

Estimated probability of competing in college athletics

Nearly eight million students currently participate in high school athletics in the United States. More than 480,000 compete as NCAA athletes, and just a select few within each sport move on to compete at the professional or Olympic level.

The table shows how many high school and NCAA athletes compete in each sport along with an estimate of the percentage of high school athletes going on to compete in the NCAA.

In contrast, the likelihood of an NCAA athlete earning a college degree is significantly greater; graduation success rates are 86% in Division I, 71% in Division II and 87% in Division III.

High School Participants	NCAA Participants	Overall % HS to NCAA	% HS to NCAA Division I	% HS to NCAA Division II	% HS to NCAA Division III	
MEN						
Baseball	491,790	34,980	7.1%	2.1%	2.2%	2.8%
Basketball	550,305	18,712	3.4%	1.0%	1.0%	1.4%
Cross Country	266,271	14,350	5.4%	1.8%	1.4%	2.2%
Football	1,057,382	73,063	6.9%	2.7%	1.8%	2.4%
Golf	141,466	8,527	6.0%	2.1%	1.7%	2.2%

Ice Hockey	35,210	4,199	11.9%	4.8%	0.6%	6.5%
Lacrosse	111,842	13,899	12.4%	2.9%	2.3%	7.1%
Soccer	450,234	24,986	5.5%	1.3%	1.5%	2.7%
Swimming	138,364	9,691	7.0%	2.7%	1.1%	3.1%
Tennis	158,171	7,957	5.0%	1.6%	1.1%	2.3%
Track & Field	600,136	28,595	4.8%	1.8%	1.2%	1.7%
Volleyball	57,209	2,007	3.5%	0.7%	0.7%	2.0%
Water Polo	21,286	1,013	4.8%	2.7%	0.7%	1.3%
Wrestling	244,804	7,175	2.9%	1.0%	0.8%	1.1%
WOMEN						
Basketball	430,368	16,532	3.8%	1.2%	1.1%	1.5%
Cross Country	226,039	15,966	7.1%	2.6%	1.8%	2.7%

Field Hockey	60,549	6,066	10.0%	3.0%	1.3%	5.7%
Golf	75,605	5,372	7.1%	2.9%	2.1%	2.2%
Ice Hockey	9,599	2,355	24.5%	8.8%	1.2%	14.5%
Lacrosse	93,473	11,752	12.6%	3.7%	2.7%	6.2%
Soccer	388,339	27,638	7.1%	2.4%	1.9%	2.8%
Softball	367,405	19,999	5.4%	1.7%	1.6%	2.1%
Swimming	170,797	12,684	7.4%	3.3%	1.2%	2.9%
Tennis	187,519	8,736	4.7%	1.5%	1.1%	2.1%
Track & Field	494,477	29,907	6.0%	2.7%	1.5%	1.8%
Volleyball	444,779	17,387	3.9%	1.2%	1.1%	1.6%
Water Polo	20,826	1,159	5.6%	3.4%	0.9%	1.3%

Sources: High school figures from the [2016-17 High School Athletics Participation Survey](#) conducted by the National Federation of State High School Associations; data from [club teams](#) not included. College numbers from the NCAA [2016-17 Sports Sponsorship and Participation Rates Report](#).

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Methodology and Notes

- High school figures come from the [2016-17 High School Athletics Participation Survey](#) conducted by the National Federation of State High School Associations. College numbers are from the NCAA's [2016-17 Sports Sponsorship and Participation Rates Report](#). These college numbers account for participation in college athletics at NCAA-member schools only.
- High school-to-NCAA percentages were calculated by dividing the number of NCAA participants in 2016-17 by the number of HS participants in that same year. This assumes that high school and college rosters are turning over at roughly the same rate (e.g., both HS and college participation numbers include four classes of students and both sets of teams turn over roughly one-quarter of their rosters each year). In prior versions of this table, more complex calculations were used to estimate the number of HS departures and open college roster slots each year; however, these more involved calculations did not lead to substantially different percentages than the simple calculation used currently. Given several potential confounds (e.g., multi-sport participation in high school, frequency of redshirt in NCAA Division I football that would lead to a 5-year rather than 4-year college track), these calculations should be considered approximations and not exact accounting.
- The high school-to-NCAA divisional percentages were calculated by dividing the number of 2016-17 participants within each NCAA division by the total number of HS participants. For example, we estimate that approximately 3.4% of HS boys basketball participants go on to play at an NCAA school (Divisions I, II or III), but only 1.0% of HS participants do so at the Division I level.
- As the high school figures account only for participants on high school teams and not those competing exclusively on club teams or similar, the true pre-college to NCAA percentages could be lower in some sports (e.g., ice hockey, tennis). Data for several sports (e.g., rowing, skiing, and gymnastics) are not shown due to the low number of high school programs in those sports relative to non-scholastic pre-college participation opportunities.