

# Health and Wellness: Findings from the Wellness Inventory

Center for the Study of Student Life

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## INTRODUCTION

The pilot Wellness Inventory is a comprehensive measure of the well-being of incoming first-year students. The instrument was designed after reviewing extant literature on college student wellness. In the pilot phase, all incoming first-year students were invited to take the survey prior to the start of classes in fall 2011. Students who were enrolled in the Undergraduate Admissions and First-Year Experience orientation course on Carmen, the primary learning platform at The Ohio State University, were solicited to take the assessment prior to entering Ohio State. After completing the consent form (in the form of a Carmen “quiz”), students were offered a link to the wellness inventory. Students could also elect to have their educational records accessed by institutional researchers over time, so that the aggregate inventory results can be related to institutional indicators such as GPA, retention, and residence.

## METHODOLOGY

Of the 4,215 students invited to take the survey, 3,582 responded, yielding a response rate of 85.0%. Researchers performed an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) using principle axis factoring to examine underlying factors that contribute to overall wellness of survey respondents. Past research indicates that different areas of wellness correlate with each other, suggesting oblique rotation is appropriate. This brief focuses on findings related to physical health and its relationship to other areas of wellness.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- While **87.2%** of respondents were confident they can exercise regularly, only **60.1%** reported exercising 3–5 times per week.
- **43.4%** of African American students reported maintaining healthy diets, whereas **67.6%** of the respondents reported maintaining healthy diets.
- **74.2%** of females and **70.6%** of males had BMIs in the normal range.
- Respondents who reported more social connectedness also reported more positive evaluations of their physical health and body image.
- **73.8%** of students reported that they never consume alcohol.
- **85.2%** of students maintained annual physical exams.

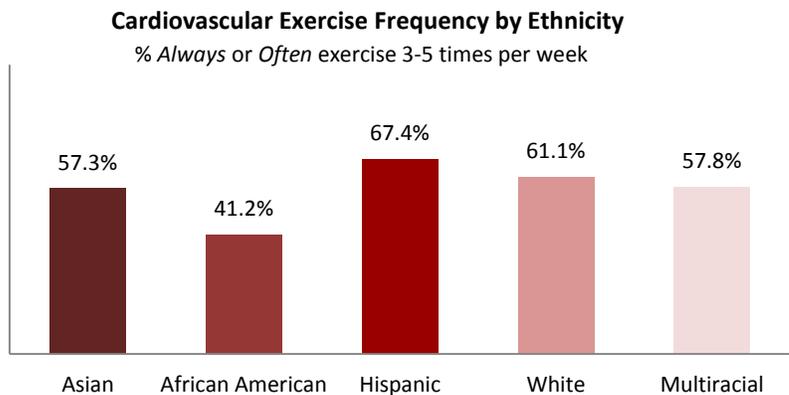
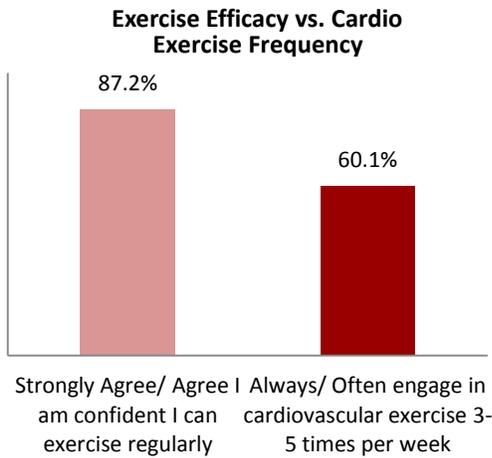
## DEMOGRAPHICS

Gender	Sample	Race/Ethnicity	Sample
Male	45.7%	American Indian/ Native American	.4%
Female	54.2%	Asian/ Pacific Islander	5.9%
		Black/ African American	3.8%
		Hispanic/ Latino(a)	2.7%
		White/ Caucasian	83.6%
		Multiracial	3.6%

Multiracial and White students were over-represented, while African American students were underrepresented. In addition, male students were underrepresented while females were overrepresented.

## EXERCISE

Research has found a relationship between mental health and exercise self-efficacy (Sidman et al., 2009). The data indicate that exercise efficacy, or confidence in one's ability to exercise, is moderately correlated with the ability to cope with stress ( $r = .321$ ). As apparent in the graph to below, however, high exercise efficacy does not always translate into action. Bray and Born (2004) found that exercise decreases significantly from high school to the first two months of college. Future studies should examine barriers to exercise among incoming first-year students to counter this trend. Significant differences in exercise frequency exist among ethnic groups.

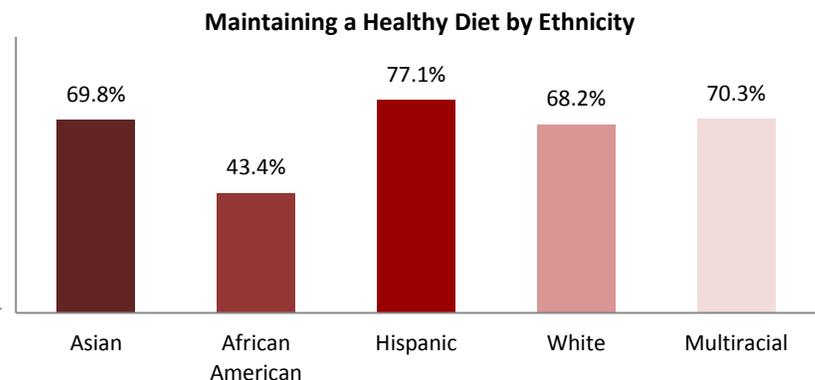
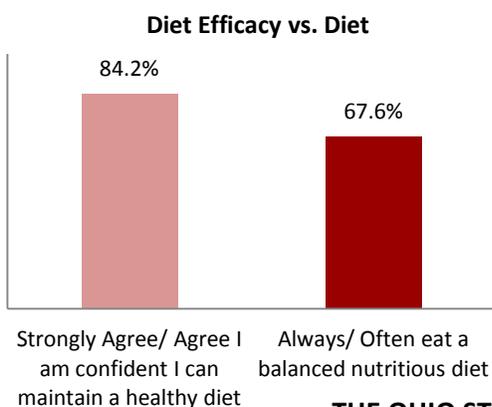


Less than half of students reported frequently engaging in strength training (44.4%) and stretching (45.5%). Students who reported they frequently engaged in cardiovascular exercise reported positive behaviors in other wellness areas more often than students who reported that they exercised infrequently.

	Students who exercise frequently	Students who exercise infrequently
Feel belonging in community	83.9%	60.7%
Rarely feel lonely	79.9%	58.8%
Practice good budgeting	80.1%	59.2%
Maintain annual physical exams	91.6%	67.2%
Depressed over the last 6 months	12.3%	22.4%

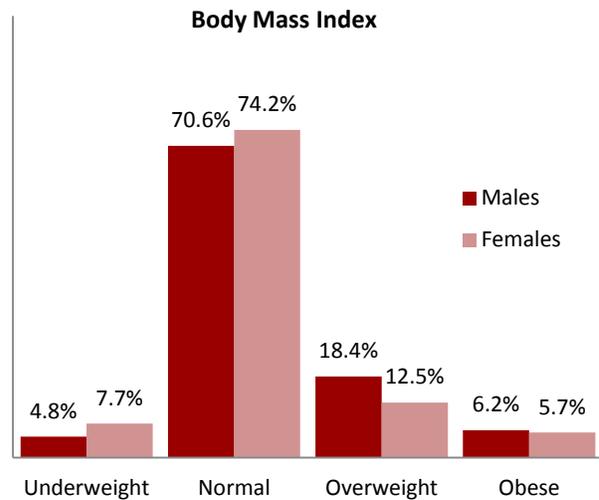
## DIET

Similar to exercise efficacy and exercise frequency, diet efficacy is much higher than frequency of healthful eating. Significant differences in healthful eating exist among ethnic groups.



## BMI

The Centers for Disease Control posits that Body Mass Index (BMI) is a reliable indicator of body fatness for most people, with notable exceptions being highly athletic individuals (2011). Individuals identified as overweight or obese using BMI are at an increased risk for a host of cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, and some cancers. Analysis of height and weight indicate slightly lower proportions of overweight and obese students than other college samples (Nelson, Gortmaker, Subramanian, Cheung, & Wechsler, 2007). Past research also indicates that college students' BMIs increase as their ages increases (Nelson et al., 2007; Huang et al., 2003).



BMI & Ethnicity	Overweight	Obese
Asian/Pacific Islander	17.5%	2.1%
African American	17.6%	16.7%
Hispanic/Latino(a)	7.3%	11.0%
White	15.4%	5.6%
Multiracial	13.9%	6.9%

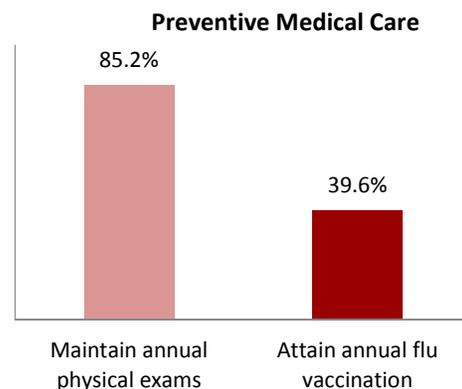
African American students were the most likely to be overweight, and were significantly more likely to be obese. These results follow from the previous sections in which African American students reported less frequent cardiovascular exercise and healthful eating.

Ponzetti (1990) and Vartanian & Hopkinson (2010) found that students with more social connections reported more positive evaluations of their health and body image. Results from this data set support this association (see table, right). Overall, 71.3% of respondents have a positive body image, while 65.1% reported satisfaction with their level of physical health.

Correlations (r)	Satisfaction with physical health	Positive body image
Community belonging	.324	.360
Strong social network	.331	.336
Rarely feel lonely	.363	.391

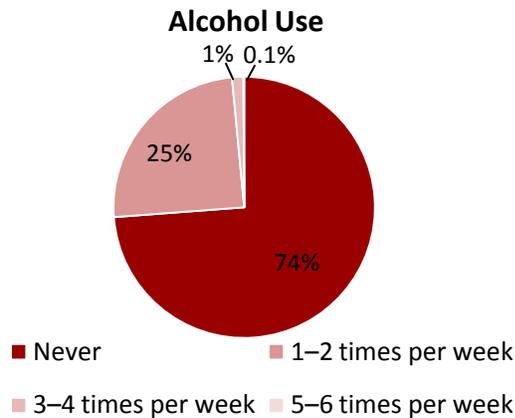
## PREVENTIVE MEASURES

Overall, 82.5% of students reported sleeping at least 6 hours per night. Significantly, 92.9% of males slept six hours per night as compared to 79.5% of females. In addition, Hispanic students were most likely to maintain annual physical exams (87.5%), while Asian students were least likely (76.9%).



## ALCOHOL, TOBACCO, AND SUBSTANCE USE

The majority of students indicated that they do not use alcohol, tobacco, and other substances. Students reported that they *always* or *often* avoided using tobacco products (93.6%), illicit drugs (95.9%), and prescription medication not prescribed to them (97.7%). In addition, 88.2% of students reported that they *always* or *often* avoid using alcohol/nicotine/other substances to manage stress or difficult situations; 72.3% of students reported that they *rarely* or *never* drink to facilitate socializing.



Alcohol by Ethnicity	Never	1-2 times per week
Asian/Pacific Islander	81.1%	18.9%
African American	91.5%	8.5%
Hispanic/Latino(a)	83.7%	16.3%
White	71.8%	26.6%
Multiracial	75.0%	24.2%

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