

Online sports betting shakes up March Madness: Brackets lose, fans bet big on UNC and Duke, and women love betting on underdogs in first rounds of NCAA Tournament

MARCH 30, 2022 - [National Research Group \(NRG\)](#), a leading global insights and strategy firm that specializes in sports, media, entertainment and technology, gathered data after the Elite Eight games to shed light on sports betting behavior.

NRG's data shows that legal online sports betting and the pandemic have dramatically changed how consumers bet on the NCAA Men's Basketball Tournament.

Death of brackets?

The Final Four teams are all bluebloods. But an upstart made the biggest waves in the NCAA Tournament: legal online sports betting.

The big loser? Traditional brackets.

- **54% of bettors say that legalized online sports betting has made them less interested in brackets**, compared to 26% that disagree.
- Overall, a **whopping 60% of people who bet on this year's NCAA Tournament did not fill out a bracket**. Conversely, only 8% of bettors filled out a bracket without betting on any individual games

Since the U.S. Supreme Court struck down the federal ban on sports betting in 2018, more than 30 states have taken steps to legalize sports betting. But another factor may have lessened interest in brackets this year: COVID-19. Nearly half of bettors (49%) said they were less interested in filling out a bracket now than before the pandemic, **and 57% stated that not physically being in an office made them less likely to fill out a bracket this year.**

"As part of NRG's focus on the sports industry, we looked at how behaviors and attitudes are evolving in the dynamic sports betting space," says Jay Kaufman, Executive Vice President, Head of Sports, at National Research Group. "Clearly, legalized online sports betting is affecting interest in traditional brackets, but so are the work-from-home policies resulting from COVID-19."

Duke and University of North Carolina rule the betting world

Coach K is taking on North Carolina for the last time in one of the most anticipated Final Four games in history. Chances are there will be a lot of money riding on Saturday's game, considering that **the most bet-on teams so far in this NCAA Tournament are:**

1. North Carolina (22%)
2. Duke (17%)
3. Kentucky (13%)
4. Arizona (12%)
5. Gonzaga (12%)
6. Miami (11%)
7. Michigan (11%)
8. Kansas (11%)
9. UCLA (11%)

10. Villanova (10%)

9% bet on Cinderella story St. Peters, which is impressive considering you **couldn't bet on the Peacocks in their home state of New Jersey**.

Overall, leading into this weekend's Final Four, 31% of Americans (age 21-64) have bet on this year's NCAA Men's Basketball Tournament.

And they put down serious cash. **39% of this year's NCAA Tournament bettors have wagered \$250 or more on the games to date**. Another 24% bet between \$100 and \$250.

Women love an underdog

The vast majority of NCAA bettors (75%) agreed that they love wagering on underdogs during the Tournament. **But more women (83%) than men (70%) said they loved wagering on underdogs**.

86% of women were more likely to watch a game they bet on, compared to 77% of men. And 72% of women said this was the most they had ever bet on the NCAA Tournament, versus 60% for men.

Other facts:

- While 24% of bettors have wagered on more than 10 games during this year's tournament, the vast majority (63%) have bet on between 3 and 10 games.
- This year, younger Americans were more likely to bet on the NCAA Tournament than older Americans (69% for Age 21-34 vs. 52% for Age 45-64). Older Americans were more likely to have wagered on a bracket (48% to 36%).

METHODOLOGY

This data comes from an online study conducted by NRG on March 28-29, 2022, among 1,000 Americans ages 18 to 64. Sports bettors are defined as anyone Age 21+ who bets frequently or occasionally on sports, while NCAA Tournament bettors consist of anyone 21+ that wagered on this year's NCAA Men's Basketball Tournament.

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