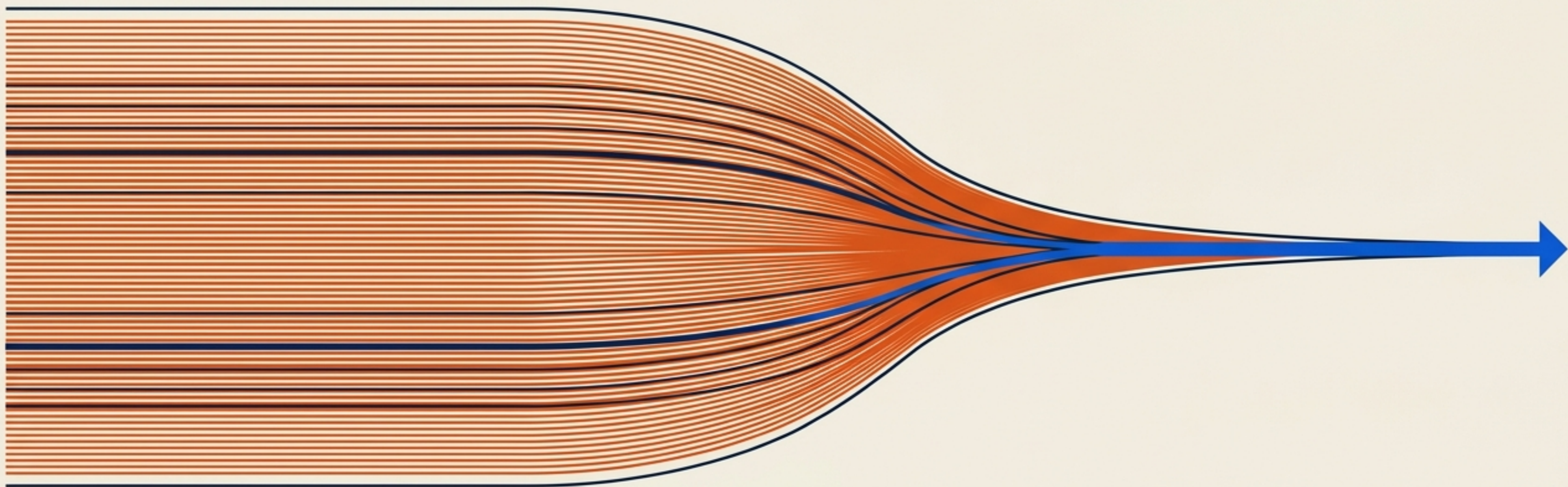




The Collegiate Athletics Pipeline

2024–2026 Data on Participation, Probabilities,
and the True Paths from High School to College

The high school starting line is more crowded than ever

The Big Three

Football (1.03M), Track & Field (1.15M combined), and Basketball (896K combined) dominate the volume.

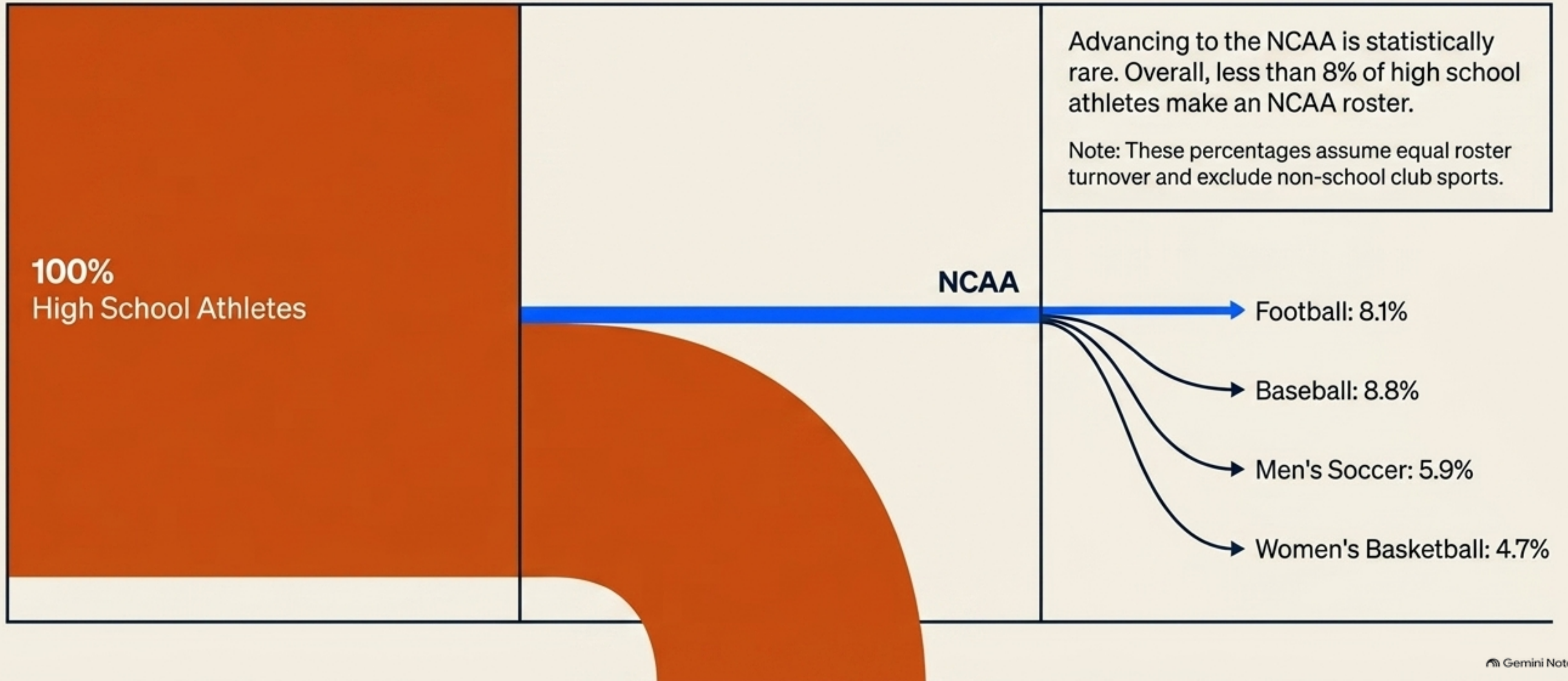
8.26M

Record-high total high school sports participants in 2024–25 (4.7M boys; 3.5M girls).

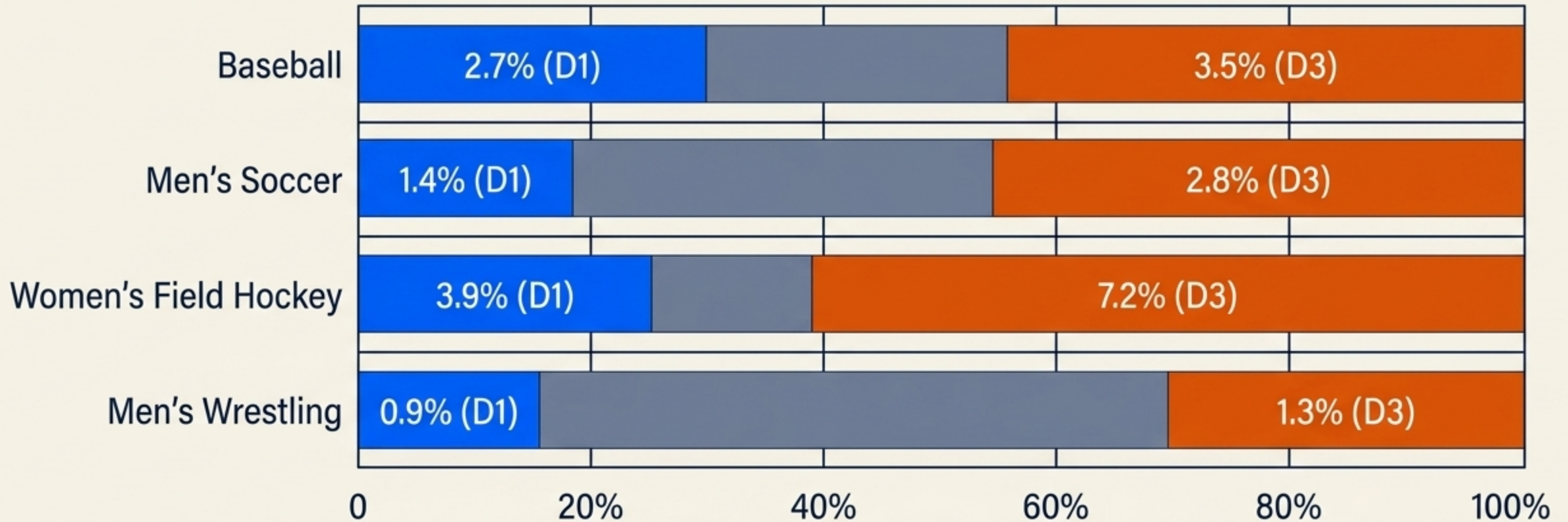
↗ Explosive Growth

Niche sports are surging. **Girls Wrestling** reached **74,064** participants (+15%) and **Girls Flag Football** hit **68,847** participants (+60%).

The NCAA funnel captures a tiny fraction of overall talent



The Division I illusion versus the Division III reality



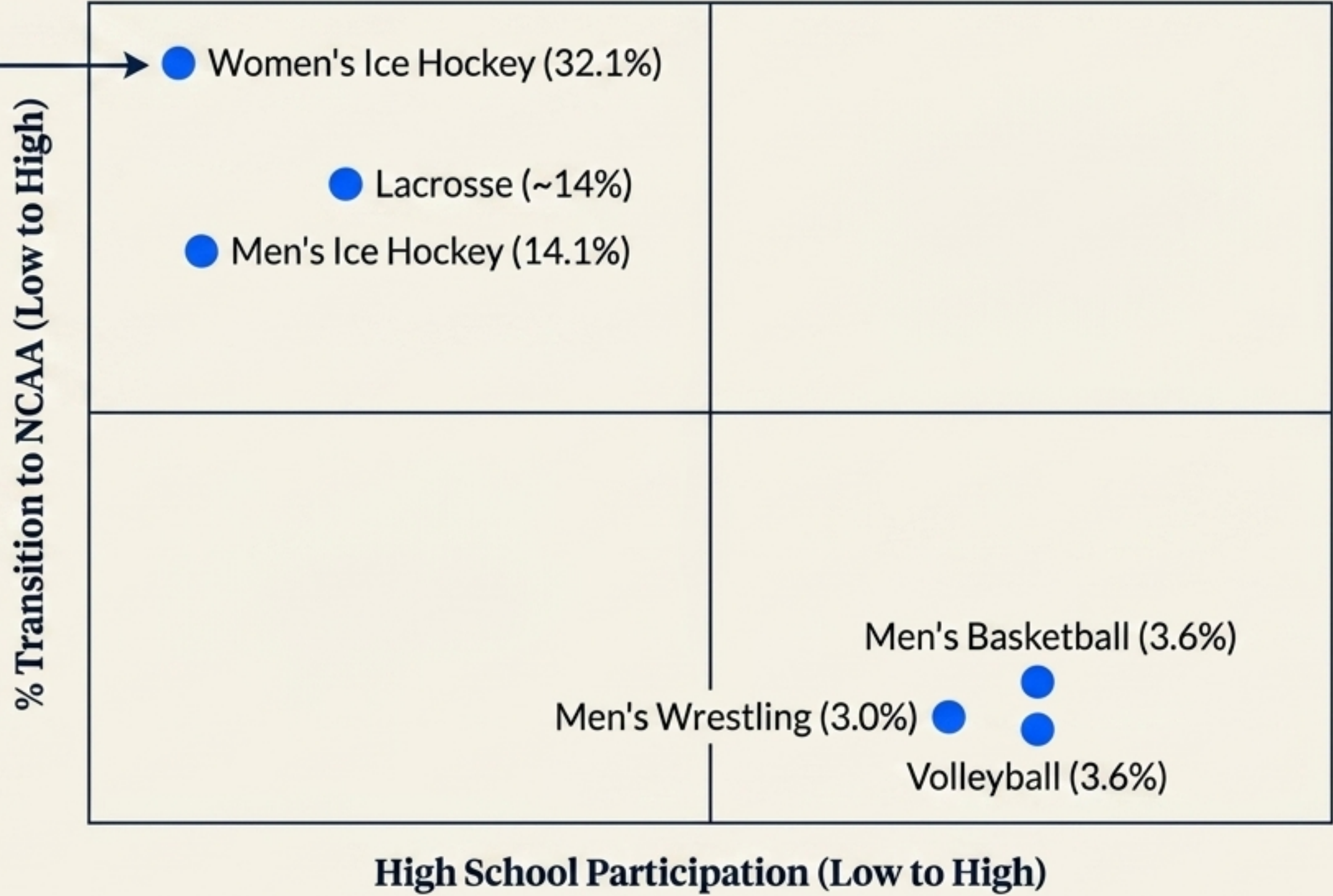
For the majority of NCAA athletes, the collegiate dream is realized at the Division III level, which prioritizes academics and offers no athletic scholarships.

The specific math depends entirely on the sport

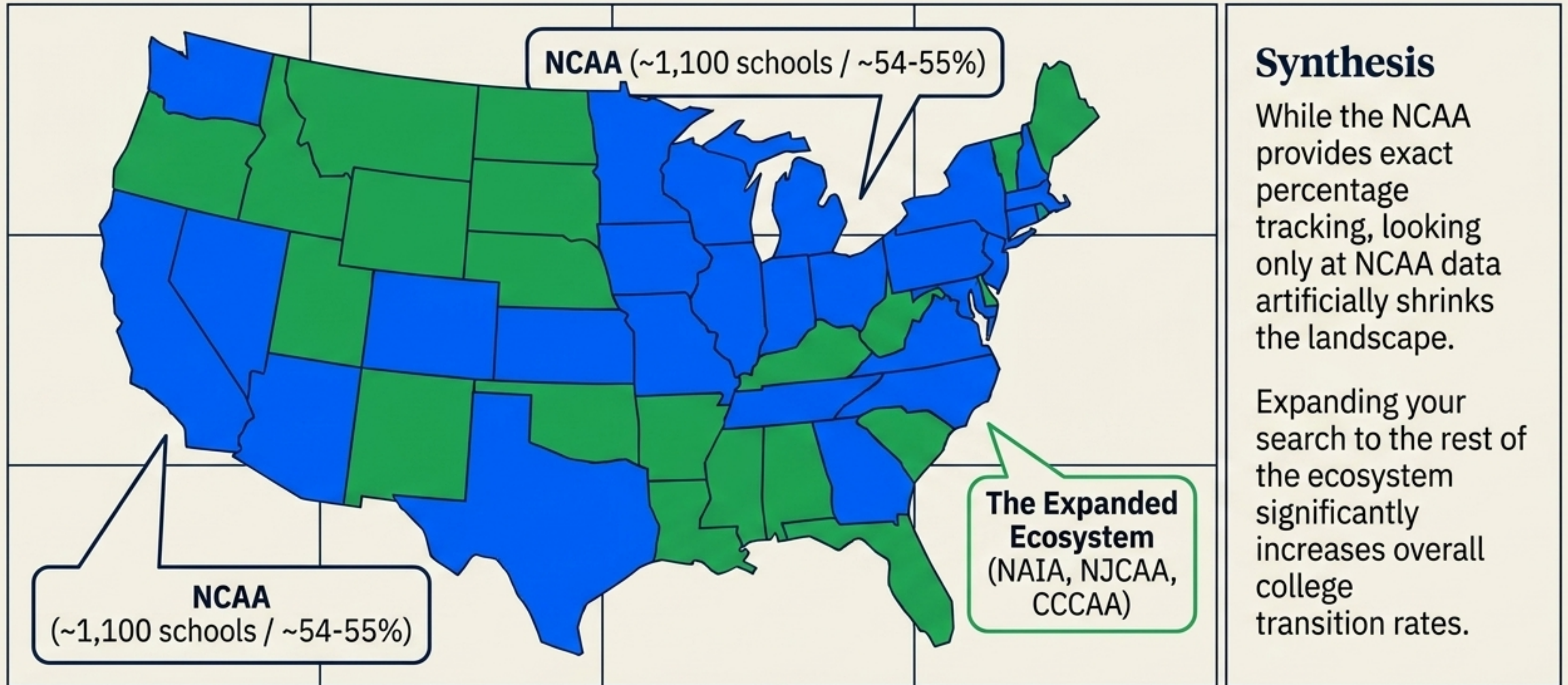


The Invisible Athletes

Club sports hide the true denominator. High transition rates in hockey and tennis are artificially inflated because the NCAA compares college rosters against high school teams, completely missing the massive pool of club-only athletes competing for the same spots.



The NCAA only represents half of the collegiate athletic map

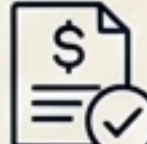
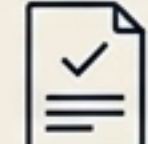
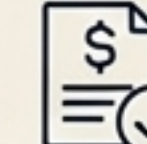
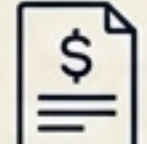


Synthesis

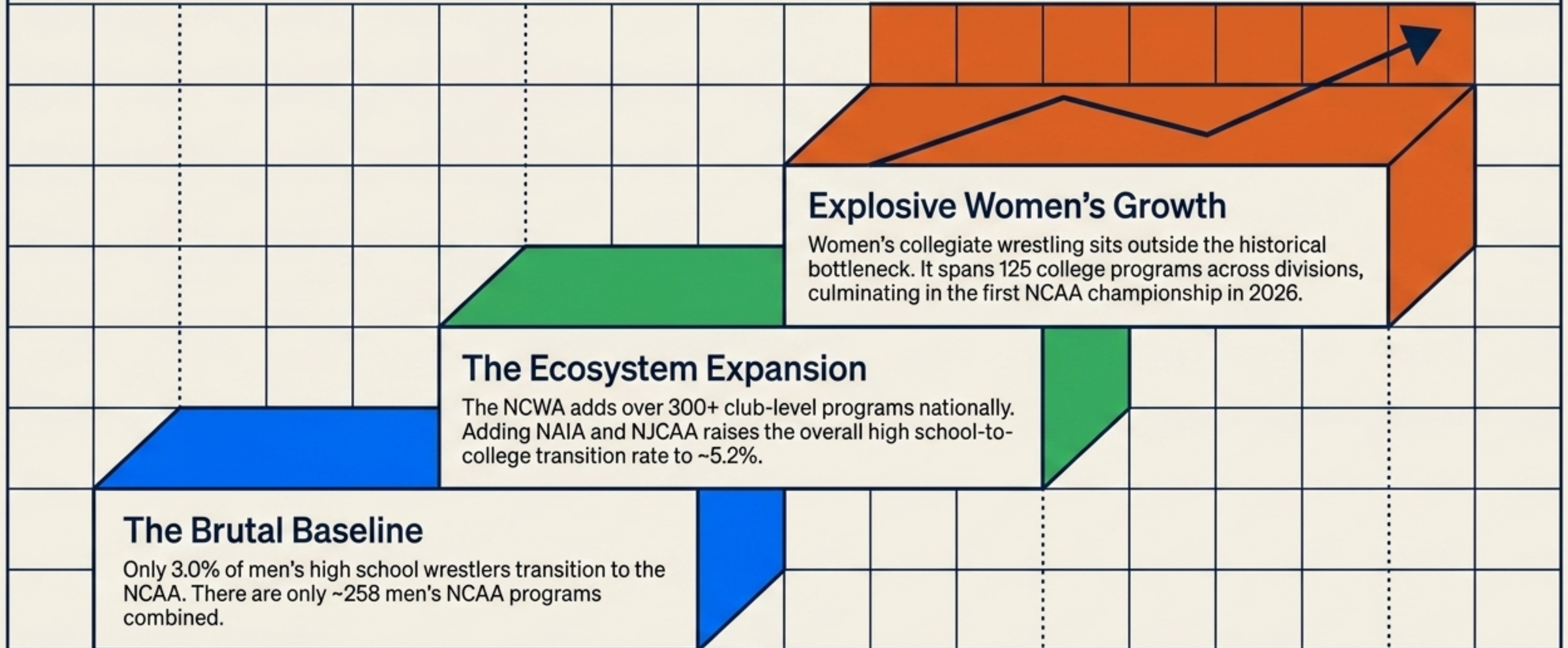
While the NCAA provides exact percentage tracking, looking only at NCAA data artificially shrinks the landscape.

Expanding your search to the rest of the ecosystem significantly increases overall college transition rates.

Mapping the hidden collegiate ecosystem

Comparison Matrix	NCAA (Baseline)	NAIA	NJCAA (JUCO)	CCCAA
Member Institutions	 ~1,100	 ~250	 500+	 109 (CA only)
Total Athletes	 ~554,000	 ~87,000	 60,000+	 ~25,000
Primary Footprint	 Major universities to regional academic colleges	 Smaller private/public colleges	 Two-year community colleges nationwide	 California two-year system
Scholarship Potential	 Athletic Scholarships in D1/D2	 Athletic Scholarships available	 Athletic Scholarships in D1/D2	 Financial aid only

Sport Spotlight: The wrestling ecosystem breaks the NCAA mold



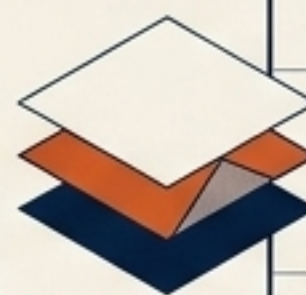
How to navigate the actual athletic pipeline

Step 1: Understand the Math



Know your sport's actual transition odds and recognize that Division III holds the majority of traditional roster spots.

Step 2: Account for the Shadows



Factor in the invisible competition. Club athletes, redshirts, and the transfer portal continuously squeeze high school spots further than the baseline percentages suggest.

Step 3: Expand the Map



Look beyond the NCAA. The NAIA and NJCAA contain nearly 1,000 additional institutions, 147,000+ athletes, and alternative routes to athletic scholarships.

The collegiate pipeline is brutally competitive, but it is much wider than Division I.
