



Highlights of [GAO-07-535](#), a report to congressional addressees

INTERCOLLEGIATE ATHLETICS

Recent Trends in Teams and Participants in National Collegiate Athletic Association Sports

Why GAO Did This Study

Since the 1970s, the roles of women as both students and athletes have changed in higher education, with female enrollment surpassing male enrollment, and female athletic participation showing gains as well. These changes have generated public interest in whether women participate in athletics at comparable levels to men and whether men's opportunities have decreased as a result of the increased opportunities for women. Under the Comptroller General's authority, GAO assessed the extent to which the numbers of men's and women's intercollegiate sports teams and participants at 4-year colleges have changed from the 1991-1992 through 2004-2005 school years.

How GAO Did This Study

To address these issues, GAO analyzed athletic data from the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) for two groups of colleges: (a) the entire NCAA membership, or *open group*, for which trends will reflect school-level decisions and membership changes, and (b) the consistent members of the NCAA throughout this period, or *closed group*, for which trends will reflect school-level decisions only. We used NCAA data because they were the only viable option for analyzing annual athletic trends for teams and participants over an extended period. We analyzed those sports for which team and participant data were reported each year for both groups of colleges.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-07-535.

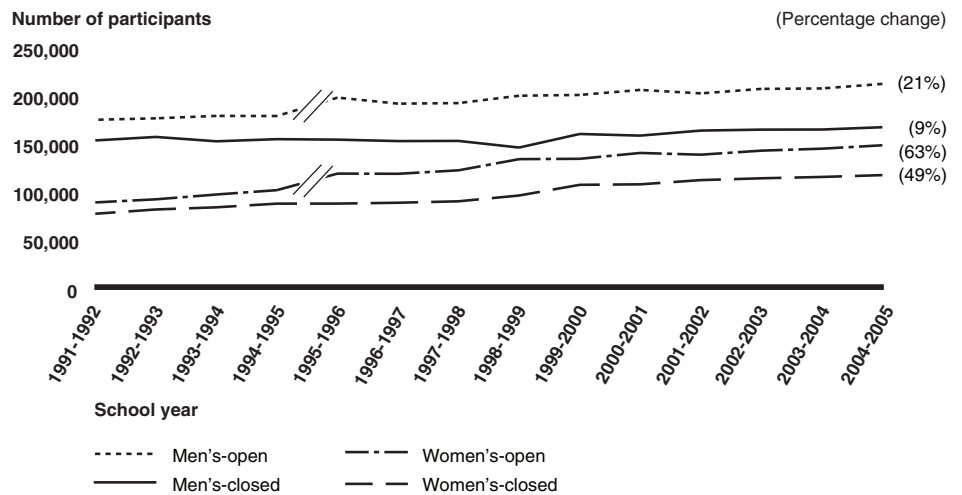
To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. To view the e-supplement online, click on www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-07-744SP. For more information, contact George A. Scott at (202) 512-7215 or ScottG@gao.gov.

What GAO Found

While the numbers of both men's and women's intercollegiate sports teams increased from 1991-1992 to 2004-2005, women's teams showed greater gains than men's teams. In fact, there have been more women's than men's teams since the mid-to-late 1990s for both the entire NCAA membership and the group of colleges that were consistent members of the NCAA throughout this period. For both groups of schools, most women's sports and some men's sports showed increases in teams, but many men's sports showed mixed or small changes in the number of teams.

The numbers of both male and female athletic participants increased from 1991-1992 to 2004-2005—with female participants showing larger rates of increase—but men's participation levels were greater than women's throughout this time period, both in absolute terms and relative to their respective enrollments. Most women's sports and half of men's sports showed increases in the number of participants across both groups of schools. In the context of enrollment, female participation grew at a faster rate than female enrollment in both groups of schools. However, from 1991-1992 to 2004-2005, overall participation rates were significantly greater for men in at least three out of four coed schools in the closed group.

Number of Male and Female Participants in the Open and Closed Groups, 1991-1992 to 2004-2005 School Years



Source: GAO analysis of NCAA data.

Notes: These counts reflect the sum of the participants in each of the individual sports that were consistently reported throughout the time period. To the extent that athletes participated on more than one team, the number of participants may be overstated.

For the open group, counts for 1995-1996 through 2004-2005 include colleges that had applied for but not yet been given full NCAA membership status; counts for 1991-1992 through 1994-1995 do not include such colleges.

Open-group participant counts for 1995-1996 through 1998-1999 are NCAA estimates based on athletic records collected by schools to meet the requirements of the Equity in Athletics Disclosure Act.