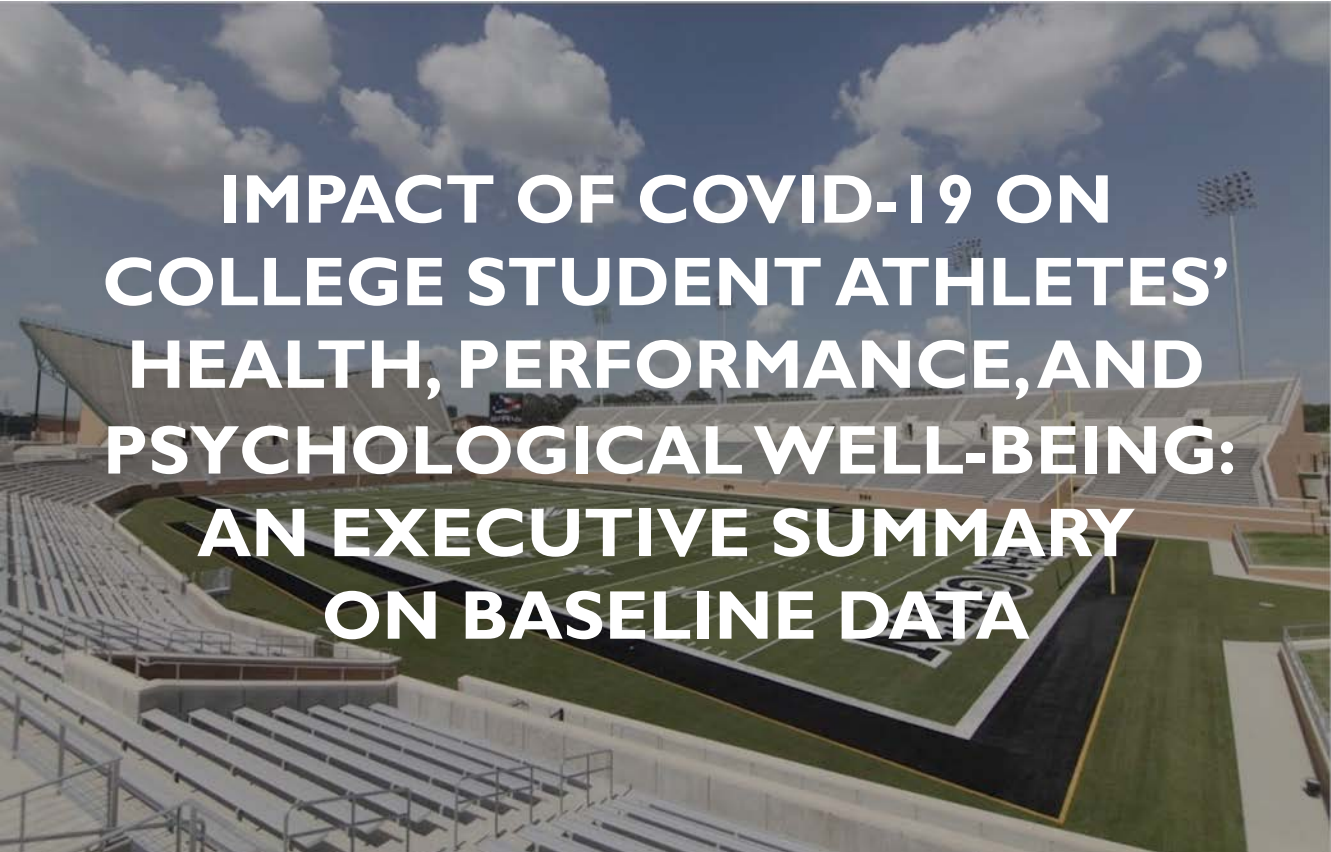




CENTER FOR SPORT PSYCHOLOGY  
AND PERFORMANCE EXCELLENCE

at the University of North Texas



**IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON  
COLLEGE STUDENT ATHLETES'  
HEALTH, PERFORMANCE, AND  
PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING:  
AN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY  
ON BASELINE DATA**

The University Of North Texas Center for Sport  
Psychology and Performance Excellence and in  
collaboration with Wayne State University

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# Overview and Methodology

- On March 12, 2020, in the midst of an emerging COVID-19 surge within the U.S., the NCAA cancelled all winter and spring sport championships. The impact of this decision, along with the closing of the majority of college/university campuses, threw the lives and futures of hundreds of thousands of student athletes into disarray. Recognizing the potential effects of this disruption on the mental health and psychological well-being of collegiate student athletes, we launched this study.
- Our data collection occurred in two phases:
  - From April 10 through May 1, 2020, our survey was appended to the end of the NCAA's Student Athlete Advisory Council (SAAC) study (see <http://www.ncaa.org/about/resources/research/ncaa-student-athlete-covid-19-well-being-study>). Student athletes, upon completing the NCAA SAAC study, had the option of proceeding to ours. Through this mechanism, just over 215 participated.
  - From April 17 through May 23, 2020, 80 different NCAA Division I, II, and III college and university athletic departments from across the U.S. enrolled in the study and disseminated our study to their student athletes. Through this mechanism, just over 5700 participated.
- We developed the survey to determine how collegiate student athletes were coping and functioning psychologically since the emergence of COVID-19 and the cancellation of collegiate sports. Whenever possible, we used validated measures to clinically assess the athletes' level of psychological functioning across a variety of areas.
- The survey, which was hosted on Qualtrics, took approximately 15 minutes to complete and could be accessed on a digital device from anywhere.

# Who Participated?

- Just under 6,000 student athletes completed the survey; athletes from all Divisions were represented:

	Men	Women
Division I	1406	2827
Division II	290	500
Division III	263	572

- Women represented about two-thirds of respondents and relatively equal percentages of athletes across year in school participated.
- White Athletes represented approximately 80% of the sample. Athletes from all men's and women's sports were represented in our sample.





# Exposure to COVID-Related Events

- The athletes reported on whether they experienced each of five different COVID related events:

	Men	Women
Was your sport season, including championship, cancelled due to the COVID-19 virus?	62%	67%
Were you required to leave your campus housing and move in somewhere else due to the virus?	59%	57%
Do you expect that the changes your school has made in how classes are delivered will negatively affect your academic performance this semester?	46%	45%
Have you, or someone close to you, been quarantined due to the possibility of having the COVID-19 virus?	30%	33%
Have you, or someone close to you, been diagnosed with the COVID-19 virus?	15%	15%

- When considered together, 94% of the athletes had experienced ONE or more of the events; 13% had been exposed to FOUR or more of the COVID-19 events.
- Thus, sizable numbers of athletes will be returning to campuses having been exposed to multiple traumatic events; the effects of which may continue or be triggered by related experiences in the future.

# Psychological Functioning

- Across all measures, cut-off scores were used to determine “clinical” or “severe” levels of disturbance/dysfunction/distress.
- A small, but sizable number of athletes scored at the highest levels (indicating severe impairment) in terms of depressive symptoms, psychological distress, and dissatisfaction with life. Even more fell into the moderate (or subclinical) level on these measures; relatively few athletes reported having no symptoms or experiencing no distress.
- Further, the athletes experienced severe levels of sleep disturbances and reported drinking behaviors that indicated a high level of risk for substance use problems. The athletes reported particularly high levels of distress in terms of their eating behaviors and their level of dissatisfaction with different aspects of their bodies.
- Across all indicators of psychological functioning, much higher percentages of Women, than Men, scored in the clinical levels of distress.

	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>
Depression	16%	25%
Psychological Distress	5%	13%
Dissatisfied with Life	10%	14%
Sleep Disturbances	11%	20%
Risky Drinking	14%	15%
Disordered Eating	11%	29%
Body Dissatisfaction		
- Overall Body	29%	48%
- Leanness of body	34%	54%
- Muscularity of body	32%	49%
- Thinness of body	32%	55%
- Weight	28%	50%



# Vigorous Exercise Behaviors

- During the two weeks prior to completing the survey, between 86% and 89% of the athletes reported having engaged in vigorous exercise, such as lifting weights, aerobic conditioning, and any other training they did for their sport.
- Slightly higher percentages of Men (92%) and White (90%) Athletes reported having exercised in this manner. Almost 75% of Athletes reported engaging in vigorous exercise for 30 minutes or more per day; 34% were exercising vigorously for 60 minutes or more per day.
- Men, more so than Women, were likely to work out for longer periods of time each day.





# Mental Health Counseling

- The athletes reported on whether they had participated in mental health counseling prior to, and after, the onset of COVID-19. The majority of athletes, from 67% to 85%, had not been involved in counseling at either of the two time points.
- Women were 1.5 to 3 times more likely than Men to have been in counseling across the time points. For the athletes who were engaged in counseling prior to COVID-19 and the shutdown of athletic departments, only 33% were able to continue in counseling after.
- Very few athletes (2%) started counseling anew after COVID-19 emerged. Black Athletes were disproportionately affected in their inability to continue mental health services following the emergence of COVID-19 (see complete baseline full report for details).
- The lack of use of counseling across the time points and the disproportionate affects on certain subgroups of athletes may reflect ongoing mental health stigma as well as a lack of availability of acceptable resources, particularly within certain communities.

	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>
No Counseling	85%	67%
Counseling Pre-COVID only	10%	20%
Counseling Post-COVID only	2%	3%
Counseling Pre & Post COVID	3%	10%



# Conclusion

- This report was based solely on the data collected from the NCAA student athletes who participated in the study. The findings, which are based on these student athletes' responses, do not reflect the views or perspectives of the NCAA, the University of North Texas, nor Wayne State University. The results reflect only the reported experiences from the student athletes who comprised this sample.
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