

Mental Health & Traumatic Brain Injury Statistics in Athletes

National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Student-Athlete Well-Being

38% of women and 22% of men student-athletes reported feeling mentally exhausted.

Source: National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Student-Athlete Well-Being Study (2021), National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA).org

48% of women and 46% of men felt comfortable seeking mental health care.

Source: National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Student-Athlete Well-Being Study (2021)

69% of women and 63% of men knew where to go on campus for mental health services.

Source: National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Student-Athlete Well-Being Study (2021)

61% of women and 40% of men considered transferring due to mental health concerns.

Source: National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Student-Athlete Well-Being Study (2021)

Men reporting feeling overwhelmed constantly or most days: 17% (down from 25%).

Source: National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Student-Athlete Health & Wellness Study (2022–23)

Women reporting constant/near-daily mental exhaustion: 35% (down from 38%).

Source: National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Student-Athlete Health & Wellness Study (2022–23)

Elite Athletes (Professional and Former)

34% of current elite athletes report anxiety or depression symptoms.

Source: Gouttebarga et al., 2019, British Journal of Sports Medicine (BJSM)

19% of current elite athletes report alcohol misuse.

Source: Gouttebarga et al., 2019, British Journal of Sports Medicine (BJSM)

26% of former elite athletes report anxiety or depression symptoms.

Source: Gouttebarga et al., 2019, British Journal of Sports Medicine (BJSM)

Moderate–severe anxiety in 22% and depression in 23% of athletes.

Source: Frontiers in Sports & Active Living, 2025

35% of elite athletes estimated to have mental health concerns; 25% report sleep issues; 5.2% of college athletes meet obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) criteria.

Source: McLean Hospital (2025)



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Concussions and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)

Up to 3.8 million concussions annually in the U.S. (~10,000 per day).

Source: McLean Hospital (2014 estimate)

Youth sports concussion incidence: 1.41 per 1,000 athletic exposures (AEs); 4.36 per 1,000 player-hours.

Source: Systematic Review, PubMed Central 2025

Youth tackle football athletes sustain 15× more total head impacts and 23× more high-magnitude impacts than flag football.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) HEADS UP 2025

Nearly 50% of people with sports-related traumatic brain injury (TBI) still have symptoms after 6 months.

Source: University of Glasgow, 2024

Adolescents with concussion: higher odds of depression (AOR 1.32), suicidal ideation (AOR 2.68), and self-harm (AOR 1.97).

Source: Journal of Child and Family Studies, 2024

At least 21% of traumatic brain injury (TBI)s among children/adolescents are from sports or recreational activities.

Source: American Association of Neurological Surgeons (AANS), 2024

~70% of emergency department visits for sports- and recreation-related traumatic brain injuries and concussions are among children ages 17 and under.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)), HEADS UP Data

Boys ages 17 and under have about twice the rate of emergency department visits for sports- and recreation-related traumatic brain injuries and concussions compared to girls.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)), HEADS UP Data

Girls have a higher chance of sports-related concussion than boys when playing the same sports, such as soccer and basketball.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)), HEADS UP Data

Contact sports including football, basketball, and soccer are associated with about 45% of all emergency department visits for sports- and recreation-related traumatic brain injuries and concussions among children ages 17 and under.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)), HEADS UP Data

In high school sports, more than two out of three concussions result from collisions among athletes.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)), HEADS UP Data



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Suicide and Mental Health Risks

53.1% of athletes reported struggling with depression or anxiety at least rarely to very frequently.

Source: U.S. Center for U.S. Center for SafeSport Athlete Culture & Climate Survey, 2024

30.2% of athletes reported engaging in disordered eating behaviors (restricting, bingeing, purging).

Source: U.S. Center for U.S. Center for SafeSport Athlete Culture & Climate Survey, 2024

21.9% of athletes reported having suicidal thoughts.

Source: U.S. Center for U.S. Center for SafeSport Athlete Culture & Climate Survey, 2024

13.2% of athletes reported self-harming behaviors.

Source: U.S. Center for U.S. Center for SafeSport Athlete Culture & Climate Survey, 2024