NCAA LACROSSE · SEASON-LEVEL ANALYSIS, 2016–2025

Faceoff & Draw Control: The Win-Rate Dividend

Across a decade of Division I, II, and III lacrosse, teams that win more faceoffs (men's) or draw controls (women's) win more games and score more goals, a relationship strong enough, and consistent enough across divisions, to plan a program around.

7,789 team-seasons analyzed 3 divisions · 2 sports Source: NCAA official season-final rankings archive

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The three questions, answered

Every number below is a season-level statistic: each observation is one team's full season (e.g. "Denver, 2021"), not a single game. Every relationship reported is statistically significant at $p < .0001$.

1 · IS THERE A CORRELATION?

- **r = 0.59** men's
- **r = 0.67** women's

Yes: a moderate-to-strong positive correlation in both sports. Draw control explains slightly more of a women's team's win rate (r^2=0.45) than faceoffs do for men's teams (r^2=0.34).

2 · IMPACT ON WIN %

- **+1.26** pts win% / +1pt FO%
- **+2.10** pts win% / +1pt draw%

Going from a 45% to a 55% faceoff team (men's) tracks with roughly +12.6 points of season win rate. The same swing in draw control tracks with +21 points for women's teams.

3 · IMPACT ON GOALS SCORED

- **+0.17** goals/gm / +1pt FO%
- **+0.26** goals/gm / +1pt draw%

A 10-point faceoff swing is worth about 1.7 more goals per game for men's teams; the same draw-control swing is worth about 2.6 more goals per game for women's teams.

THE RELATIONSHIP, VISUALIZED

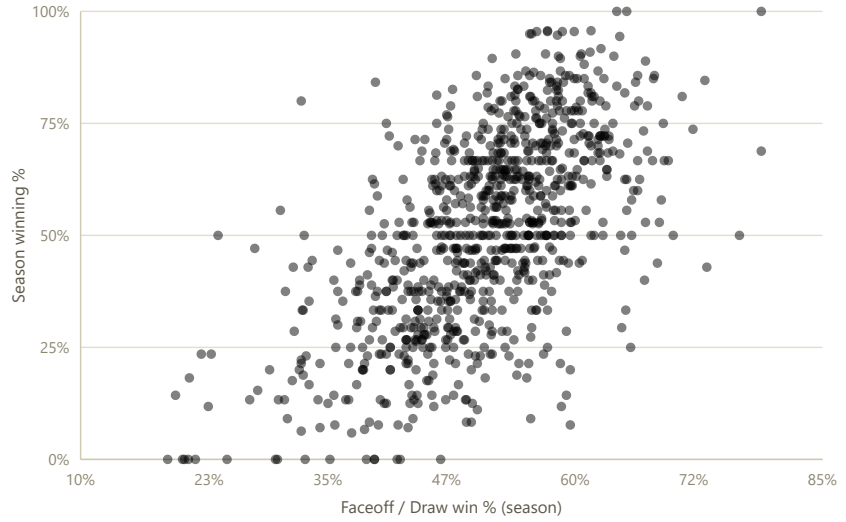
More possessions, more wins, more goals

Each dot is one team's full season (450 randomly sampled per sport, per chart, for legibility). The line is the best-fit season-level trend for that sport.

Men's lacrosse · faceoff win % Women's lacrosse · draw control %

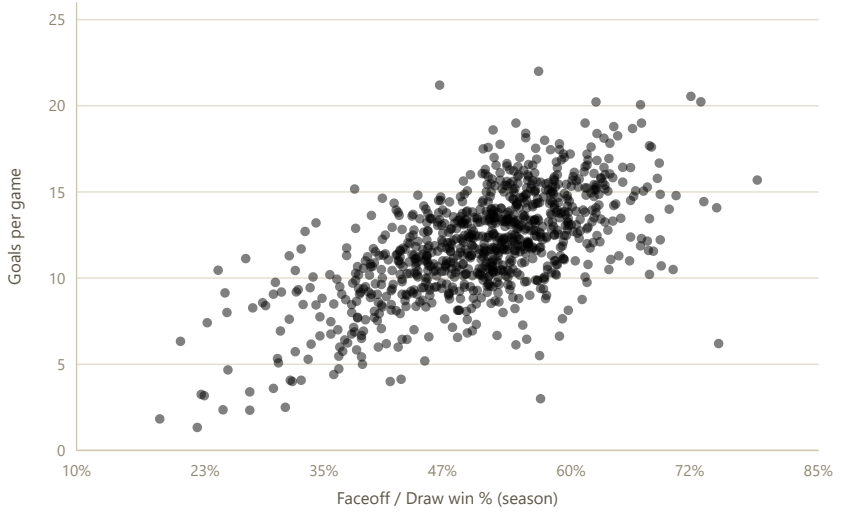
Faceoff / draw win % vs. season winning %

All divisions pooled · n = 3,704 (men's), 1,390 (women's)



Faceoff / draw win % vs. goals per game

All divisions pooled · n = 3,702 (men's), 1,387 (women's)



BY DIVISION

The effect holds everywhere, with one exception

Broken out by division and sport. Slopes are read as "per +1 percentage point of faceoff/draw win %." D3 women's is the one meaningfully weaker relationship,

likely because draw-control percentage is a newer, thinner-tracked stat at that level (see Methodology).

DIVISION	SPORT	N (TEAM-SEASONS)	R	R^2	WIN % SLOPE	GOALS/GM SLOPE
D1	**Men's (faceoff)**	650	0.489	0.239	+1.23	+0.110
D1	**Women's (draw)**	725	0.656	0.431	+2.11	+0.246
D2	**Men's (faceoff)**	697	0.587	0.345	+1.25	+0.144
D2	**Women's (draw)**	305	0.693	0.480	+2.29	+0.310
D3	**Men's (faceoff)**	2,357	0.603	0.364	+1.26	+0.186
D3	**Women's (draw)**	360	0.365	0.133	+1.43	+0.211

FINE PRINT

Methodology

Data

Team-season stats for faceoff win % (men's), draw control % (women's), scoring offense (goals/game), and winning % were pulled from the NCAA's official historical rankings archive (`web1.ncaa.org/stats/StatsSrv/rankings`) for every completed season 2016–2025, across Divisions I, II, and III, for both men's and women's lacrosse: 30,801 stat rows collapsing to 7,789 unique team-seasons with both a faceoff/draw figure and a winning percentage.

Method

Each team-season is one observation. Relationships are Pearson correlation and ordinary-least-squares linear regression (`scipy.stats.linregress`), computed separately per division × sport, and pooled across divisions per sport for the headline figures. "Slope" is the regression coefficient, i.e. the modeled change in the outcome per +1 percentage point of faceoff/draw win %.

Why D3 women's is thinner

Draw control percentage is a newer NCAA-tracked stat; for Division II women's it wasn't tracked at all before 2016, and even where present, several early seasons return no data server-side. D3 women's has the smallest, most recent-skewed sample (n=360) of the six groups, which is the most likely driver of its weaker r.

READ BEFORE YOU ACT ON THIS

What this analysis can't tell you yet

- **Season-level, not game-level.** "Impact on % chance of winning" here means impact on a team's *full-season* win rate, not the probability of winning one specific game controlling for that game's opponent. A true per-game model exists in this project's design (logistic regression on box scores, see `analysis/correlation_analysis.py`) but the game-by-game scraper has not been run. `data/games/game_results.csv` is currently empty. That's the natural next step if you need per-game win probability rather than season-level trend.
- **Correlation, not causation.** Teams that win more faceoffs/draws tend to be deeper, more talented programs overall, so this analysis doesn't isolate the faceoff's standalone causal effect from general team quality.
- **Small-sample caution.** D2 and D3 women's lacrosse groups (n=305, n=360) are smaller and skew toward more recent seasons than the men's groups (n up to 2,357). Treat their exact slopes as noisier than D1/D3 men's.

Compiled from 2016–2025 NCAA official rankings archive data. Analysis code: `analysis/correlation_analysis.py`. Full division/sport breakdown and regression diagnostics available in `data/analysis/correlation_report.md`.