



# **Co-Curricular Involvement Among First- and Fourth- Year Students**

Center for the Study of Student Life

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## INTRODUCTION

Student engagement is an essential component of a well-rounded college experience. Participation in educationally intentional activities is beneficial for student learning, and colleges and universities play a critical role in providing opportunities and organizations for students to become involved. The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) collects data on participation in co-curricular activities. The aim of this report is to understand how first-year and senior undergraduate students spend their time and how co-curricular involvement expands their college experiences.

The Ohio State University distributed the NSSE survey to a random sample of 11,486 first- and fourth-year undergraduate students in 2013 and received 1,465 responses (a 12.4% response rate). The following report provides demographic characteristics of student involvement in co-curricular activities on campus. Not all students answered each question. All comparisons presented are statistically significant unless otherwise noted.

## HIGHLIGHTS

**The majority of first-year (77.2%) and fourth-year students (71.0%) are involved in co-curricular activities. Across class rank, students report they most commonly spend between 1 and 5 hours participating in co-curricular activities each week.**

- A larger proportion (29.8%) of first-year students say they spend 6-15 hours per week in co-curricular activities compared to fourth-year students (22.1%). However, 4.5% of fourth-year students report they spend more than 20 hours per week participating in co-curricular activities compared to 2.1% of first-year students.
- First-generation college student status is not a significant predictor of student involvement in co-curricular activities for first-year students, but it is a significant predictor for fourth-year students. Fourth-year, first-generation students have higher rates of non-participation (45.5%) compared to their non-first-generation peers (21.2%). Both first-generation and non-first-generation fourth-year students most commonly report that they spend 1-5 hours per week participating.
- Fraternity and sorority members are more involved in co-curricular activities than are their unaffiliated peers; this trend is significant across class rank. Both first- and fourth-year Greek life students most frequently report that they spend 1-5 hours participating at 42.4% and 41.7% respectively.
- While the difference is not statistically significant (likely because of too few students in some categories), living farther than walking distance of campus reduces participation; 44.6% of first-year students and 60.9% of fourth-year students who commute to campus do not participate in co-curricular activities.
- International student status is a significant predictor of involvement in co-curricular activities for first-year student, but not for fourth-year students. Only 16.4% of international students do not participate, compared to 23.6% of non-international students.
- Racial/ethnic background, gender, and grades are not significant determinants of student participation in co-curricular activities.

## DEMOGRAPHICS

The self-reported demographics originally had more response options but have been collapsed into the categories below for statistical comparisons.

<b>Characteristics of First and Fourth-year Students</b>		
	<b>First-year</b>	<b>Fourth-year</b>
<b>Class Rank</b>	60.0%	40.0%
<b>First-Generation Identifier</b>		
Yes	27.0%	32.7%
No	73.0%	67.3%
<b>Student Athlete</b>		
Yes	2.5%	1.1% <sup>9</sup>
No	97.5%	98.9
<b>Fraternity/Sorority Member</b>		
Yes	6.5%	10.9%
No	93.5%	89.1%
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>		
Student of Color	24.4%	17.6%
White	75.6%	82.4%
<b>Residence Type</b>		
Residence Hall	82.1%	6.9%
House/apartment in walking distance of campus	7.7%	69.0%
House/apartment farther than walking distance of campus	10.2%	24.2%
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	61.2%	63.8%
Male	38.8%	36.2%
<b>International Student</b>		
Yes	9.8%	6.2%
No	90.2%	93.8%
<b>Average Grades</b>		
Mostly "A"s	55.2%	55.5%
Mostly "B"s	37.1%	41.1%
Mostly "C"s	7.6%	3.4%

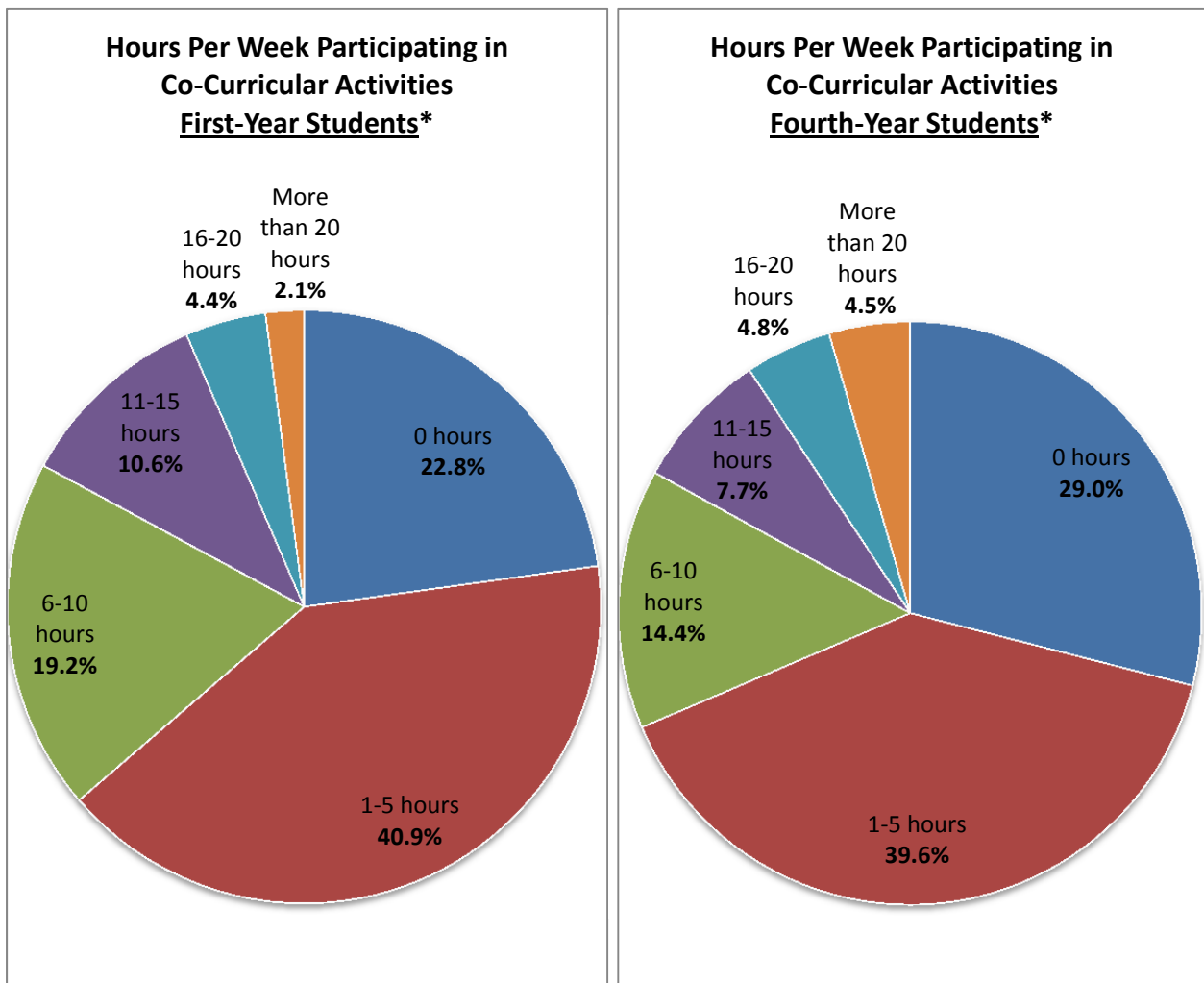
\* $p < .05$  \*\*  $p < .01$

## FINDINGS

The findings present information about the hours per week first and fourth-year students report they spend participating in co-curricular activities (e.g., organizations, campus publications, student government, intramural sports).

### CO-CURRICULAR PARTICIPATION BY CLASS RANK

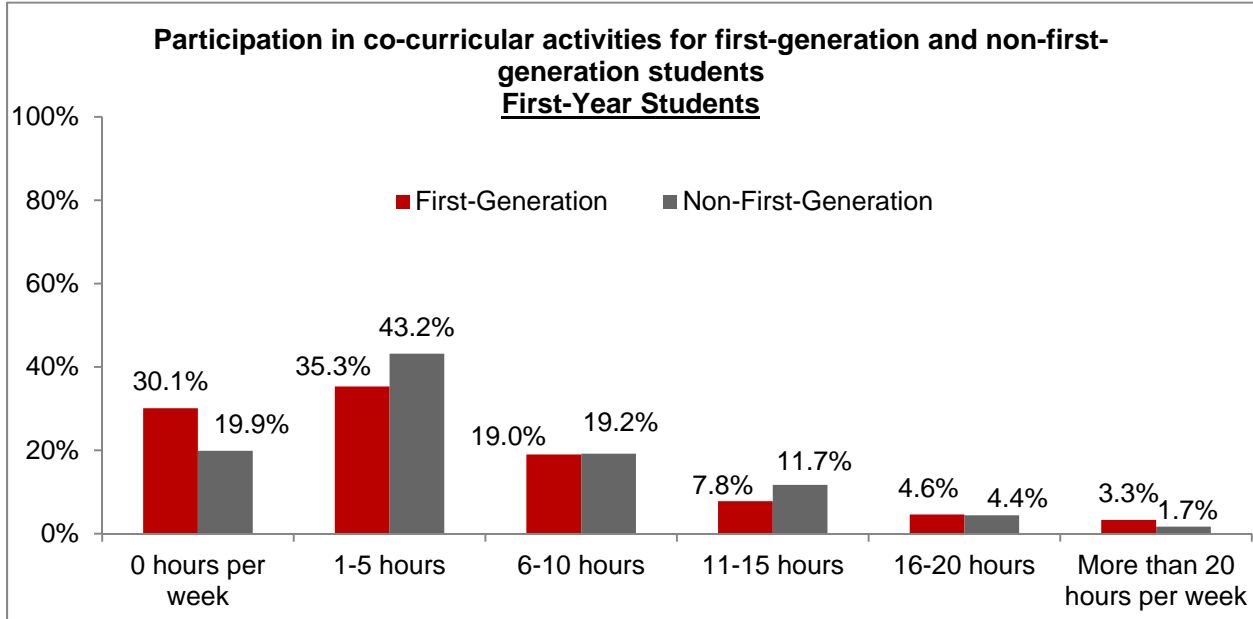
First-year students are more likely to be involved in co-curricular activities than are fourth-year students. More first-year students spend 6-10 hours in co-curricular activities (19.2%) than do fourth-year students (14.4%). More fourth-year students report high participation (more than 20 hours a week) in co-curricular activities (4.5%) compared to first-year students (2.1%).



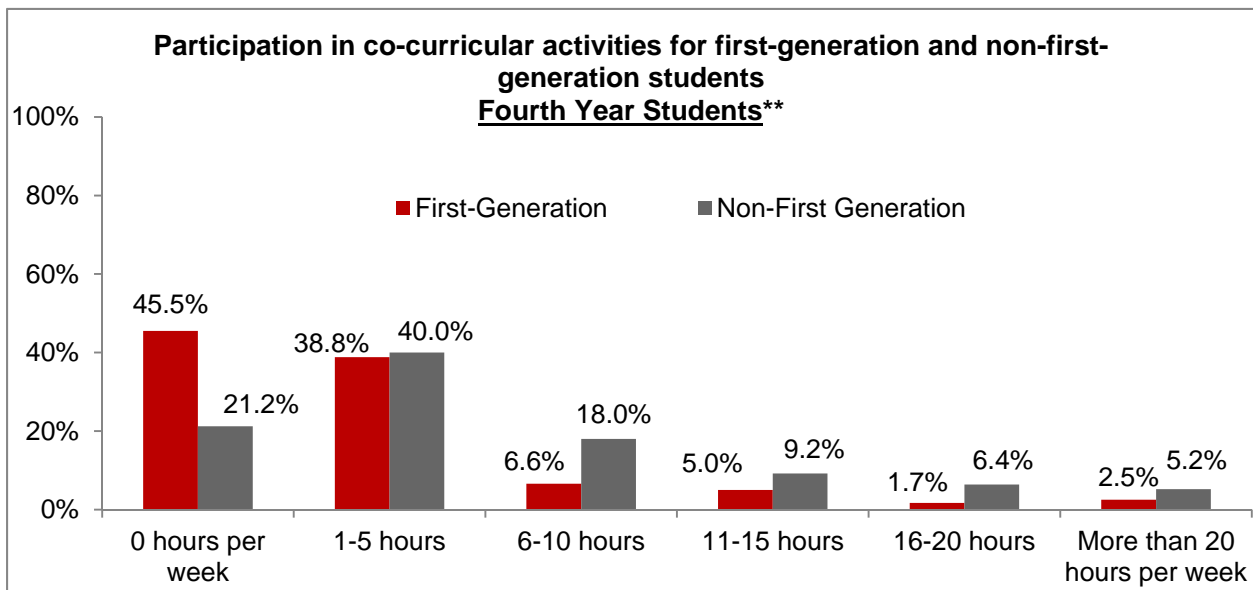
\* $p < .05$  \*\*  $p < .01$

## FIRST-GENERATION STUDENTS

Across all categories of involvement in co-curricular activities, non-first-generation students have higher rates of participation. First-generation status is not a significant predictor of first-year student involvement; however, it does influence participation for fourth-year students.



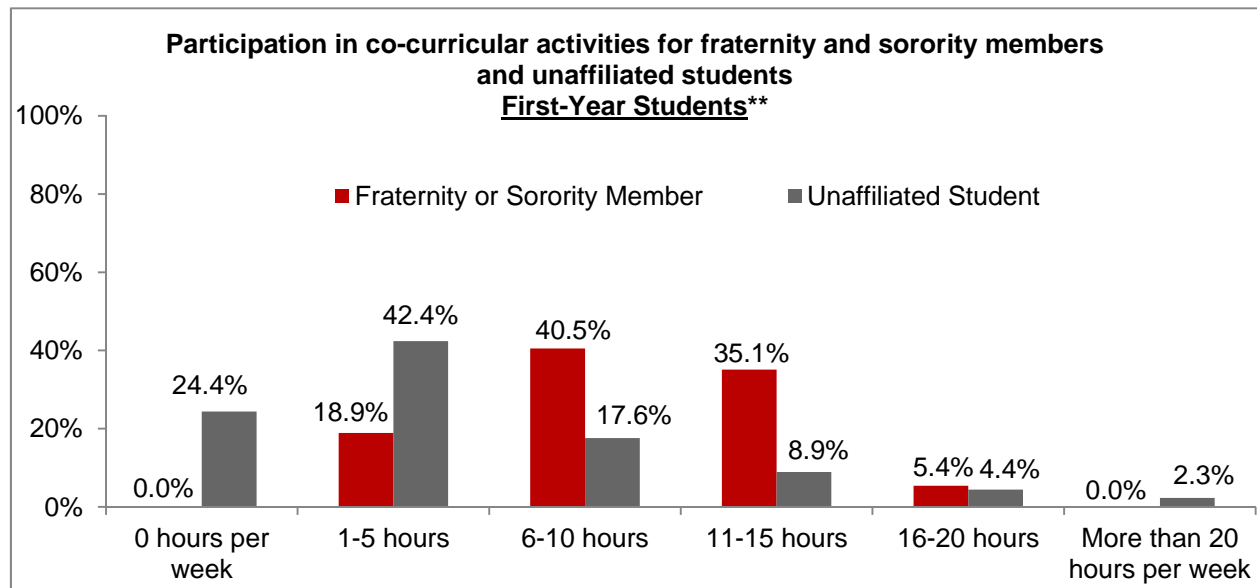
Fourth-year, first-generation students have high rates of non-participation (45.5%).



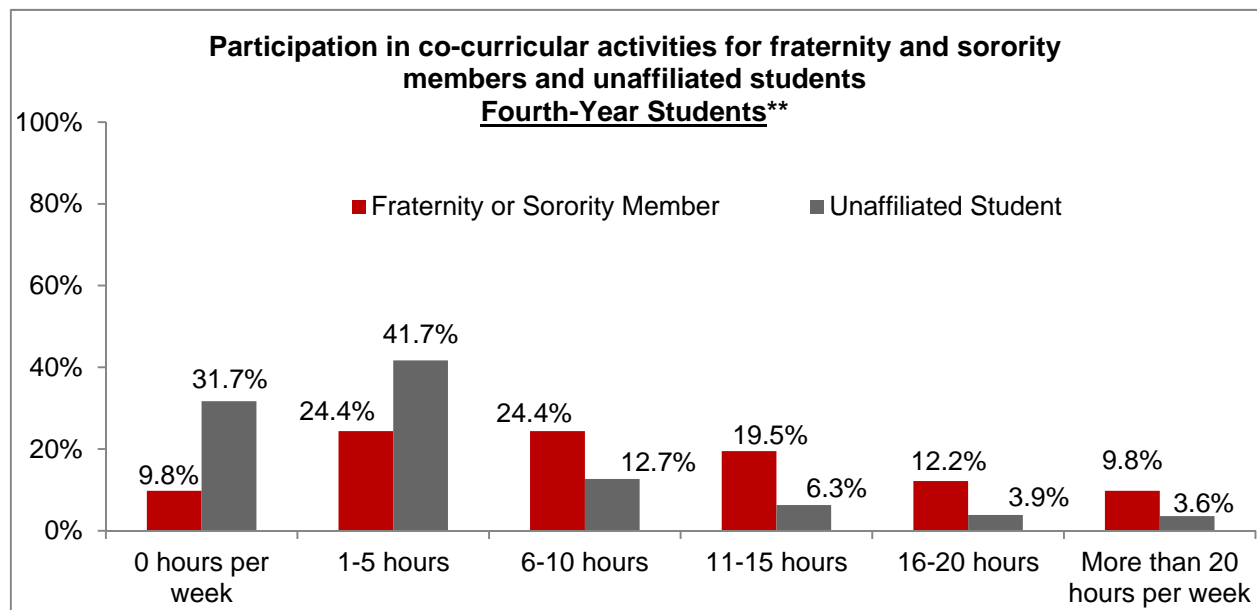
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## FRATERNITY AND SORORITY MEMBERS

Members of fraternities and sororities are more likely to be involved in co-curricular activities across class rank than unaffiliated students. First-year Greek life members most frequently report that they spend 1-5 hours in co-curricular activities (40.5%). The most frequently selected category of involvement for first-year fraternity and sorority members was 11-15 hours a week (35.1%). Fourth-year Greek life members are equally divided among spending 1-5 hours and 6-10 hours in co-curricular activities as the most frequent response. Compared to the first-year cohort, fourth-year Greek life students spend more hours per week participating. More fourth-year fraternity and sorority members (9.8%) reported spending more than 20 hours per week participating, while no first-years reported spending more than 20 hours.



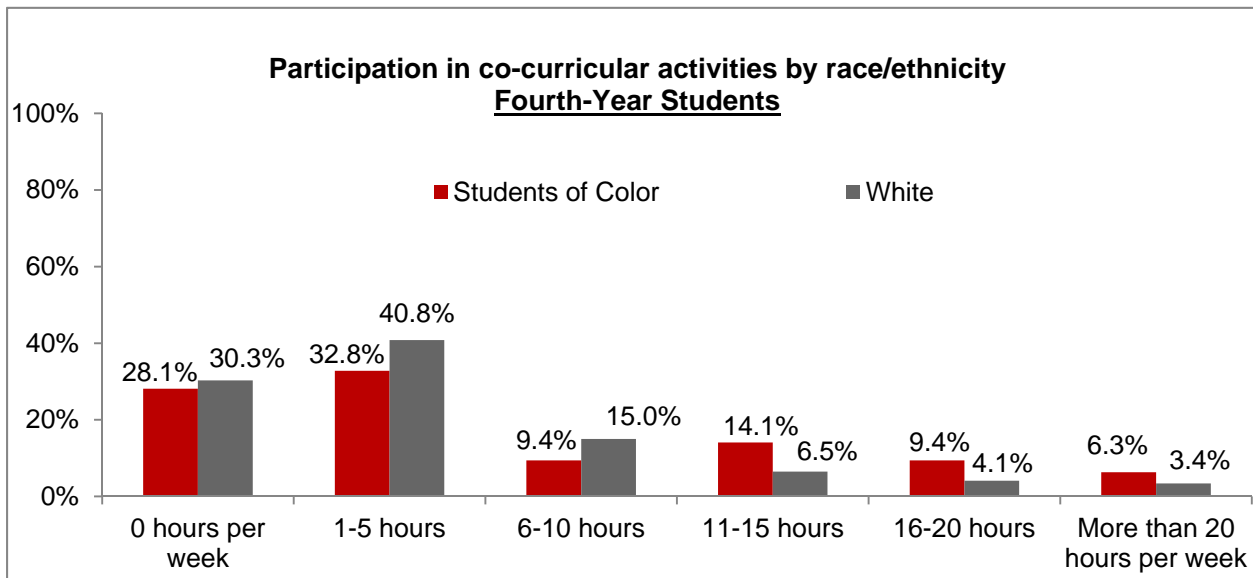
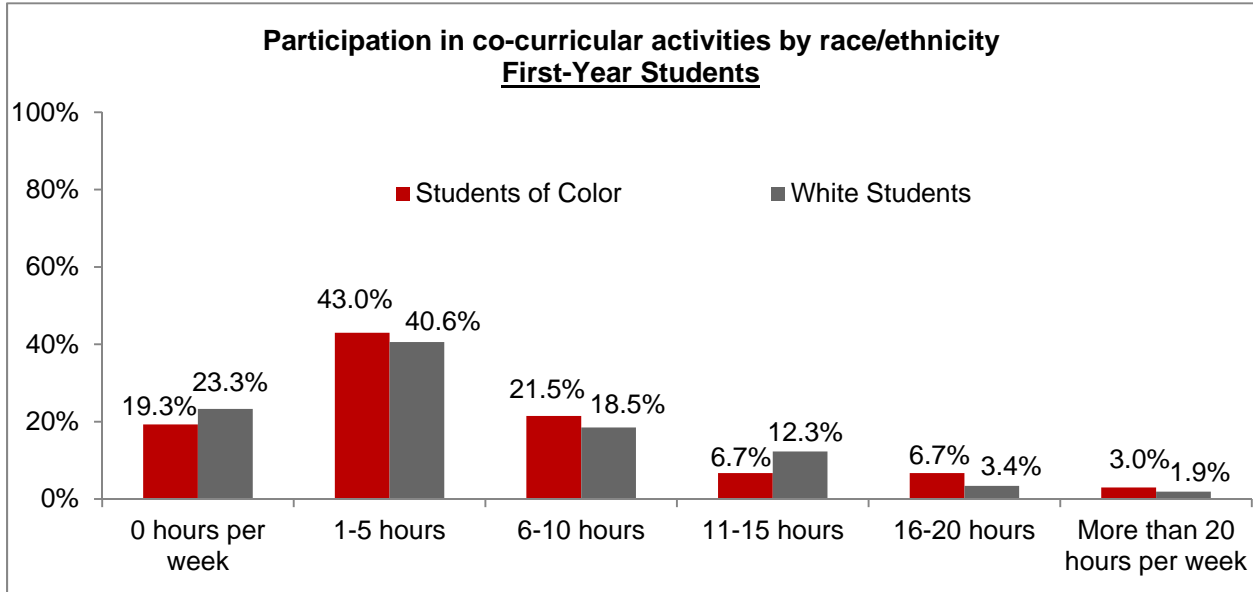
Unaffiliated students have higher rates of non-participation across cohorts. Among first-year students, 24.4% report they are not involved in co-curricular activities and 31.7% of fourth-year unaffiliated students are not involved. Unaffiliated students in both class ranks say they most frequently spend 1-5 hours in co-curricular activities.



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## RACE/ETHNICITY

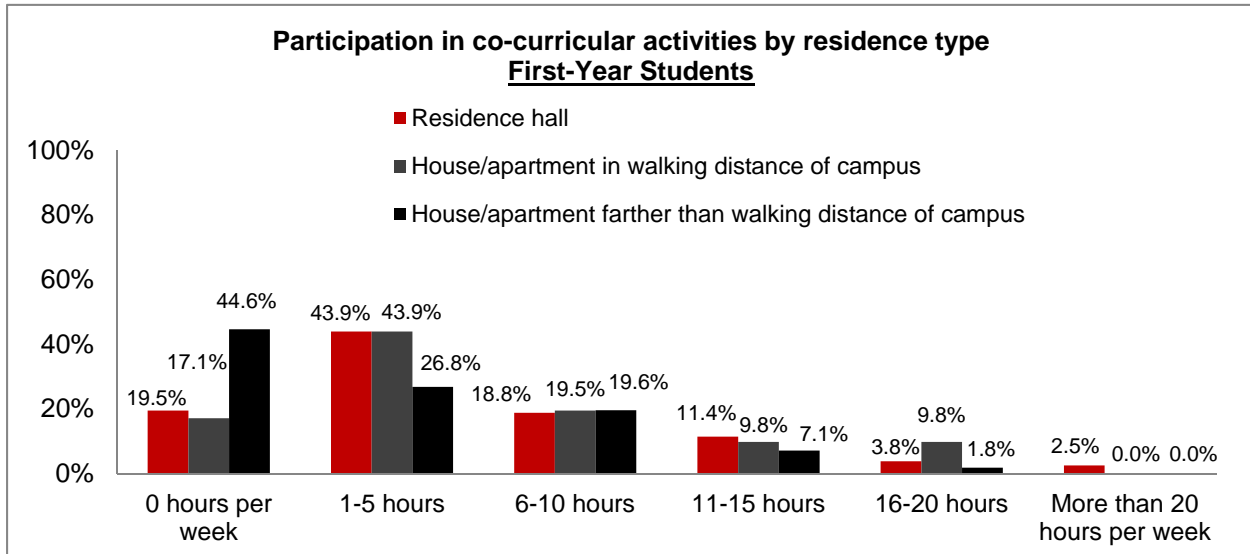
Race and/or ethnic background is not a significant predictor of involvement in co-curricular activities across class rank.



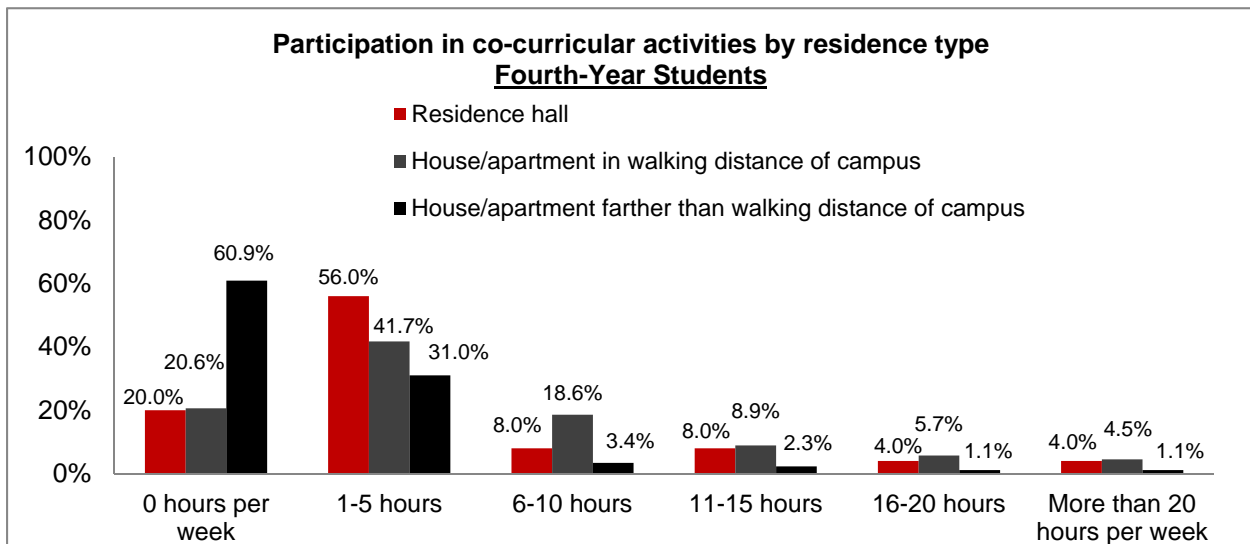
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## RESIDENCE TYPE

While the difference is not statistically significant (likely because there are too few students in some categories), students who live on campus or within walking distance appear more likely to participate in co-curricular activities across class rank. Among the first- and fourth-year students, those who live beyond walking distance of campus have the highest rates of non-participation at 44.6% and 60.9% respectively.



Spending 1-5 hours in co-curricular activities was the most common response across cohorts and residence types. Fourth-year students report the most involvement (9.5%) in the “more than 20 hours” category.

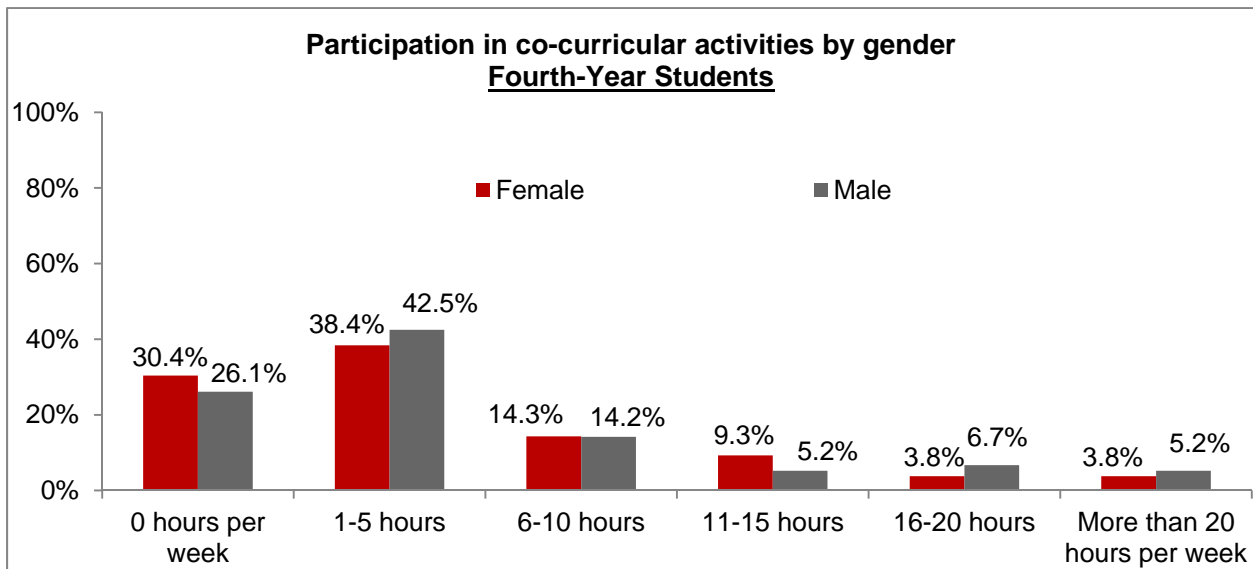
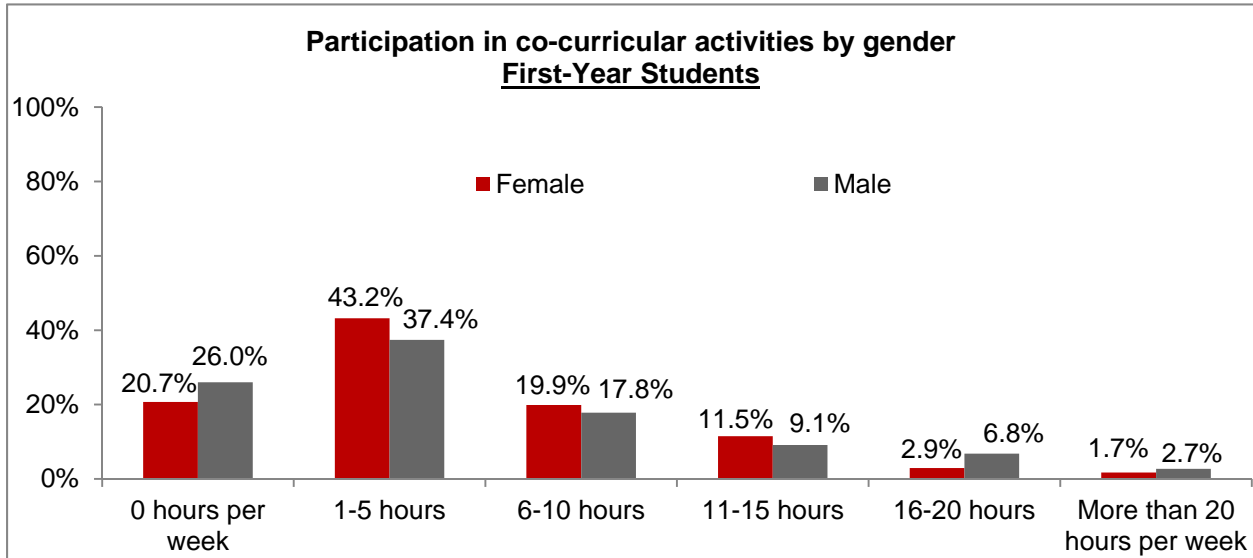


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## GENDER

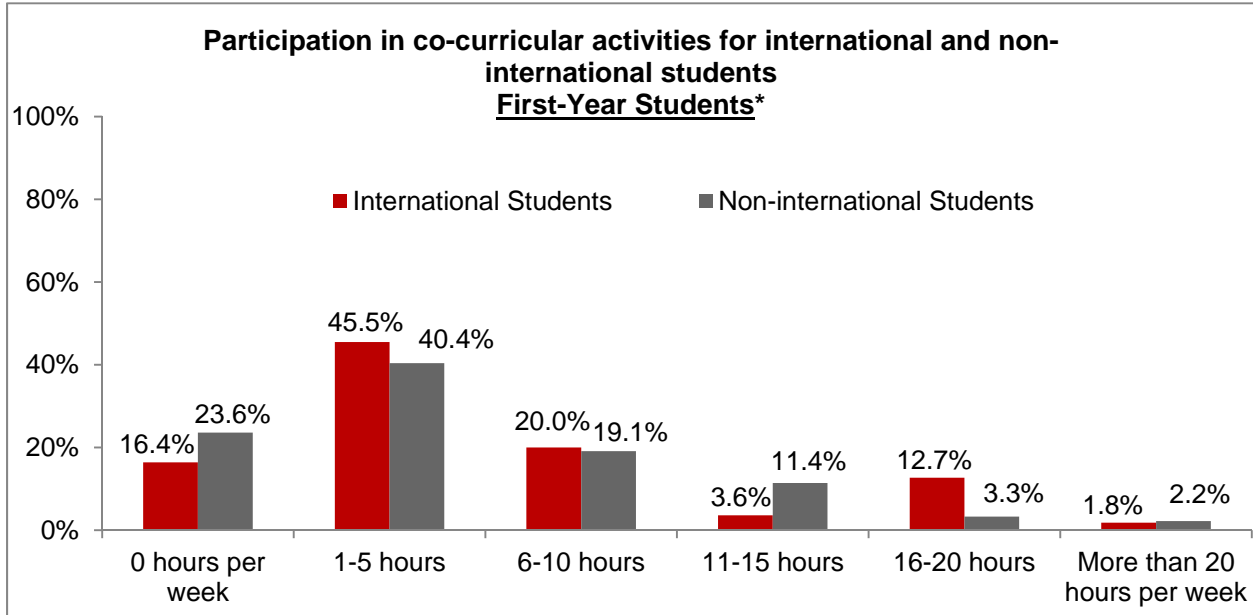
Male and female students' participation in co-curricular activities does not significantly differ among either first-years or fourth-years.



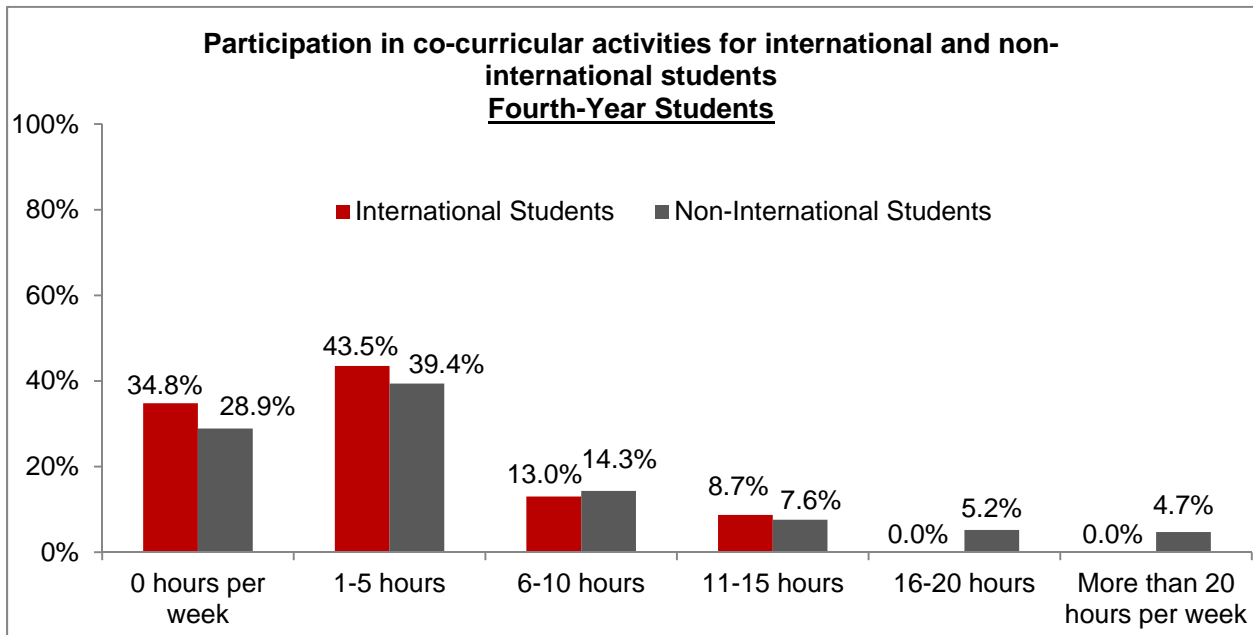
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## INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

International student status is a significant predictor of involvement in co-curricular activities for first-year students, but not for fourth-years students. First-year non-international students have higher non-participation rates (23.6%) than do first-year international students (16.4%).



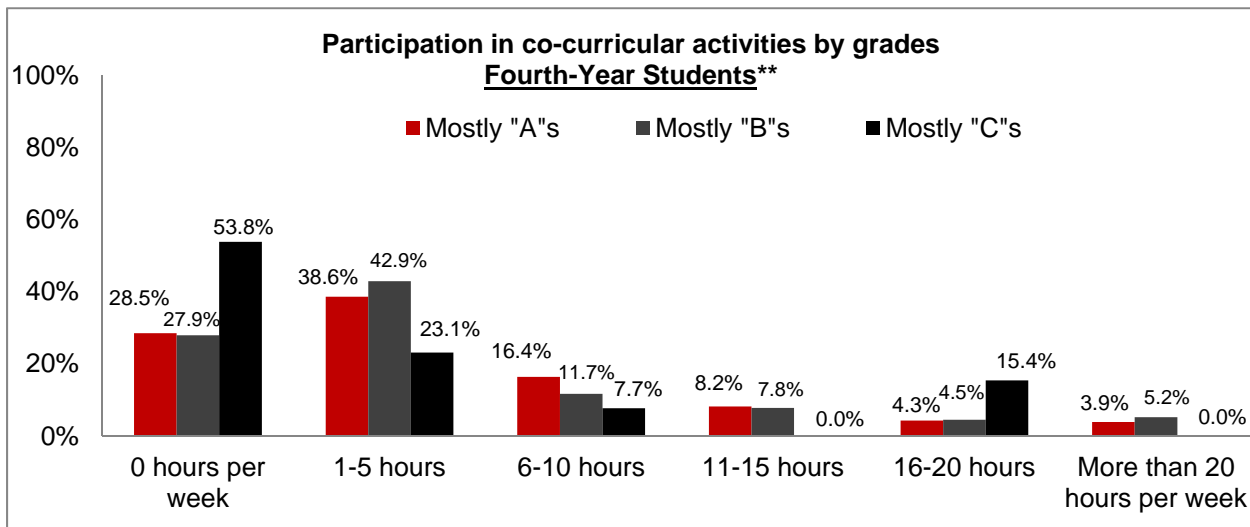
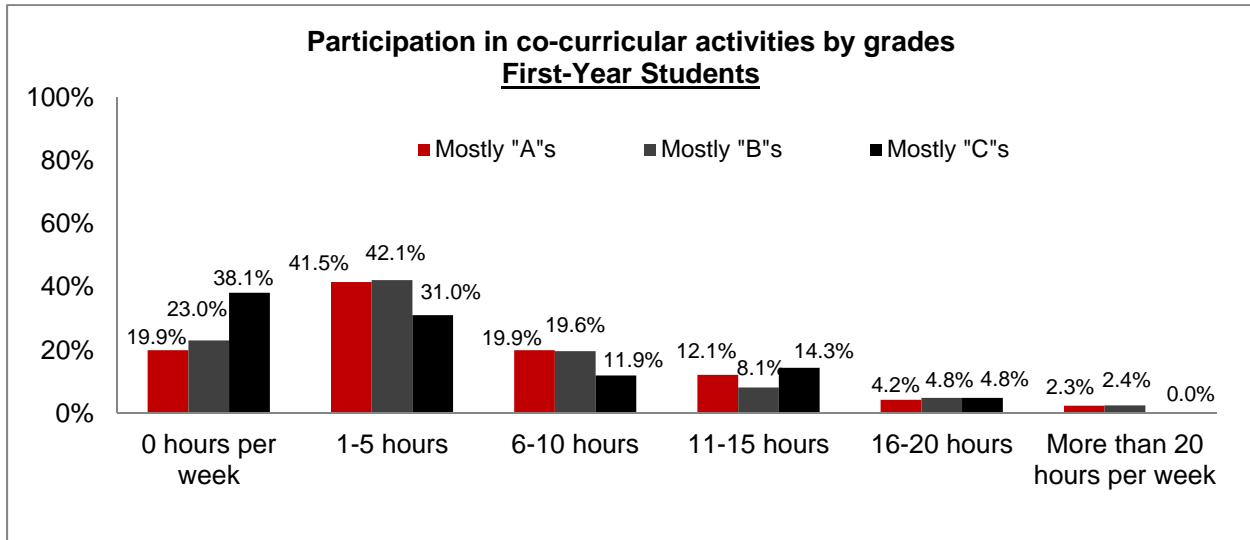
Both international and domestic students most frequently report they spend 1-5 hours involved in co-curricular activities at 45.5% and 40.4% respectively. A greater percentage of domestic students (5.2%) devote more than 20 hours a week to co-curricular activities compared to international students (1.8%).



\* $p < .05$  \*\*  $p < .01$

## GRADES

Grades, which were self-reported, do not significantly influence participation in co-curricular activities for both first- and fourth-year students.



## SUMMARY

Most students are involved in co-curricular activities; 77.2% of first-year students and 71.0% of fourth year students report weekly participation. Involvement is highest among fraternity and sorority members. Fourth-year, first-generation students spend less time in co-curricular activities than their non-first-generation peers. While rates of involvement in activities vary by residence location, these differences are not statistically significant. In order to better engage non-involved students, future research should be conducted to determine whether non-involvement might be attributable to a conscious choice or because of barriers such as finances or transportation. Furthermore, it is also important for student affairs practitioners to understand and highlight the learning that occurs within co-curricular activities that supports student growth, development and success.

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