



**TO:** American Gaming Association  
**FROM:** The Mellman Group  
**DATE:** March 9, 2018  
**RE:** Participation in NCAA Pools

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*This analysis represents the findings of a national survey of 1,501 adults, including 1057 betting pool participants. In the final results, betting pool participants were weighted down to their proper portion of the population as indicated by the base sample of 1,501. The survey employed a mixed online and phone sample which included cell phones and landlines and used live interviewers for the phone interviews. The survey was conducted January 28<sup>th</sup> – February 11<sup>th</sup>, 2018. The margin of error overall is +/-2.5 percentage points at a 95% level of confidence. The margin of error is higher for subgroups.*

The Mellman Group recently surveyed adults to examine the pervasiveness of paid-entry sports betting pools in America. Our research asked participants if they had participated in any of several possible types of paid-entry pools including a squares or grid pool, a bracket competition, a pick 'em pool, a survivor or Calcutta pool, or a cash-based fantasy sports pool. Participation in pools generally, and in NCAA basketball in particular, is widespread.

**An estimated 54 million people, or nearly one-quarter of American adults, participated in a pool last year. Pool participants entered an average of more than seven different pools over the course of the last year, and their total spend across all sports was nearly \$18 billion.<sup>i</sup>**

**NCAA basketball is one of the most popular sports on which pools are based. In the past year, approximately 24 million people filled out nearly 60 million pool entries and spent over \$2.6 billion on entry fees for those pools.<sup>ii</sup>**

Nearly two-thirds, or 63% of participants in NCAA basketball pools, said either the "most important" or a "very important" reason they participate in pools is that pools, "make it more fun to watch sports and follow the teams and players that you like." 62% of participants in NCAA basketball pools said the most important or a very important reason they participate in pools is that they, "enjoy the comradery with friends, family or colleagues."

We also found that Americans expressed considerable confusion and uncertainty around the legal status of these pools: 62% said they weren't sure whether they are legal or illegal, while only 15% said they are legal and 22% said illegal. Among those who participate in NCAA pools, 40% think they are legal, 22% illegal, and 38% are unsure.

By more than a 2-to-1 ratio, the public wants federal law changed, where applicable, to allow states to decide whether or not to legalize these pools, with 68% in favor and 28% opposed.<sup>iii</sup>

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<sup>i</sup> **Full estimate:** 53,671,959 people participated in a paid-entry pool and in total spent \$17,989,836,105 on pools

<sup>ii</sup> **Total NCAA paid-entry estimate:** 23,907,220 people participated in an NCAA paid-entry pool, 59,786,050 entries were submitted to paid-entry pools, and \$2,635,399,908 was spent on entry fees

<sup>iii</sup> Under current federal law, states are prohibited from legalizing certain types of real-money betting pools. Would you favor or oppose changing federal law so that each individual state can decide whether or not to allow certain types of betting pools in their own state?