



ROWING GROWING

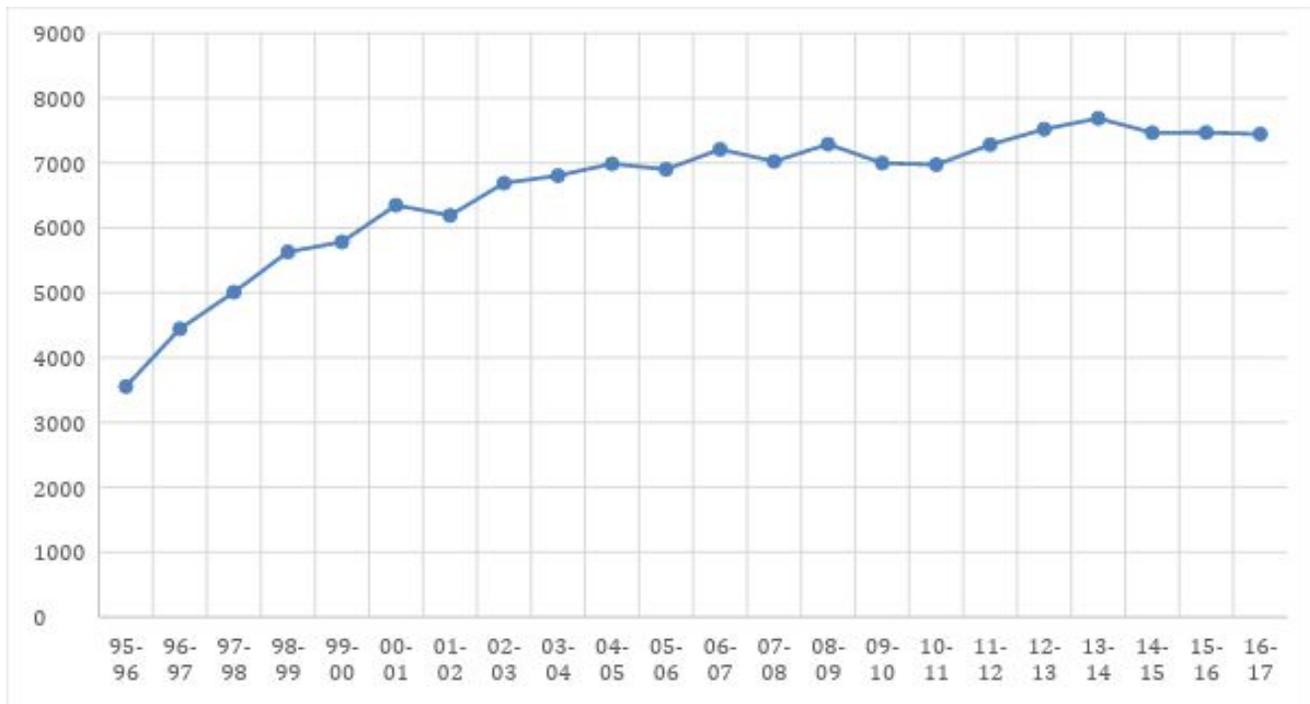
Rowing is Growing – 2017 Women’s and Men’s Collegiate Rowing

Collegiate rowing programs, including men and women’s varsity programs as well as men and women’s club programs, make up a small but significant portion of the more than 1,308 USRowing organizational members in 2017. Almost 300 of our organizational members, or 23%, in 2017 were collegiate programs.

Women’s Varsity Collegiate Rowing

Collegiate women’s rowing expanded rapidly in 1997 when it became an NCAA sport. In 1997, there were 98 Division I, II, and III teams across the country. As of 2017, that number has nearly doubled to 146 women’s programs. As an NCAA sport, collegiate women’s rowing teams can offer junior rowers and even walk-on athletes the opportunity to become NCAA student-athletes on scholarships. The spectrum of programs from Division I, II, and III schools provides many women the option of rowing at a high level.

Women’s Collegiate Rowing: Number of Athletes 1995-2017

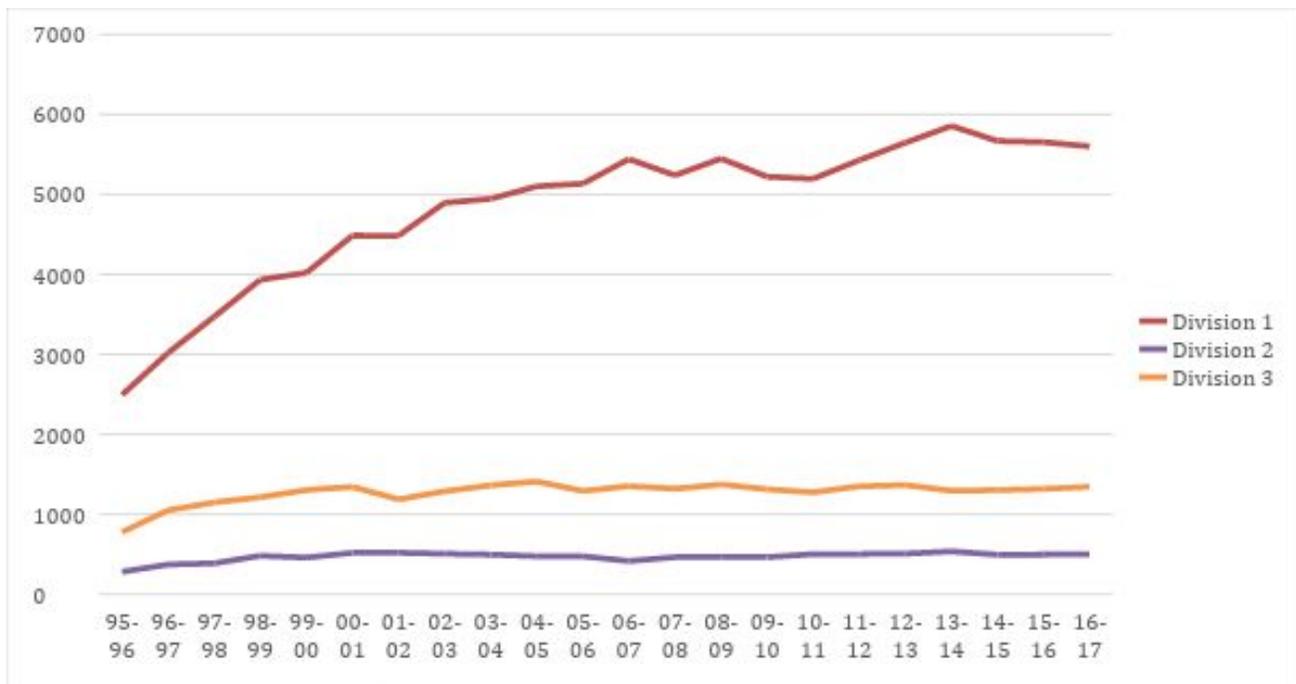


Information from NCAA database

The effects of women’s rowing gaining NCAA status can be seen clearly in the percentage increase in athletes from 1997 to 2017. Following its introduction as an NCAA sport, women’s rowing programs rapidly increased in its early years, though it has flattened out in the past three years. The largest growth can be seen in Division I programs, with a 86% increase in athletes from 1996-2017. In addition, Division II and III programs sustained significant increases in athletes with 34% and 28% respectively. Over the course of 20 years, the combined percentage of growth across all divisions is 68%.

In the last 10 years, growth has leveled off as programs have become more established. In the 2016-2017 season, approximately 7,445 women participated in 146 Division I, II, and III programs according to the NCAA. Programs earn qualification to compete at the NCAA Championships via various regional regattas as well as at-large bids based on season performance. Of the 146 NCAA programs, 32 programs ended their season at the NCAA Championships for their division.

Women’s Collegiate Athletes: Division I, II, and III 1995-2017



Information from NCAA database

Women’s varsity programs can look to Title IX as the foundation for the large growth in women’s rowing at the collegiate level. It allowed for the equal funding of men and women’s varsity sports, and allowed for the growth of large women’s programs like rowing. Most importantly, Title IX ensured women would have equal opportunities as men in collegiate athletics.

Men’s Varsity Collegiate Rowing

Men’s collegiate rowing is not an NCAA sanctioned sport, however it has remained fairly consistent in growth. After an initial decline for a few years when women’s rowing became an NCAA sport in 1997, men’s collegiate rowing has since sustained growth. In 1997, the number of men’s varsity programs peaked at 90 nationwide. Between 1996-2017, the number of programs decreased by 40% and total

number of athletes has decreased by 30%. Divisions I and II have both decreased in their amount of athletes, yet overall squad size has grown across all three divisions. Division III has seen a 13% increase in athletes since 1997. There are approximately 56 collegiate men's varsity programs in the country.

The Intercollegiate Rowing Association runs the IRA National Championship Regatta, which is held every year as the men's varsity collegiate championship. In 2017, the regatta had 125 total men's entries for the regatta. Men's varsity rowing is one with a deep history with the very first IRA race held in 1895. It consisted of one varsity eight from each of the founding schools (Cornell University, Columbia University, and the University of Pennsylvania) racing four miles on the Hudson River. The format of the race has drastically changed over time, though the growth continues. Fast-forward over 100 years, 24 programs competed on Mercer Lake in Princeton, NJ to be named IRA Champions. In total, there were 920 male athletes competing at the 2017 IRA!

2017 IRA by the numbers:

- 50 IRA Eligible Teams
- 24 IRA programs invited
- 920 Athletes
- 6 Automatic Qualification Regattas
- 97 Men's Varsity 8+s Racing in Automatic Qualification Regattas
- 3 IRA Events for Team Points (MV8+, M2V8+, M3V8+)
- 1 IRA Champion Team

Men's varsity rowing, as it is not an NCAA sponsored sport, does not have a singular NCAA Championship regatta for Divisions I, II, and III. The IRA regatta is typically made up of Division I programs yet it is open to all divisions who qualify through six qualifying regattas across the country. The National Invitational Rowing Championships, or NIRC, is one such qualifying regatta comprised mainly of New England and mid-Atlantic teams. Though the first eligible finisher is able to qualify for the IRA, it is also considered as a season capping race for many Division III programs. In addition to the NIRC, there are five other regional qualifying regattas in which a variety of programs compete. Varsity programs compete alongside club programs in four of the six regional qualifying regattas.

Men's and Women's Collegiate Club Rowing

The largest growth in collegiate rowing can be seen in club rowing. Varsity programs compete alongside club programs in four of the six regional qualifying regattas for the IRA Championships. As varsity men and women's programs have a championship race, men and women's club programs compete in one as well. Both men and women's club rowing have benefitted from a substantial increase in athletes since the inception of the American Collegiate Rowing Association (ACRA) in 2008.

The ACRA Championship Regatta is held annually and includes all collegiate club rowing programs recognized by their respective universities. ACRA membership is made up of university and college club rowing teams, and junior college and community college teams (both men and women) that are not eligible through their institutions' athletic department for the NCAA or IRA Championship. Events at ACRA's span from open weight men and women as well as lightweight men and women.

ACRA Championships have seen a 66% increase in men and women’s clubs competing and a 130% increase in the number of entries since its inception in 2008 to today. The number of entries in the ACRA championships is not limited by a qualification event, therefore as demand increases, we see the direct correlation in the number of entries, clubs competing, as well as increases in men and women competing.

The ACRA championships had its largest year in 2017 with a record number of 333 entries and 1,710 athletes competing on Lake Lanier in Gainesville, Georgia. The majority of athletes participating in the 2017 ACRA championship were male with 1,133 total, roughly double the amount of female athletes.

ACRA Championships 2008-2016

Year	Number of Entries	Number of Clubs	Boys	Girls	Total
2017	333	68	1133	577	1710
2016	309	64	1149	537	1686
2015	293	61	1044	484	1528
2014	267	63	1013	389	1402
2013	254	56	945	360	1305
2012	251	61	960	355	1315
2011	218	51	806	431	1237
2010	192	48	712	327	1039
2009	185	48	717	348	1065
2008	145	41	529	252	781

Information from RegattaCentral

What the junior and college rowing data tells us about youth rowing

Collegiate rowing is still growing in all aspects: men’s, women’s, varsity, and club. Women’s rowing has especially benefited from the NCAA status received in 1997, which allowed for more direct funding to women’s rowing previously unavailable to teams. Men’s varsity rowing had initially slowed its growth following 1997 and during the creation of more women’s varsity programs. Men’s varsity has since sustained a steady growth from 2001 to today. Division II men’s programs have been declining, yet across all divisions, expansion continues.

There is an especially large demand for men’s varsity programs, as the number of men who compete at the club level is growing and is over double the number of women who are competing at the club level. The expansion of men’s club rowing, programs which consist largely of walk-on or novice athletes, also means that more and more people are trying rowing for the first time. The lack of women’s club athletes may also be partly due to the large amount of programs available at the varsity level and opportunities for competing on an NCAA sanctioned team. The influx of men’s club rowers over the last eight years has

benefitted from men's youth rowing growing at a slightly faster rate in the last five years than women's youth rowing.

A continuing positive trend in growth for junior rowing mirrors what we see in collegiate rowing. The bigger the pool of athletes, the more competitive programs become and the more collegiate athletes involved in rowing. Whether walk-on or former junior rower, collegiate programs continue to grow the foundation for the future of rowing.

Find out more at [NCAA Publications](#), [IRA](#), and [RegattaCentral](#).