disagreements with family/friends	6%	5%	5%	3%

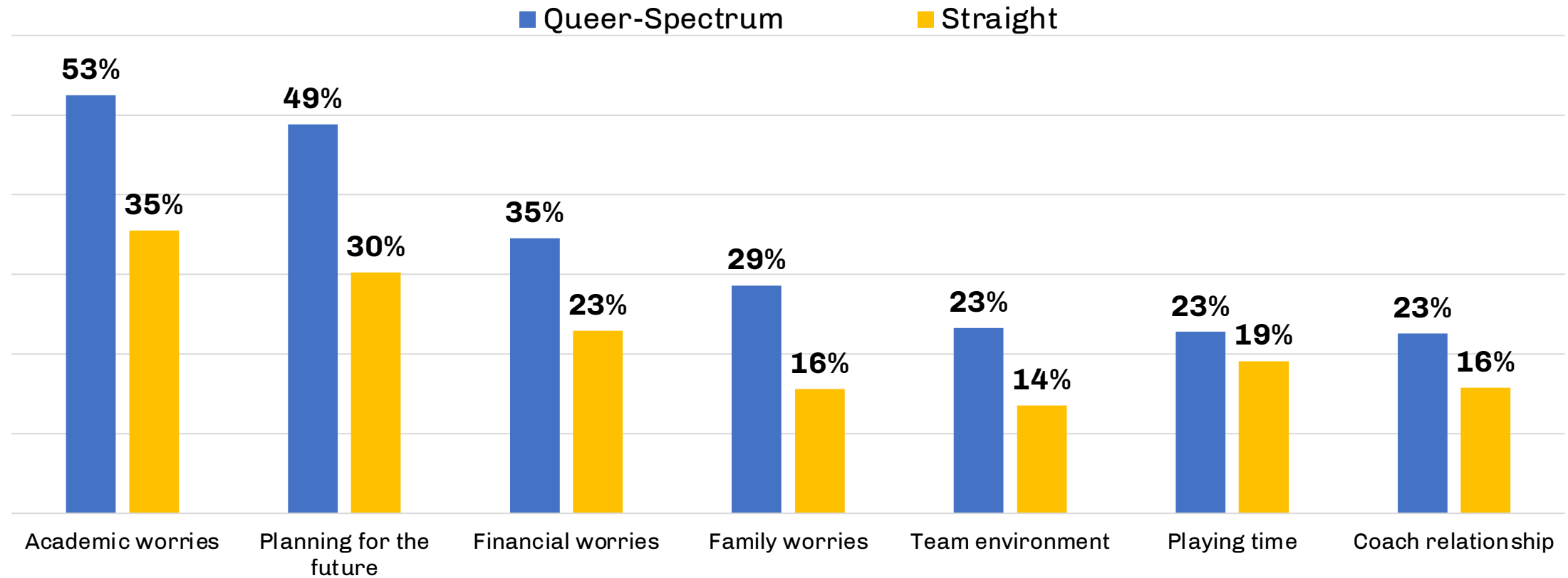
Note: Top 2 points on a 6-point scale. The survey asked, “How much do you agree or disagree that the following have negatively impacted your mental health within the last month?” “Other” includes those who selected American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, Middle Eastern/North African, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, Other or multiple racial identities. Source: NCAA Student-Athlete Health and Wellness Study (2023).



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Factors Negatively Impacting Student-Athlete Mental Health in the Month Before the Survey

(Percentage of Participants Who Responded “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” by Sexual Orientation)



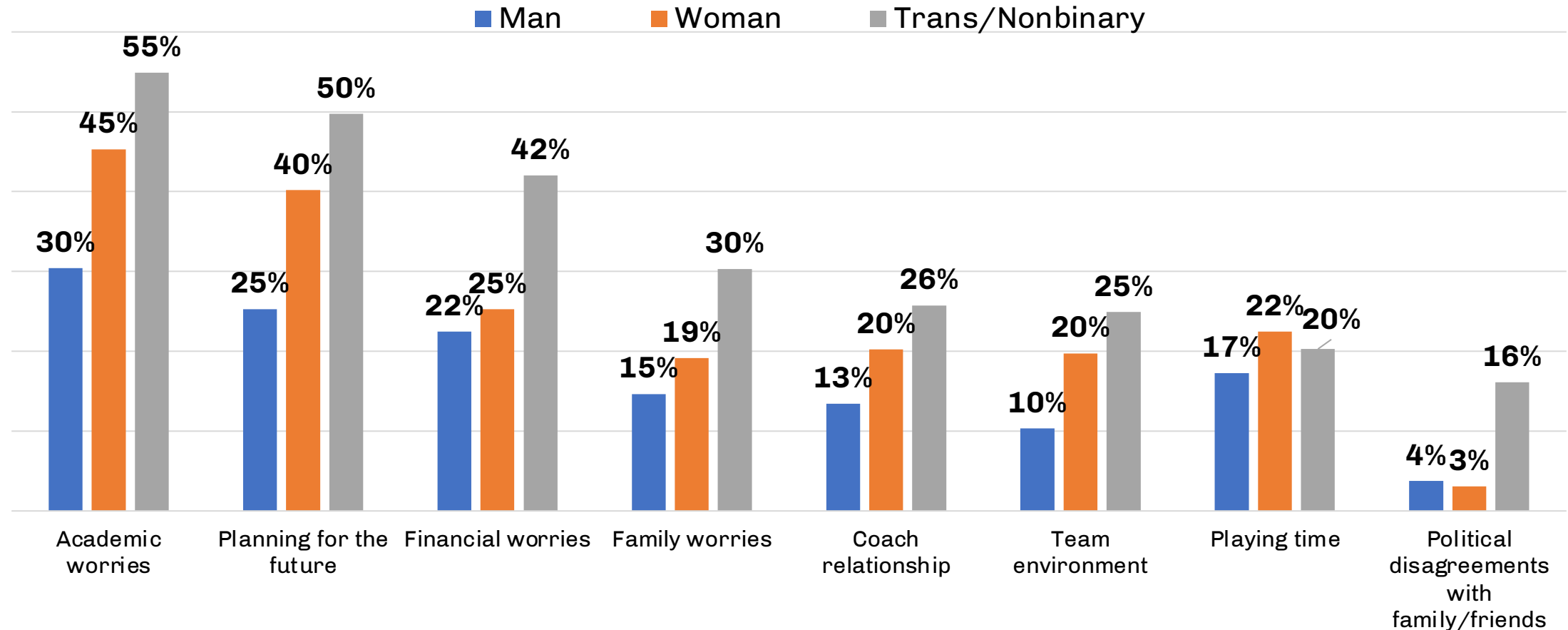
Note: Top 2 points on a 6-point scale. The survey asked, “How much do you agree or disagree that the following have negatively impacted your mental health within the last month?” Other factors endorsed at rates ranging from 3-8% included COVID-19 health concerns and political disagreements with family/friends. Queer-spectrum includes those self-identifying as gay, lesbian, bisexual, pansexual, queer, questioning/unsure, another sexual identity or multiple sexual identities. Queer-spectrum participants represented 7% of the sample (N=1,495). Source: NCAA Student-Athlete Health and Wellness Study (2023).



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Factors Negatively Impacting Student-Athlete Mental Health in the Month Before the Survey

(Percentage of Participants Who Responded “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” by Gender Identity)



Note: Top 2 points on a 6-point scale. The survey asked, “How much do you agree or disagree that the following have negatively impacted your mental health within the last month?” Other factors endorsed at rates ranging from 3-8% included COVID-19 health concerns and political disagreements with family/friends. Trans/Nonbinary includes those self-identifying as genderqueer, nonbinary, transgender, another gender identity or multiple gender identities. Nonbinary participants represented <1% of the sample (N=148). Source: NCAA Student-Athlete Health and Wellness Study (2023).



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Wellness Support

Findings

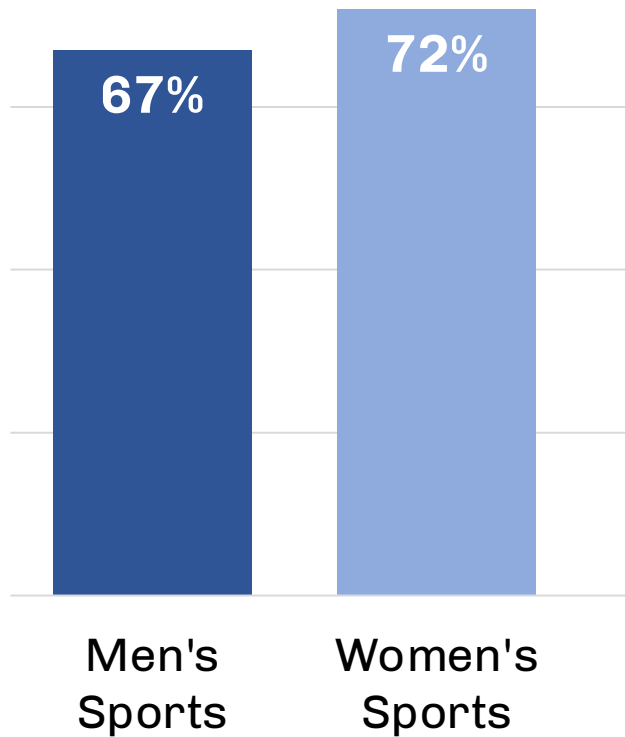
- Nearly 70% of student-athletes reported knowing where to go on campus and having people on campus they can trust to provide mental health support when needed.
- One-half reported feeling comfortable seeking support from a mental health provider on campus.
- Student-athletes reported feeling less comfortable talking to their coaches about mental health issues as compared to speaking about physical health issues. The percentage of student-athletes who felt their coaches cared about well-being issues generally has declined since pre-pandemic studies.



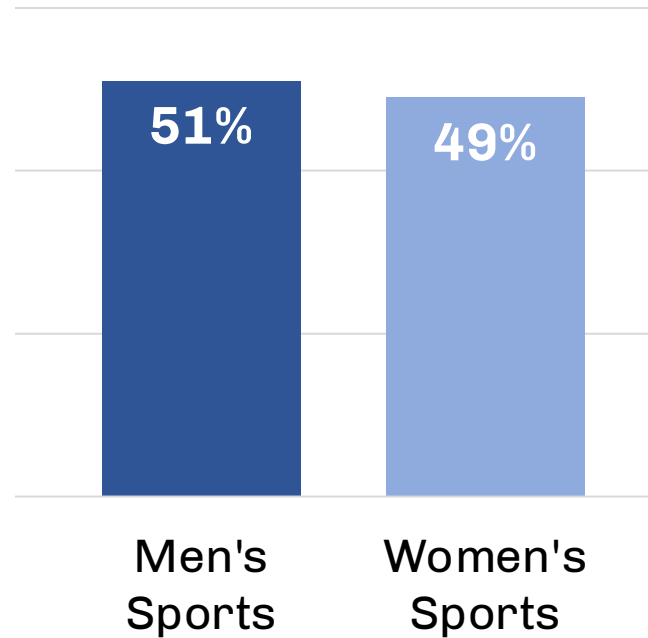
Campus Mental Health Support

(Percentage of Participants Who Endorsed “Agree” or “Strongly Agree”)

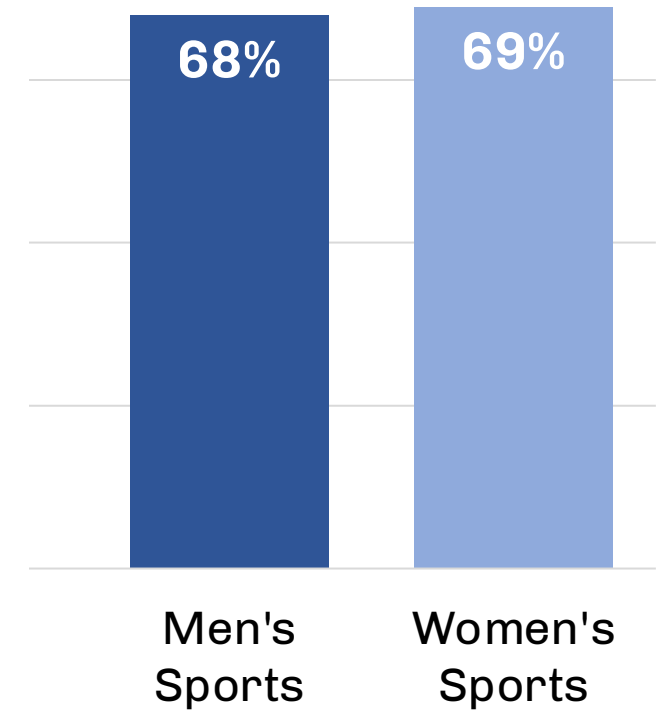
I know where to go on campus if I have mental health concerns.



I would feel comfortable seeking support from a mental health provider on this campus.



There are people on campus I can trust to give me support when I need it.



Beliefs about Mental Health Seeking

(Percentage of Participants Who Endorsed “Agree” or “Strongly Agree”)

I would feel inadequate if I went to a therapist for psychological help.

Seeking psychological help would make me feel less intelligent.

My self-esteem would increase if I talked to a therapist.

26%

14%

Men's
Sports

Women's
Sports

19%

9%

Men's
Sports

Women's
Sports

25%

30%

Men's
Sports

Women's
Sports



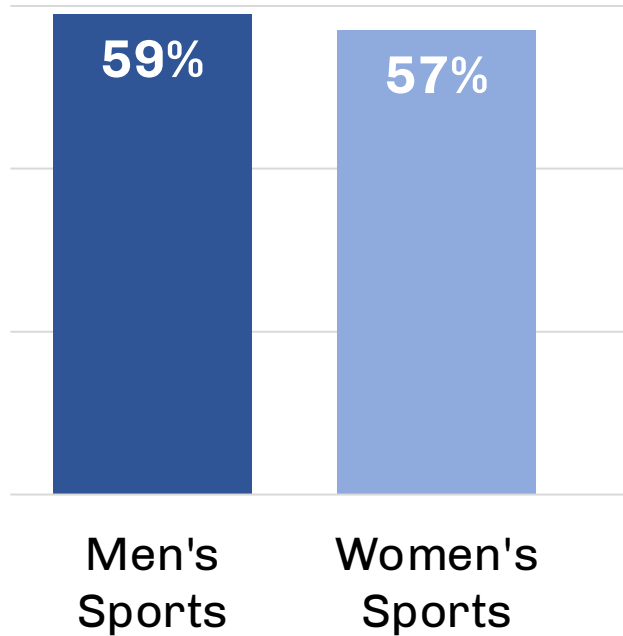
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Note: Top 2 points on a 6-point scale. Source: NCAA Student-Athlete Health and Wellness Study (2023).

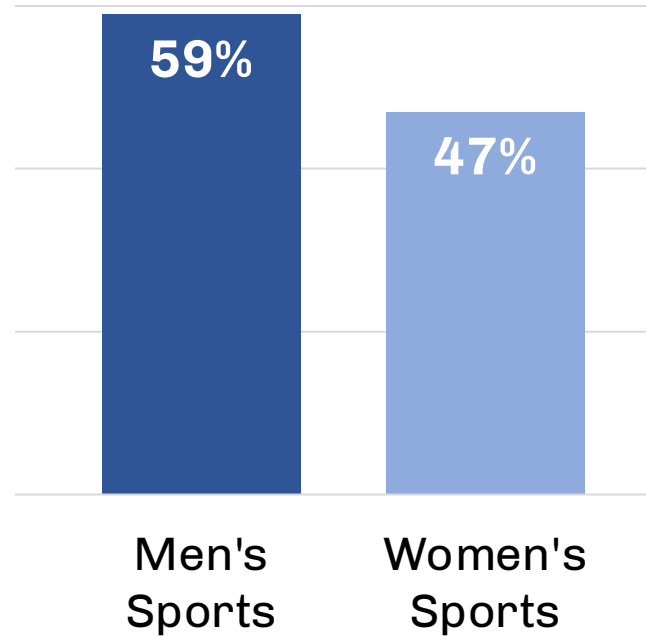
Mental Health Support in Athletics

(Percentage of Participants Who Endorsed “Agree” or “Strongly Agree”)

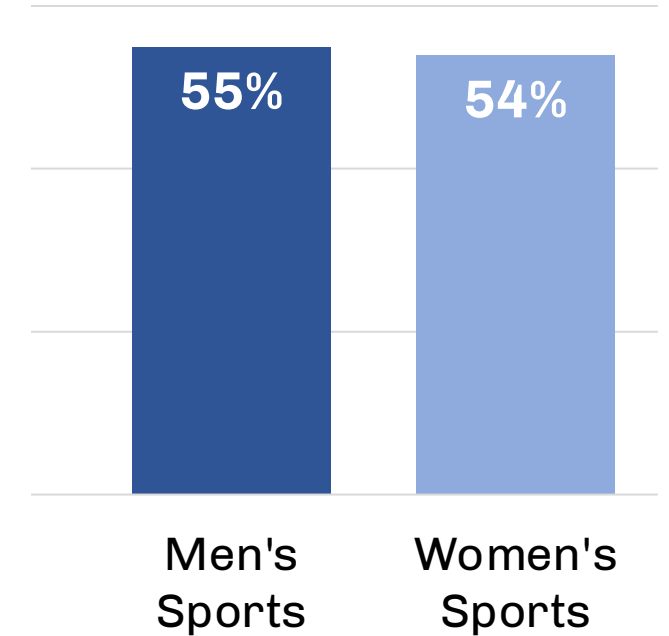
I know how to help a teammate that is experiencing a mental health issue.



I feel that student-athletes' mental health is a priority to our athletics department.



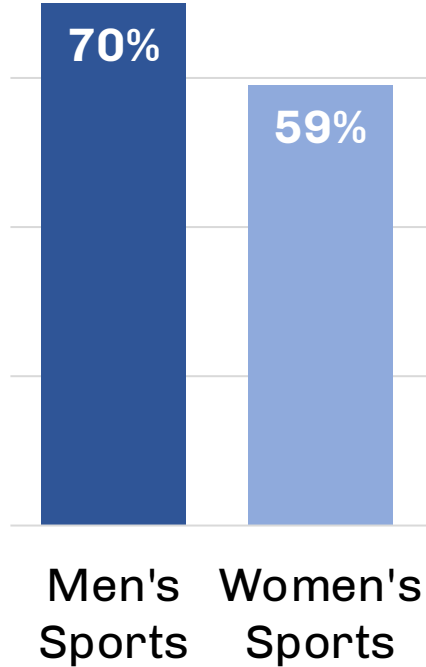
Student-athletes on this campus take the mental health concerns of their teammates seriously.



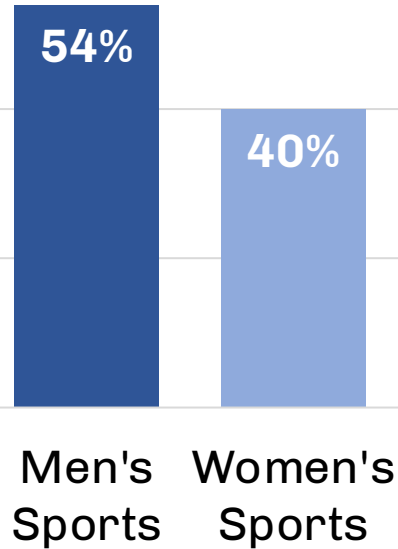
Well-Being Support from Coaches

(Percentage of Participants Who Endorsed “Agree” or “Strongly Agree”)

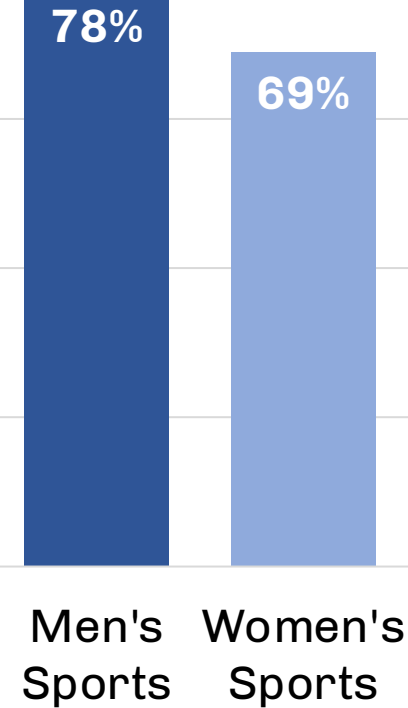
My coaches care about my **mental** well-being.



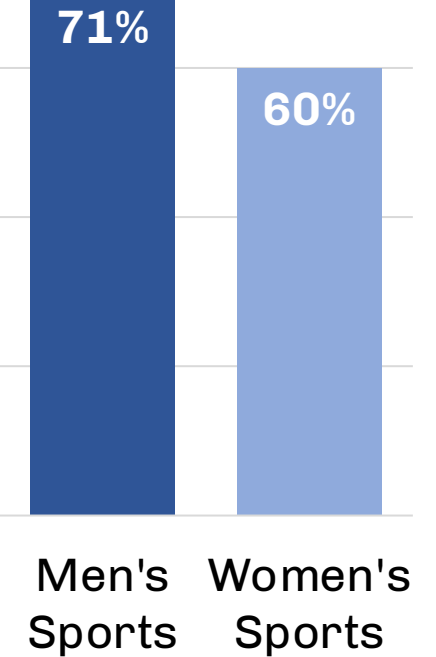
I would feel comfortable talking with my coaches about **mental health** issues.



My coaches care about my **physical** well-being.

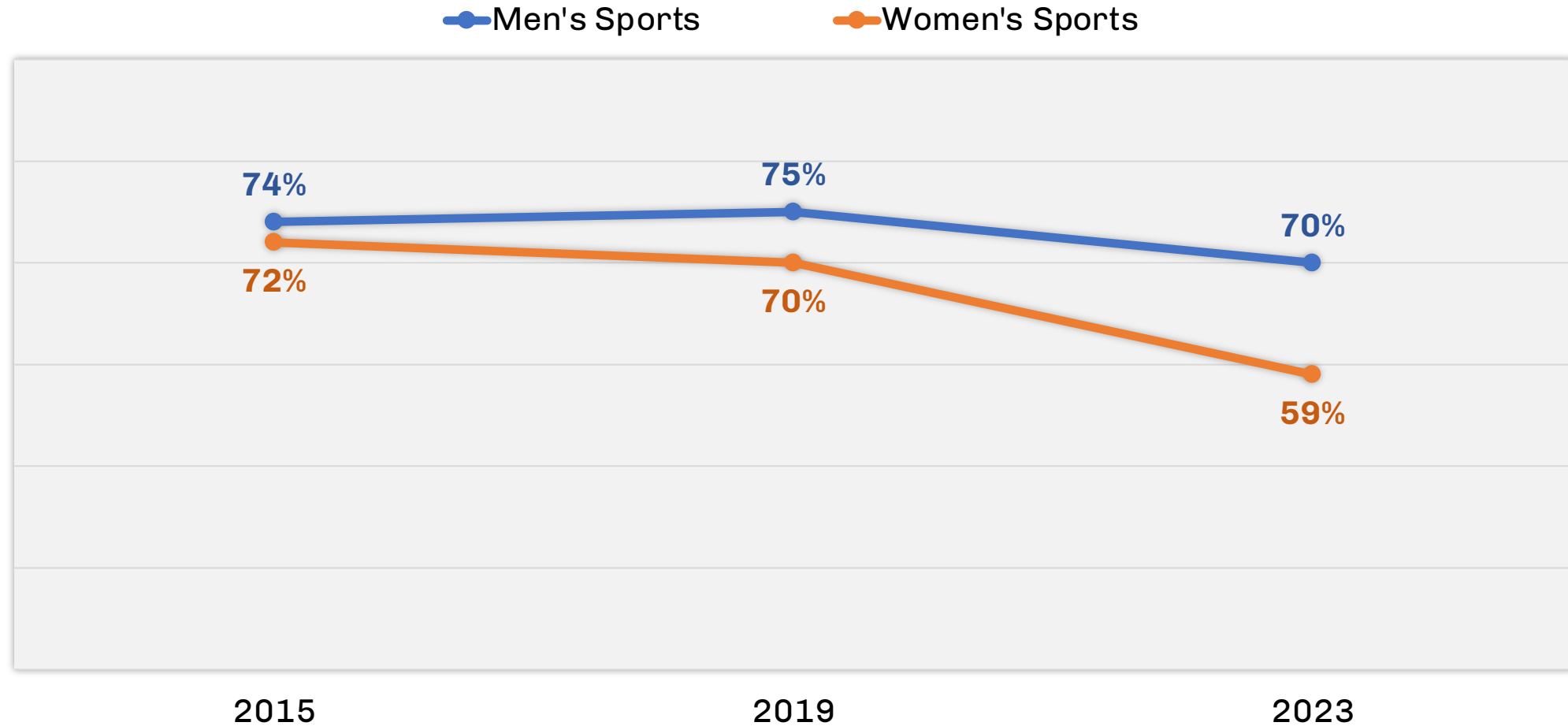


I would feel comfortable talking with my coaches about **physical health** issues.



“My coaches care about my mental well-being”

(Percentage of Participations Who Endorsed “Agree” or “Strongly Agree”)

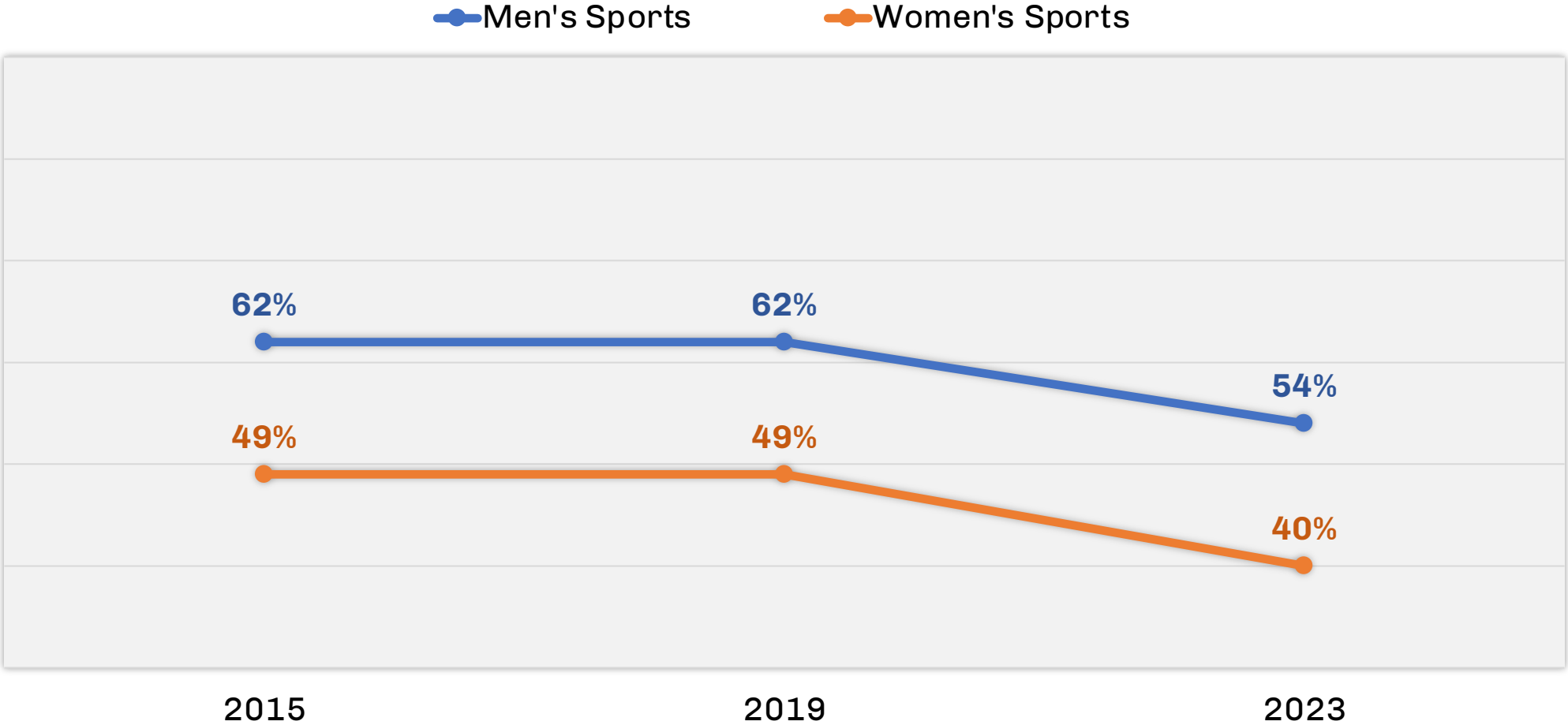


Note: Top 2 points on a 6-point scale. Sources: NCAA GOALS Studies (2015, 2019) and NCAA Student-Athlete Health and Wellness Study (2023).



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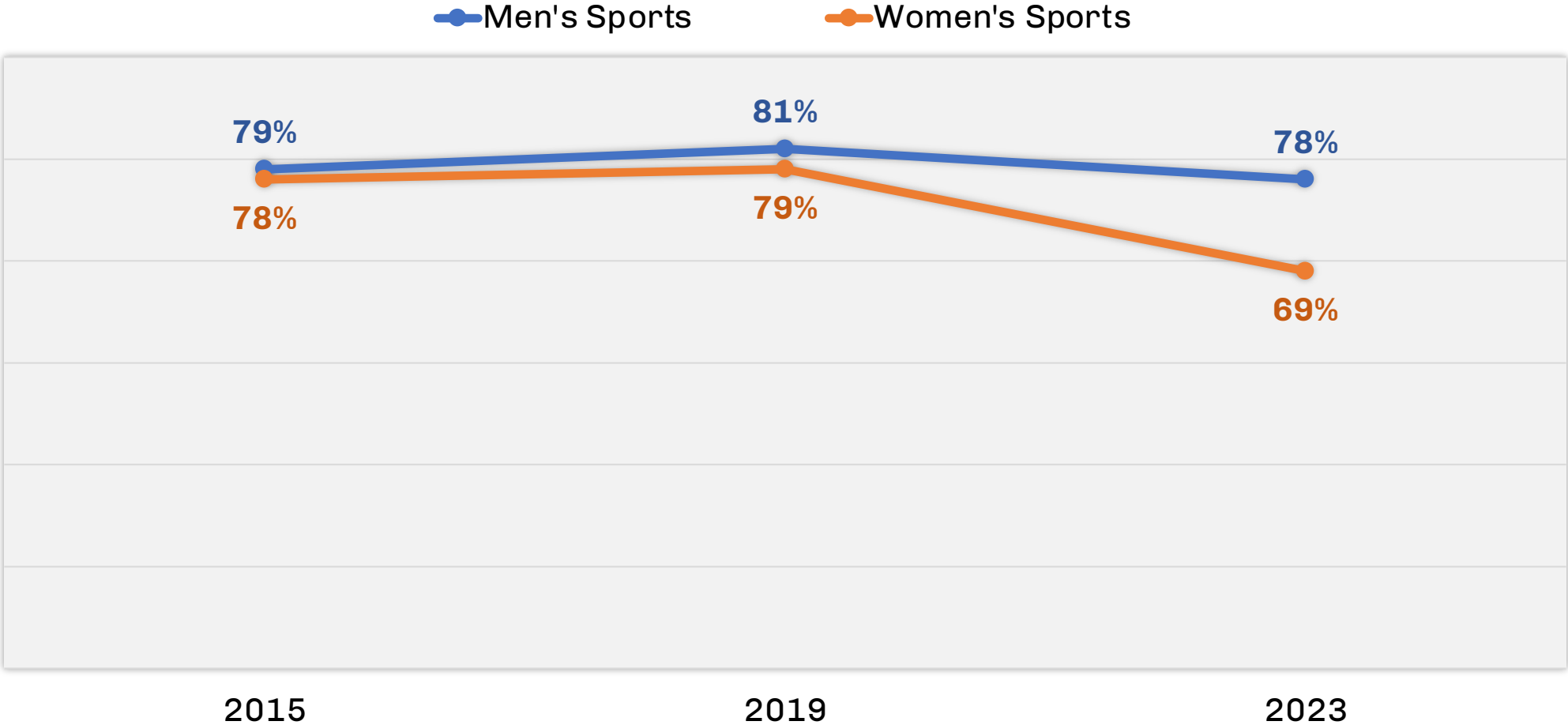
“I would feel comfortable talking to my coaches about mental health issues”
(Percentage of Participations Who Endorsed “Agree” or “Strongly Agree”)



Note: Top 2 points on a 6-point scale. Sources: NCAA GOALS Studies (2015, 2019) and NCAA Student-Athlete Health and Wellness Study (2023).

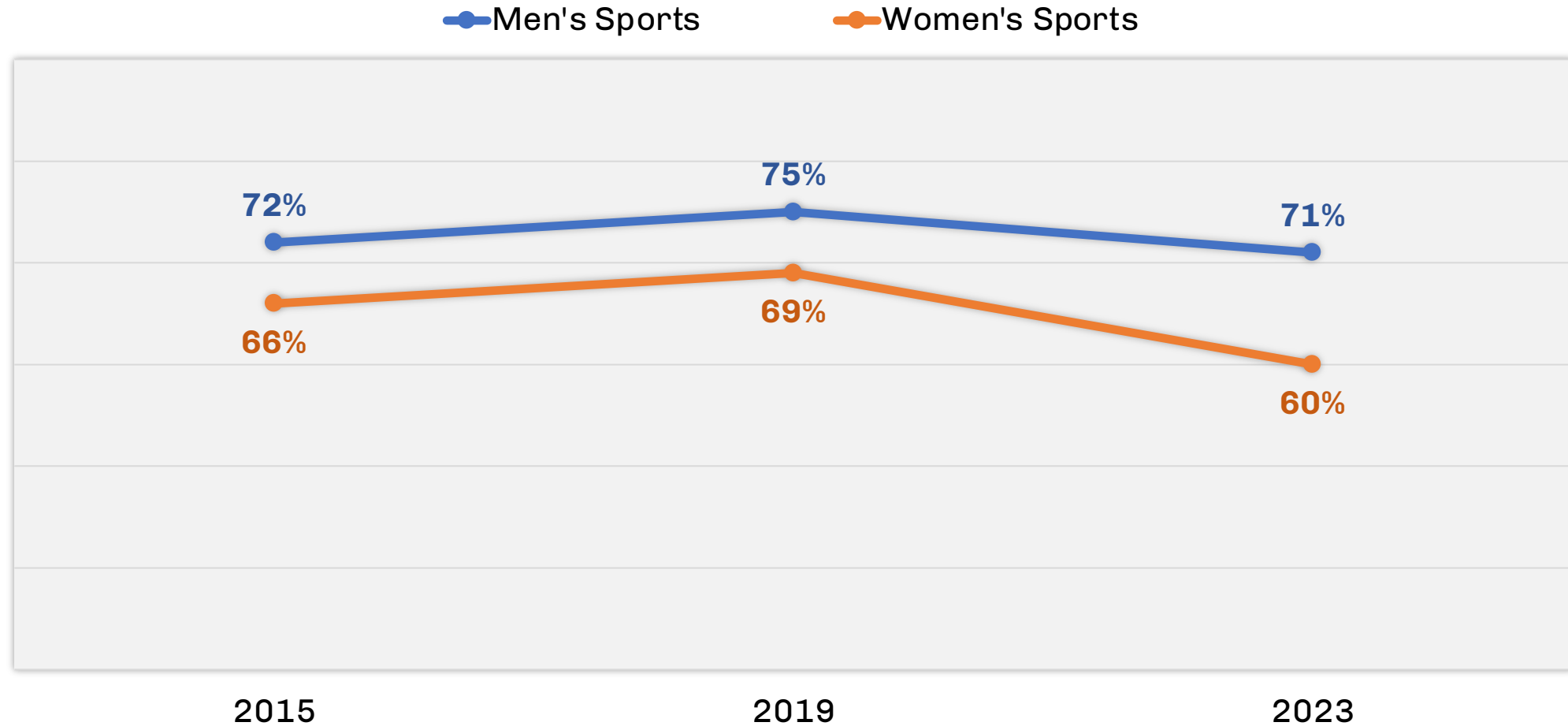
“My coaches care about my physical well-being”

(Percentage of Participations Who Endorsed “Agree” or “Strongly Agree”)



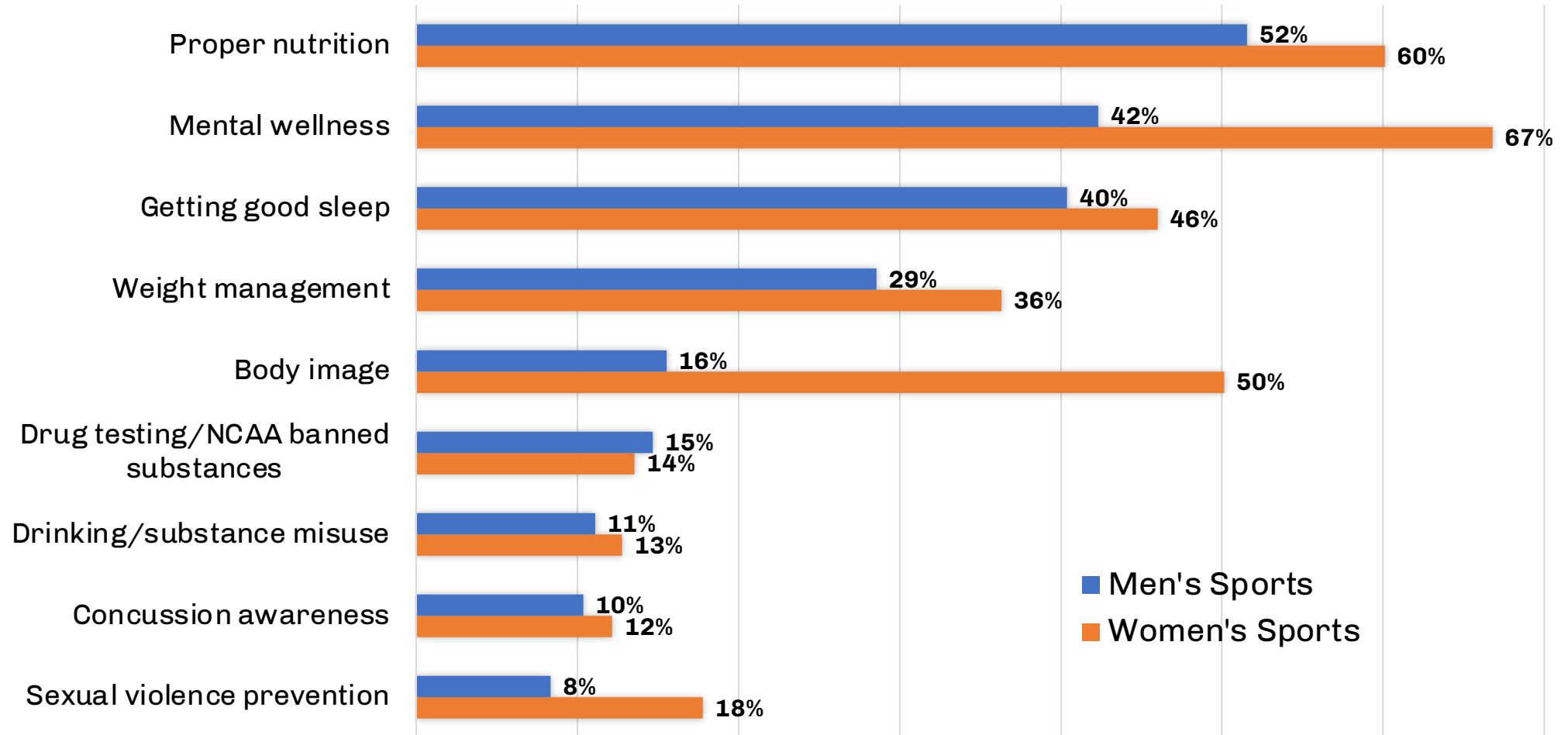
Note: Top 2 points on a 6-point scale. Sources: NCAA GOALS Studies (2015, 2019) and NCAA Student-Athlete Health and Wellness Study (2023).

“I would feel comfortable talking to my coaches about physical health issues” (Percentage of Participations Who Endorsed “Agree” or “Strongly Agree”)



Note: Top 2 points on a 6-point scale. Sources: NCAA GOALS Studies (2015, 2019) and NCAA Student-Athlete Health and Wellness Study (2023).

“I wish the coaches and administrators at my school talked more with my team about the following wellness topics”



Bystander Intervention



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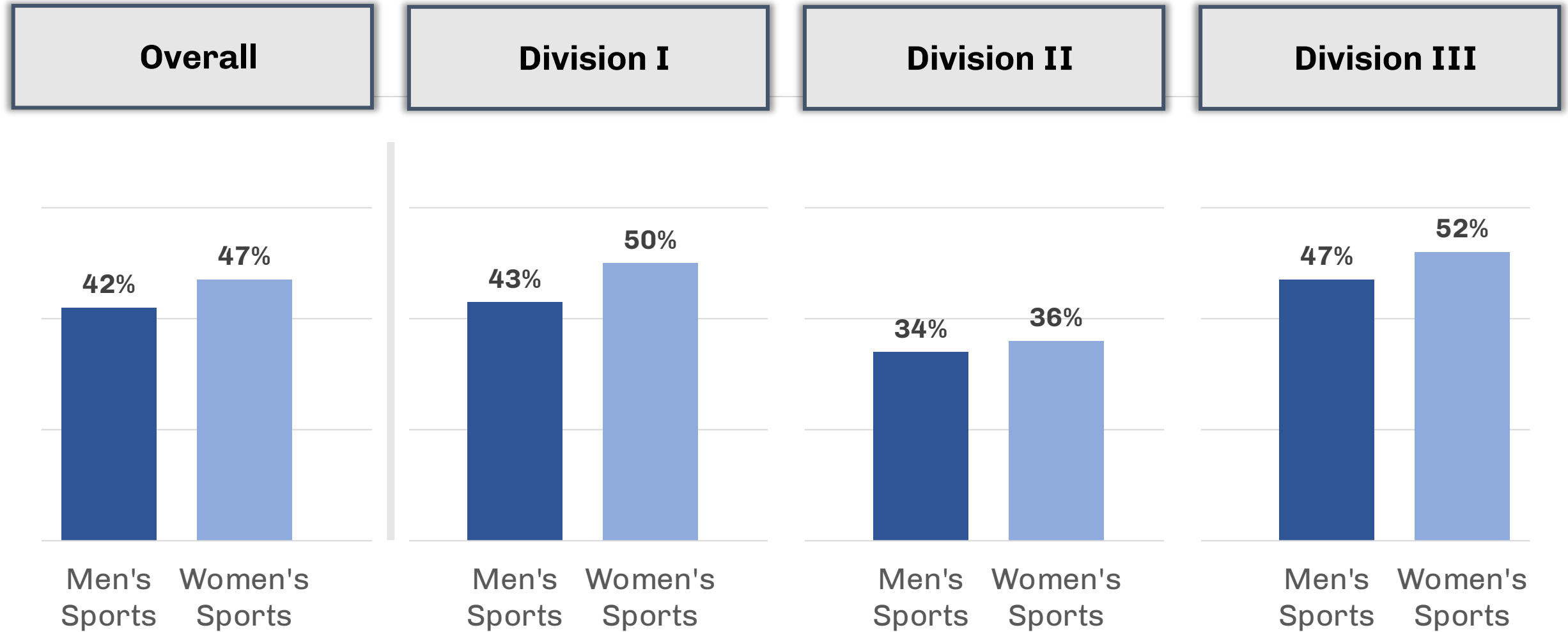
Findings

- Less than one-half of student-athletes overall reported receiving bystander intervention training. Women's sports participants were more likely to report receiving such training than men's sports participants.
- The number of men's sports participants who responded that they are likely to intervene in a situation that could lead to unwanted sexual behavior increased by 22 percentage points since 2012 (from 63% to 85%). Reported likelihood of intervention was even higher among those men's sports athletes who had received bystander intervention training at 89%.



Received Bystander Intervention Training on Campus

(Percentage Responding “Yes”)



Note: Question asked: Have you received training on your campus (e.g., bystander intervention, StepUP! or Green Dot) to prepare yourself to help someone in trouble? (Yes, No). Source: NCAA Student-Athlete Health and Wellness Study (2023).



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Willingness to Intervene

(Percent responding “Likely” or “Extremely Likely”)

	Men's Sports			Women's Sports		
	2012	2016	2023	2012	2016	2023
Accompany a teammate home if they've had a lot to drink.	87%	88%	91%	93%	95%	95%
Stop a teammate from driving if drinking.	81%	84%	87%	93%	95%	95%
Intervene in a situation if it could lead to unwanted* sexual behavior.	63%	78%	85%	71%	90%	89%
Confront a teammate if they are treating partner inappropriately.	59%	70%	74%	47%	67%	62%
Walk away from a confrontation.	58%	61%	62%	74%	77%	68%

- Green indicates a decrease of 5 percentage points or more from 2016.
- Yellow indicates an increase of 5 percentage points or more from 2016.

Note: Endorsement of top two points on a 5-point scale. Sources: NCAA Social Environments Study (2012, 2016); NCAA Student-Athlete Health and Wellness Study (2023).

Willingness to Intervene

(Percent responding “Likely” or “Extremely Likely” With and Without Bystander Intervention Training)

	Men's Sports		Women's Sports	
	No Bystander Training	Received Bystander Training	No Bystander Training	Received Bystander Training
Accompany a teammate home if they've had a lot to drink.	90%	93%	94%	96%
Stop a teammate from driving if drinking.	86%	88%	95%	96%
Intervene in a situation if it could lead to unwanted sexual behavior.	83%	89%	88%	91%
Seek help to stop a fight that involves a teammate.	83%	87%	83%	86%
Confront a teammate if they are treating partner inappropriately.	72%	77%	60%	63%
Walk away from a confrontation.	60%	65%	65%	71%

Source: NCAA Student-Athlete Health and Wellness Study (2023).

Detailed Methodology

- ▶ FARs at all active member institutions were asked to survey one to three pre-specified teams on their campus. Selected teams were determined by a stratified random sampling procedure.
- ▶ Administered anonymously on paper only (~30 minutes to complete).
- ▶ Data collection began in October 2022 and concluded in June 2023.
- ▶ 23,272 current student-athletes participated in the study; final data weighted based on 2022-23 NCAA participation rates to ensure the representativeness of findings.
 - ▶ Responses by sport:
 - 14,001 men's sports student-athletes
 - 9,271 women's sports student-athletes
 - ▶ Responses by division:
 - 8,965 Division I student-athletes
 - 5,902 Division II student-athletes
 - 8,405 Division III student-athletes





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