

# NCAA Student-Athlete Well-Being Study

May 2022



RESEARCH



## **Resources and Recommendations**

If you are feeling isolated or facing other mental health challenges during this time, **please seek help through your campus health center or other campus resources devoted to mental health.** There are a number of other resources that could be helpful to you, some of which can be found here:

### **NCAA Sport Science Institute**

Mental health [resources and recommendations](#) shared here.

### **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services**

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration Disaster Distress Helpline provides 24/7 crisis counseling and support to individuals experiencing emotional distress related to natural or human-caused disasters. **Call 800-985-5990 or text TalkWithUs to 66746.**

### **Students of Color**

For students of color, The Steve Fund and Crisis Text Line provides 24/7, free and confidential support for mental health and well-being. **Text STEVE to 741741.**

### **LGBTQ+**

For the LGBTQ+ community, [The Trevor Project](#) provides 24/7 counseling for crisis intervention and suicide prevention. **Call 866-488-7386, text START to 678678 or message a counselor online [here](#).**

### **Suicide Prevention**

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline provides 24/7, free and confidential support for individuals in distress. **Call 800-273-8255 or chat [here](#).** A list of international suicide hotlines is available [here](#).



## ***NCAA Student-Athlete Well-Being Study***

As a follow-up to two NCAA student-athlete well-being studies conducted during 2020, NCAA Research collaborated with the NCAA Sport Science Institute and the NCAA's Division I, II and III Student-Athlete Advisory Committees to design and distribute a similar survey in fall 2021. The survey examined the experiences and well-being of 9,808 student-athletes.

The full report can be found [here](#).



# Student-athlete mental well-being remains a concern.

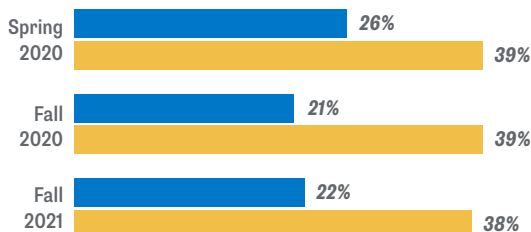
Student-athletes continue to report elevated levels of mental health concerns. They reported lower levels of hopelessness in fall 2021 as compared to the onset of the pandemic. However, elevated rates of mental exhaustion, anxiety and feelings of being depressed have seen little change since 2020. Mental health concerns remained highest among demographic subgroups commonly displaying higher rates of mental distress (e.g., women, student-athletes of color, those identifying on the queer-spectrum and those reporting family economic hardship). In most instances, the rates of reported mental health concerns experienced within the last month were 1.5 to 2 times higher than have been historically reported by NCAA student-athletes prior to 2020.

## Mental Health Concerns During COVID-19 Pandemic

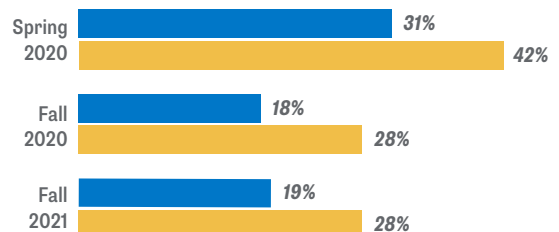
(Percentage of Participants Who Endorsed “Constantly” or “Most Every Day”)

■ Men’s Sports   ■ Women’s Sports

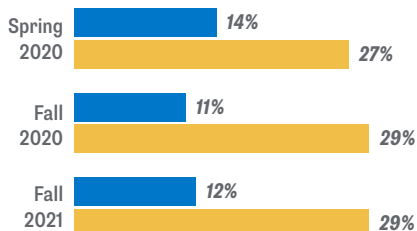
### Felt mentally exhausted



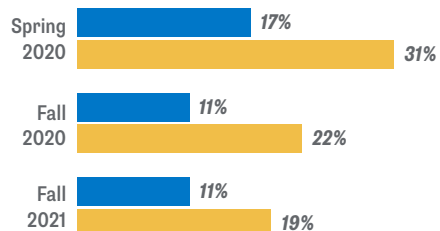
### Experienced sleep difficulties



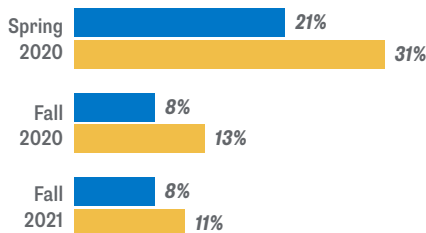
### Felt overwhelming anxiety



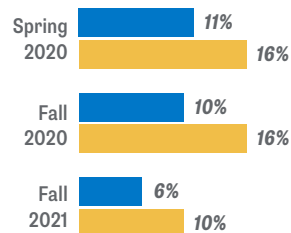
### Felt sad



### Felt a sense of loss



### Felt things were hopeless

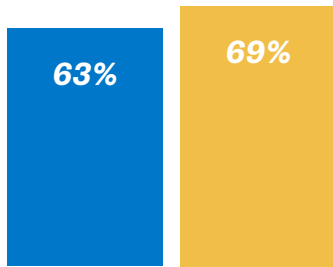


Two-thirds of student-athletes indicated knowing where to go on campus for mental health concerns, and a majority (56%) reported knowing how to help a teammate experiencing a mental health issue. However, fewer than half (47%) felt they would be comfortable personally seeking support from a mental health provider on campus. Sixty-three percent of student-athletes felt their teammates take mental health concerns of fellow teammates seriously, and a slightly lower percentage (53%) reported that coaches take mental health concerns of their student-athletes seriously. Half of student-athletes believe that mental health is a priority to their athletics department.

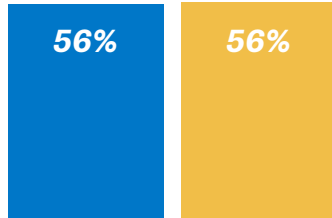
### Mental Health Support

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

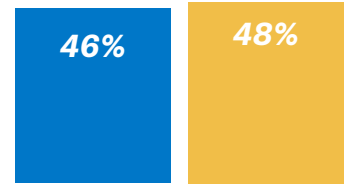
■ Men’s Sports ■ Women’s Sports



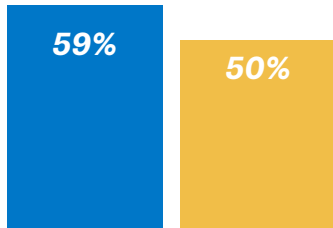
I know where to go on campus if I have mental health concerns.



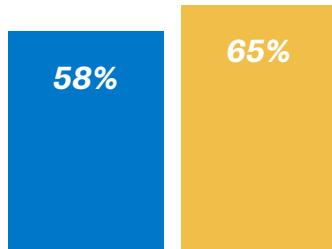
I know how to help a teammate who is experiencing a mental health issue.



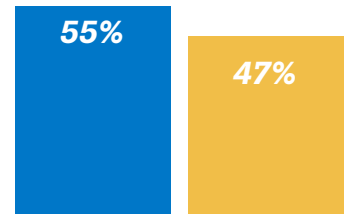
I would feel comfortable seeking support from a mental health provider on this campus.



My coaches take mental health concerns of their student-athletes seriously.



My teammates take mental health concerns of fellow teammates seriously.



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



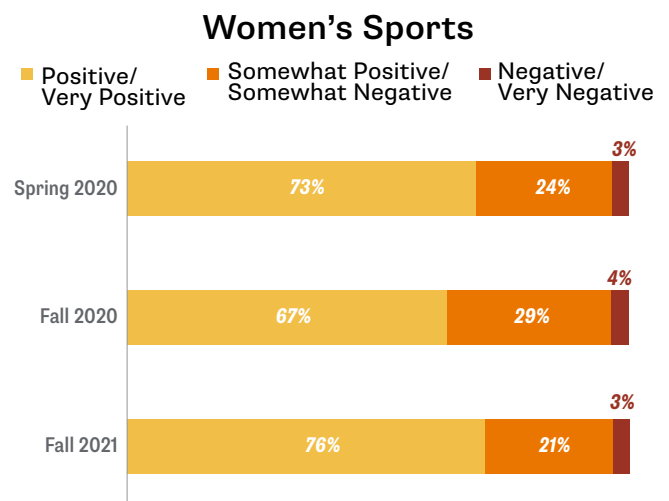
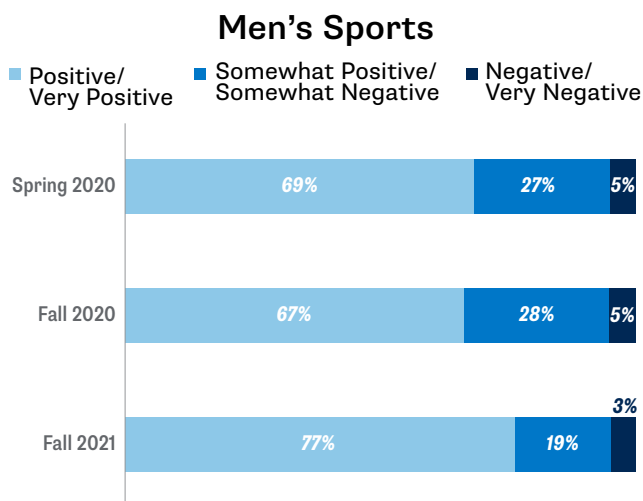


# Student-athletes seem to be feeling better about their academic experiences.

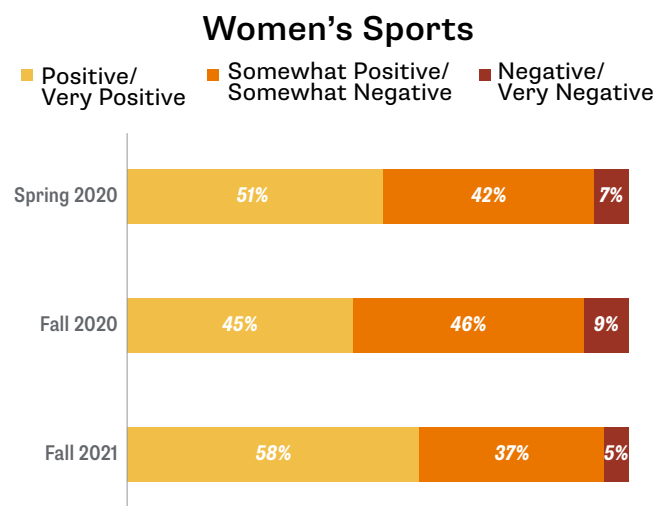
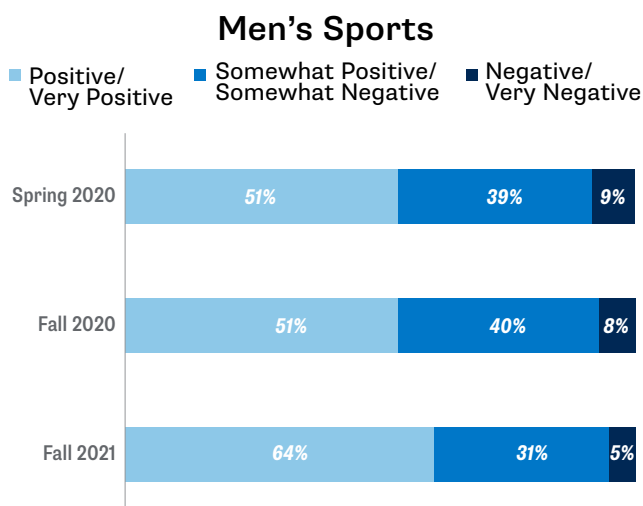
Student-athletes expressed more positivity about their ability to keep up with and pass their fall 2021 courses as compared with spring and fall 2020. Half of student-athletes were pleased about their ability to find balance between academics and extracurriculars, including athletics. Self-reported balance was higher among men’s sports athletes (56%) as compared to women’s sports athletes (47%), and higher in Divisions II and III.

## Feelings About...

### Ability to pass their courses this academic term.



### Ability to keep up with classes.



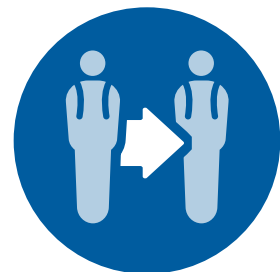
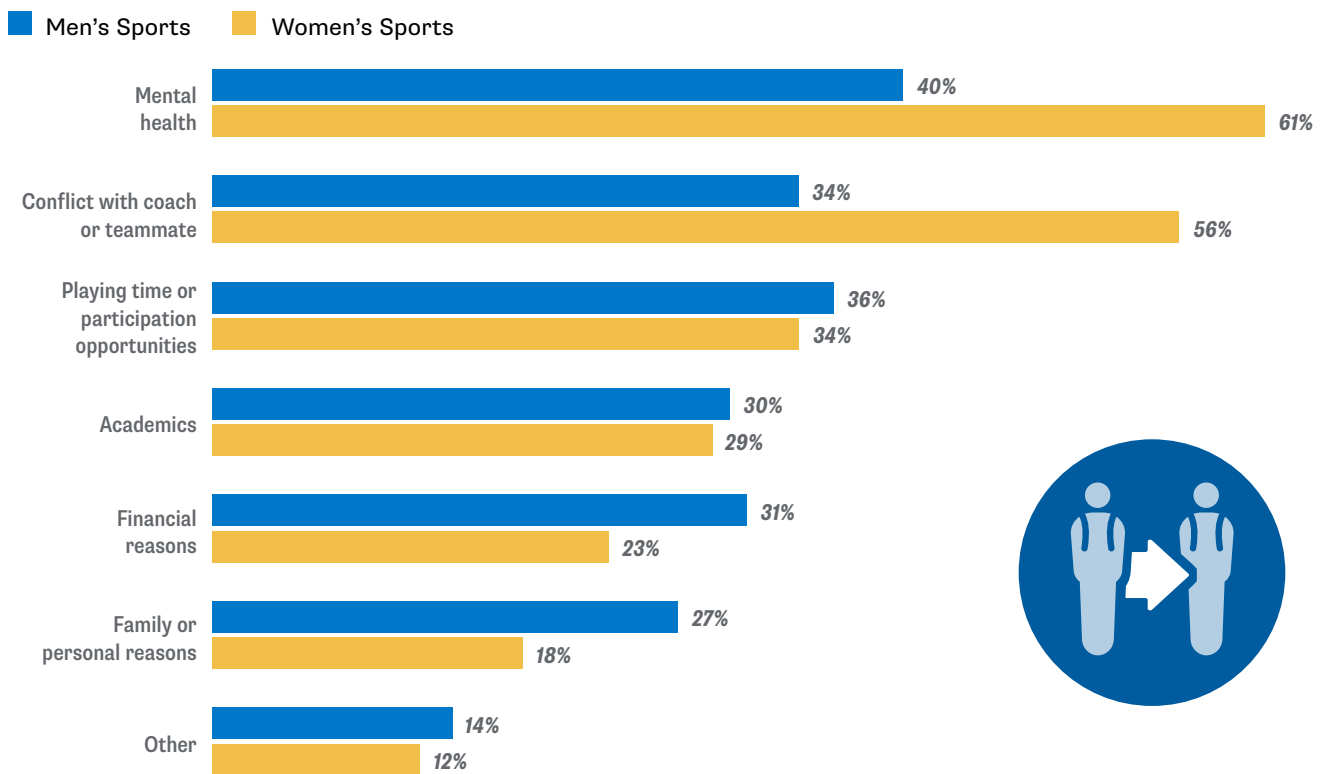
Note: Participants not enrolled in spring or fall 2020 classes excluded. The sum of percentages in each bar may not equal 100% due to rounding.



## Numerous factors were raised for considering transfer.

Among the survey participants, 8% indicated that it was likely they would transfer at some point during the 2021-22 academic year. Mental health, conflict with coach or teammates and playing time were the most cited reasons to consider transfer at some point during the year. These reasons varied for participants in men's and women's sports and by division.

### Reasons Reported by Student-Athletes for Considering Transfer



Note: Participants could select multiple reasons for transfer. Includes only those who endorsed being "somewhat likely" or "very likely" to transfer at some point this year. 502 women's sports participants (8%) and 237 men's sports participants (8%) endorsed being likely to transfer this year.

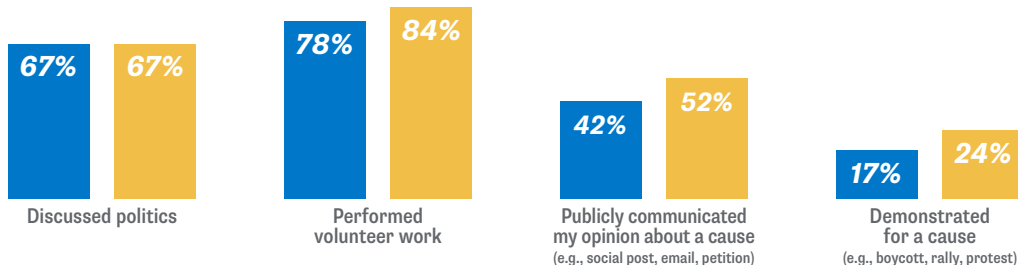


# Issues related to race and gender equity are on the minds of student-athletes.

Student-athletes continue to volunteer in their communities, take part in social and civic engagement activities and make an effort to learn more about injustices on their own.

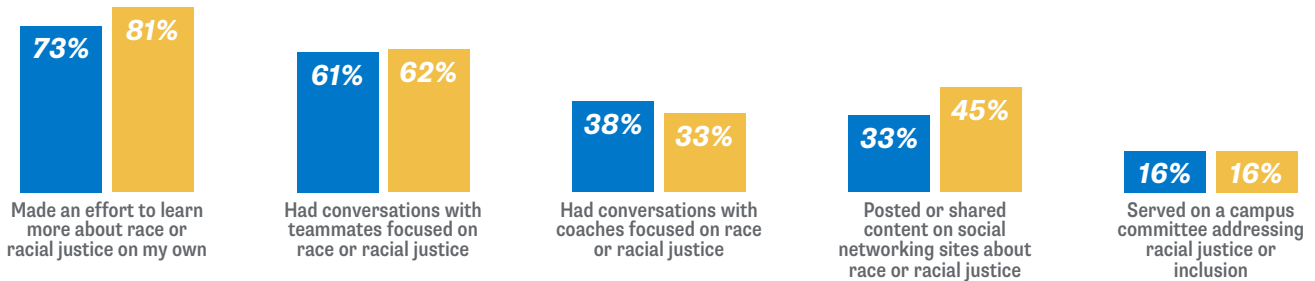
■ Men's Sports   ■ Women's Sports

## Participation in Social and Civic Engagement Activities in the Last Year (Percentage of Participants Who Endorsed "Occasionally" or "Frequently")



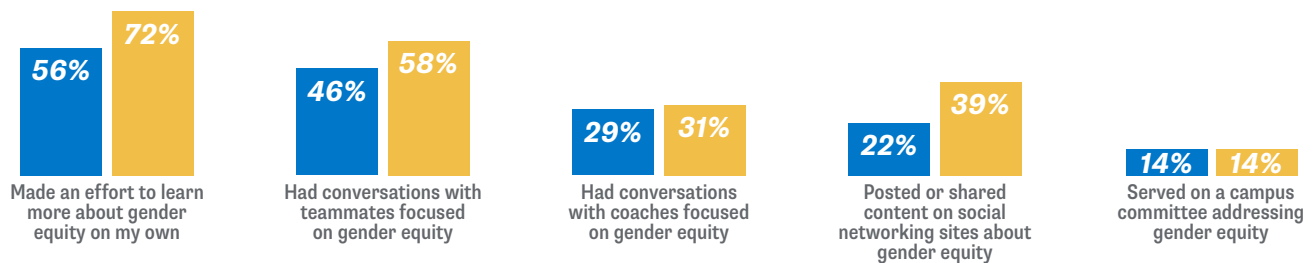
## Racial Justice Engagement in the Last 6 Months

(Percentage of Participants Who Endorsed "Occasionally" or "Frequently")



## Gender Equity Engagement in the Last 6 Months

(Percentage of Participants Who Endorsed "Occasionally" or "Frequently")



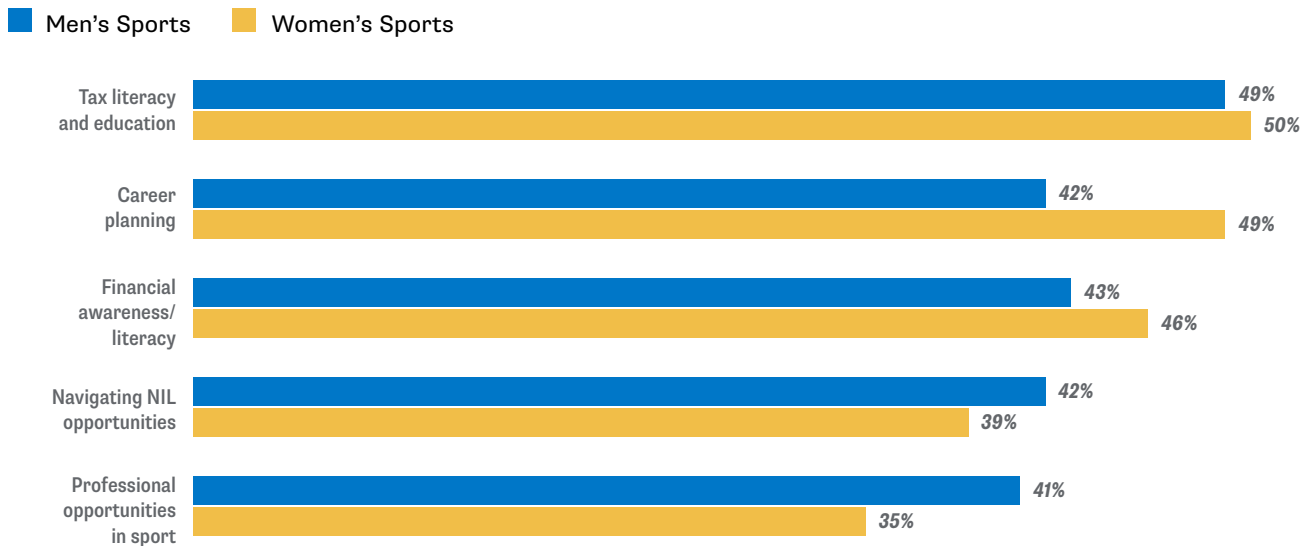




## Student-athletes are looking for resources related to both NIL and their future careers.

Student-athletes were most likely to indicate a need for educational resources on tax and financial literacy, career planning, navigating name, image and likeness (NIL) opportunities and professional opportunities in sport.

### Educational Resources



Note: Display limited to those resources for which at least 40% of men's or women's participants selected "Need this resource" to the question, "How interested are you in receiving additional education/resources about the following topics?"

For more detailed, division-specific information, including a collection of student-athlete comments about how their coaches and athletics departments can support them at this time, please see the [full report](#).

## Methodology

The NCAA Student-Athlete Well-Being Survey (Fall 2021) was an online survey that examined the impact of the experiences and well-being of student-athletes during the COVID-19 pandemic. It was a follow-up to the NCAA Student-Athlete Well-Being Surveys (Spring 2020 and Fall 2020). The survey was designed by NCAA Research in collaboration with the NCAA Sport Science Institute and the NCAA's Division I, II and III Student-Athlete Advisory Committees (SAACs). It was a 10-minute, confidential survey administered online through QuestionPro survey software, designed to be taken via phone, tablet or computer. The survey opened Nov. 17, 2021, and closed Dec. 13, 2021. A snowball sampling technique was used. National SAAC representatives forwarded the link through conference and campus SAACs to student-athletes. Conference SAAC liaisons were also made aware of the survey and encouraged student-athletes to participate. In all, 9,808 student-athletes representing nearly all NCAA-member conferences completed the survey. Response rates varied widely by conference and sport. Women and white student-athletes were overrepresented in the sample. Therefore, it is important to examine results disaggregated by gender and race. See full slide deck for a detailed look at response rates by division, conference, sport and race.

