



Current Findings on Student-Athlete Weight, Body Image and Nutrition

NCAA Student-Athlete Health and Wellness Study (February 2024)



RESEARCH

Summary of Methodology

- This study on student-athlete perceptions of weight, body image, and nutrition is based on data collected in a comprehensive [survey](#) 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.
- A total of 23,272 current student-athletes participated in the study; final data was weighted based on 2022-23 NCAA participation rates to ensure the representativeness of findings.



OVERALL RESULTS

Weight and Body Image

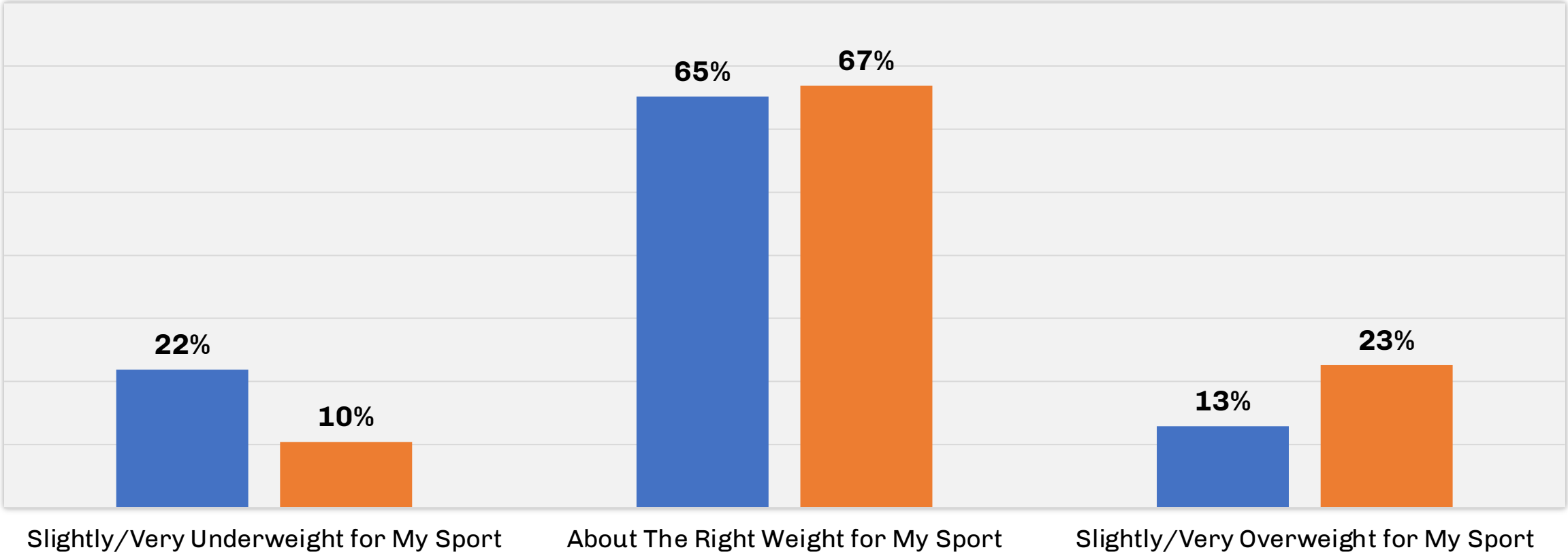
Findings

- There is a stark difference in perceptions of weight for student-athletes in women's and men's sports. Women's sports athletes were more likely to perceive themselves as overweight for their sport while men's sports athletes were more likely to report being underweight.
- Despite two-thirds of student-athletes overall perceiving themselves to be the right weight for their sport, over 40% of men's sports athletes reported trying to gain weight, whereas 45% of women's athletes were trying to lose weight.
- Men's sports athletes were 20-30 percentage points higher than women's sports athletes on all measures of positive body image.
- By sport, swimming and diving had the highest percentage of athletes in both men's and women's sports who reported feeling overweight for their sport. Wrestling stood out as the only men's sport with more athletes trying to lose weight than gain it.
- Black student-athletes were more likely than other racial groups to hold positive perceptions of body image. This is true across men's and women's sports.



How do you describe your weight?

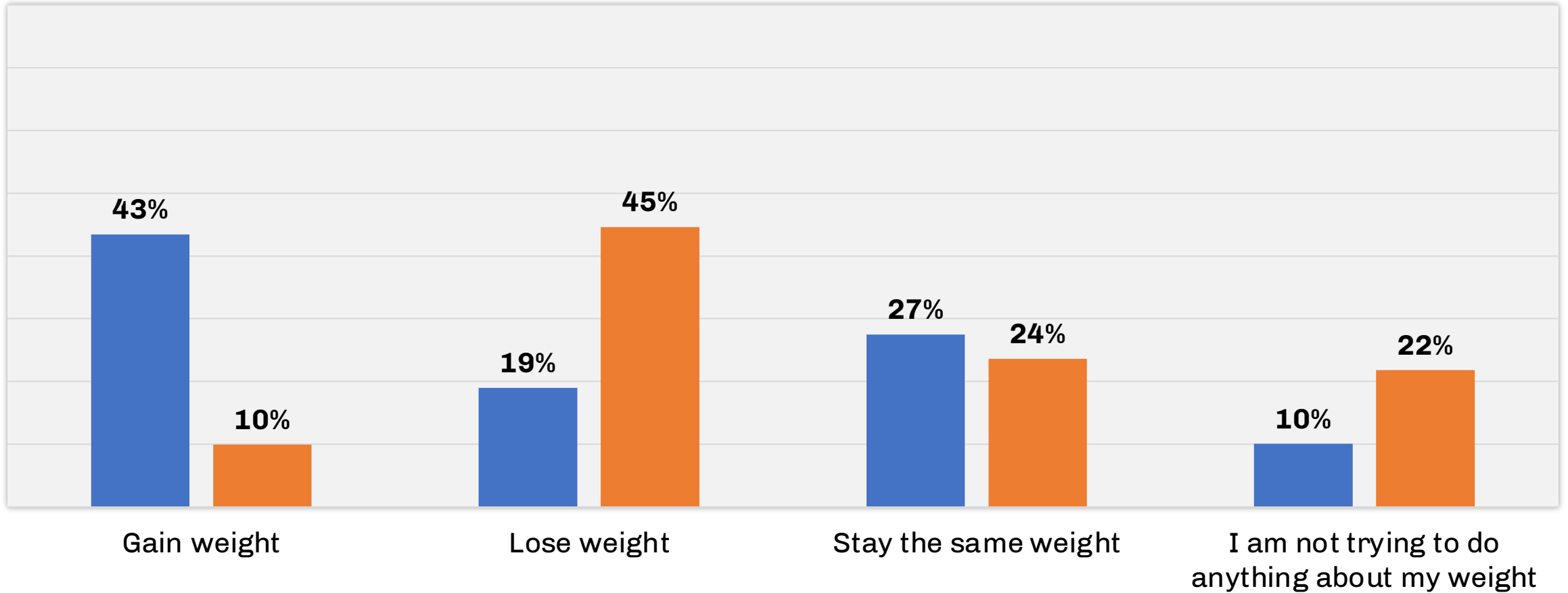
■ Men's Sports ■ Women's Sports



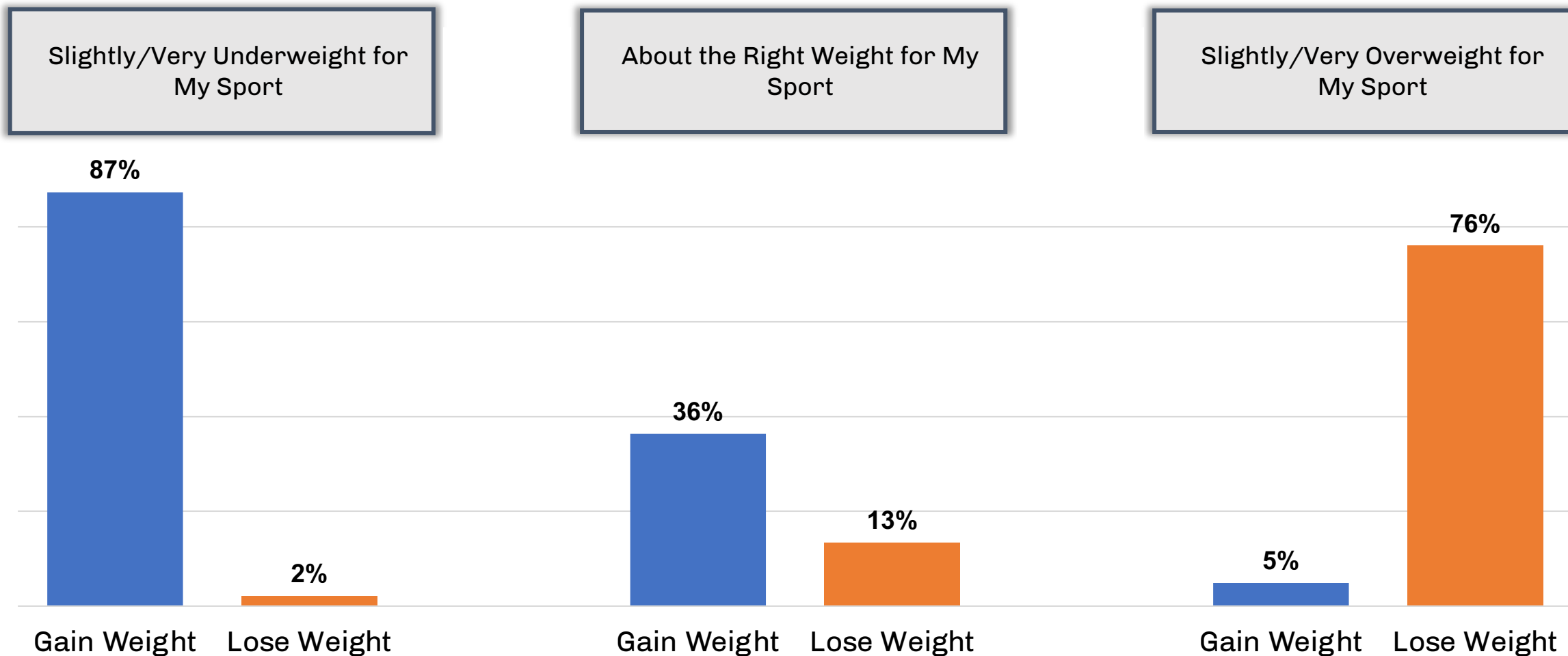
Source: NCAA Student-Athlete Health and Wellness Study (2023).

Which of the following are you trying to do about your weight?

■ Men's Sports ■ Women's Sports



Student-Athlete Perceptions of Weight vs. Current Weight Management (Men's Sports)

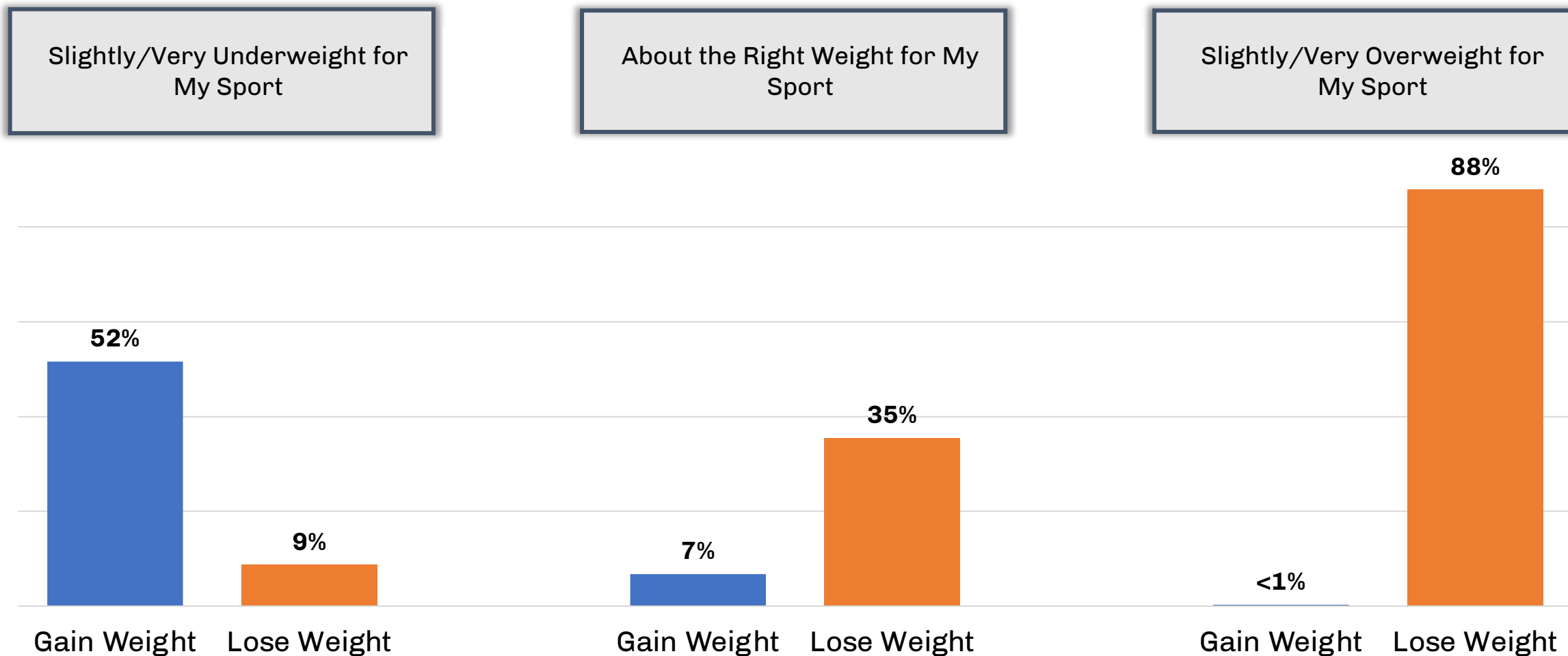


Note: Top 2 points on a 6-point scale. Participants were asked, "Which of the following are you trying to do about your weight?" Response options included "gain weight," "lose weight," "stay the same weight," and "I am not trying to do anything about my weight." Source: NCAA Student-Athlete Health and Wellness Study (2023).



RESEARCH

Student-Athlete Perceptions of Weight vs. Current Weight Management (Women's Sports)

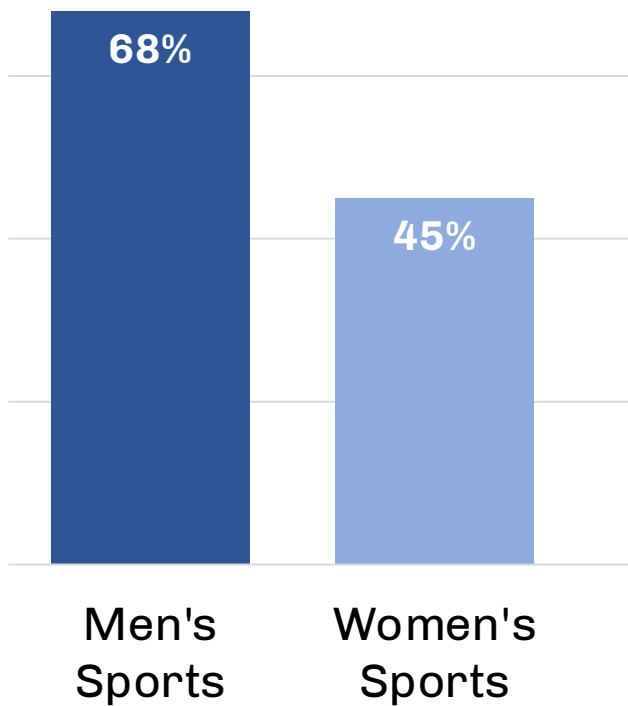


Note: Top 2 points on a 6-point scale. Participants were asked, "Which of the following are you trying to do about your weight?" Response options included "gain weight," "lose weight," "stay the same weight," and "I am not trying to do anything about my weight." Source: NCAA Student-Athlete Health and Wellness Study (2023).

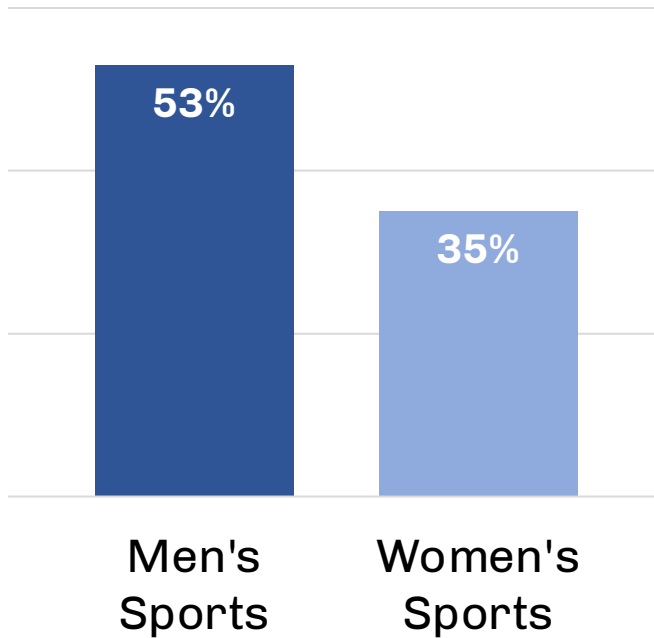
Body Image

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

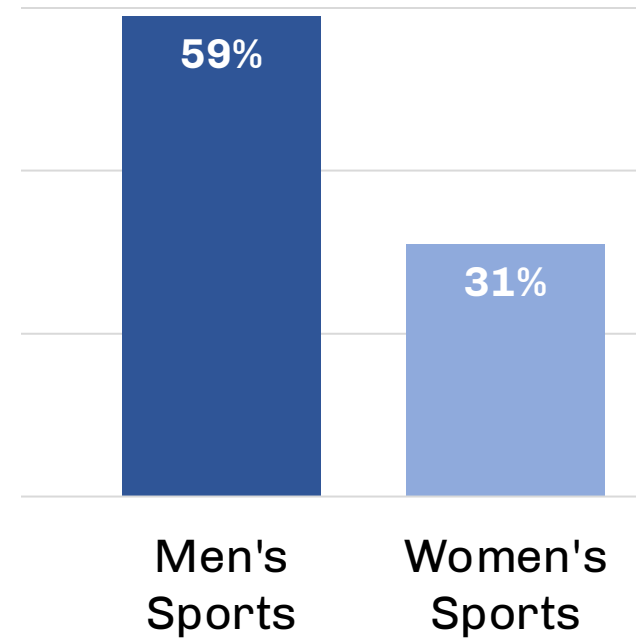
I think I have a good body



I am happy with my current weight

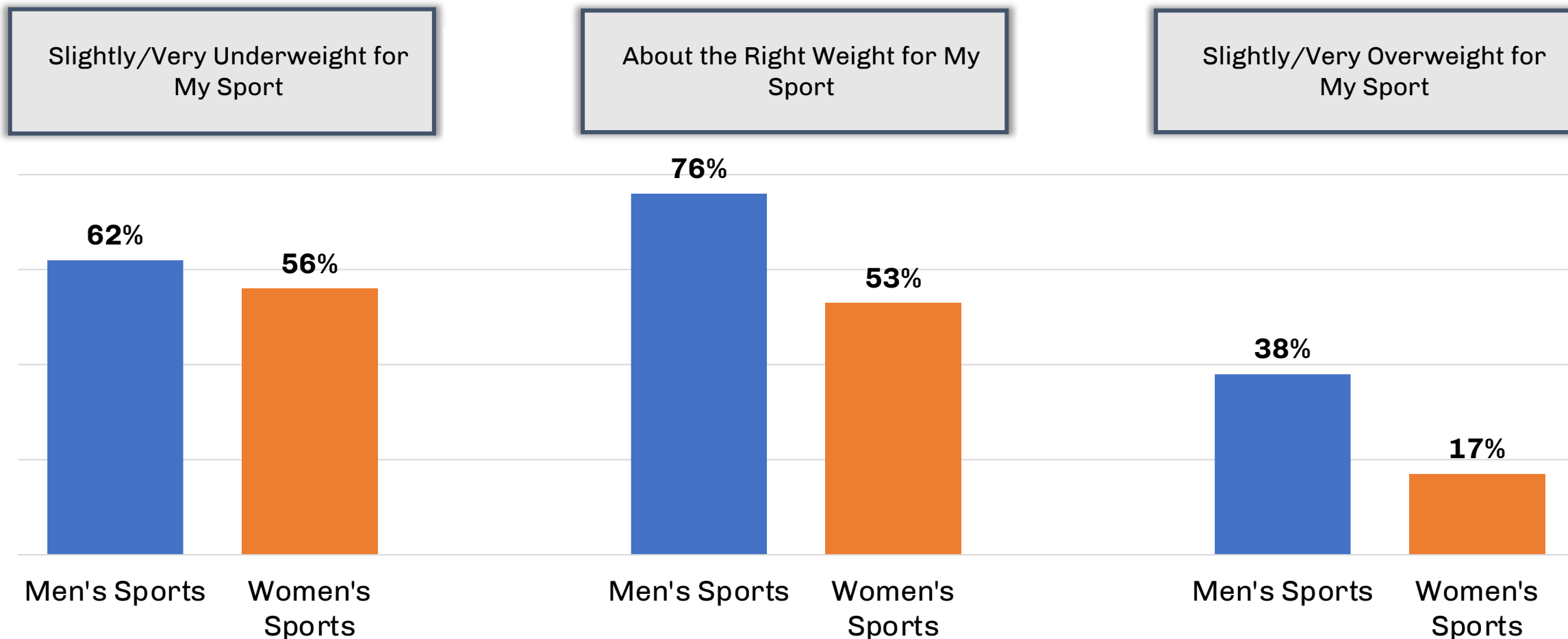


I like what I look like in pictures



“I think I have a good body”

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



Note: Top 2 points on a 6-point scale. Participants were asked, “How do you describe your weight?” Source: NCAA Student-Athlete Health and Wellness Study (2023).

Nutrition

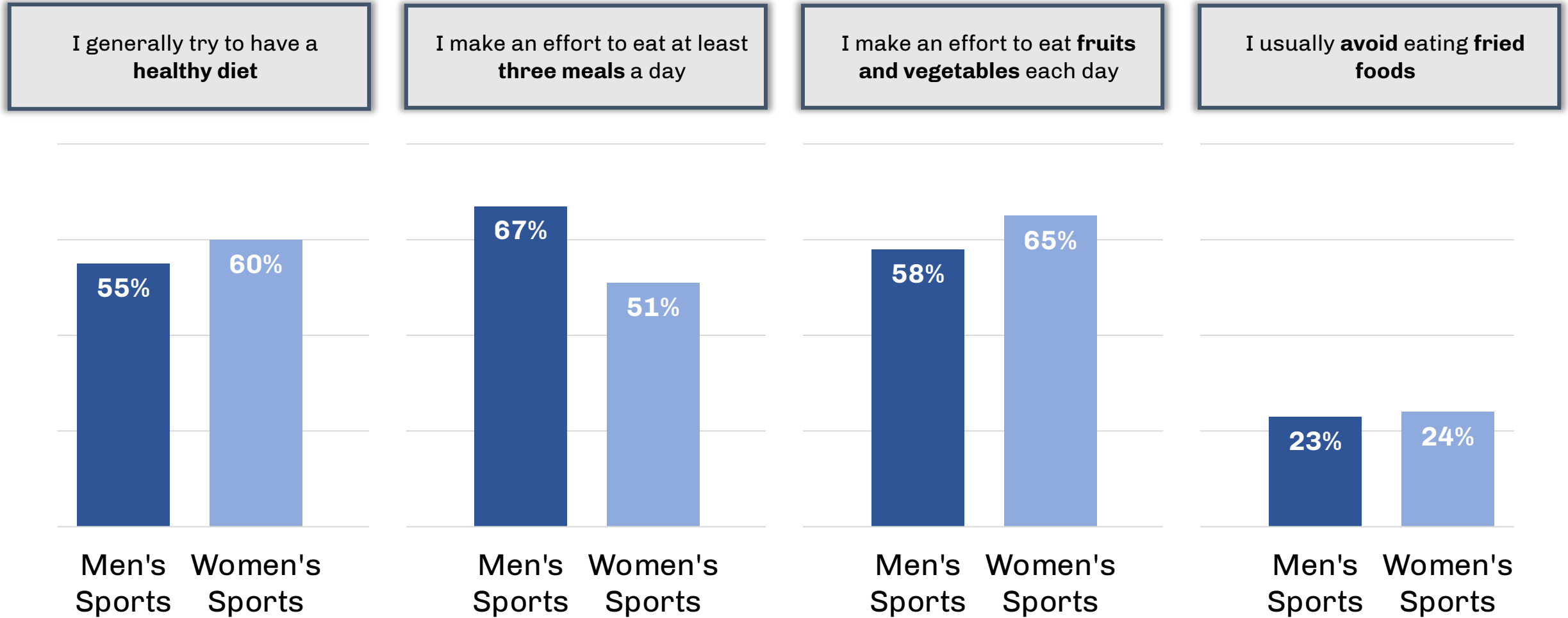
Findings

- A majority of student-athletes reported making an effort to eat healthy and consume at least three meals per day.
- Women's sports athletes were less likely than men's sports athletes to indicate that healthy food options are readily available after practice or competition and that they have time to eat healthy meals each day.
- Student-athletes reported using a range of supplements to enhance their diets. The most used supplements in the past year were protein products (44%), energy drinks (44%), multivitamins (41%), creatine (23%) and multivitamins/minerals with other additives (e.g., caffeine, probiotics; 22%).
- Proper nutrition is the wellness topic student-athletes want coaches and athletics administrators to discuss more with their teams, followed by mental wellness, getting good sleep, weight management and body image.

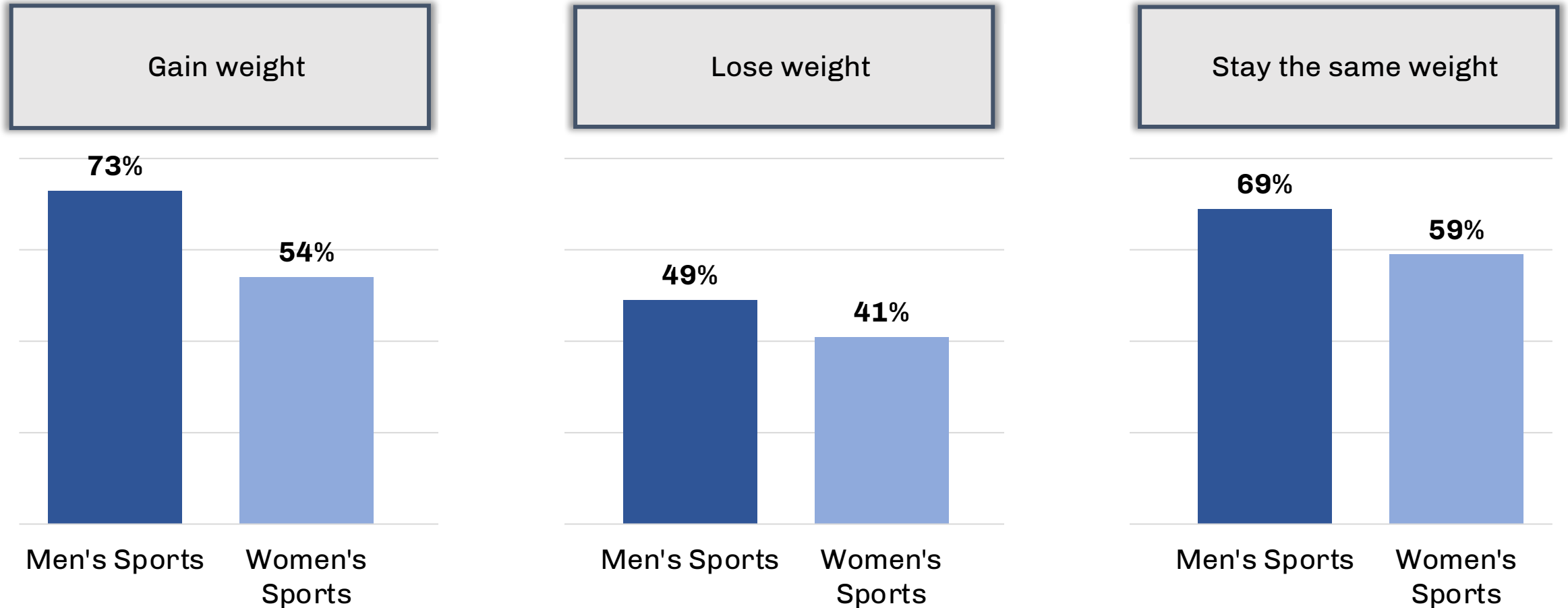


Nutritional Habits

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



Percentage Making an Effort to Eat Three Meals Per Day by Current Weight Management



Note: Top 2 points on a 6-point scale for “I make an effort to eat at least three meals a day.” Participants were asked, “Which of the following are you trying to do about your weight?” Those who responded with “I am not trying to do anything about my weight” were excluded from the chart. Source: NCAA Student-Athlete Health and Wellness Study (2023).

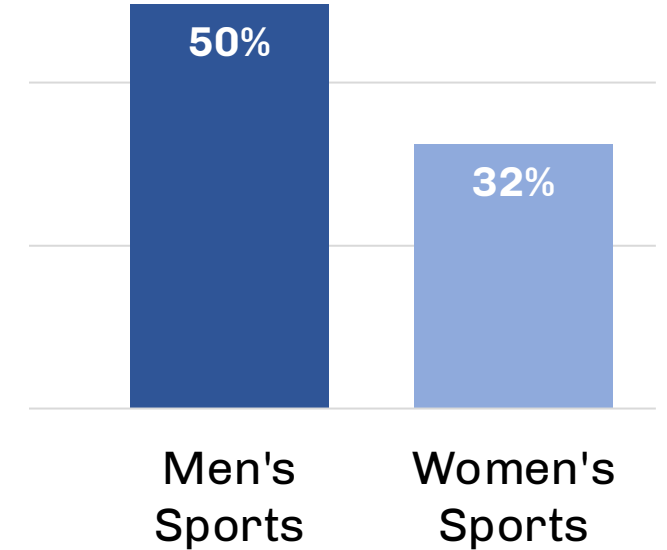
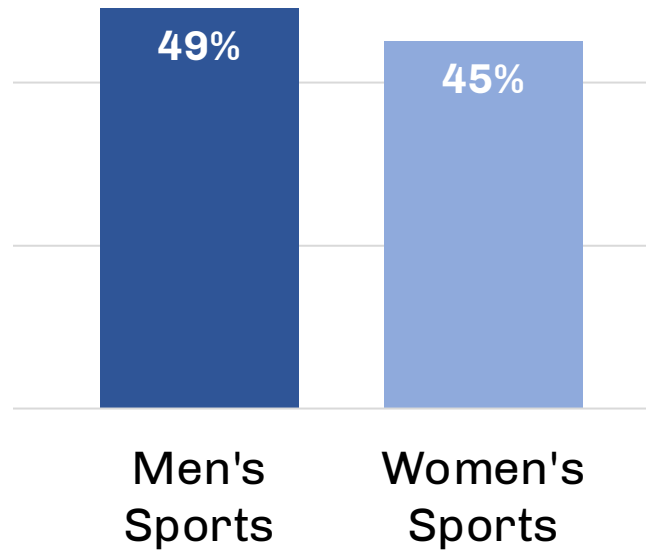
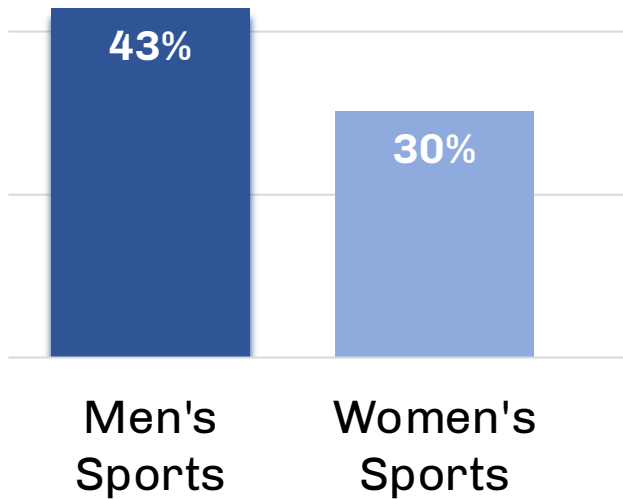
Access to Healthy Food

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

Healthy food options are **readily available** to me after practice and competition

I can **afford** to eat healthy meals each day

I have **time** to eat healthy meals each day



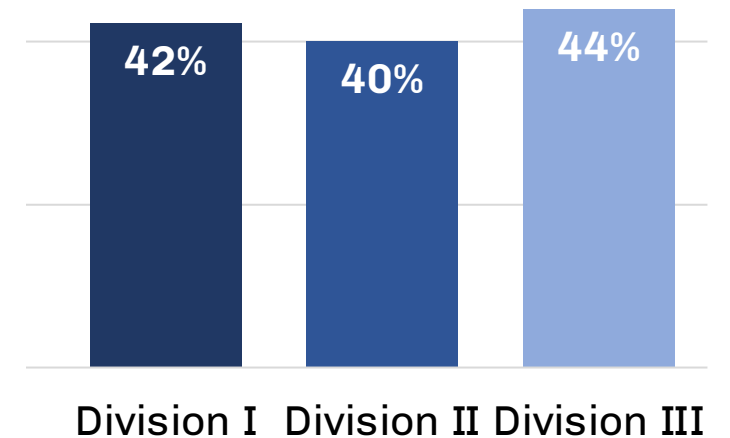
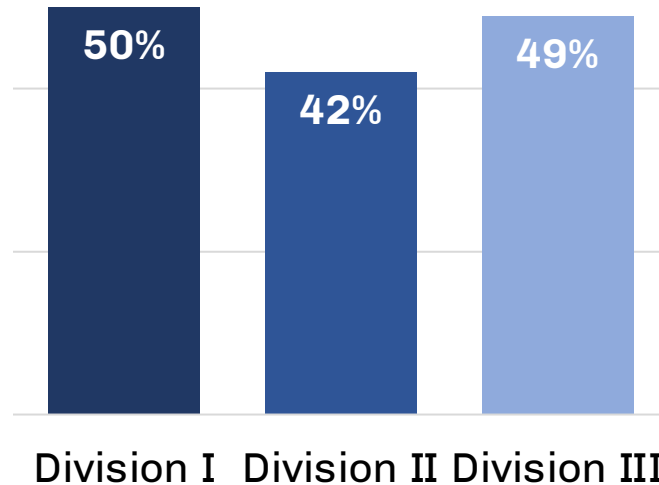
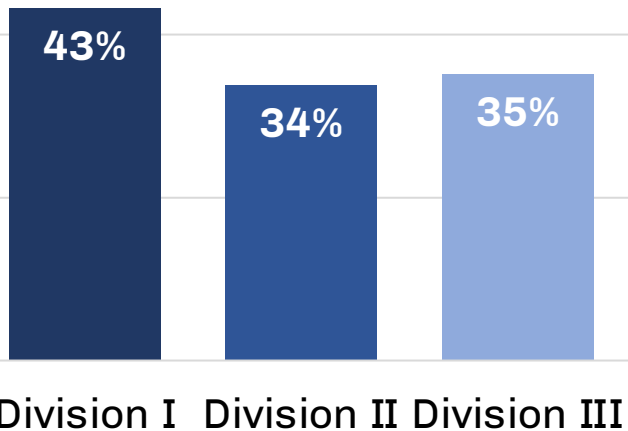
Access to Healthy Food

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

Healthy food options are **readily available** to me after practice and competition

I can **afford** to eat healthy meals each day

I have **time** to eat healthy meals each day



Dietary Supplement Use in the Last Year

	Men's Sports	Women's Sports
Protein products (e.g., whey, casein, soy)	46%	41%
Energy drinks (e.g., Red Bull, Monster)	40%	48%
General multivitamin	35%	50%
Creatine	33%	11%
Fish oil	21%	14%
Multivitamin/mineral with additives (e.g., caffeine)	20%	24%
Amino acids (e.g., BCAAs)	15%	8%
Non-prescription sleep aid (e.g., Melatonin)	13%	28%
Calcium	12%	15%
Iron	11%	29%
Probiotic	7%	20%
Herbal supplements (e.g., turmeric, Echinacea)	6%	10%
Weight gain products	5%	<1%
Brain/memory enhancer (i.e., nootropics)	2%	1%
Sexual enhancers	2%	1%
Prescription sleep aid (e.g., Ambien, Xanax, Ativan)	1%	3%
Glucosamine and/or chondroitin	1%	1%
Thermogenic/fat burners/weight loss products	1%	1%
Diuretics (e.g., water pills)	<1%	1%

Note: 38% of men's sports athletes and 21% of women's sports athletes in 2023 did not report any use of the items listed within the past year.

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

Change in Dietary Supplement Use, 2017 to 2023 (Men's Sports, Within Last Year)

	2017	2023
Protein products (e.g., whey, casein, soy)	48%	46%
Energy drinks (e.g., Red Bull, Monster)	34%	40%
General multivitamin	36%	35%
Creatine	20%	33%
Fish oil	21%	21%
Multivitamin/mineral with additives (e.g., caffeine)	15%	20%
Amino acids (e.g., BCAAs)	18%	15%
Non-prescription sleep aid (e.g., Melatonin)	13%	13%
Calcium	13%	12%
Iron	9%	11%
Probiotic	6%	7%
Herbal supplements (e.g., turmeric, Echinacea)	4%	6%
Weight gain products	9%	5%
Brain/memory enhancer (i.e., nootropics)	1%	2%

Note: Less than 2% of men's sports student-athletes in 2023 reported use of sexual enhancers, prescription sleep aids (e.g., Ambien) or glucosamine and/or chondroitin in the past year, and less than 1% reported use of thermogenic/fat burners/weight loss products or diuretics. 38% of men's sports participants in 2023 did not use any of the items listed within the past year. Sources: NCAA Student-Athlete Substance Use Study (2017) and NCAA Student-Athlete Health and Wellness Study (2023).



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Change in Dietary Supplement Use, 2017 to 2023 (Women's Sports, Within Last Year)

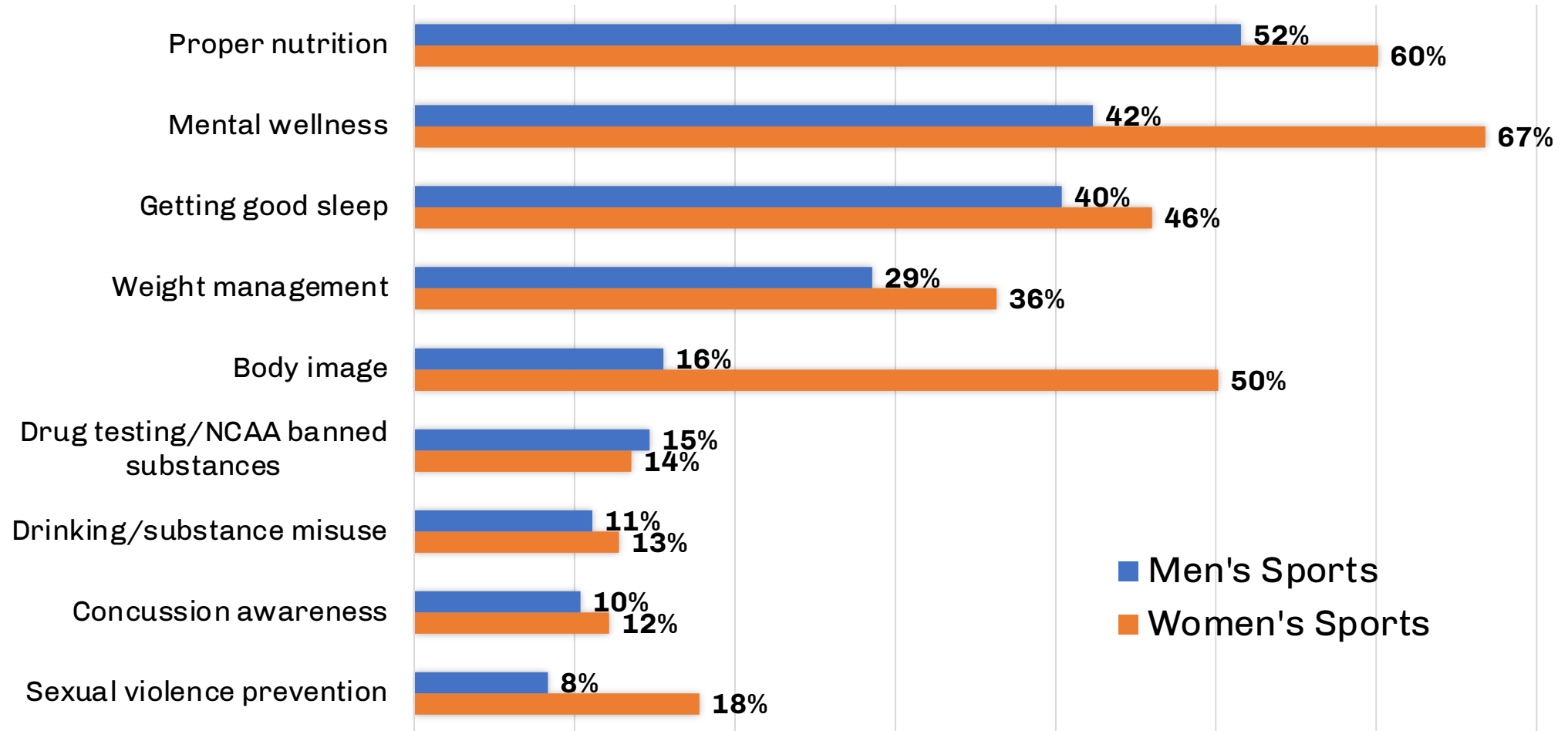
	2017	2023
General multivitamin	49%	50%
Energy drinks (e.g., Red Bull, Monster)	27%	48%
Protein products (e.g., whey, casein, soy)	31%	41%
Iron	24%	29%
Non-prescription sleep aid (e.g., Melatonin)	27%	28%
Multivitamin/mineral with additives (e.g., caffeine)	18%	24%
Probiotic	14%	20%
Calcium	19%	15%
Fish oil	17%	14%
Creatine	3%	11%
Herbal supplements (e.g., turmeric, Echinacea)	8%	10%
Amino acids (e.g., BCAAs)	6%	8%
Prescription sleep aid (e.g., Ambien, Ativan)	4%	3%
Thermogenic/fat burners/weight loss products	4%	1%

Note: 1% or less of women's sports student-athletes in 2023 reported use of diuretics, glucosamine and/or chondroitin, brain/memory enhancers (i.e., nootropics), sexual enhancers or weight gain products in the past year. 21% of women's sports participants in 2023 did not use any of the items listed within the past year. Sources: NCAA Student-Athlete Substance Use Study (2017) and NCAA Student-Athlete Health and Wellness Study (2023).



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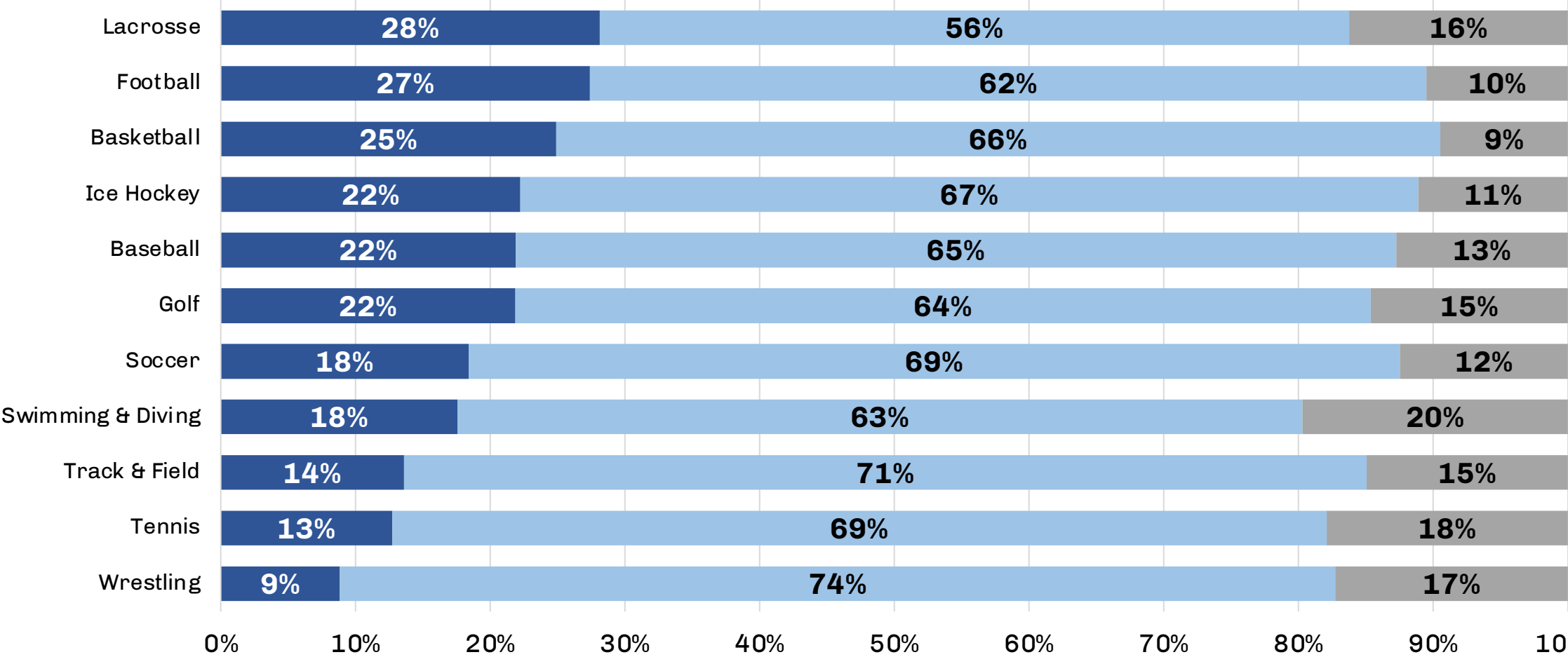
“I wish the coaches and administrators at my school talked more with my team about the following wellness topics”



RESULTS BY SPORT

How do you describe your weight? (Men's Sports)

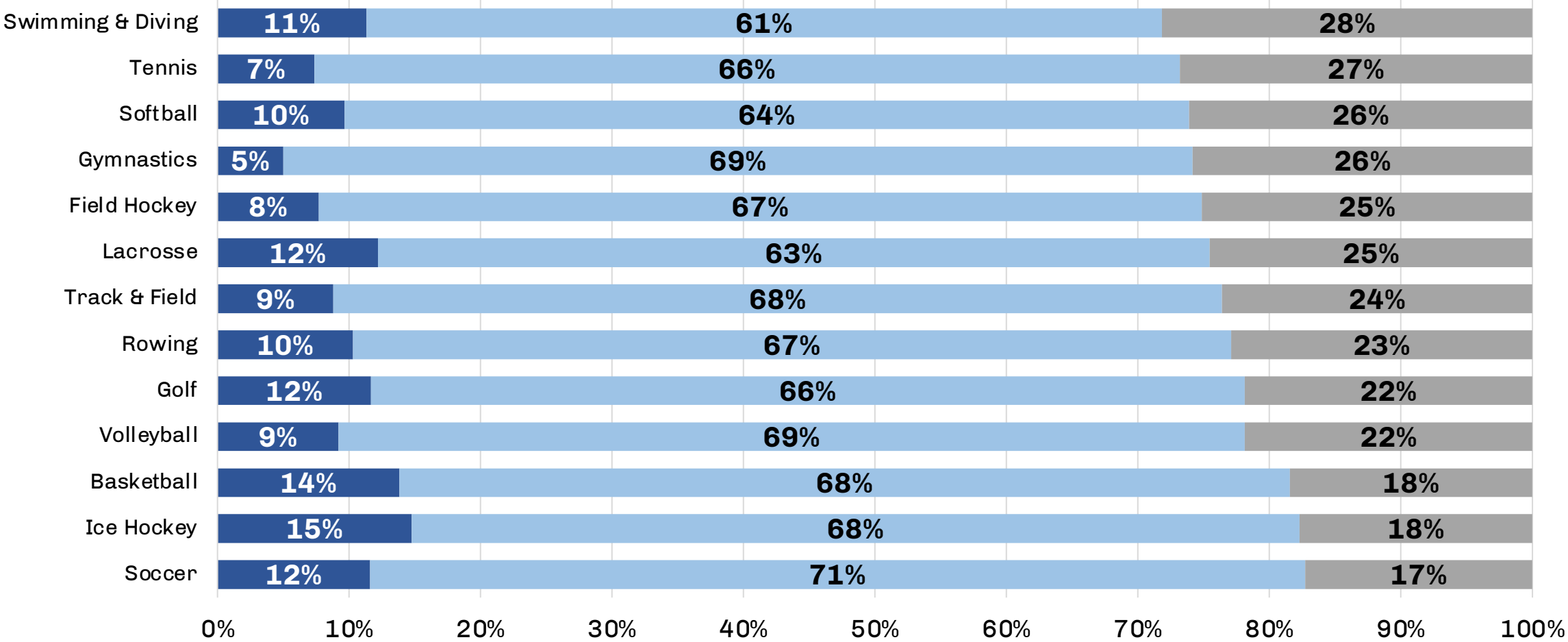
■ Slightly/Very Underweight for My Sport ■ About The Right Weight for My Sport ■ Slightly/Very Overweight for My Sport



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

How do you describe your weight? (Women's Sports)

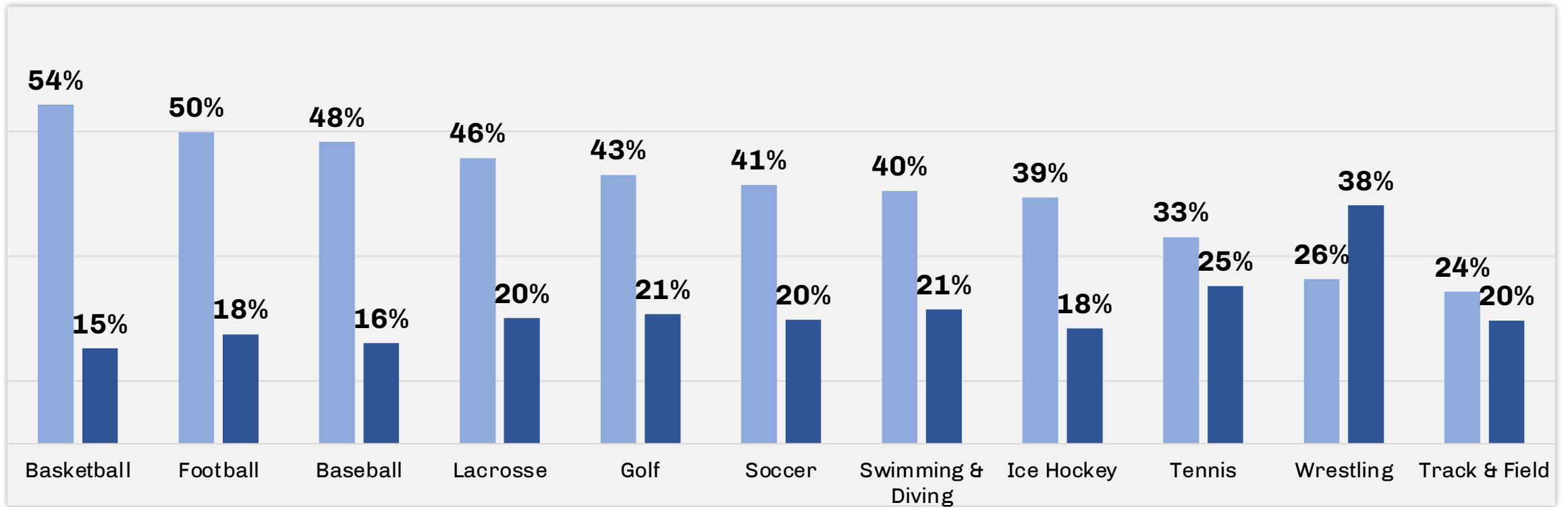
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Note: Top 2 points on a 6-point scale. Source: NCAA Student-Athlete Health and Wellness Study (2023).

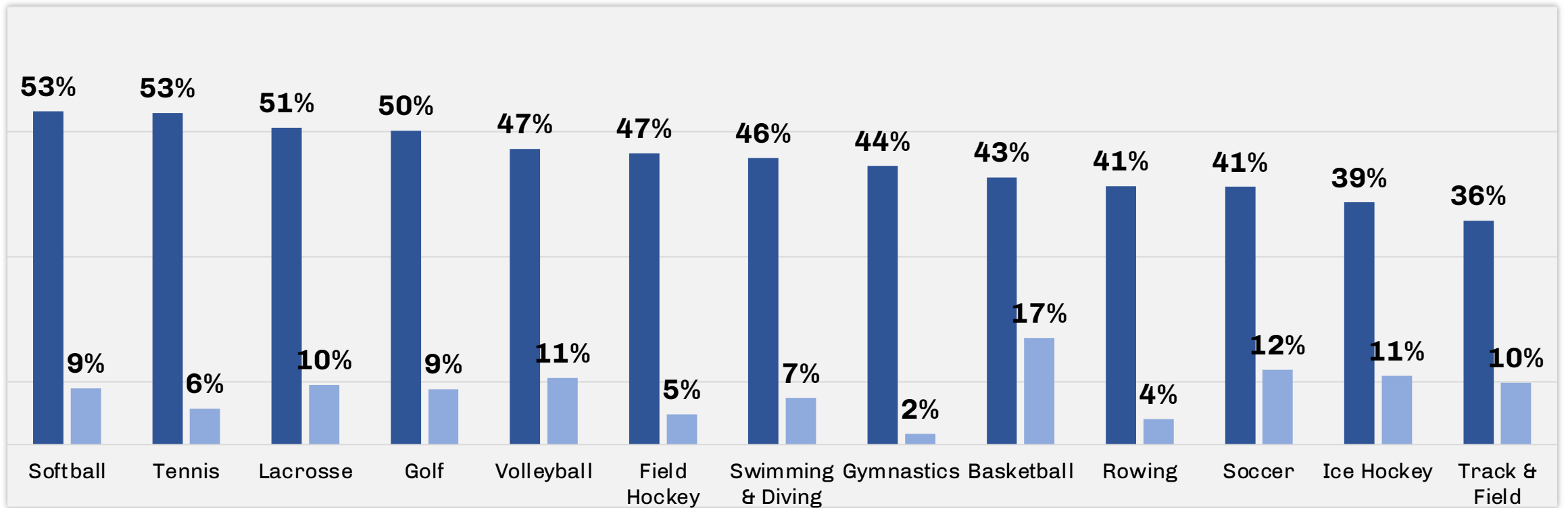
Which of the following are you trying to do about your weight? (Men's Sports)

■ Gain weight ■ Lose weight



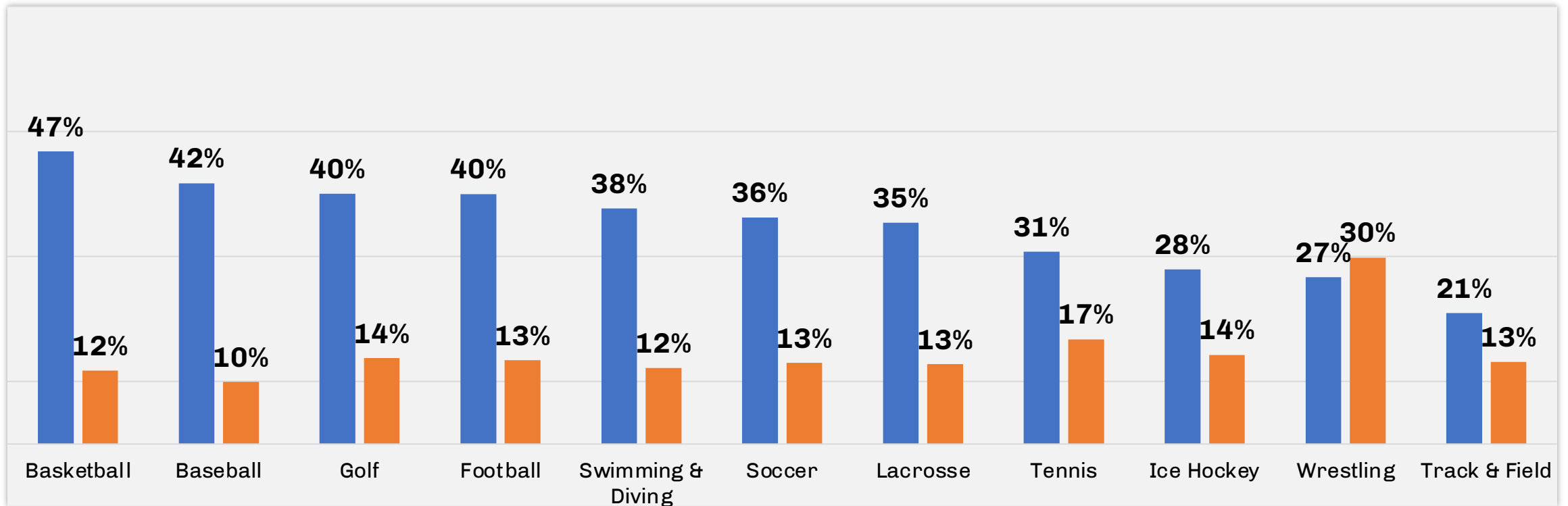
Which of the following are you trying to do about your weight? (Women's Sports)

■ Lose weight ■ Gain weight



Percentage Trying to Gain/Lose Weight Among Those Who Endorsed Being “About the Right Weight for Their Sport” (Men’s Sports)

■ Gain weight ■ Lose weight

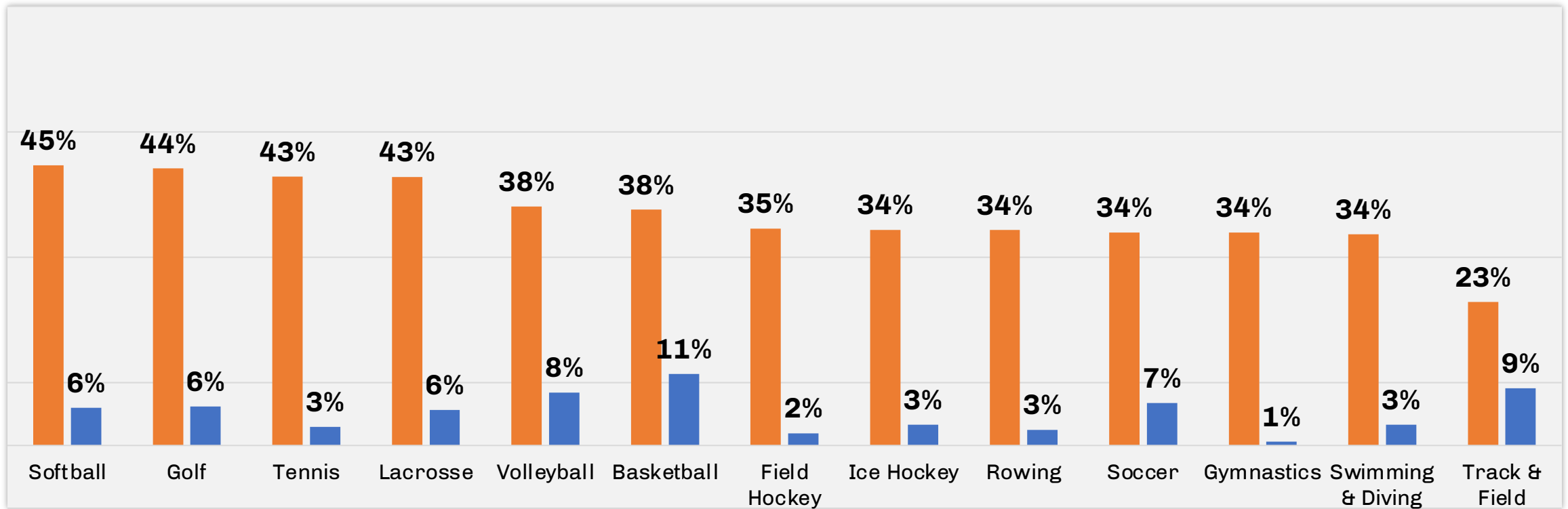


Note: 21% of wrestlers who said they were “slightly/very underweight for their sport” reported trying to lose weight.

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

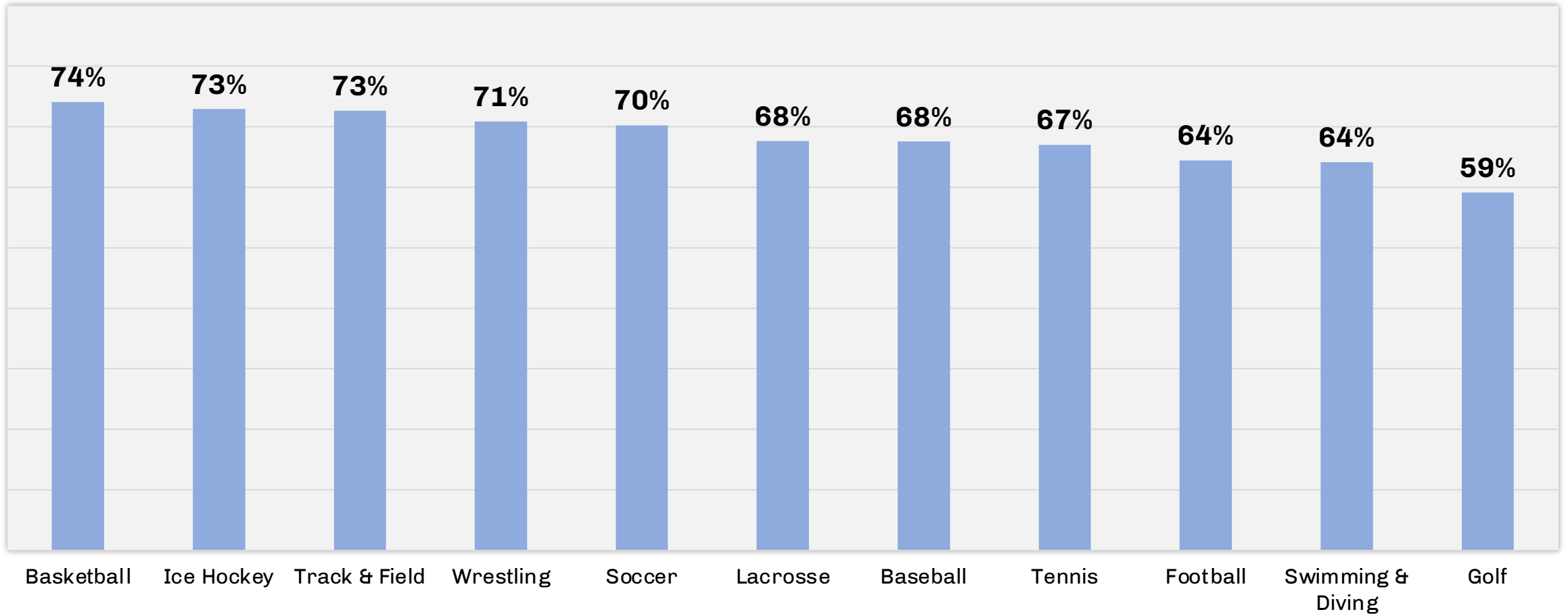
Percentage Trying to Gain/Lose Weight Among Those Who Endorsed Being “About the Right Weight for Their Sport” (Women’s Sports)

■ Lose weight ■ Gain weight



“I think I have a good body”

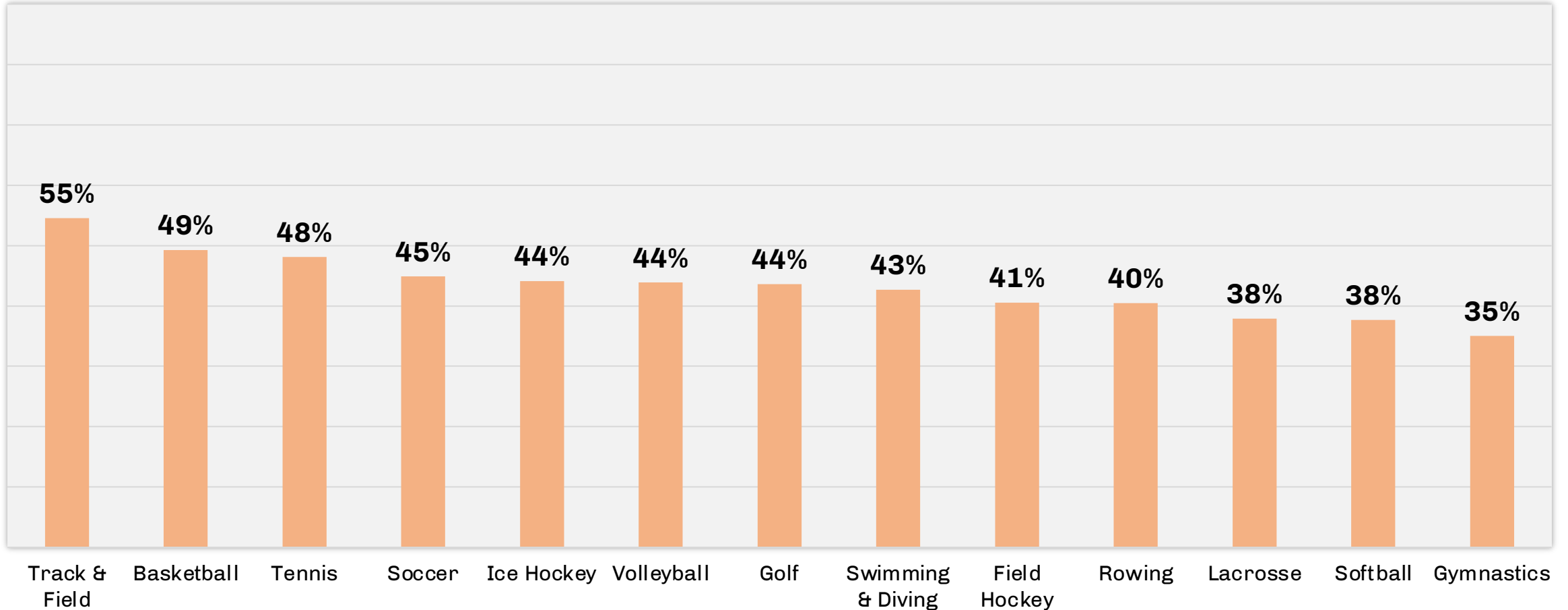
(Percentage of Men’s Sports Participants Who Endorsed “Agree” or “Strongly Agree”)



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

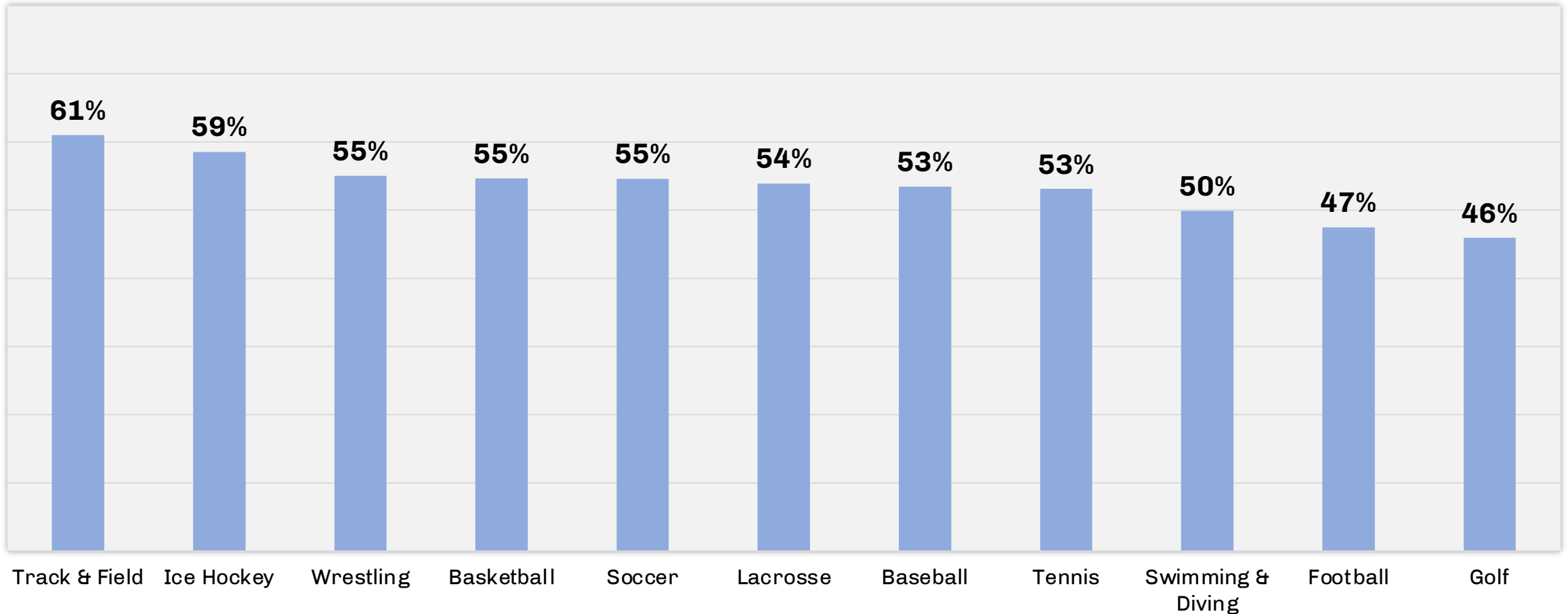
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(Percentage of Women’s Sports Participants Who Endorsed “Agree” or “Strongly Agree”)



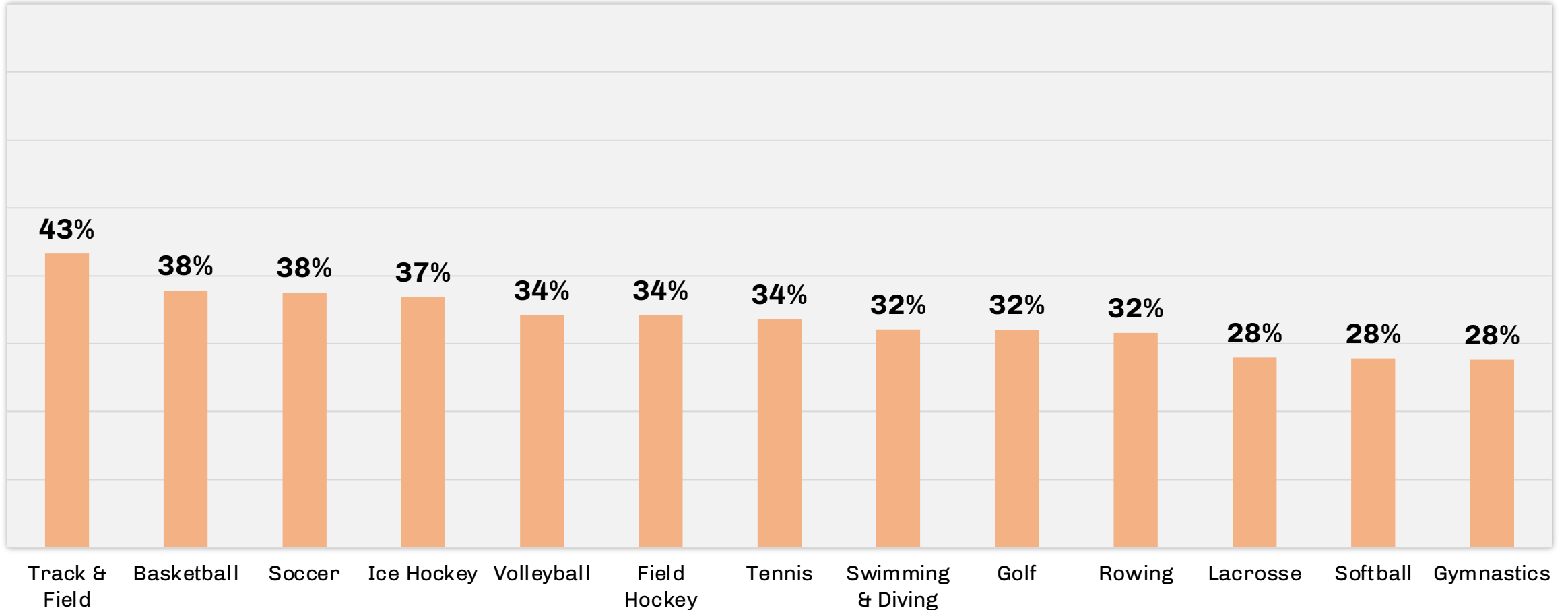
“I am happy with my current weight”

(Percentage of Men’s Sports Participants Who Endorsed “Agree” or “Strongly Agree”)



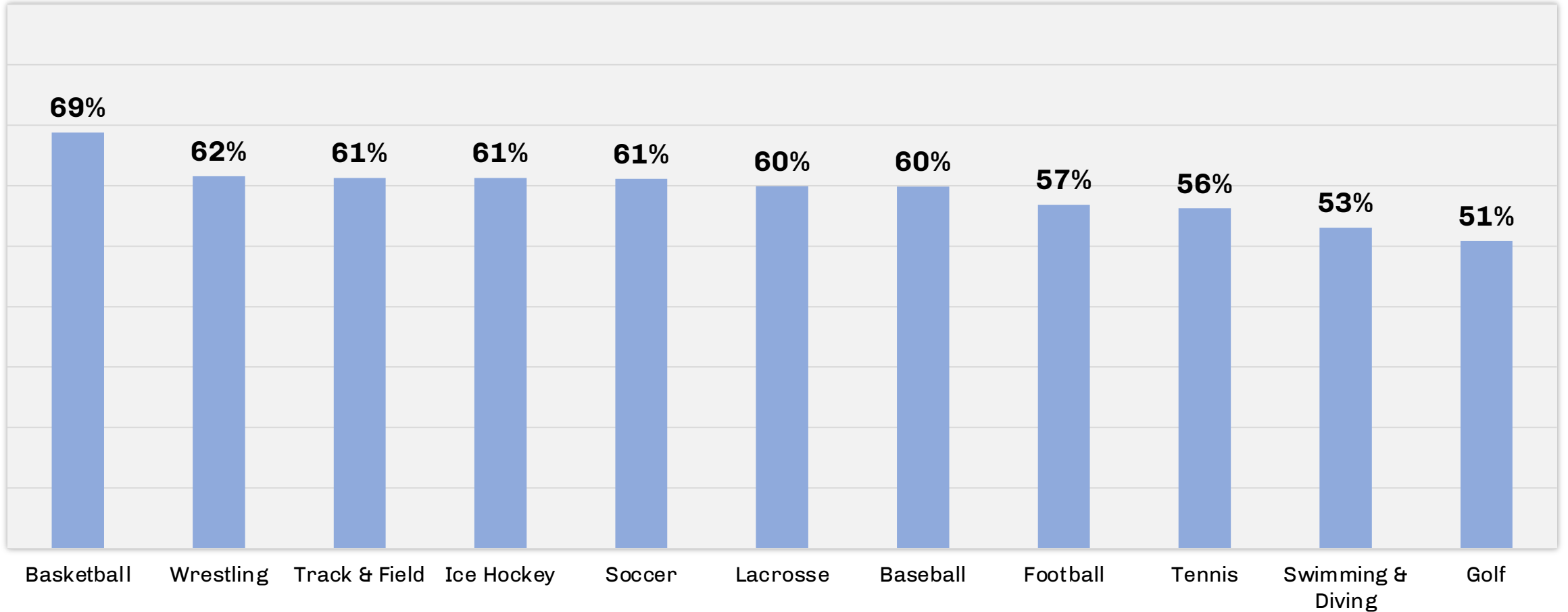
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“I like what I look like in pictures”

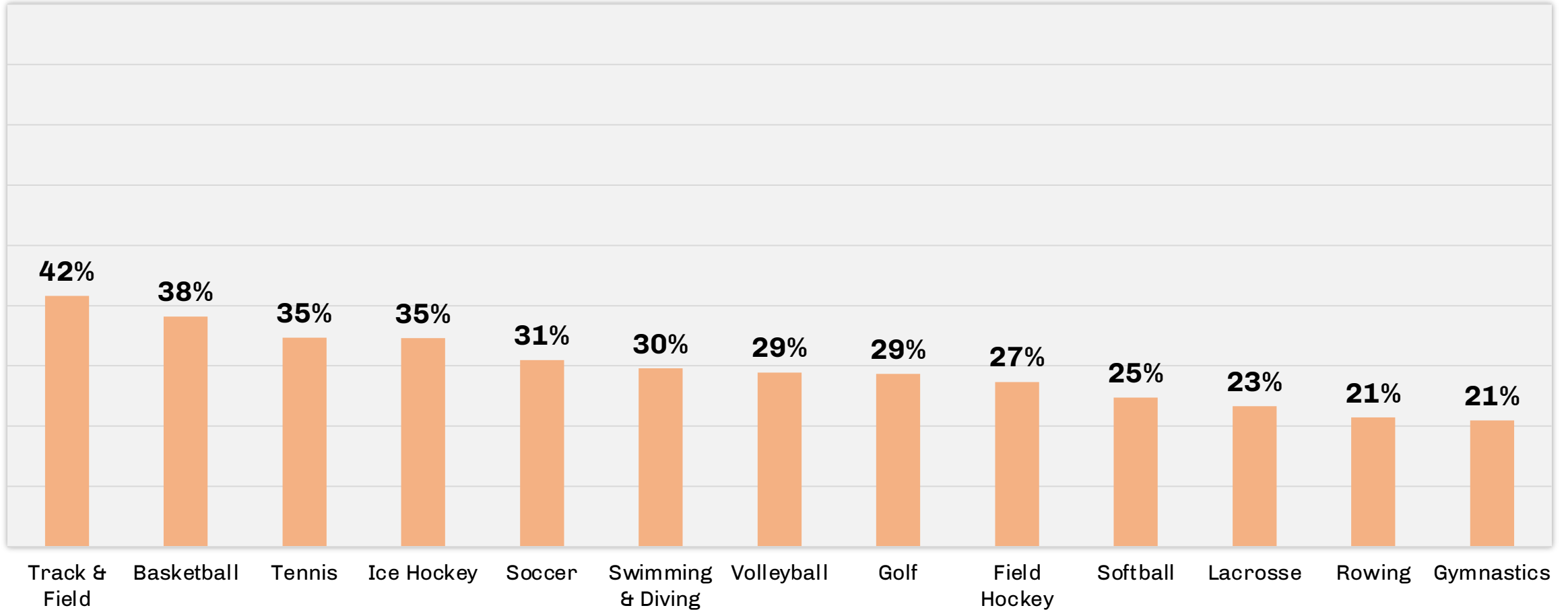
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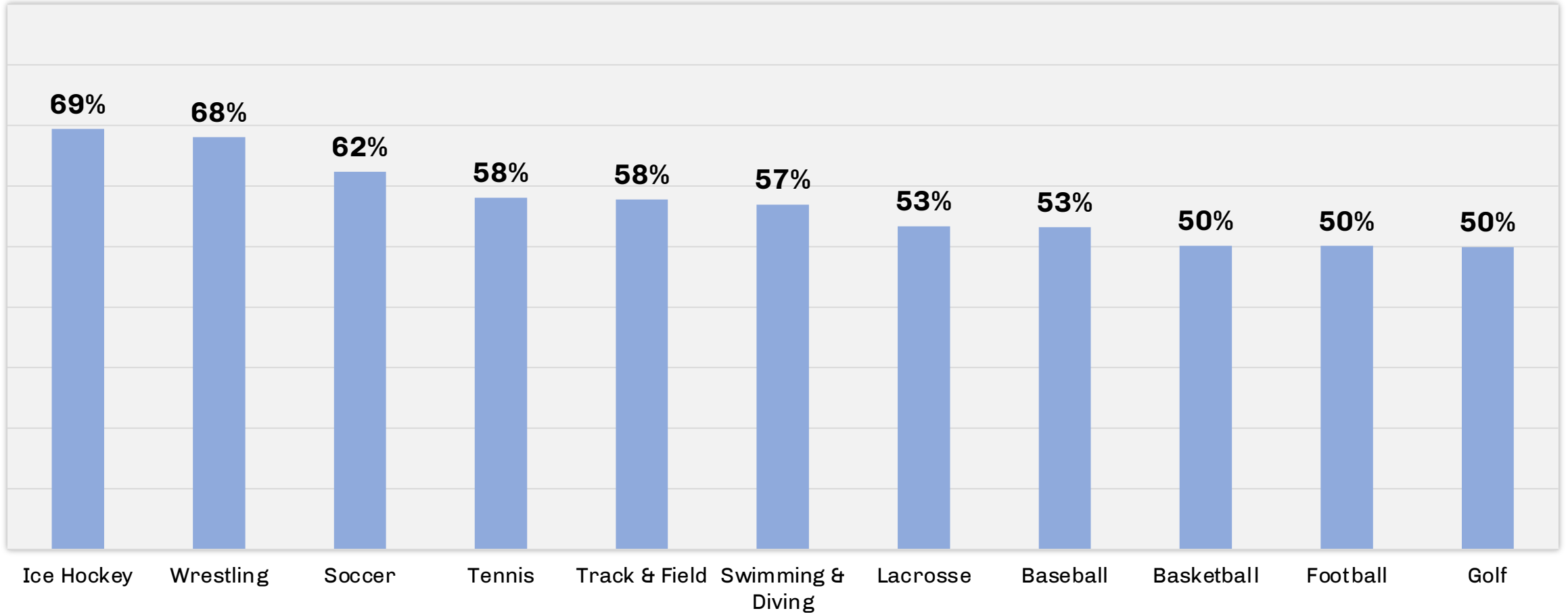
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Note: Top 2 points on a 6-point scale. Source: NCAA Student-Athlete Health and Wellness Study (2023).

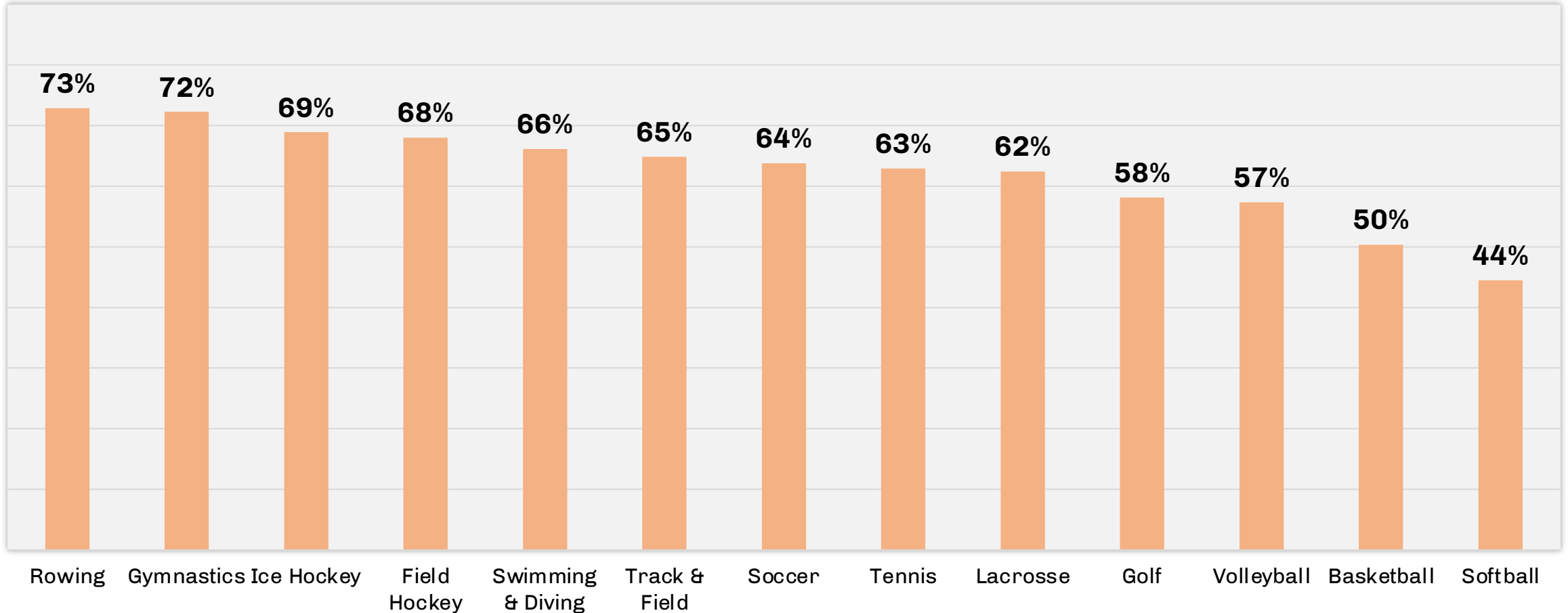
“I generally try to have a healthy diet”

(Percentage of Men’s Sports Participants Who Endorsed “Agree” or “Strongly Agree”)



“I generally try to have a healthy diet”

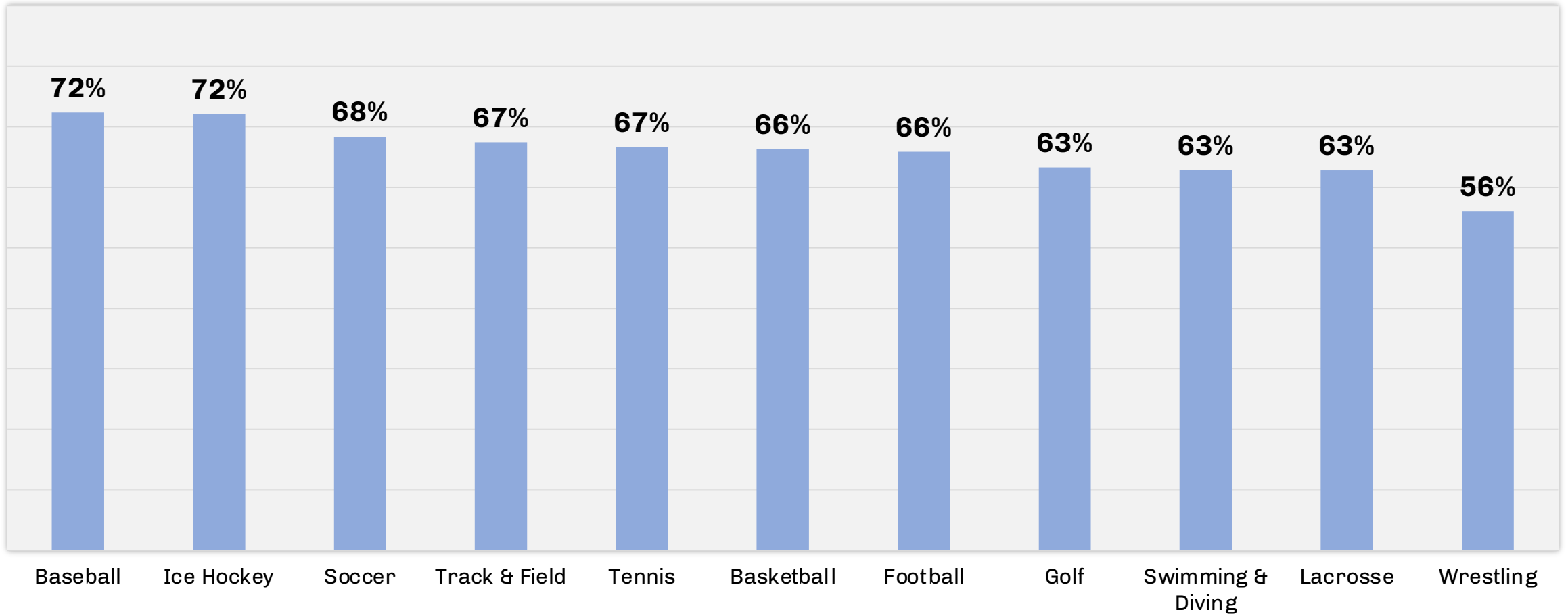
(Percentage of Women’s Sports Participants Who Endorsed “Agree” or “Strongly Agree”)



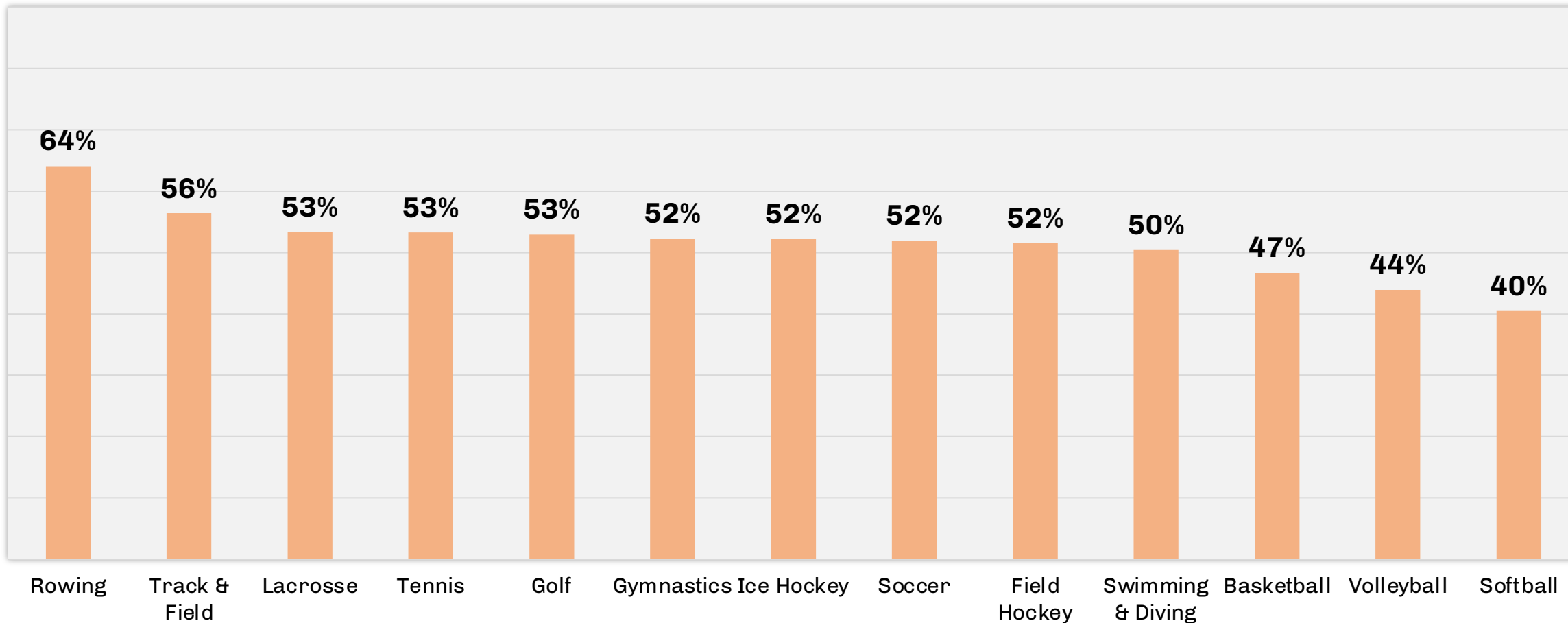
Note: Top 2 points on a 6-point scale. Source: NCAA Student-Athlete Health and Wellness Study (2023).

“I make an effort to eat at least three meals a day”

(Percentage of Men’s Sports Participants Who Endorsed “Agree” or “Strongly Agree”)

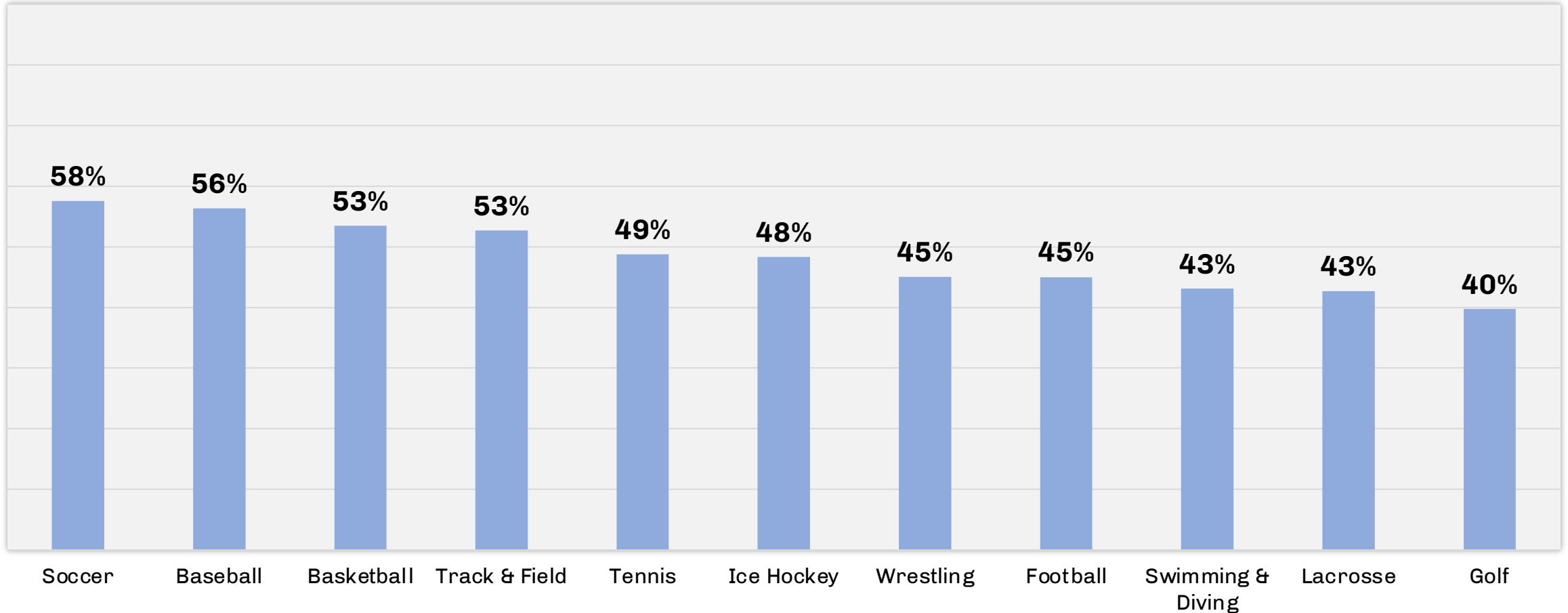


“I make an effort to eat at least three meals a day” (Percentage of Women’s Sports Participants Who Endorsed “Agree” or “Strongly Agree”)



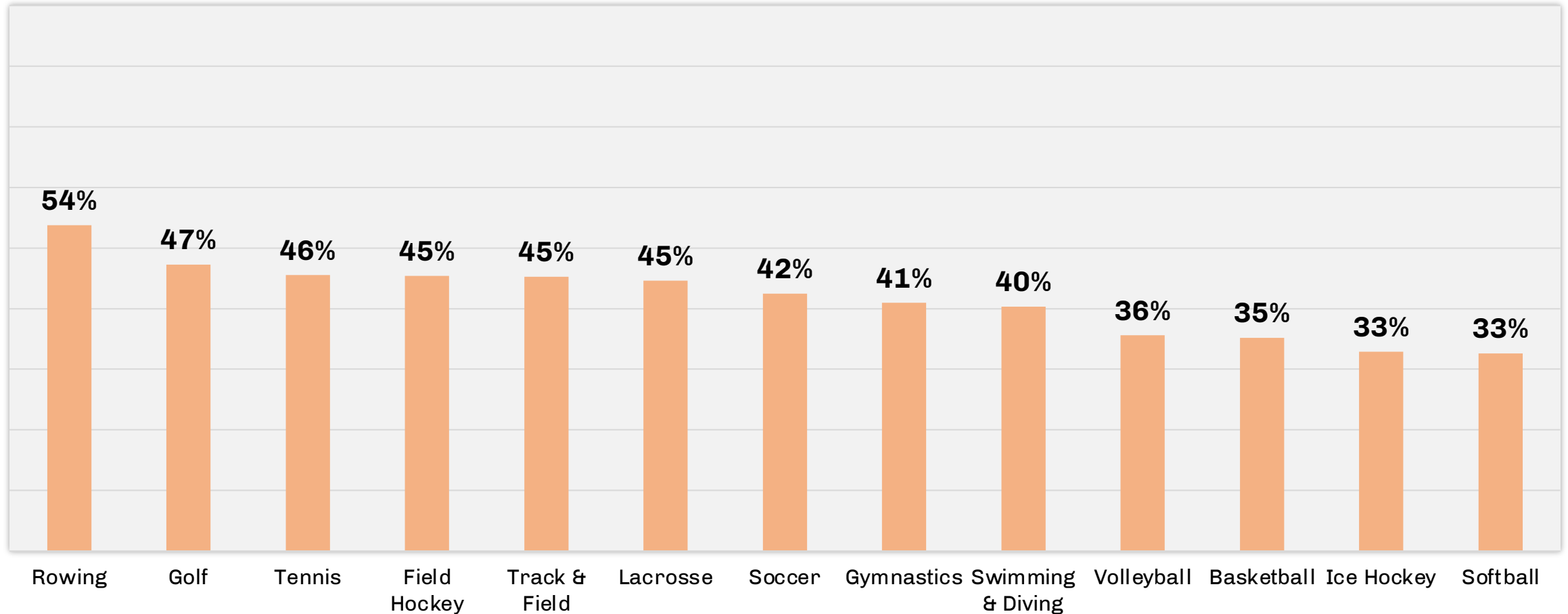
Note: Top 2 points on a 6-point scale. Source: NCAA Student-Athlete Health and Wellness Study (2023).

Percentage Making an Effort to Eat Three Meals Per Day Among Student-Athletes Trying to Lose Weight (Men's Sports)



Note: Top 2 points on a 6-point scale for “I make an effort to eat at least three meals a day.” Source: NCAA Student-Athlete Health and Wellness Study (2023).

Percentage Making an Effort to Eat Three Meals Per Day Among Student-Athletes Trying to Lose Weight (Women's Sports)

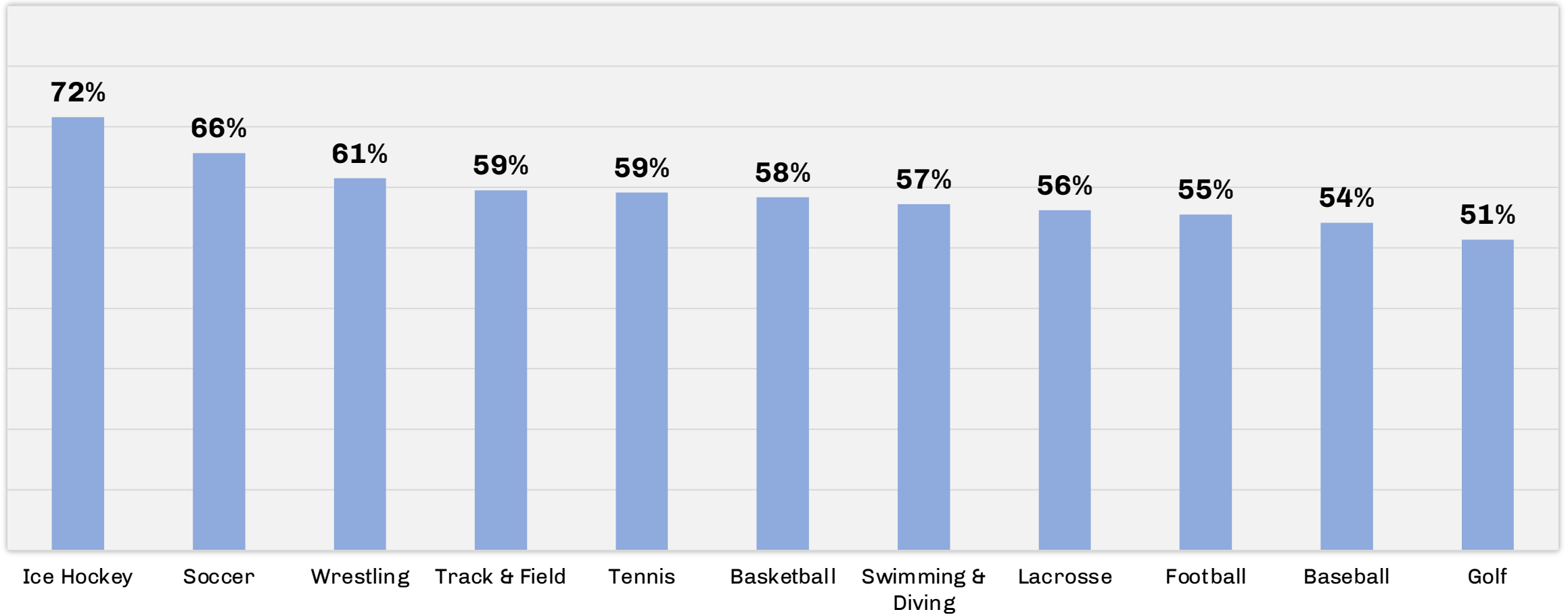


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RESEARCH

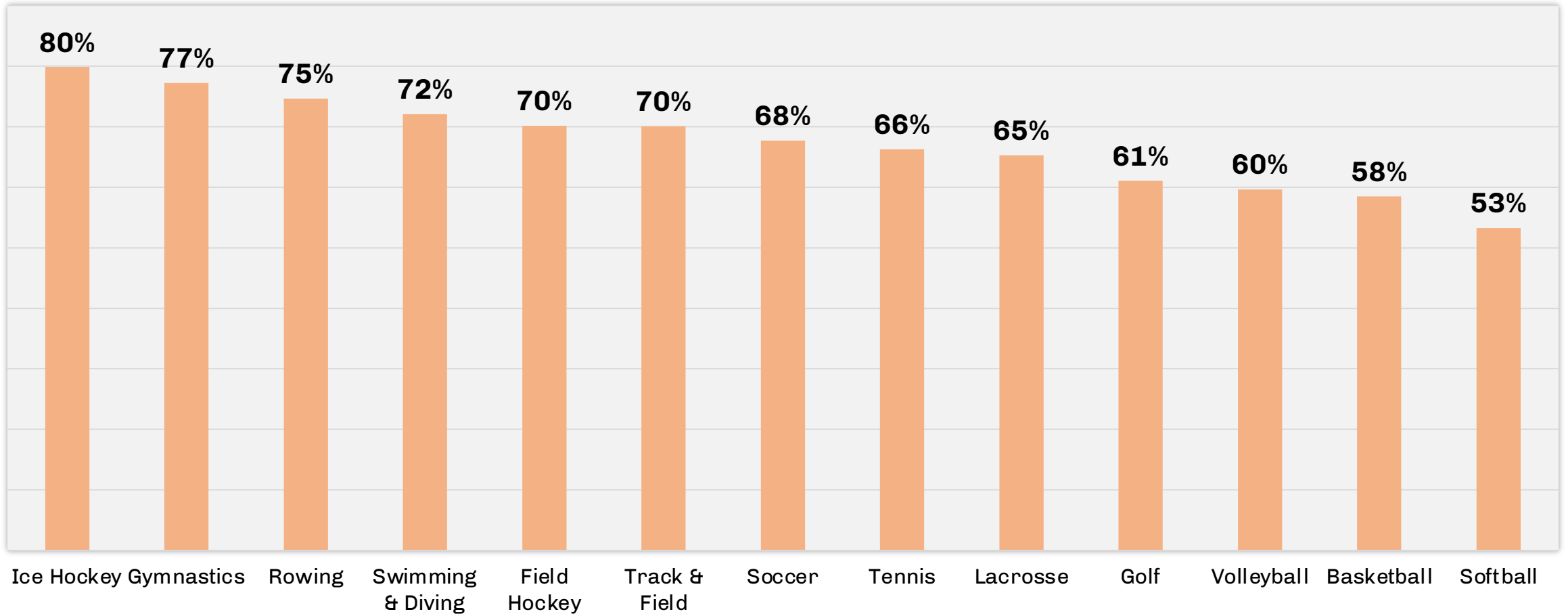
“I make an effort to eat fruits and vegetables each day” (Percentage of Men’s Sports Participants Who Endorsed “Agree” or “Strongly Agree”)



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

“I make an effort to eat fruits and vegetables each day”

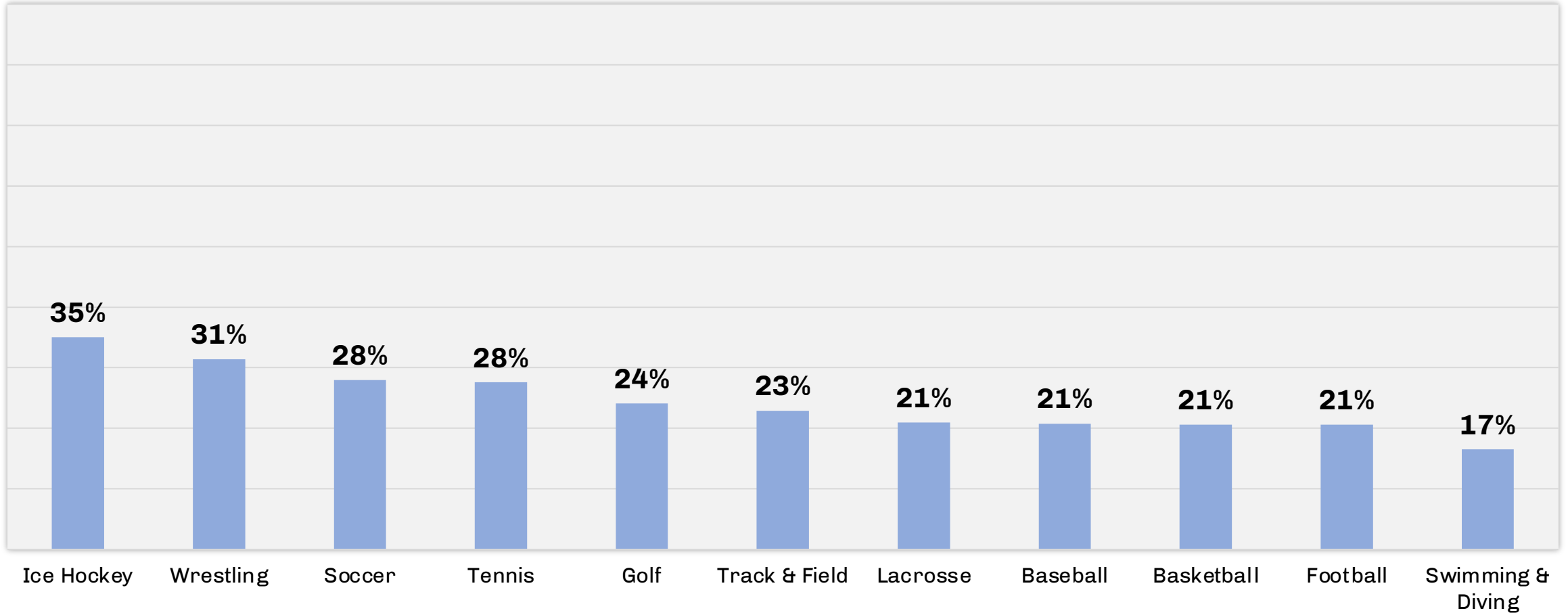
(Percentage of Women’s Sports Participants Who Endorsed “Agree” or “Strongly Agree”)



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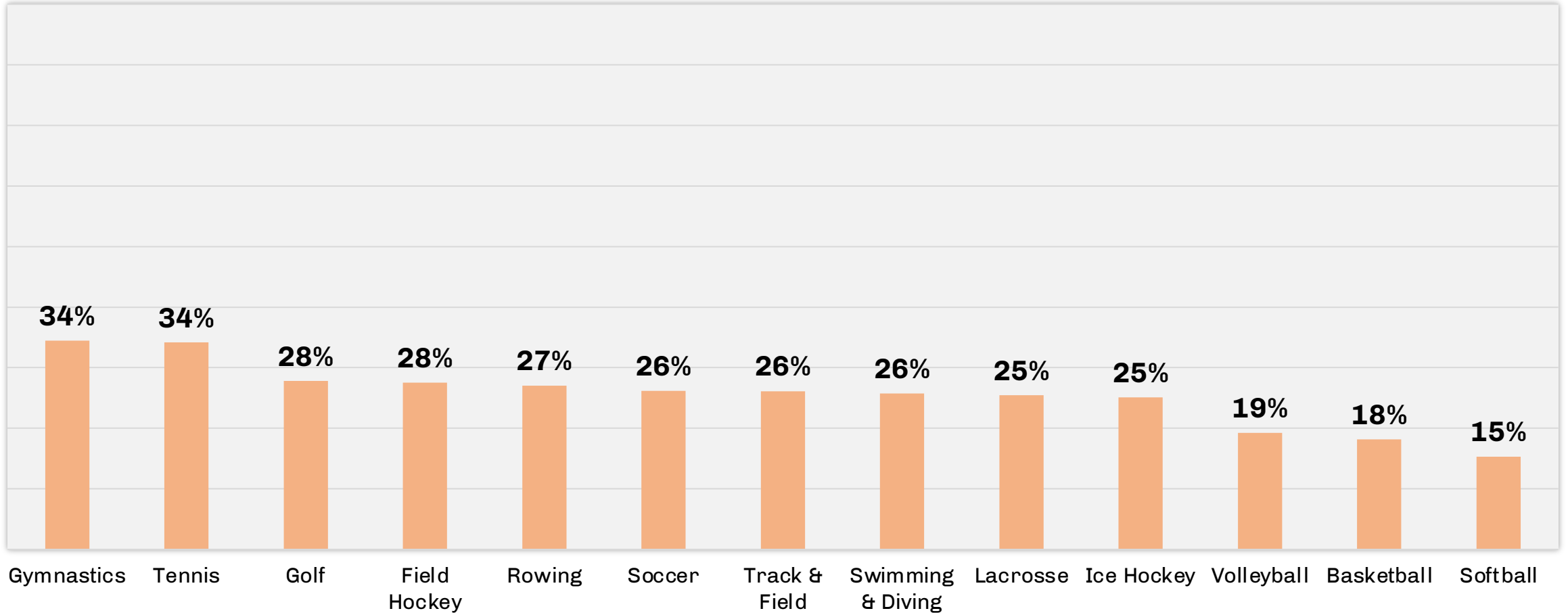
“I usually avoid eating fried foods”

(Percentage of Men’s Sports Participants Who Endorsed “Agree” or “Strongly Agree”)



“I usually avoid eating fried foods”

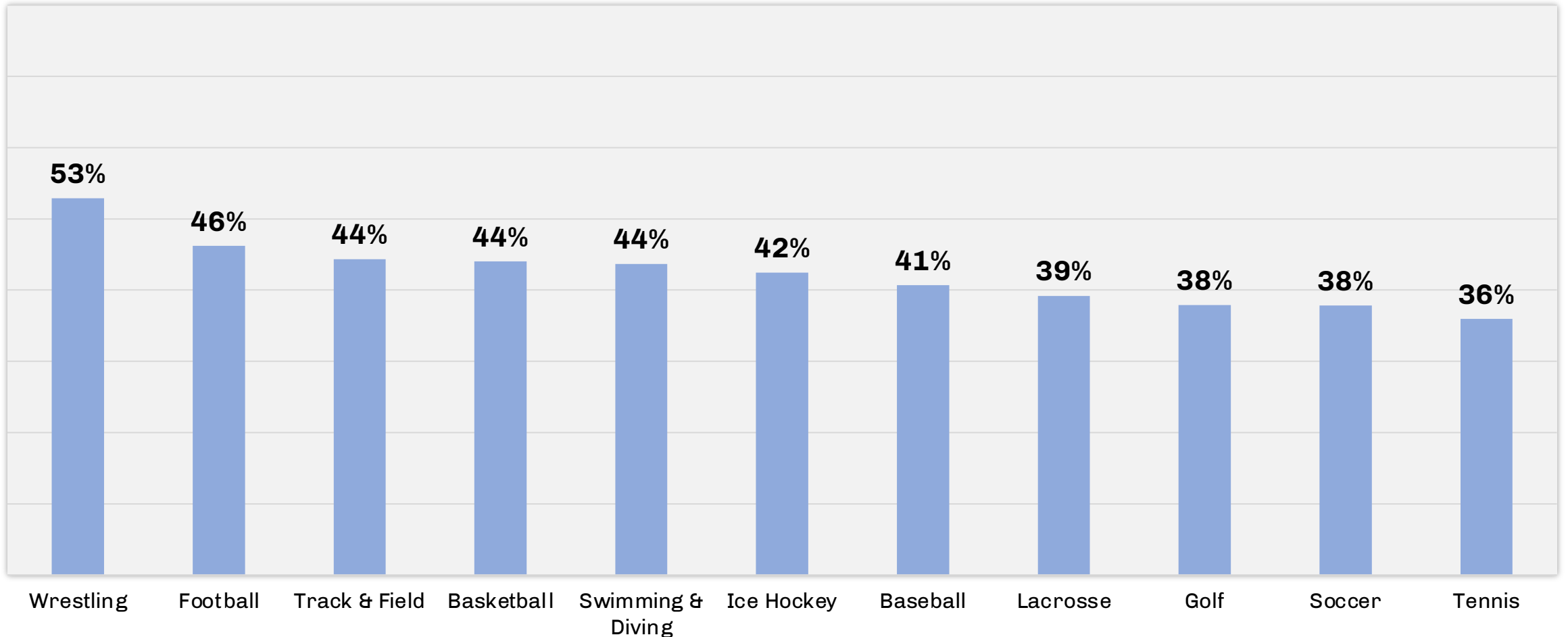
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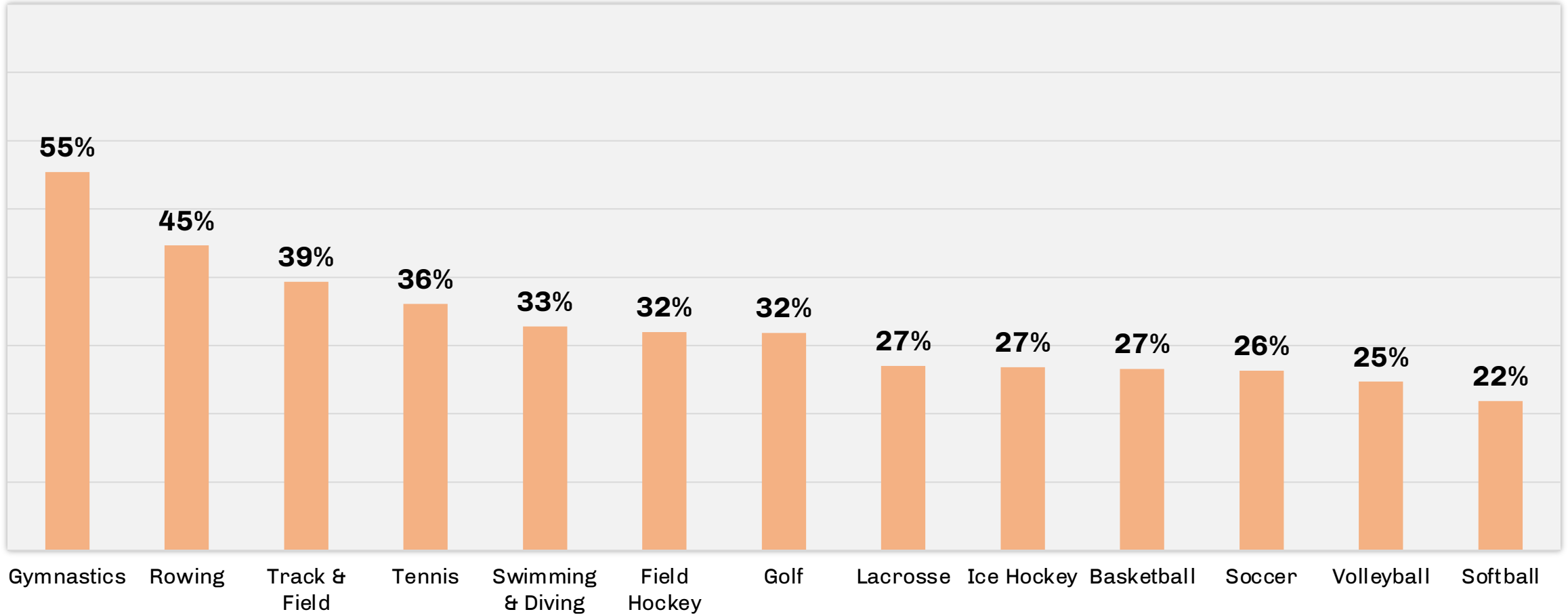
“Healthy food options are readily available to me after practice and competition”

(Percentage of Men’s Sports Participants Who Endorsed “Agree” or “Strongly Agree”)



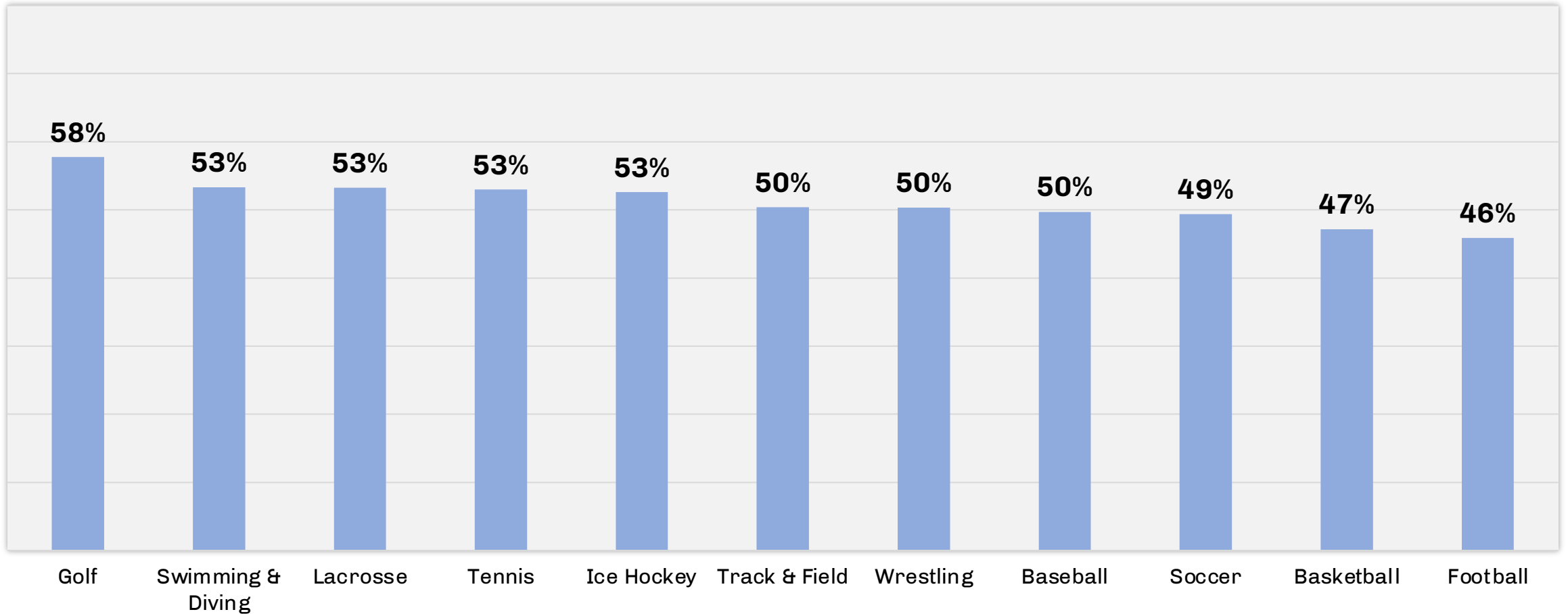
“Healthy food options are readily available to me after practice and competition”

(Percentage of Women’s Sports Participants Who Endorsed “Agree” or “Strongly Agree”)



“I can afford to eat healthy meals each day”

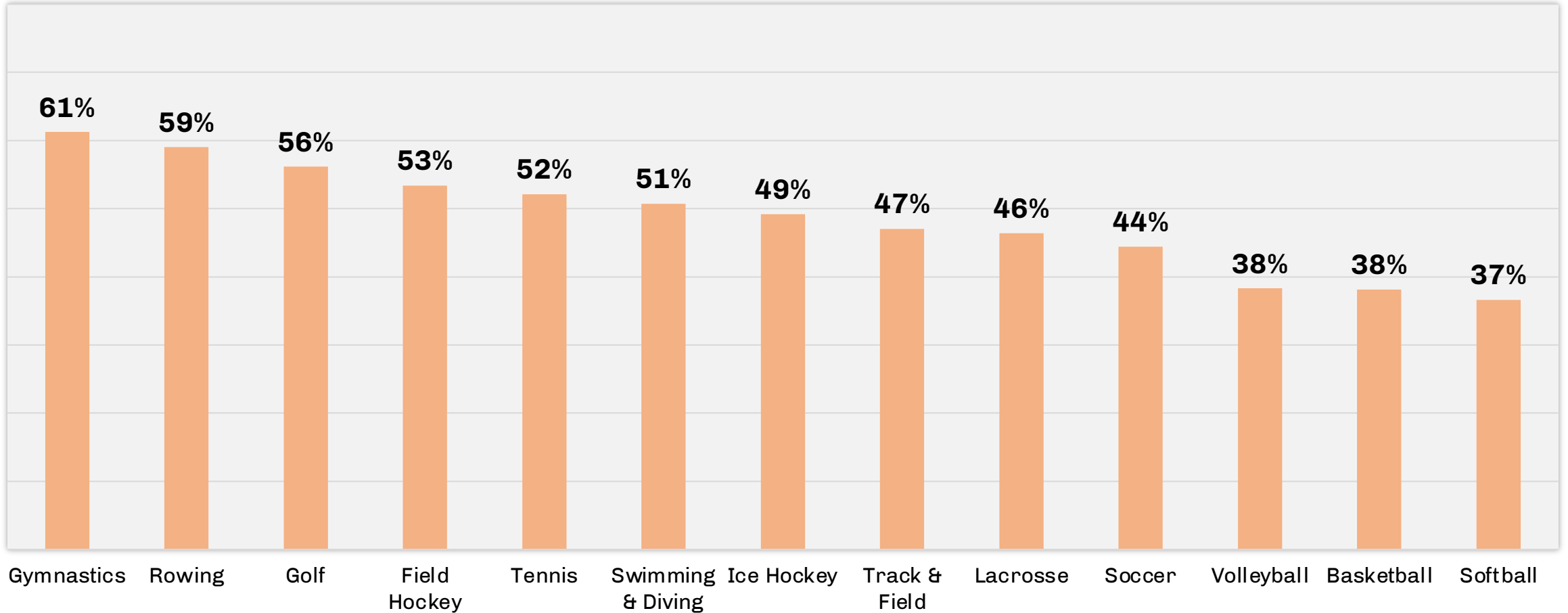
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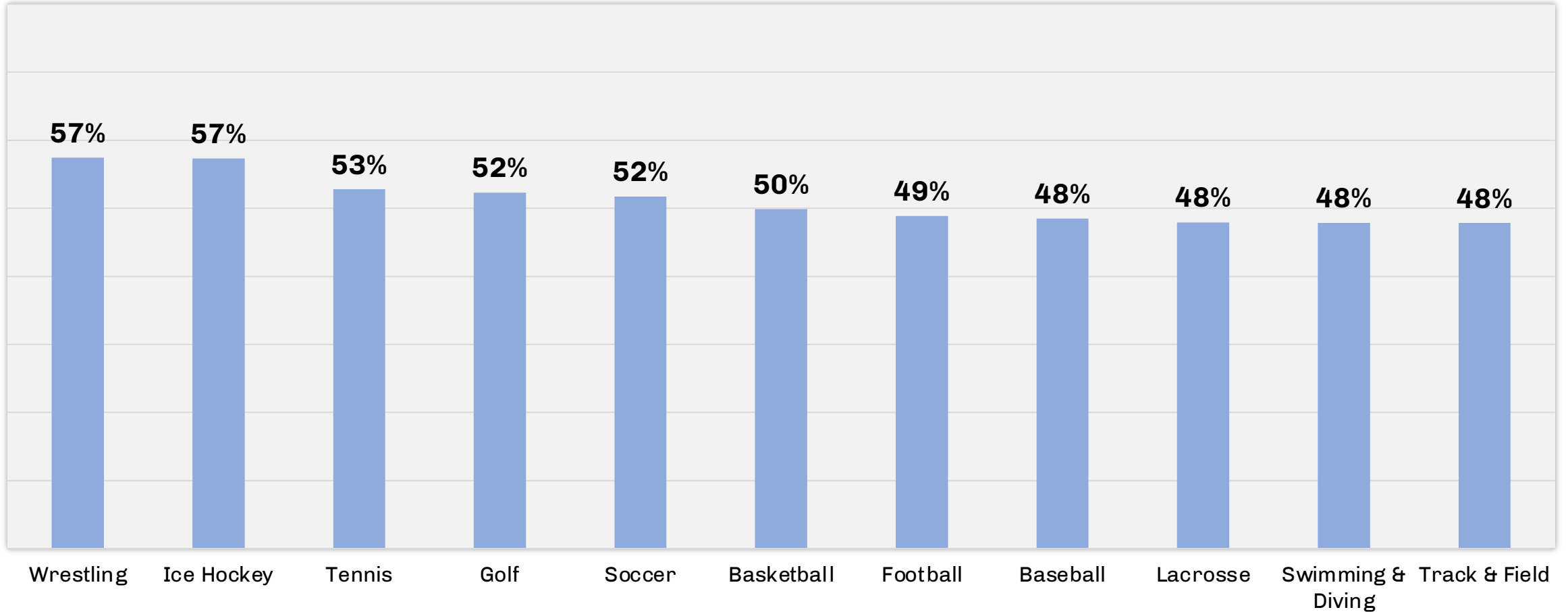
(Percentage of Women’s Sports Participants Who Endorsed “Agree” or “Strongly Agree”)



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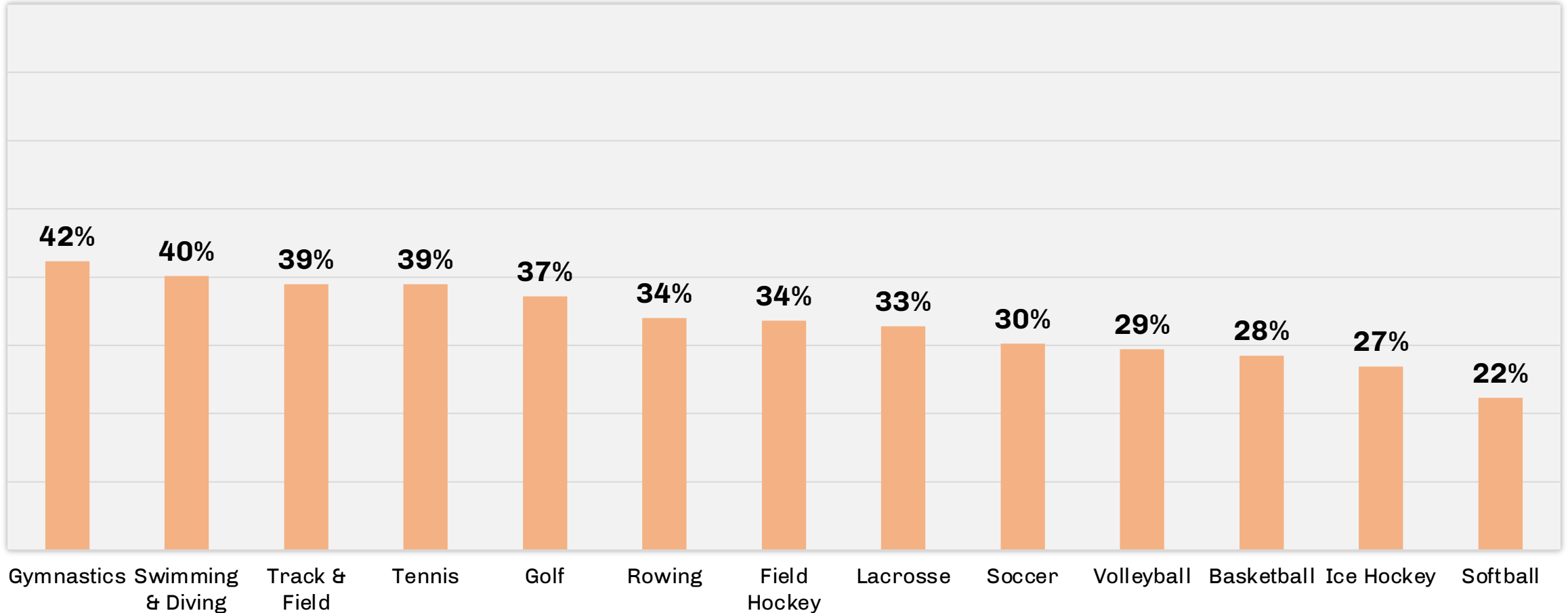
“I have time to eat healthy meals each day”

(Percentage of Men’s Sports Participants Who Endorsed “Agree” or “Strongly Agree”)



“I have time to eat healthy meals each day”

(Percentage of Women’s Sports Participants Who Endorsed “Agree” or “Strongly Agree”)

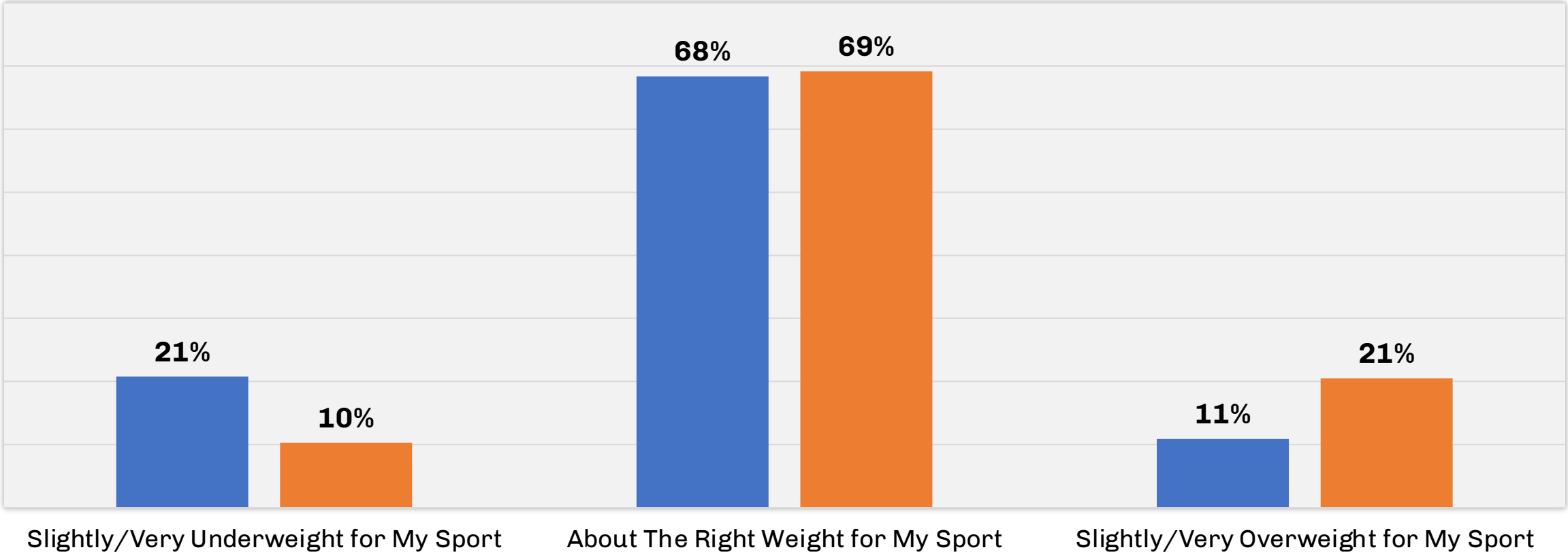


RESULTS BY DIVISION

Division I

How do you describe your weight? (Division I)

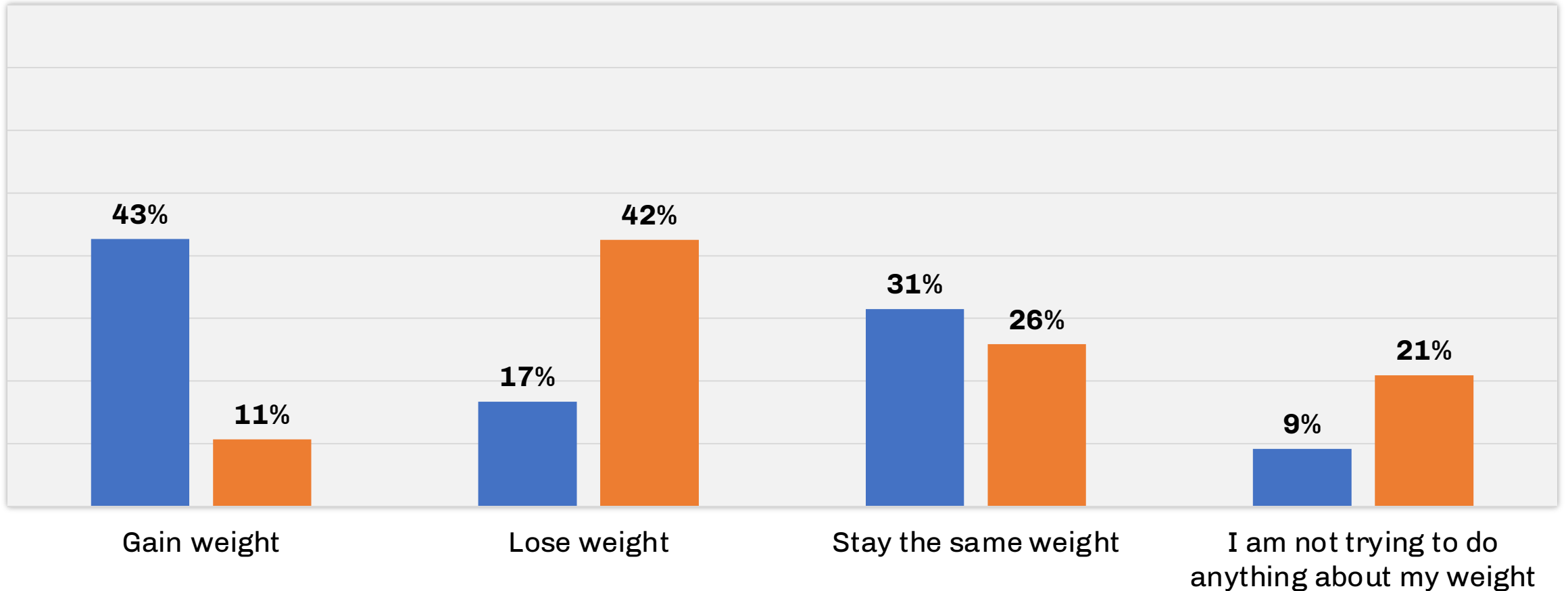
■ Men's Sports ■ Women's Sports



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

Which of the following are you trying to do about your weight? (Division I)

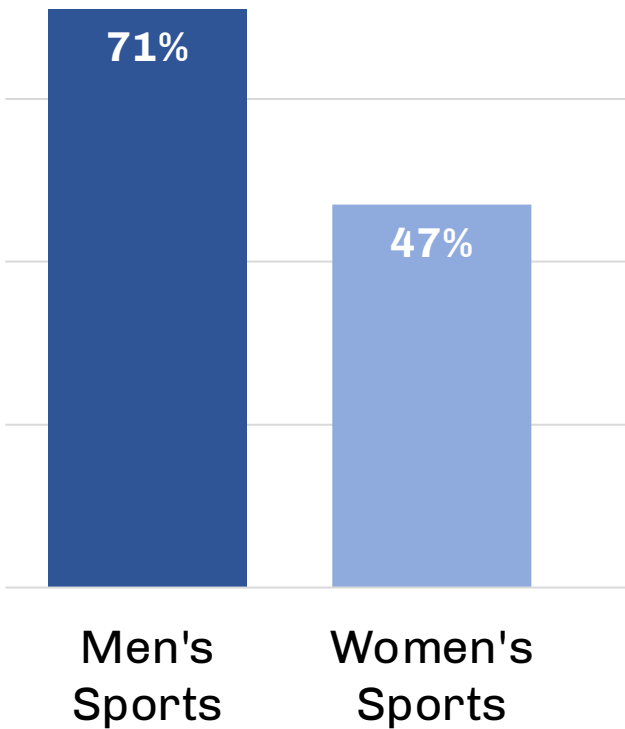
■ Men's Sports ■ Women's Sports



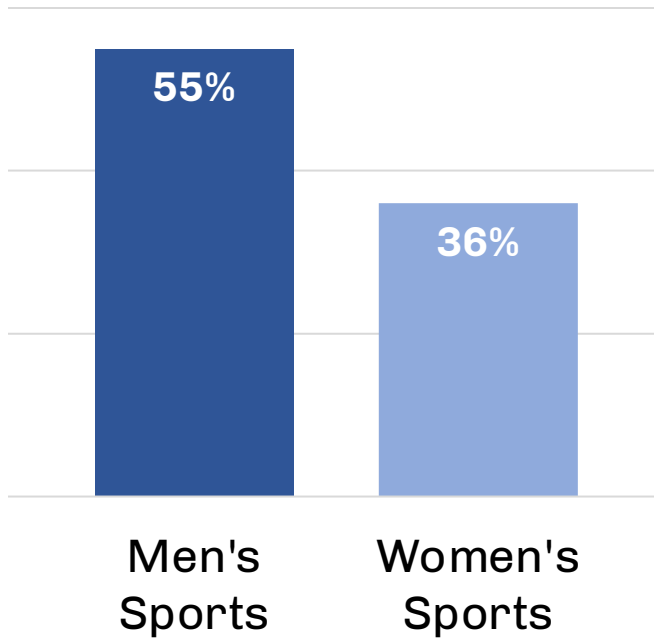
Body Image

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

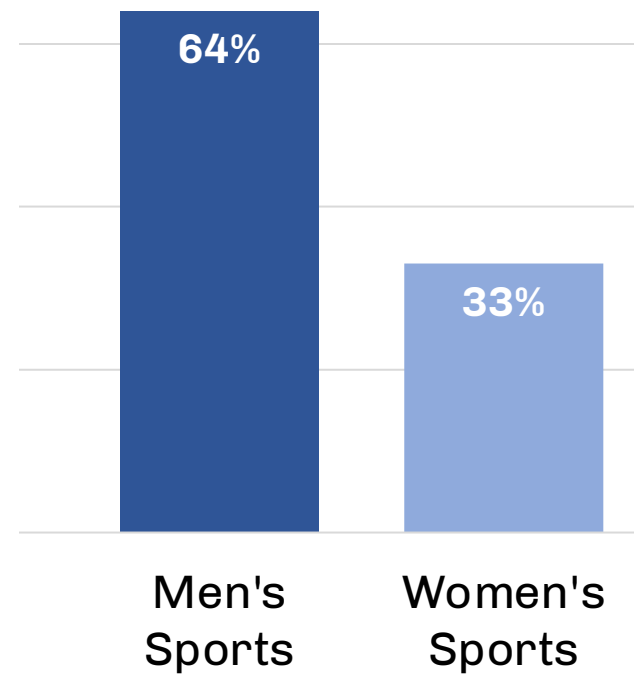
I think I have a good body



I am happy with my current weight

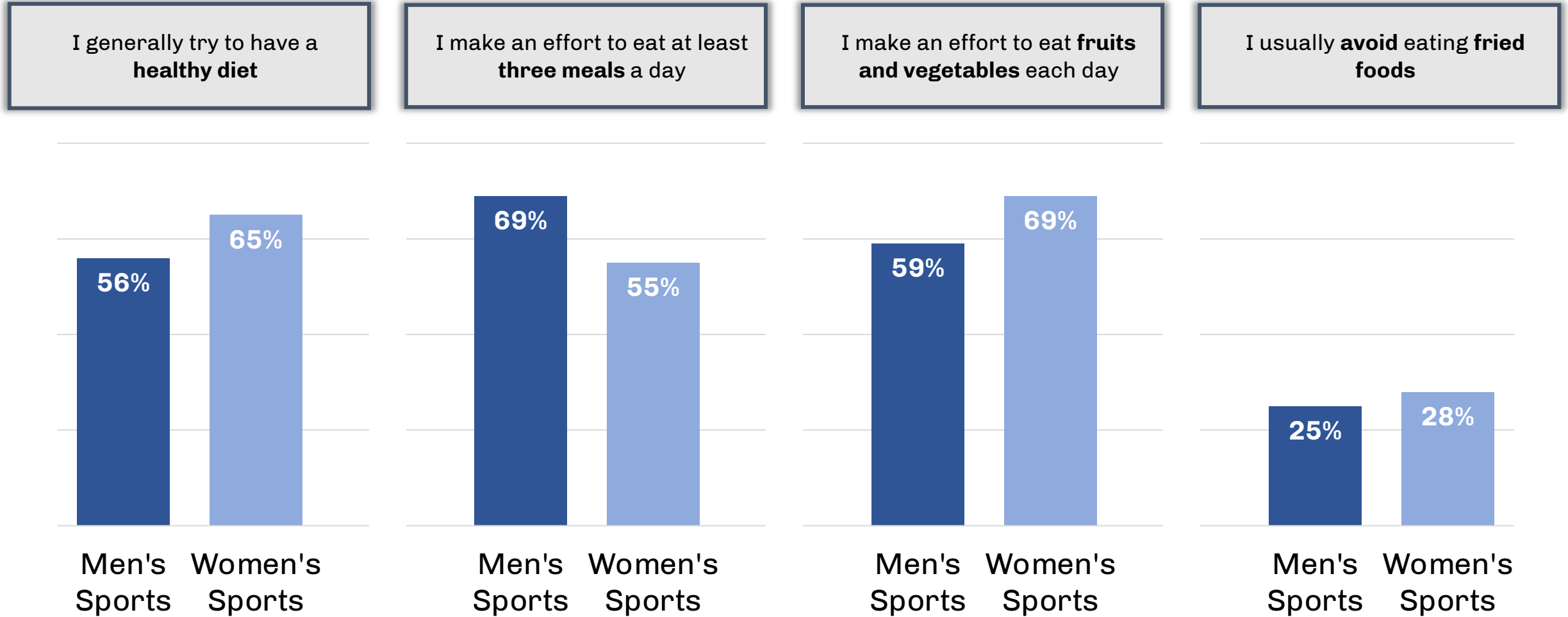


I like what I look like in pictures



Nutritional Habits

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



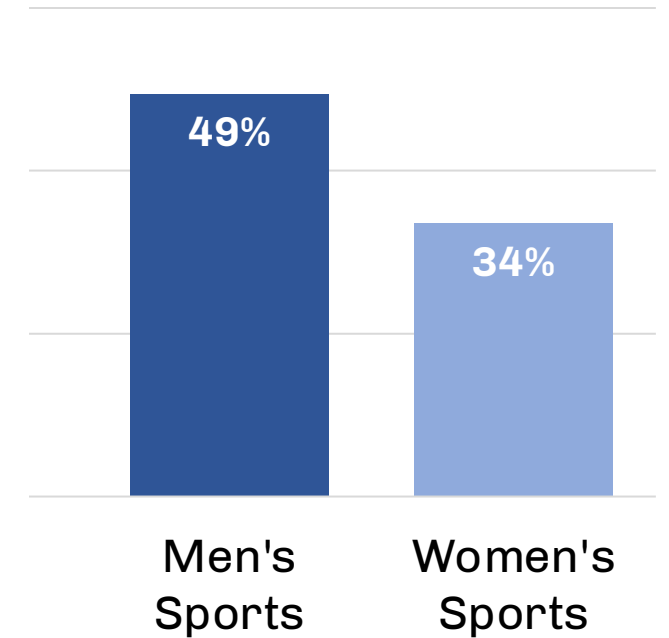
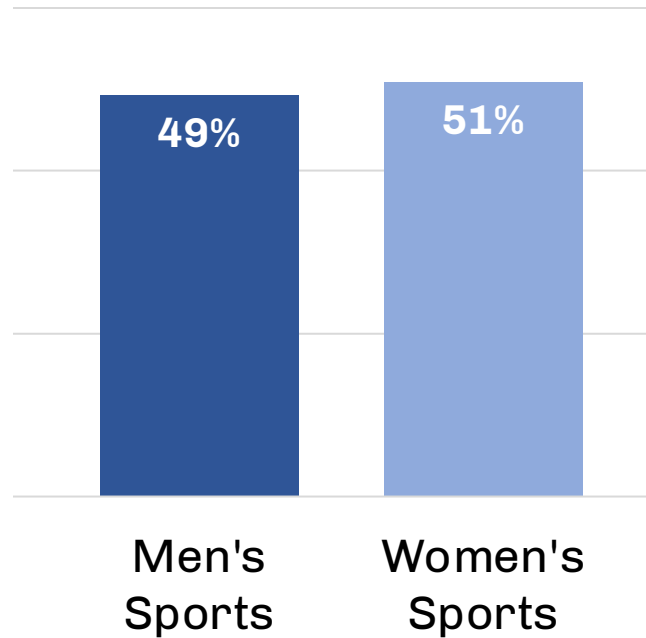
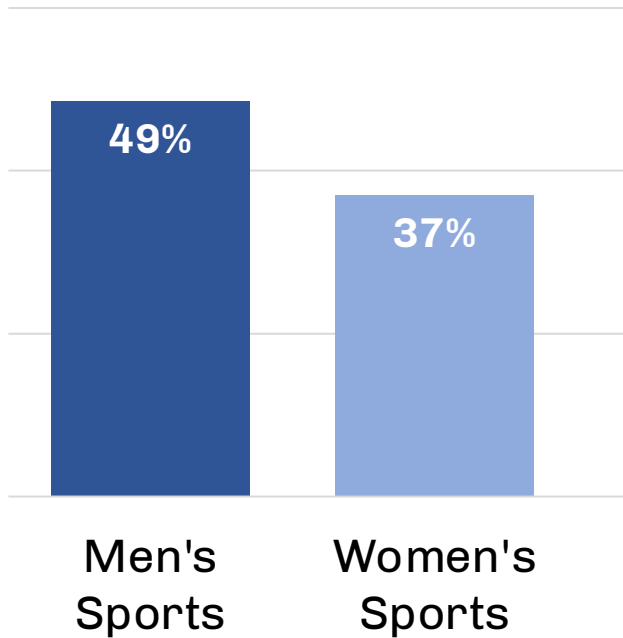
Access to Healthy Food

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

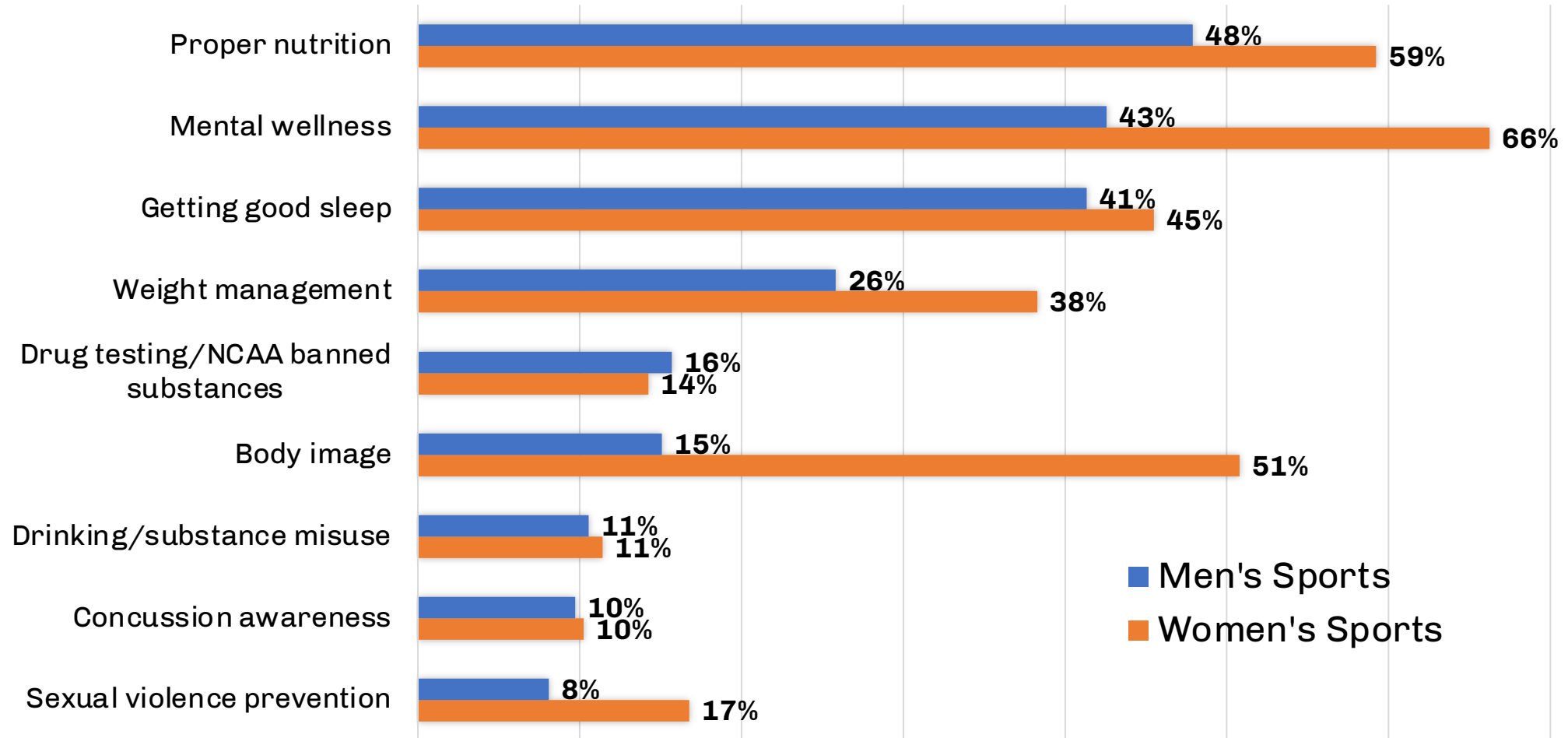
Healthy food options are **readily available** to me after practice and competition

I can **afford** to eat healthy meals each day

I have **time** to eat healthy meals each day



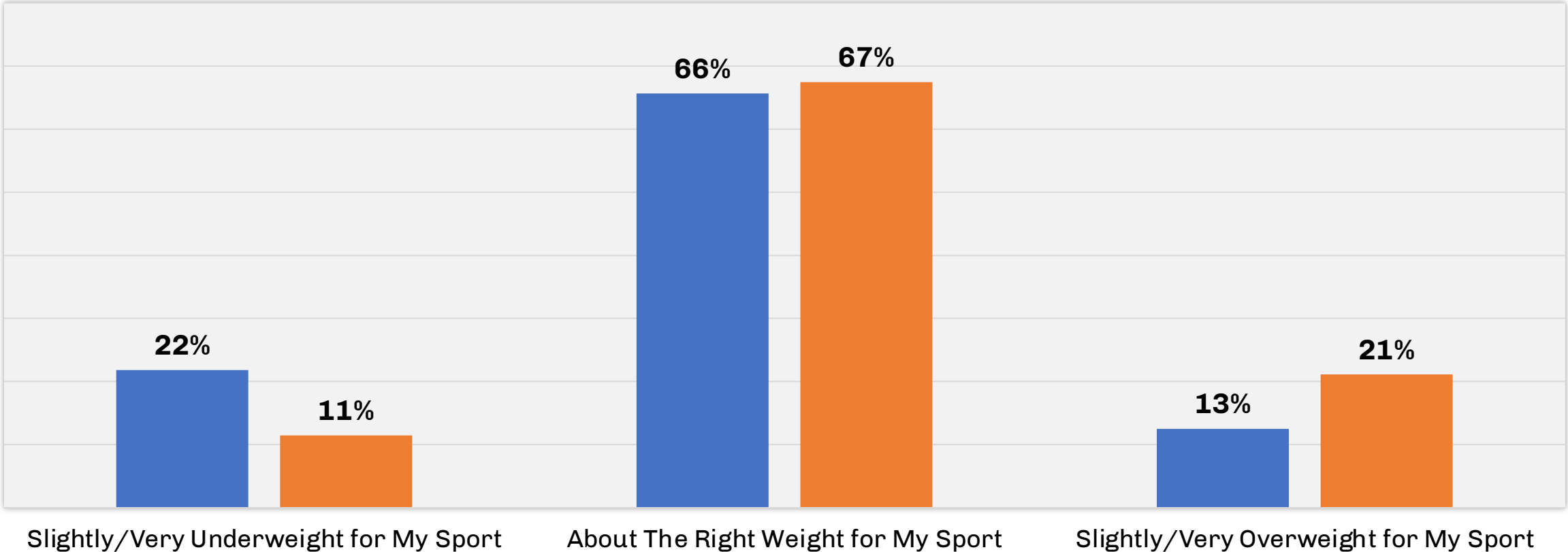
“I wish the coaches and administrators at my school talked more with my team about the following wellness topics” (Division I)



Division II

How do you describe your weight? (Division II)

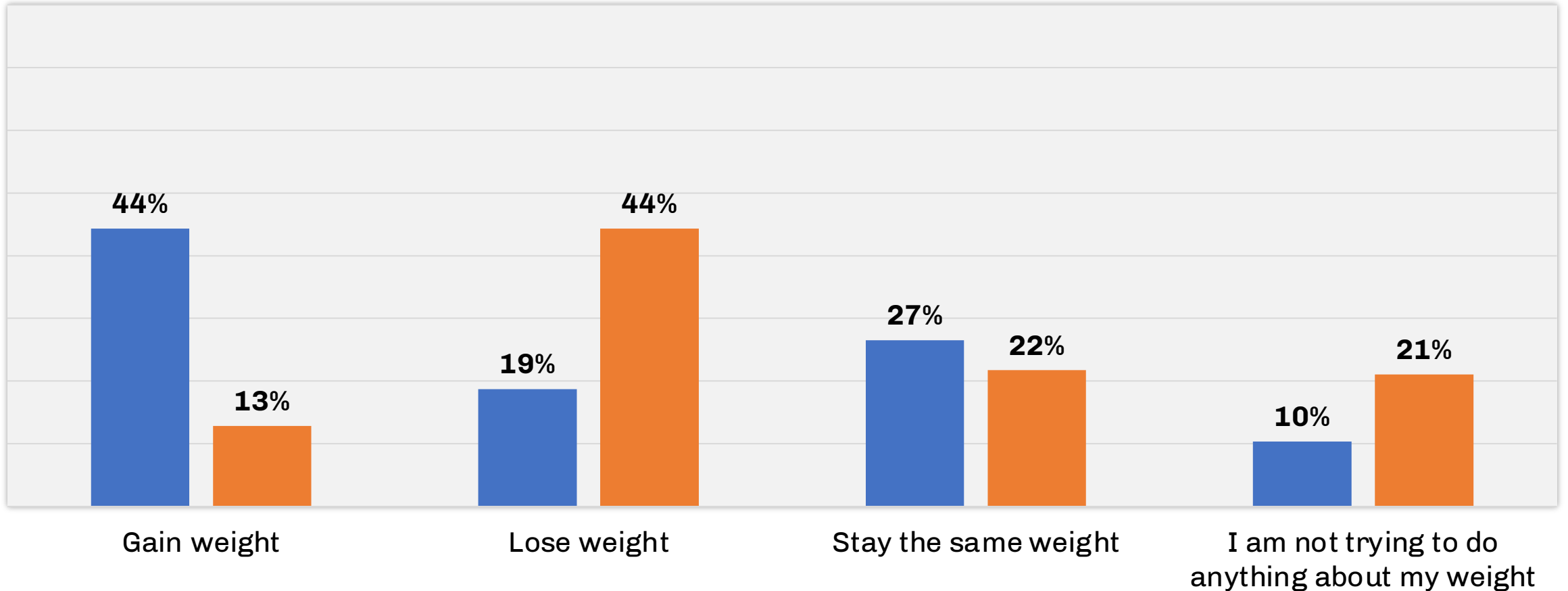
■ Men's Sports ■ Women's Sports



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

Which of the following are you trying to do about your weight? (Division II)

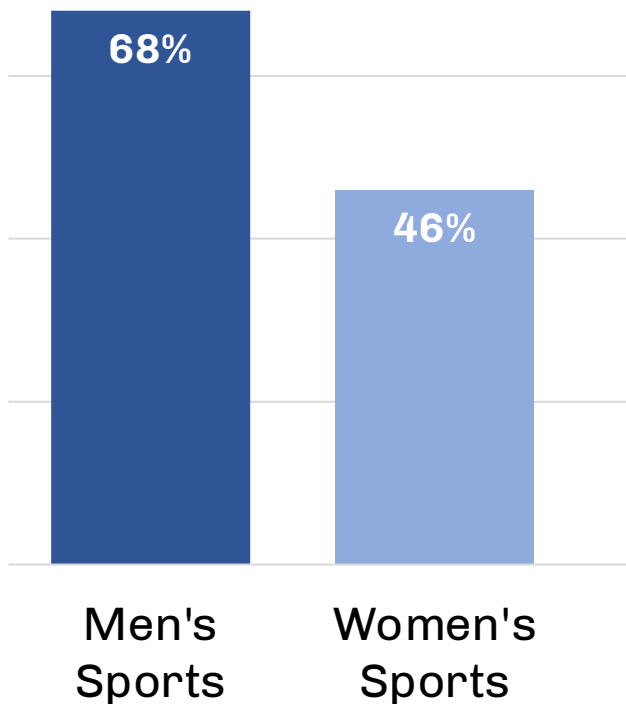
■ Men's Sports ■ Women's Sports



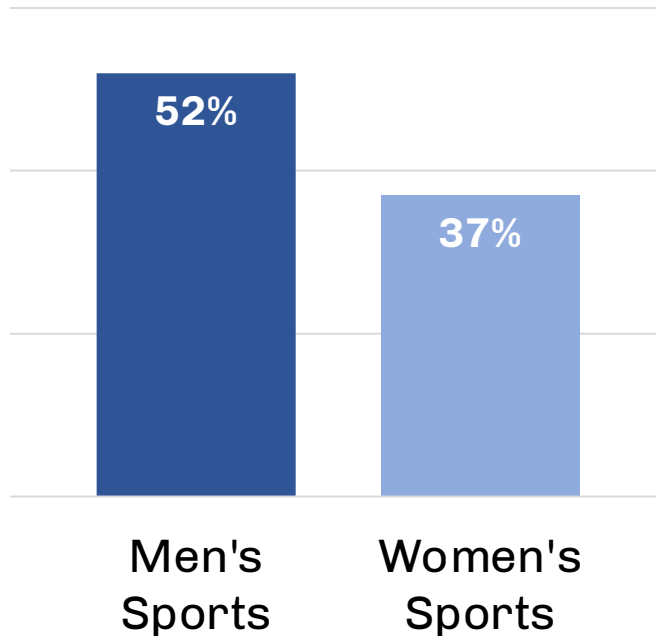
Body Image

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

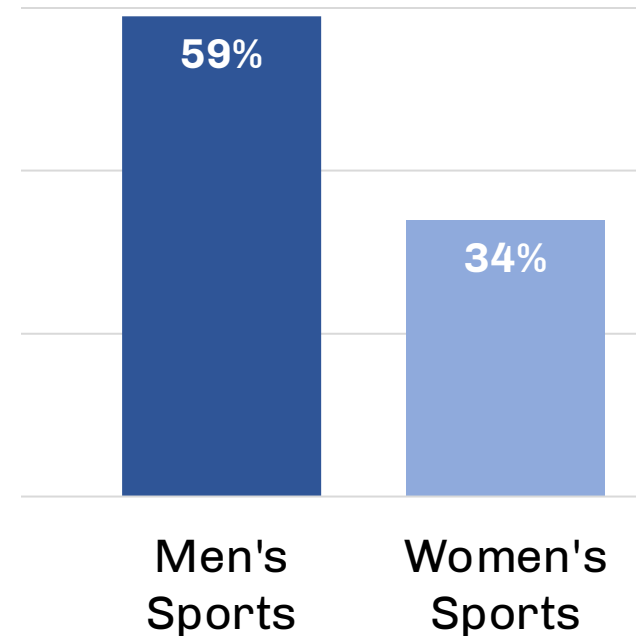
I think I have a good body



I am happy with my current weight

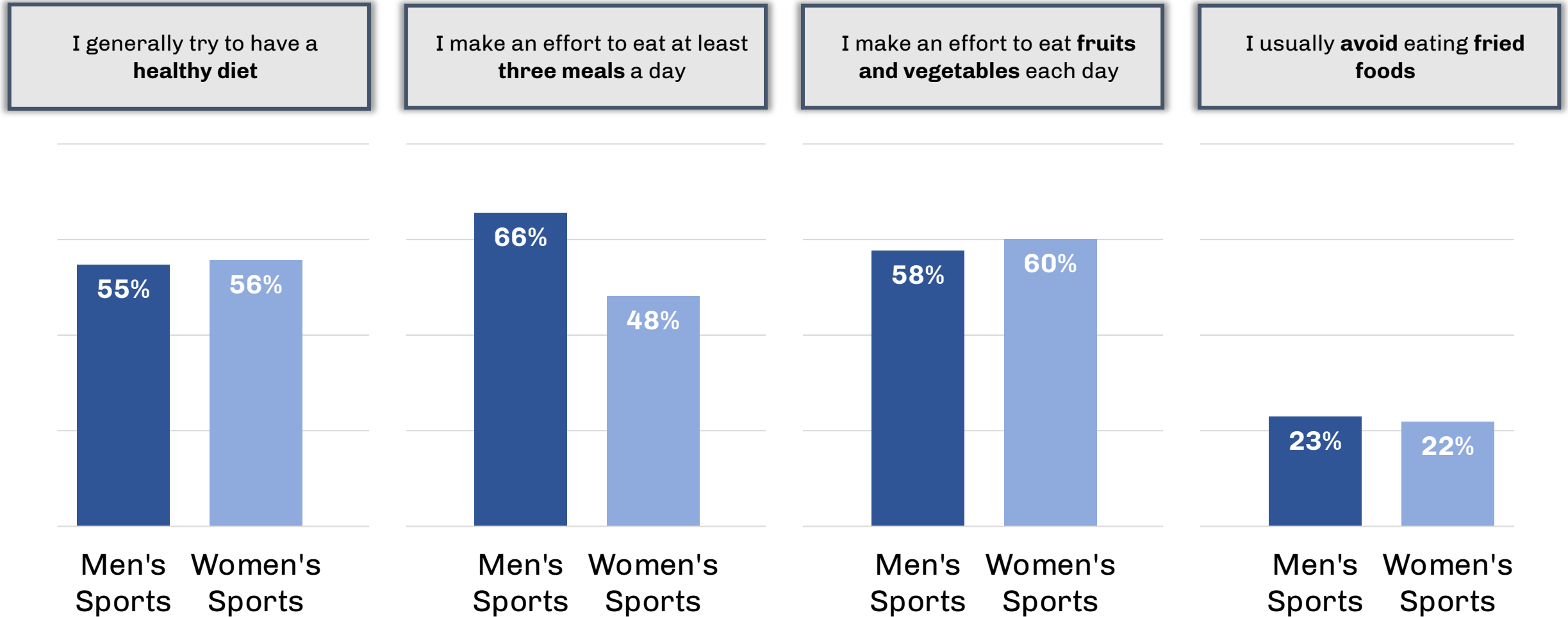


I like what I look like in pictures



Nutritional Habits

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



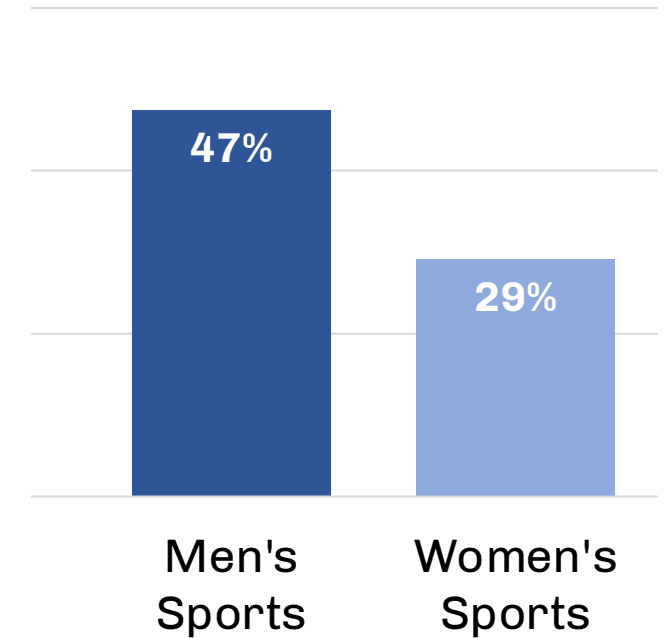
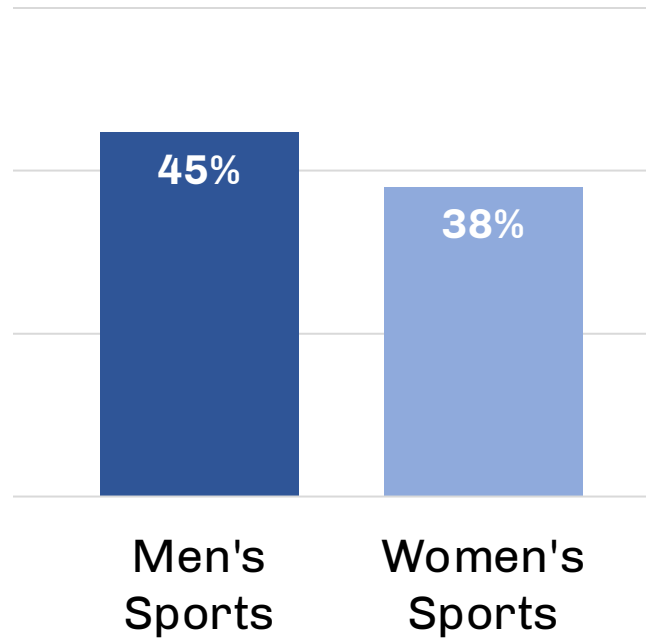
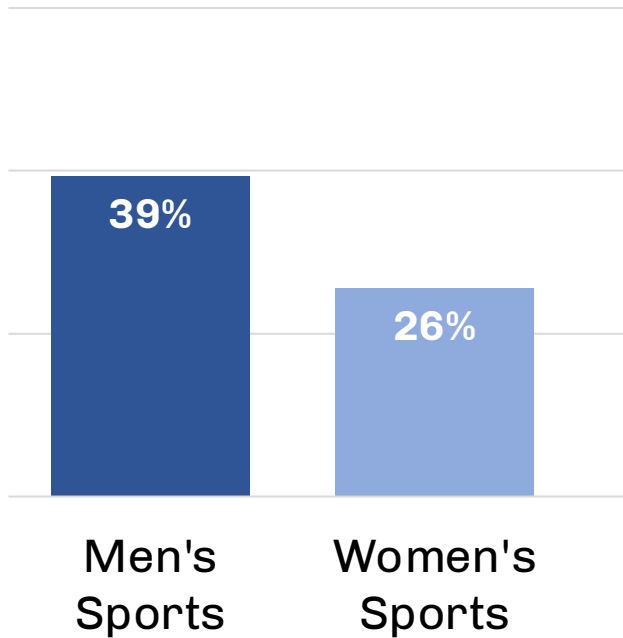
Access to Healthy Food

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

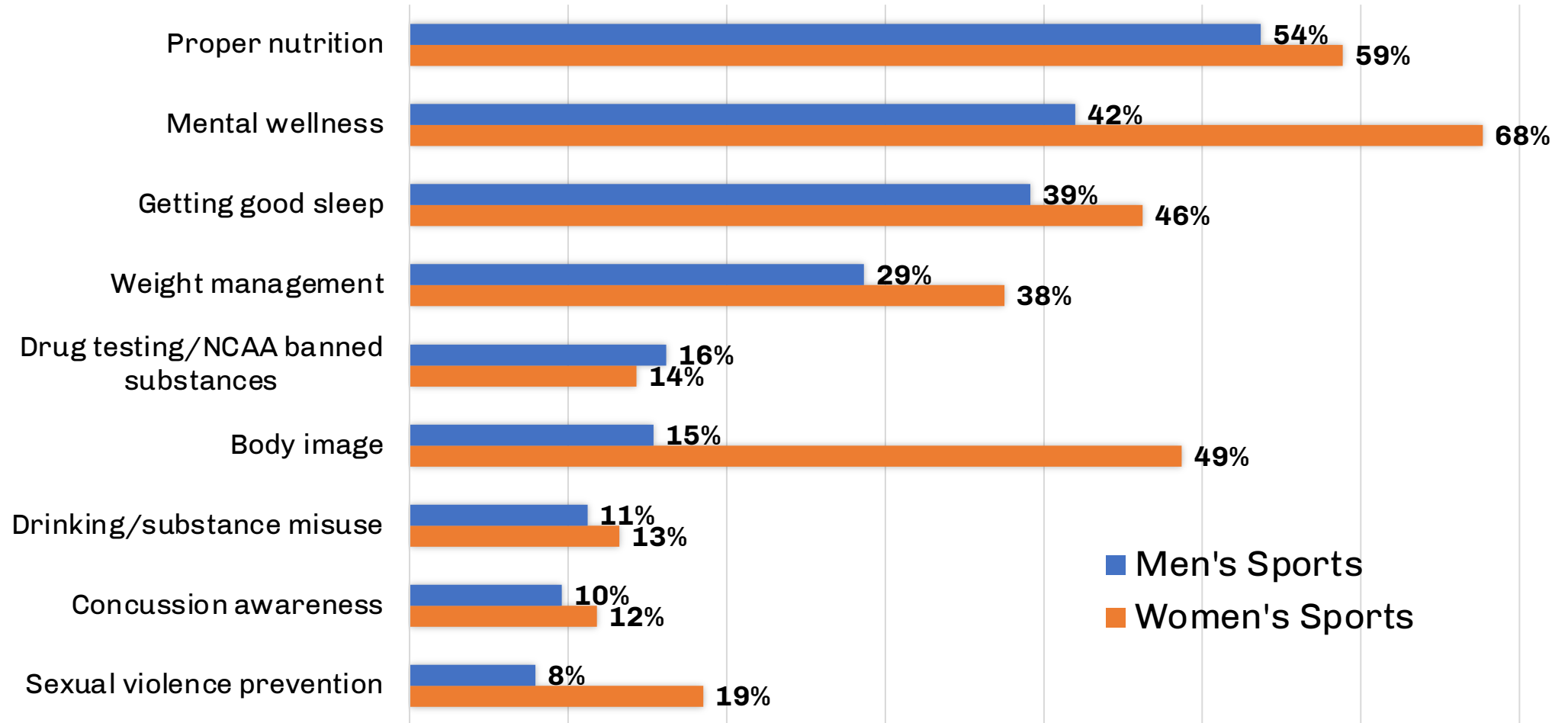
Healthy food options are **readily available** to me after practice and competition

I can **afford** to eat healthy meals each day

I have **time** to eat healthy meals each day



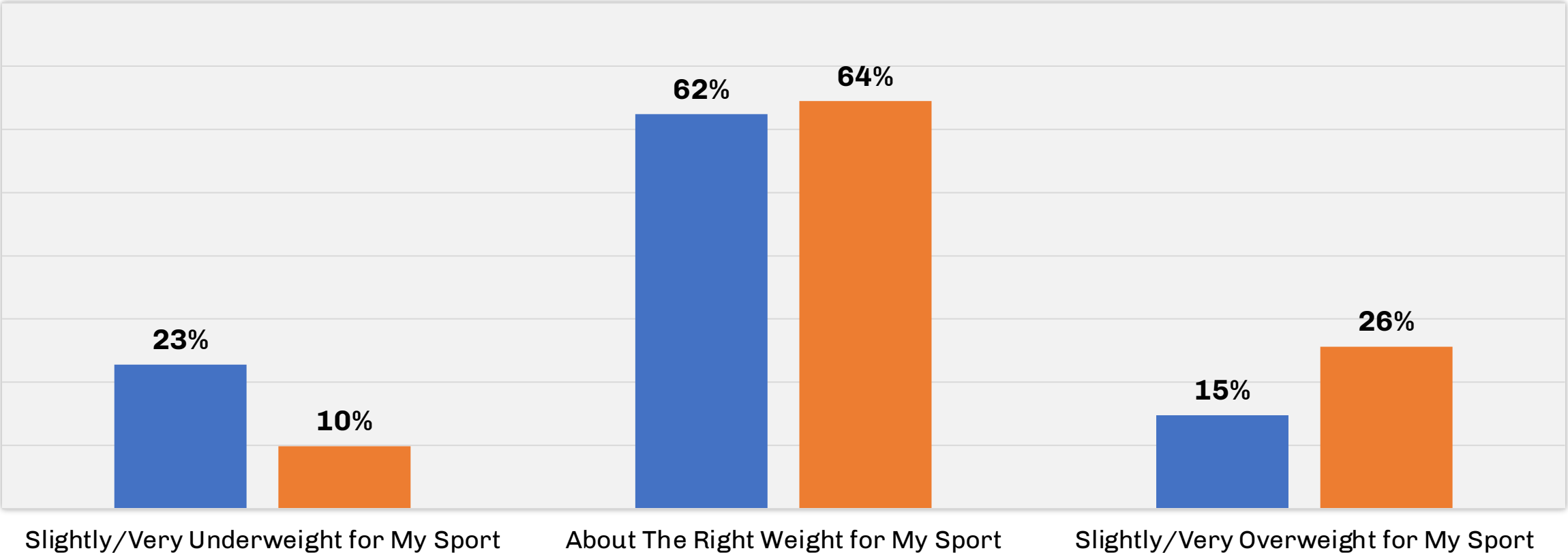
“I wish the coaches and administrators at my school talked more with my team about the following wellness topics” (Division II)



Division III

How do you describe your weight? (Division III)

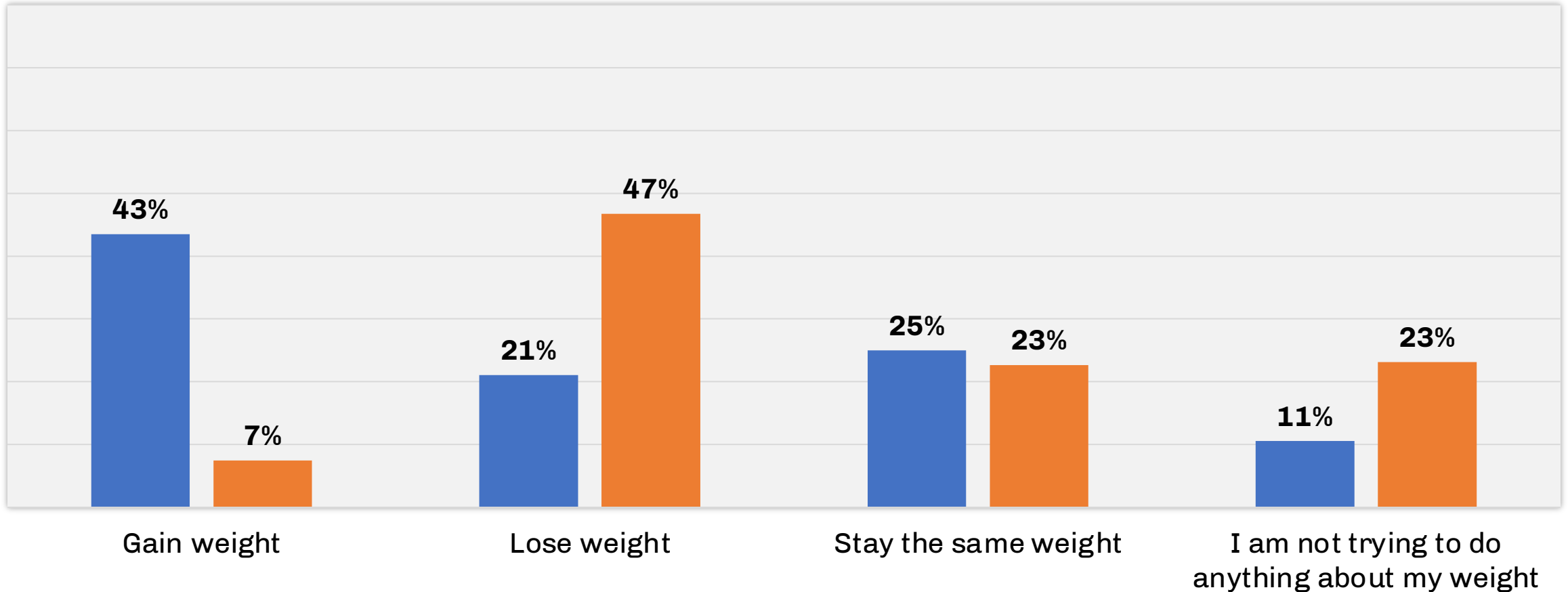
■ Men's Sports ■ Women's Sports



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

Which of the following are you trying to do about your weight? (Division III)

■ Men's Sports ■ Women's Sports



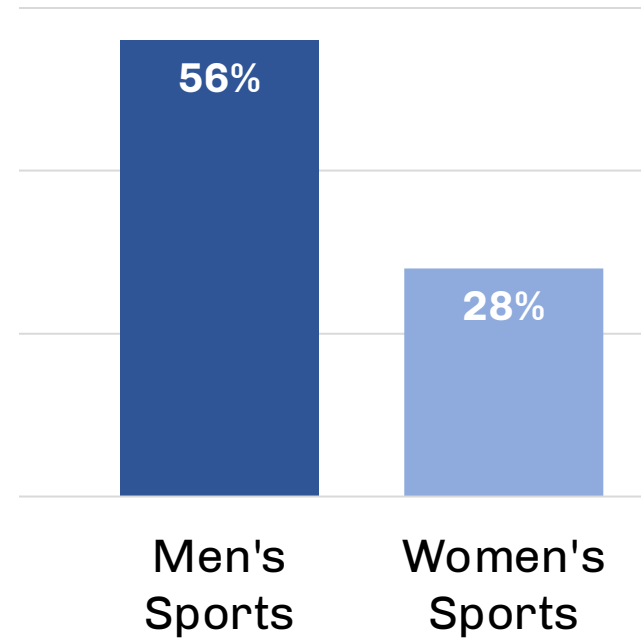
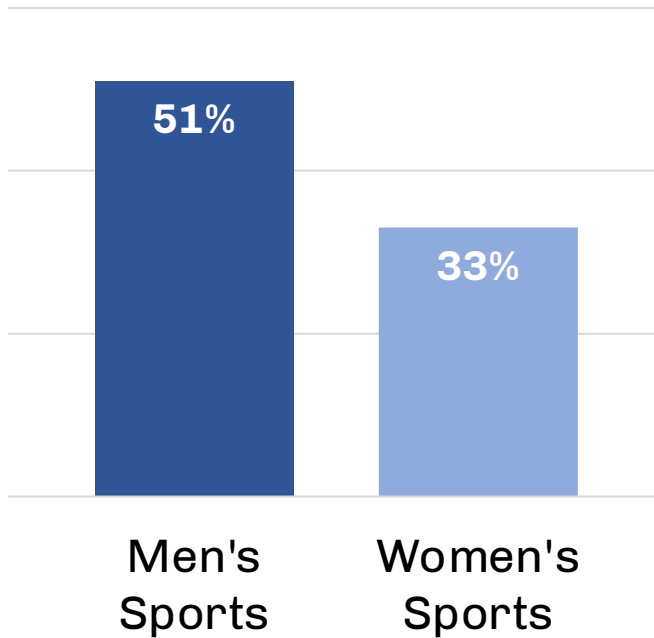
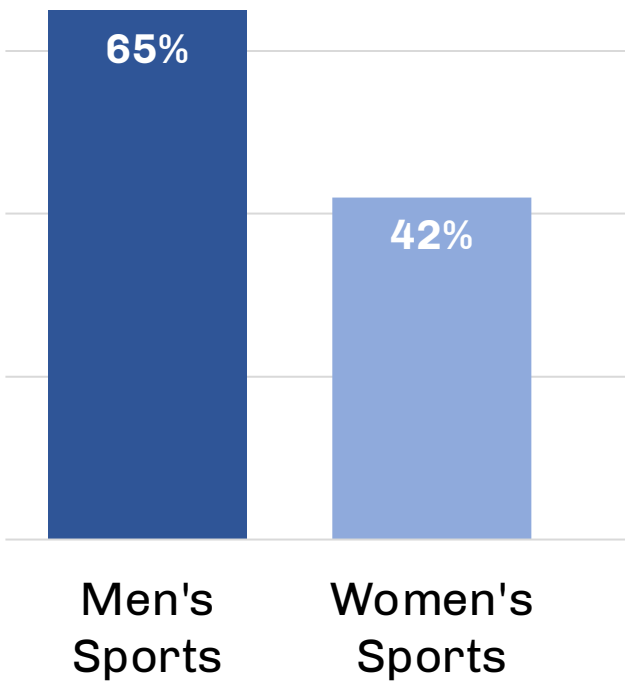
Body Image

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

I think I have a good body

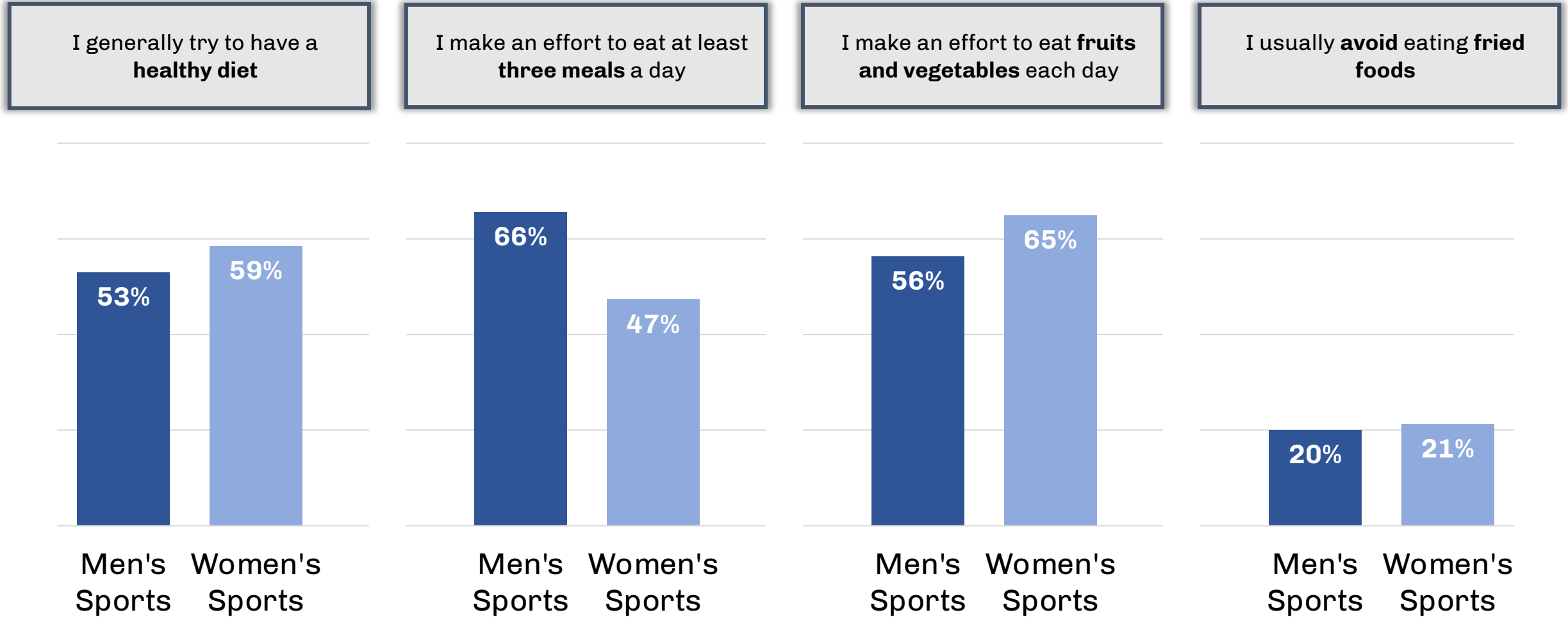
I am happy with my current weight

I like what I look like in pictures



Nutritional Habits

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



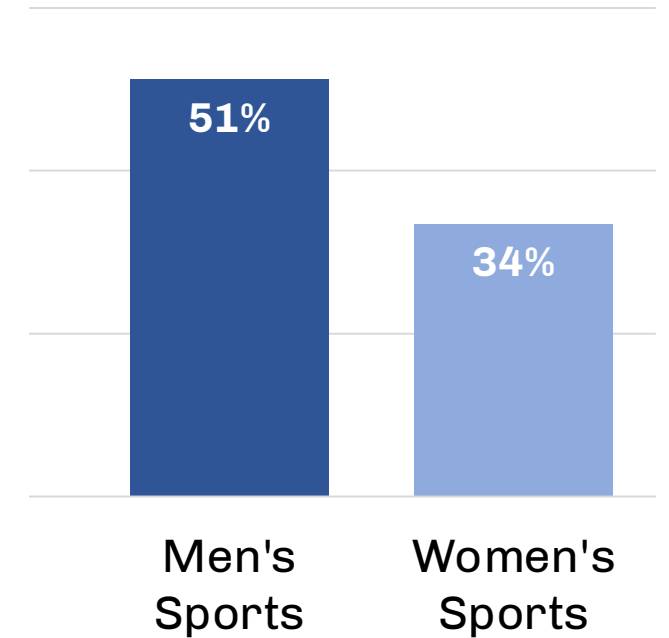
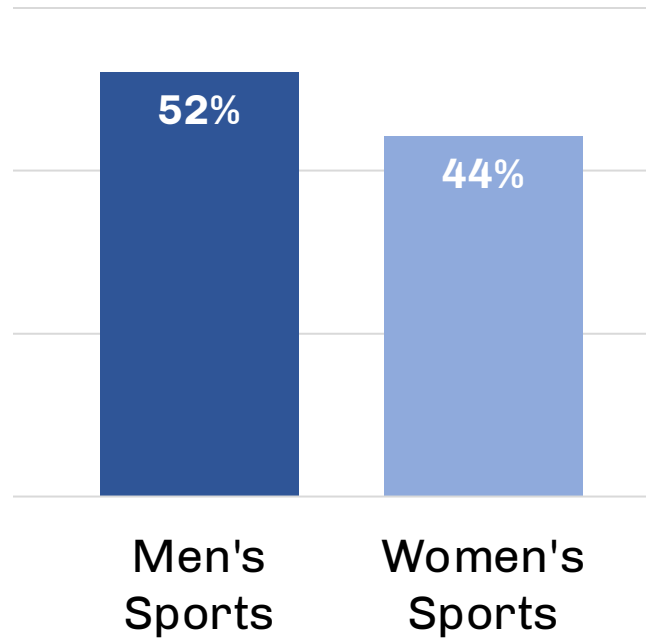
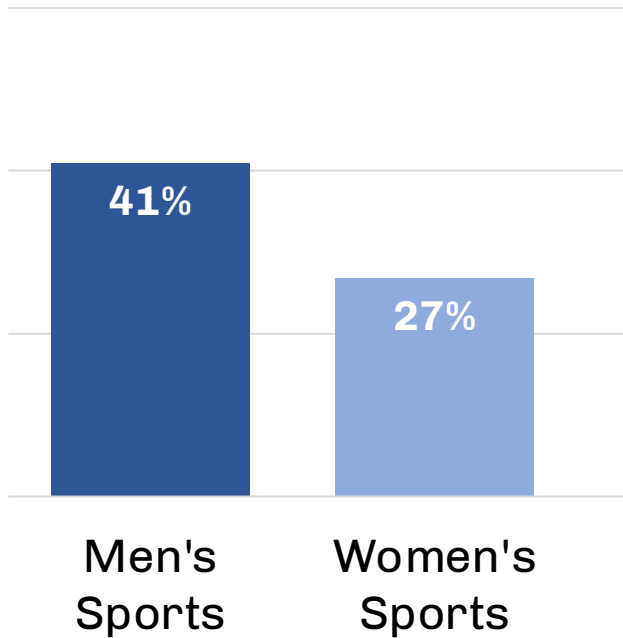
Access to Healthy Food

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

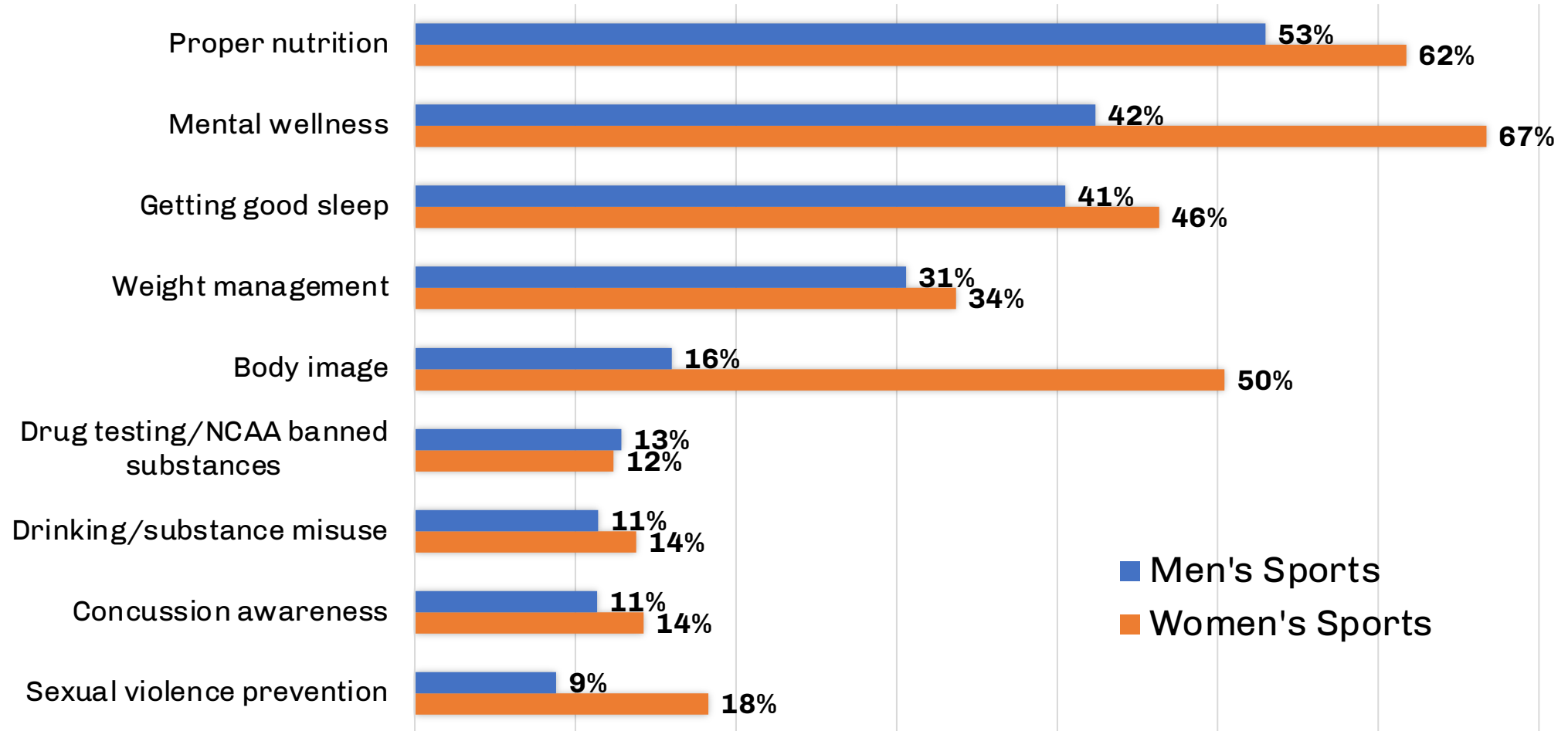
Healthy food options are **readily available** to me after practice and competition

I can **afford** to eat healthy meals each day

I have **time** to eat healthy meals each day

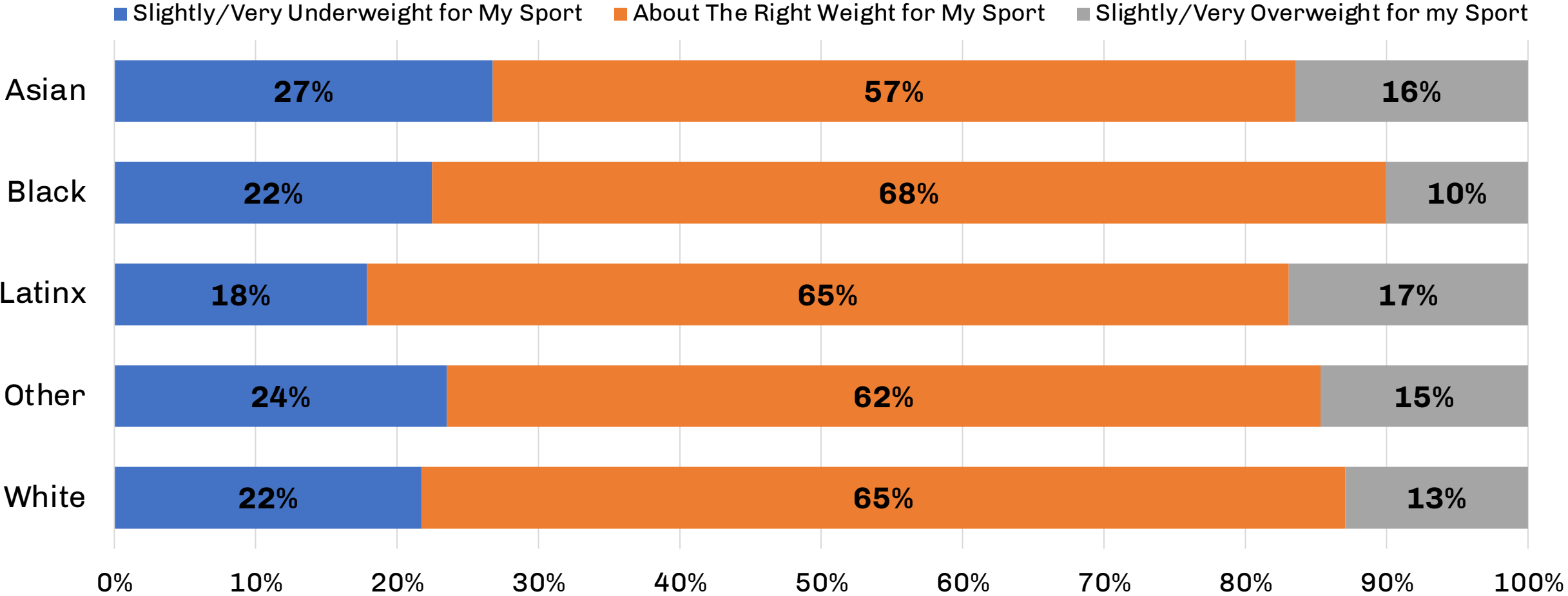


“I wish the coaches and administrators at my school talked more with my team about the following wellness topics” (Division III)



RESULTS BY RACIAL GROUP

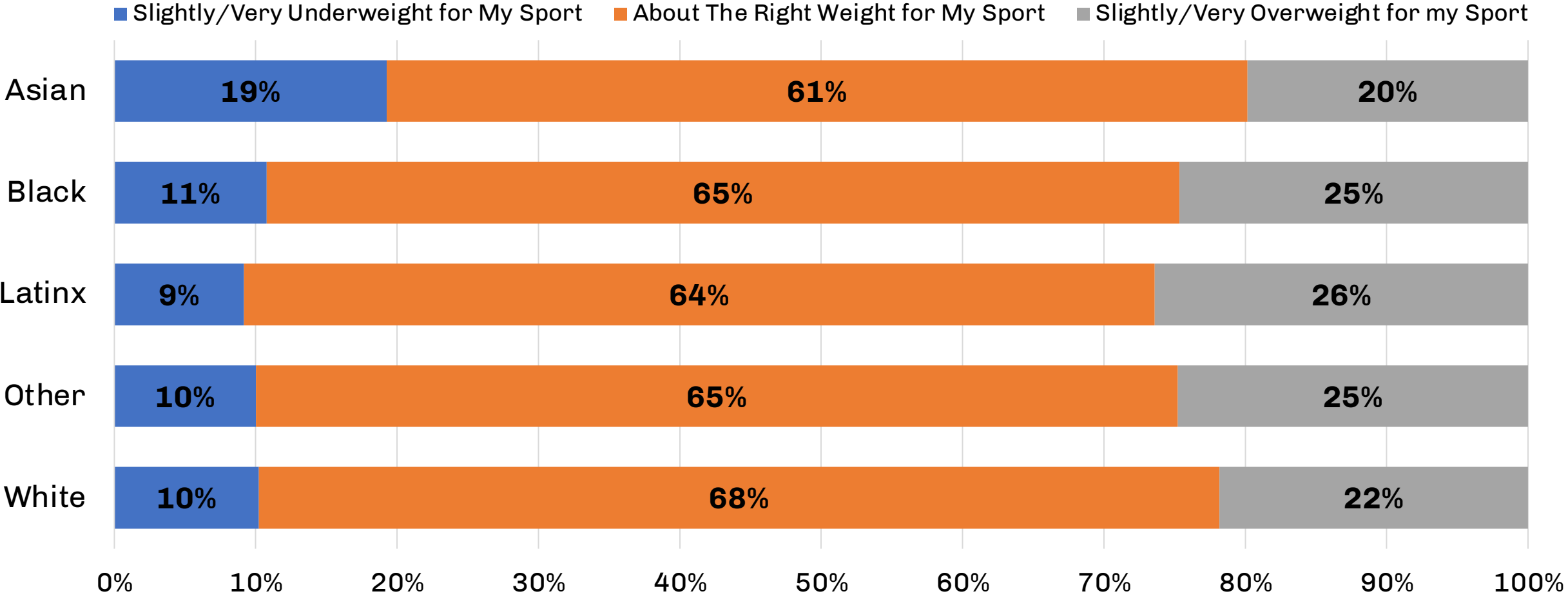
How do you describe your weight? (Men's Sports by Racial Group)



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



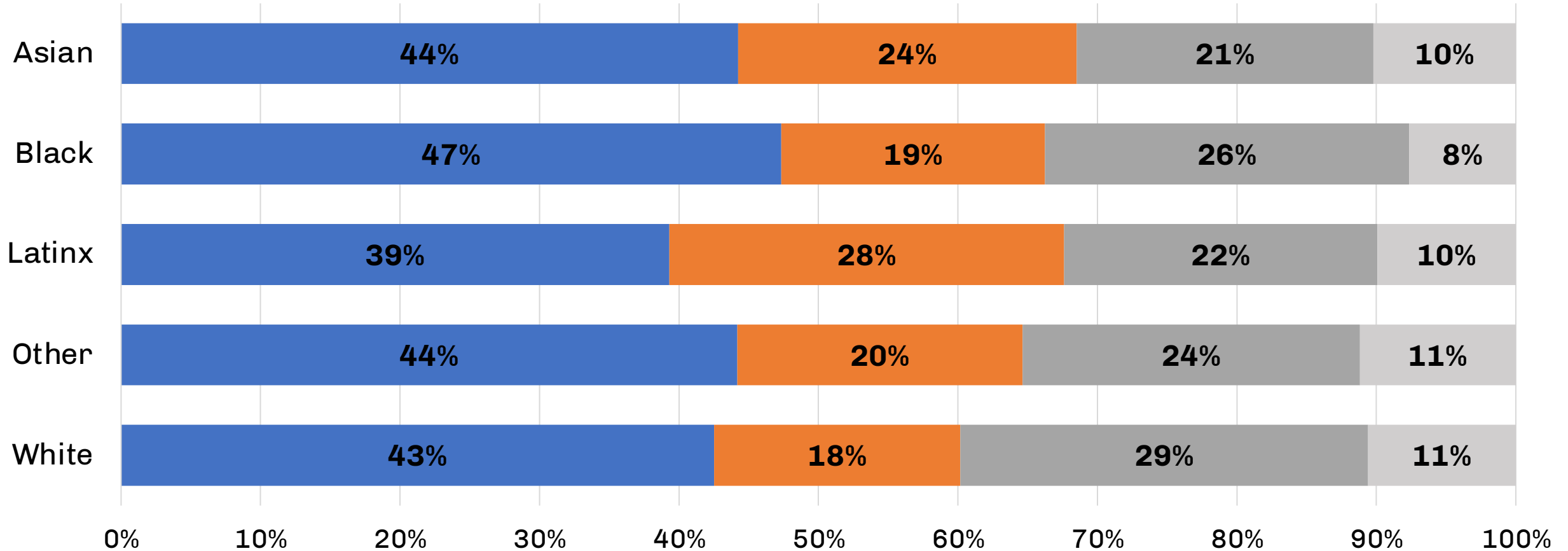
How do you describe your weight? (Women's Sports by Racial Group)



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

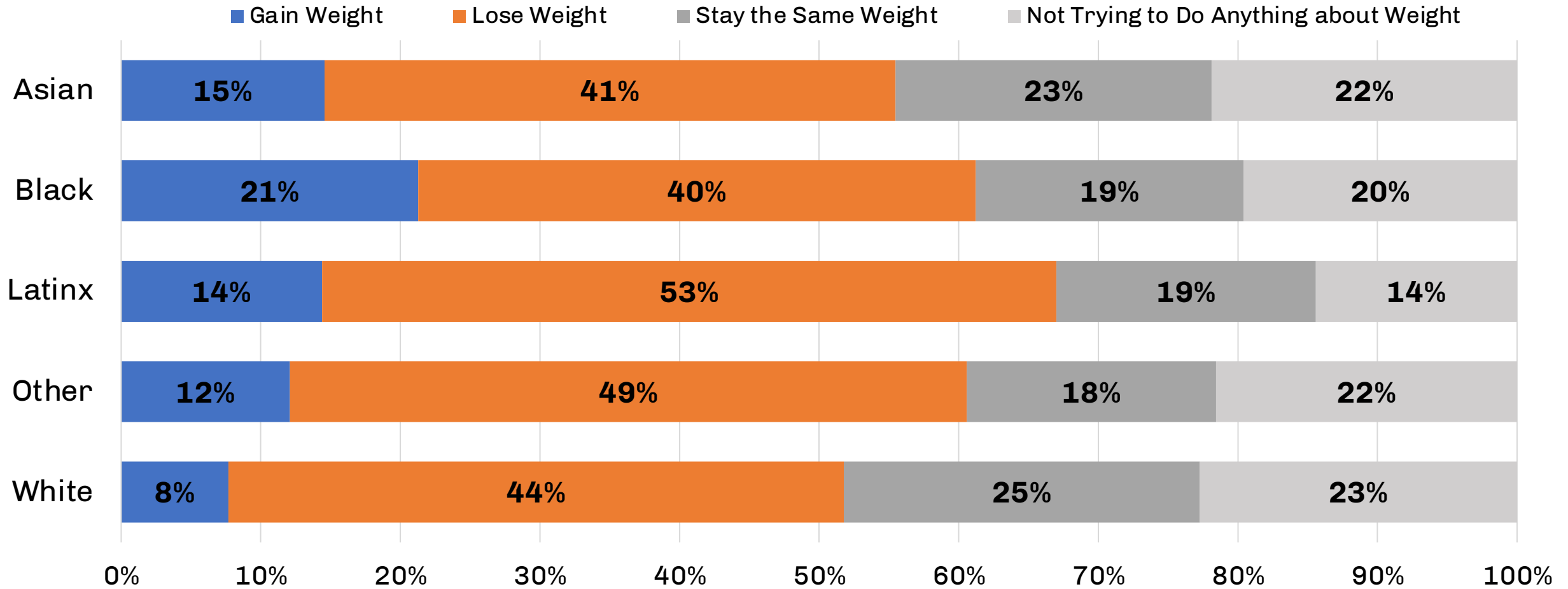
Which of the following are you trying to do about your weight? (Men's Sports by Racial Group)

Gain Weight Lose Weight Stay the Same Weight Not Trying to Do Anything about Weight



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

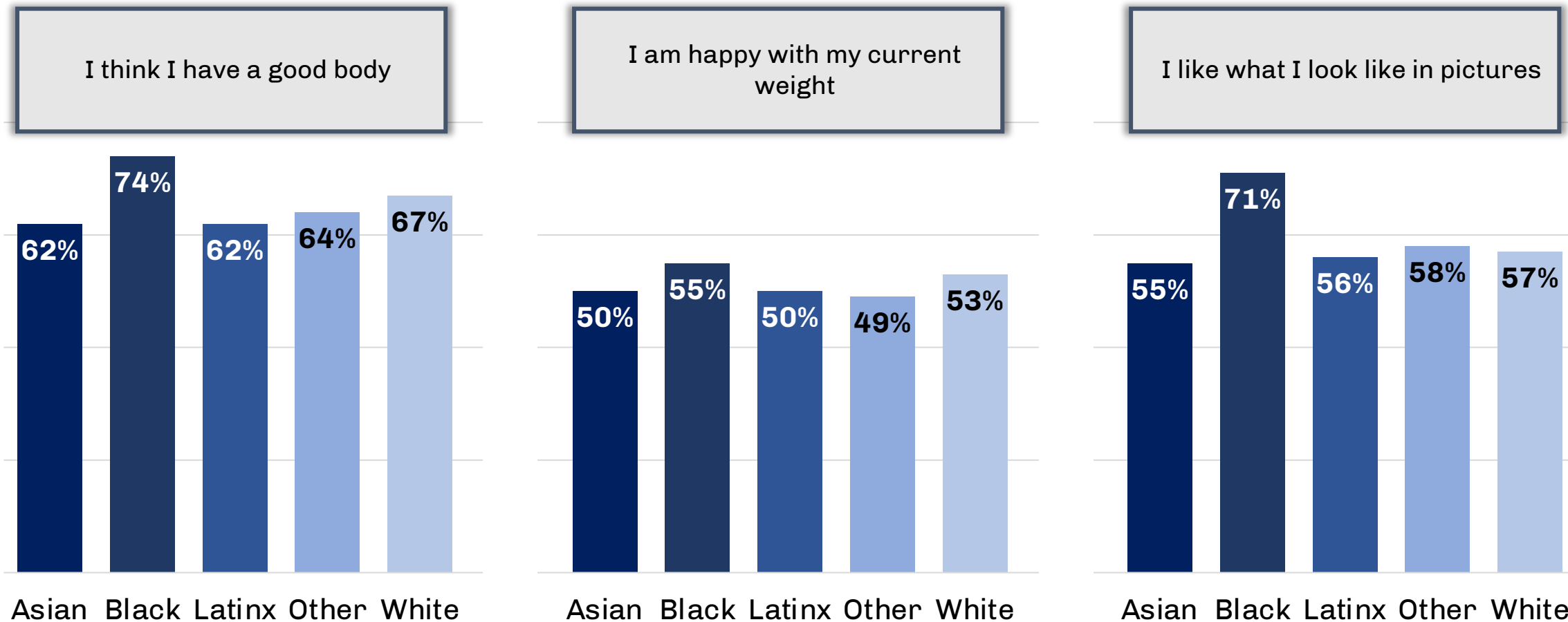
Which of the following are you trying to do about your weight? (Women's Sports by Racial Group)



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

Body Image

(Percentage of Men's Sports Participants Who Endorsed "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" by Racial Group)

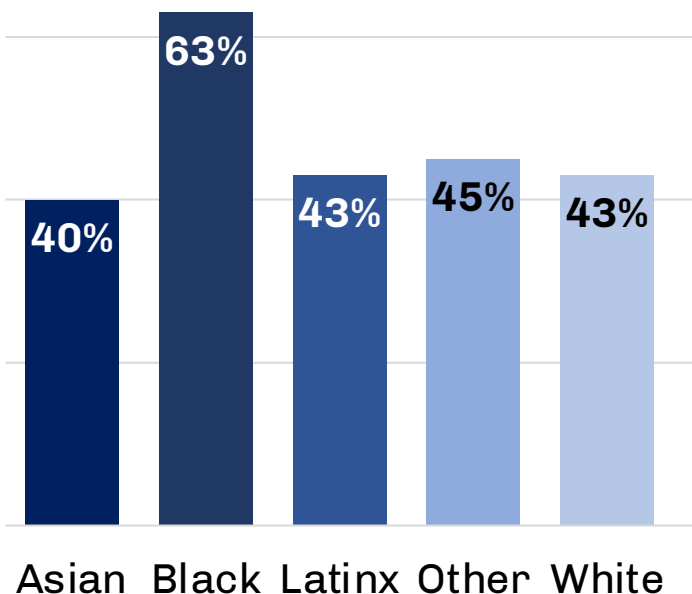


Note: Top 2 points on a 6-point scale. "Other" includes those who selected American Indian/Alaska Native, Middle Eastern/North African, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, Other or multiple racial identities. Source: NCAA Student-Athlete Health and Wellness Study (2023).

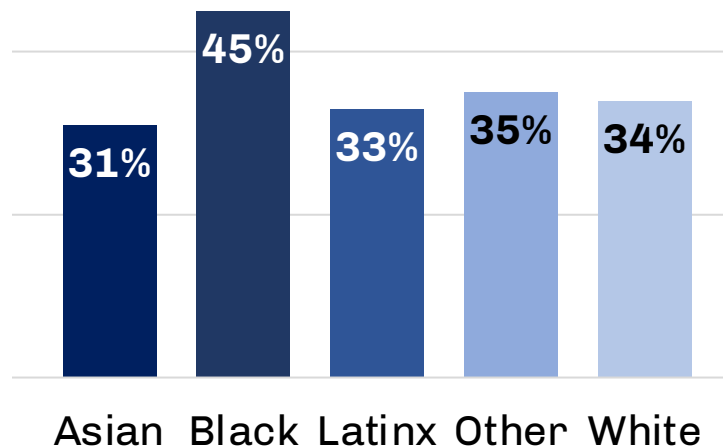
Body Image

(Percentage of Women's Sports Participants Who Endorsed "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" by Racial Group)

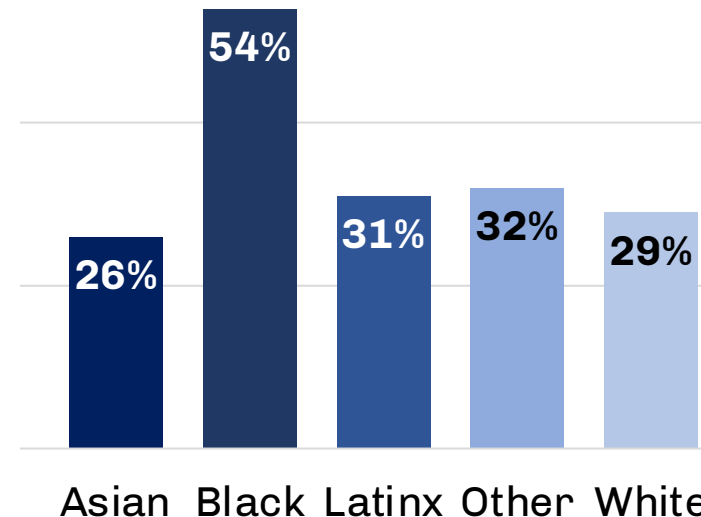
I think I have a good body



I am happy with my current weight



I like what I look like in pictures



Note: Top 2 points on a 6-point scale. "Other" includes those who selected American Indian/Alaska Native, Middle Eastern/North African, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, Other or multiple racial identities. Source: NCAA Student-Athlete Health and Wellness Study (2023).

Nutritional Habits

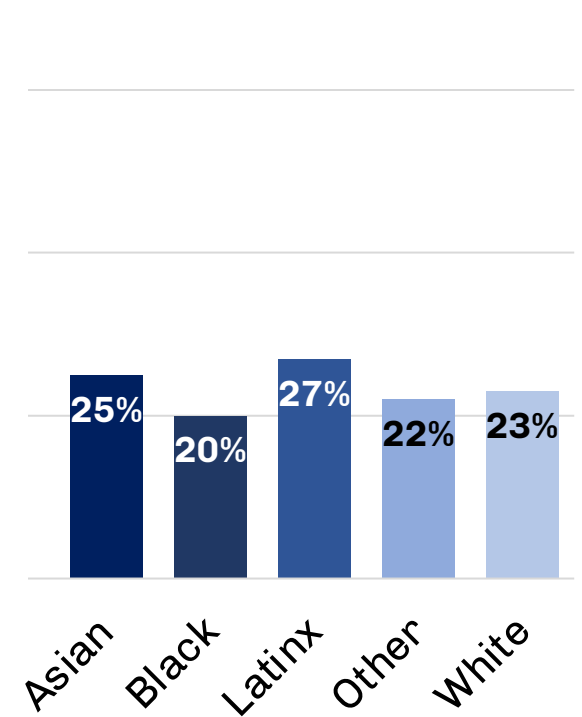
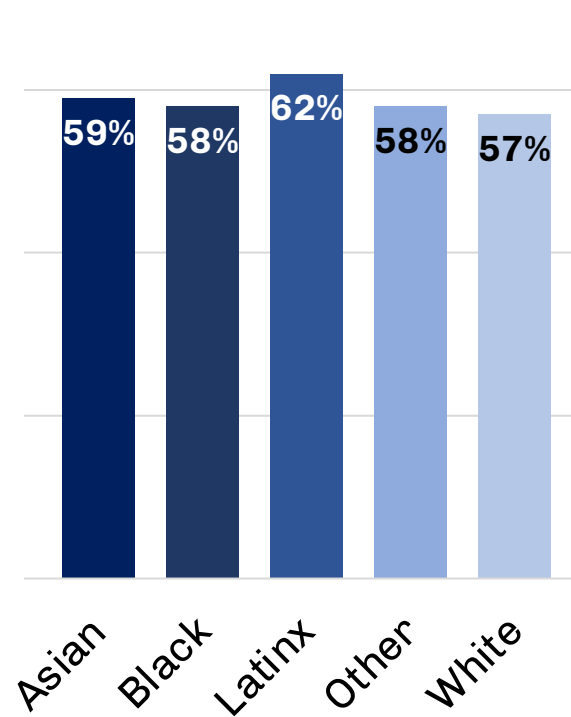
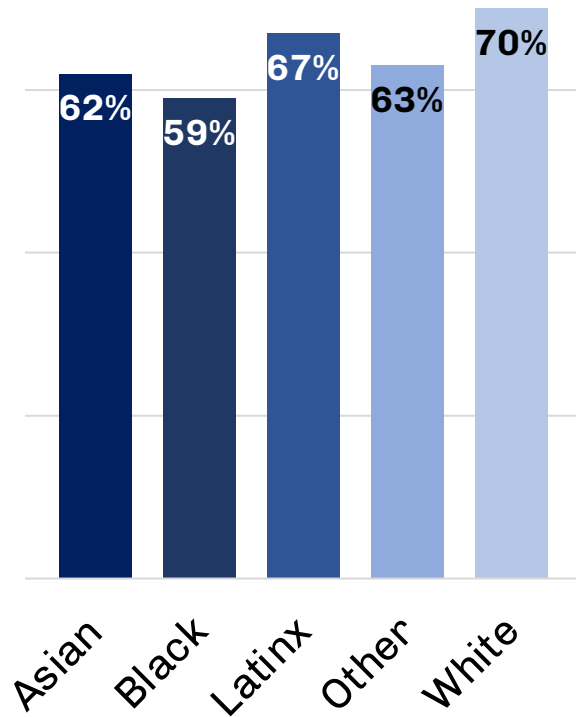
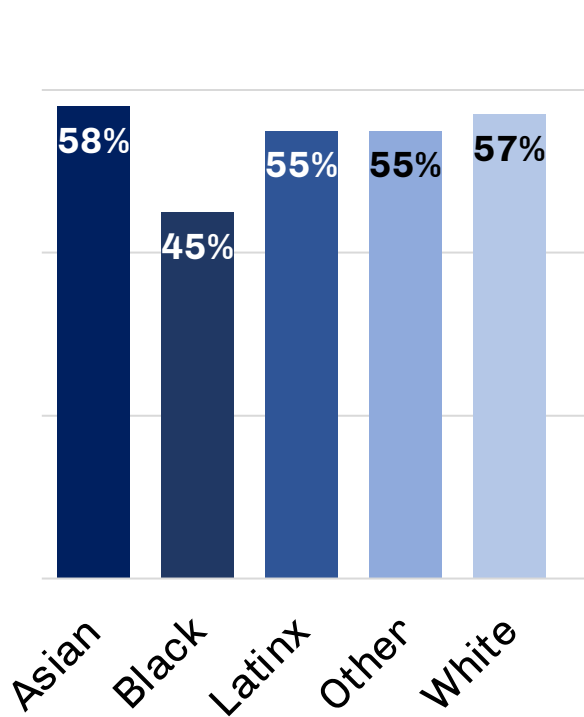
(Percentage of Men's Sports Participants Who Endorsed "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" by Racial Group)

I generally try to have a healthy diet

I make an effort to eat at least three meals a day

I make an effort to eat fruits and vegetables each day

I usually avoid eating fried foods



Nutritional Habits

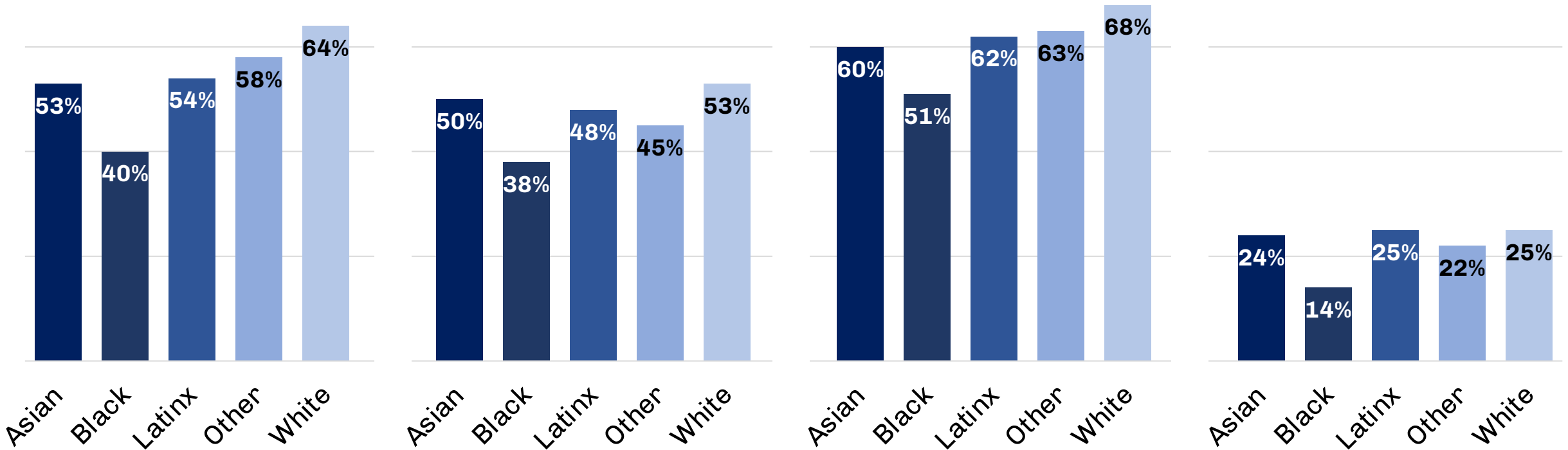
(Percentage of Women's Sports Participants Who Endorsed "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" by Racial Group)

I generally try to have a healthy diet

I make an effort to eat at least three meals a day

I make an effort to eat fruits and vegetables each day

I usually avoid eating fried foods



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

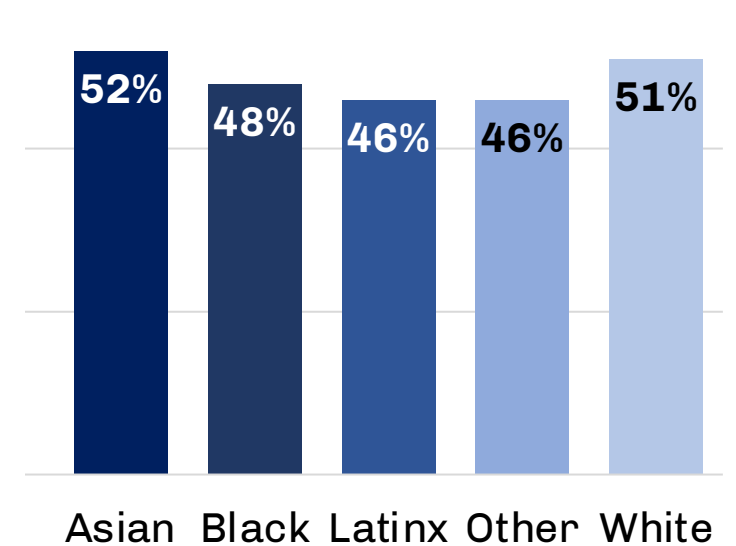
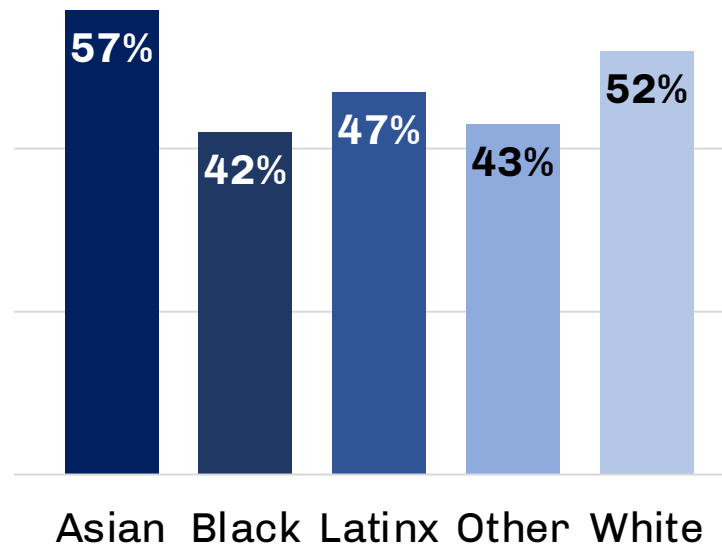
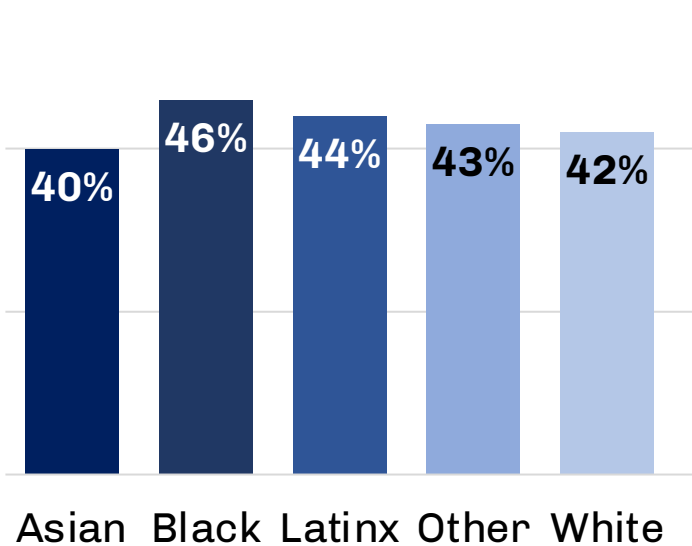
Access to Healthy Food

(Percentage of Men's Sports Participants Who Endorsed "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" by Racial Group)

Healthy food options are **readily available** to me after practice and competition

I can **afford** to eat healthy meals each day

I have **time** to eat healthy meals each day



Note: Top 2 points on a 6-point scale. "Other" includes those who selected American Indian/Alaska Native, Middle Eastern/North African, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, Other or multiple racial identities. Source: NCAA Student-Athlete Health and Wellness Study (2023).

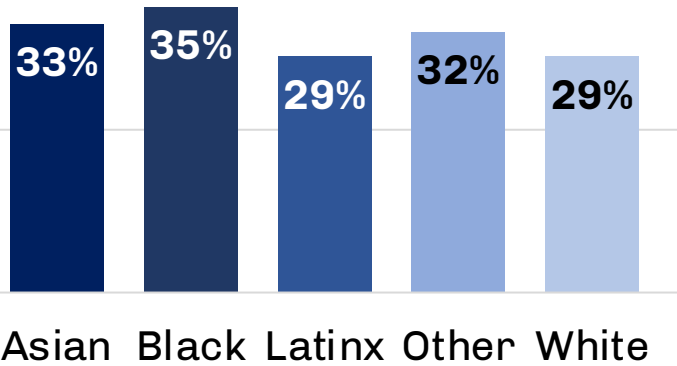


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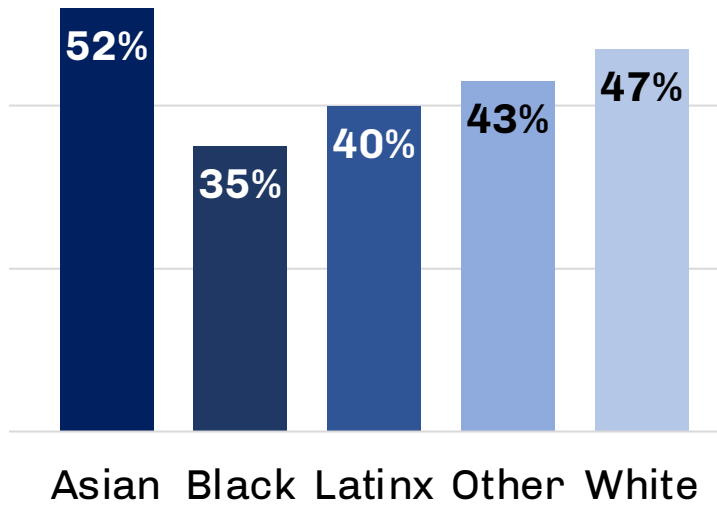
Access to Healthy Food

(Percentage of Women's Sports Participants Who Endorsed "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" by Racial Group)

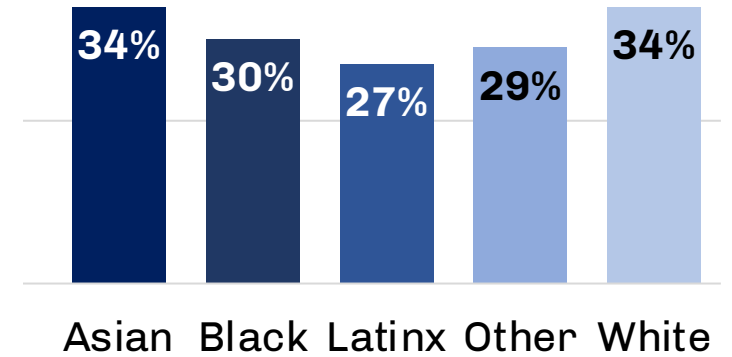
Healthy food options are **readily available** to me after practice and competition



I can **afford** to eat healthy meals each day



I have **time** to eat healthy meals each day



Note: Top 2 points on a 6-point scale. "Other" includes those who selected American Indian/Alaska Native, Middle Eastern/North African, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, Other or multiple racial identities. Source: NCAA Student-Athlete Health and Wellness Study (2023).

Detailed Methodology

- This study on student-athlete perceptions of weight, body image, and nutrition is based on data collected in a comprehensive [survey](#) of student-athlete health and wellness during the 2022-23 academic year.
- Faculty athletics representatives at all active member schools were asked to survey one to three pre-specified teams on campus. Selected teams were determined by a stratified random sampling procedure.
- The study was administered anonymously and on paper only (taking about 30 minutes to complete).
- Data collection began in October 2022 and concluded in June 2023.
- A total of 23,272 current student-athletes participated in the study; final data was 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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