



Measures of Citizenship and Societal Change

Results from the 2021 Multi-
Institutional Study of Leadership

Center for the Study of Student Life

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THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
OFFICE OF STUDENT LIFE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Multi-Institutional Study of Leadership (MSL) is an international survey that investigates the extent to which the university environment contributes to student leadership development and, in turn, prepares students to be global citizens. This report uses data from the 2021 MSL to examine citizenship-related behaviors before and during college among students on The Ohio State University's Columbus campus.

KEY FINDINGS

- Over two-thirds (**69.6%**) of MSL respondents indicated that they *sometimes* or *often* act to benefit the common good or protect the environment
- **79.0%** of MSL respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they value opportunities that allow them to contribute to their community
- Women indicated participating *often* in one or more social change activities during college (**45.7%**), significantly more than men (**32.5%**)
- Women and men received the same score for Socially Responsible Leadership *before* college (**4.03** out of 5), but women scored significantly higher on this scale *during* college (**3.95**) compared to men (**3.74**)
- Students with a disability indicated participating in one or more social change activity *often* (**52.4%**) significantly more than those without a disability (**40.0%**)
- Heterosexual students scored significantly higher on Socially Responsible Leadership *before* college (**4.05**) compared to students identifying as gay, lesbian, bisexual, queer or questioning (**3.94**), but this difference disappeared *during* college
- Continuing-generation college students scored significantly higher on Socially Responsible Leadership *before* college (**4.05**) compared to first-generation college students (**3.87**), but this difference disappeared *during* college
- International students scored significantly lower on Socially Responsible Leadership *before* college (**3.80**) compared to first-generation U.S.-born students (**3.96**) and second-generation or higher students (**4.05**), but this difference disappeared *during* college

INTRODUCTION

The Multi-Institutional Study of Leadership (MSL) is an online survey that is conducted to measure the environmental factors of the college experiences that contribute to student leadership development and, in turn, contribute to the preparation of engaged citizens. The survey was administered to a random sample of 4,000 undergraduate students on The Ohio State University's Columbus campus. Latinx and international students were underrepresented in the 2018 MSL data, so these groups were oversampled in 2021. Between the random sample and this two-group oversample, 715 students responded for a response rate of 15.4%.

FINDINGS

The MSL is designed around the Social Change Model of Leadership Development which explores the 7 Cs, or values, that suggest leadership is a learned attribute of college students (Higher Education Research Institute, 1996). Of the 7 Cs, this report examines *citizenship*, which is defined as “the process whereby an individual and the collaborative group become responsibly connected to the community and the society through the leadership development activity” (Higher Education Research Institute, 1996). Citizenship involves working toward positive societal change on behalf of the community. Specifically, socially responsible leadership and social change activities before and during college are explored in this report. Differences in responses by demographic group are also

reported. Demographic data are not reported when there are fewer than 20 respondents in a group. See Appendix A for a full breakdown of respondent demographics.

Independent samples *t*-tests, one way analysis of variance (ANOVAs) and chi-square tests were used to analyze statistically significant differences between demographic groups on mean scores, or averages, for the scales in this report. Asterisks are used to indicate significant differences between groups.

SOCIETAL CHANGE ACTIVITIES

The following tables explore the frequency in which students participated in activities contributing to positive change at the societal level before and during college.

Looking back to before you started college, how often did you engage in the following activities?

Performed community service	19.3%	28.3%	43.7%	8.7%
Participated in community or work-related organizations (e.g., church group, scouts, professional associations)	19.8%	21.3%	33.0%	26.0%
Took leadership positions in community organizations or work-related groups (e.g., union leader, PTA, president)	13.4%	13.4%	24.1%	49.1%
Worked with others for change to address societal problems (e.g., rally, protest, community organizing)	6.5%	10.3%	39.7%	43.5%

How often have you engaged in the following activities during your college experience?

Please note that the following items are measured on different scale points than social change behaviors *before* college (the previous table).

	Often	Sometimes	Once	Never
Performed community service	10.2%	39.7%	18.5%	31.5%
Acted to benefit the common good or protect the environment	24.4%	45.2%	13.3%	17.0%
Acted to raise awareness about a campus, community or global problem	11.7%	25.9%	16.2%	46.3%
Been actively involved with an organization that addresses a social or environmental problem	16.0%	21.9%	15.1%	47.0%
Been actively involved with an organization that addresses the concerns of a specific community (e.g., academic council, neighborhood association)	11.6%	20.0%	8.5%	59.9%
Communicated with campus or community leaders about a pressing concern	5.2%	15.5%	15.6%	63.7%
Took action in the community to try to address a social or environmental problem	6.6%	25.5%	18.4%	49.5%
Took part in a protest, rally, march or demonstration	4.7%	17.6%	14.5%	63.2%
Worked with others to address social inequality	10.1%	26.6%	17.6%	45.7%
Worked with others to make the campus or community a better place	11.5%	30.4%	16.5%	41.6%

Demographic Differences

The following table examines differences in participation of citizenship-related societal change activities between demographic groups. Percentages indicate the proportion of students in each group that participate *often* in one or more of these activities (during college). Chi-square tests were conducted to identify statistically significant differences. Small sample sizes and/or high variability in responses could decrease the ability of statistical tests to detect statistically significant differences between demographic groups. Therefore, non-significant findings should be interpreted with caution when sample sizes are small.

Citizenship-Related Societal Change Activities During College ($n = 715$)

	<i>n</i>	% Often	Significance
All Students	715	33.1%	
Gender Identity			**
Man	160	32.5%	
Woman	341	45.7%	
Transgender/Gender Non-Conforming	--	--	
Racial/Ethnic Identity			
White	322	39.1%	
Black	27	48.1%	
Asian	59	49.2%	
Latinx	23	43.5%	
Other race/ethnicity	26	38.5%	
Multiracial/ethnic	57	50.9%	
Sexual Orientation			
Heterosexual	378	40.2%	
LGBQ+	134	46.3%	
Preferred response not listed	--	--	
First-Generation College Student			
Continuing-generation	440	43.4%	
First-generation	72	31.9%	
Don't know	--	--	
Citizenship/Generation Status			
Second-generation or higher	377	40.8%	
First-generation U.S.-born	78	47.4%	
Foreign-born (naturalized/permanent resident)	25	48.0%	
International student	39	38.5%	
Disability Status			*
No disability	432	40.0%	
Has disability	84	52.4%	
Political Affiliation			***
Liberal	277	49.5%	
Moderate	191	35.6%	
Conservative	79	26.6%	

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE LEADERSHIP

The following tables explore the extent to which students agreed or disagreed with statements about their leadership experiences before and during college. The items analyzed below were identified within the socially responsible leadership scales as citizenship-related measures. Response options “Strongly Disagree” and “Disagree” were combined and “Strongly Agree” and “Agree” were combined to create three possible response categories (i.e., strongly disagree/disagree; neutral; strongly agree/agree).

Looking back to before you started college, please indicate your level of agreement with the following items.

I enjoyed working with others toward common goals	80.3%	15.1%	4.6%
I worked well when I knew the collective values of a group	83.8%	13.5%	2.7%
I valued the opportunities that allowed me to contribute to my community	78.8%	18.1%	3.0%

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following items.

Note that this table represents students’ experiences *during* college.

I believe I have responsibilities to my community	73.8%	21.3%	4.8%
I work with others to make my communities better places	61.3%	30.7%	8.0%
I participate in activities that contribute to the common good	71.2%	24.6%	4.1%
It is important to me that I play an active role in my communities	61.4%	31.4%	7.2%
I value opportunities that allow me to contribute to my community	79.0%	17.4%	3.6%
I believe my work has a greater purpose for the larger community	65.5%	27.9%	6.7%

Demographic Differences

The following table examines differences in citizenship-related socially responsible leadership behaviors between demographic groups. A mean score, or average, was calculated for the two scales on socially responsible leadership. For students’ pre-college experiences, students had to respond to at least two of the three items in the scale above to receive a mean score (i.e., pre-college socially responsible leadership scores ranged from 1 to 5, with a mean of 4.01 and standard deviation of 0.6). Cronbach’s alpha for this 3-item scale is moderate (i.e., $\alpha = 0.724$; values closer to 1 indicate stronger reliability).

Students received a mean score for the second scale if they responded to at least five out of the six scale items (i.e., scores for socially responsible leadership *during* college ranged from 1 to 5, with a mean of 3.87 and standard deviation of 0.71). The reliability for this scale is strong (i.e., $\alpha = .899$).

Independent samples *t*-tests and ANOVAs were conducted to identify statistically significant differences in socially responsible leadership. *Before* college, heterosexual students scored significantly higher compared to students identifying as gay, lesbian, bisexual, queer or questioning ($p < .05$). Continuing-generation college students scored significantly higher than first-generation college students *before* college ($p < .05$). Regarding citizenship status, international students scored

significantly lower *before* college than first-generation U.S.-born students ($p < .05$) and second-generation or higher students ($p < .01$). There were no significant differences for these groups *during* college. Analyzing students' experiences *during* college revealed that women scored significantly higher than men ($p < .01$). There were no significant differences between men and women *before* college.

Socially Responsible Leadership Before College ($n = 624$)

	<i>n</i>	Mean	Significance
All Students	624	4.01	
Gender Identity			
Man	160	4.03	
Woman	341	4.03	
Transgender/Gender Non-Conforming	--	--	
Racial/Ethnic Identity			
White	322	4.03	
Black	27	4.19	
Asian	59	3.98	
Latinx	23	3.93	
Other race/ethnicity	57	4.06	
Multiracial/ethnic	26	3.95	
Sexual Orientation			
Heterosexual	378	4.05	*
LGBQ+	134	3.94	
Preferred response not listed	--	--	
First-Generation College Student			
Continuing-generation	440	4.05	*
First-generation	72	3.87	
Don't know	--	--	
Citizenship/Generation Status			
Second-generation or higher	377	4.05	*
First-generation U.S.-born	78	3.96	
Foreign-born (naturalized/permanent resident)	25	4.11	
International student	39	3.80	
Disability Status			
No disability	432	4.03	
Has disability	84	3.94	
Political Affiliation			
Liberal	277	4.03	
Moderate	191	4.00	
Conservative	79	4.09	

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Socially Responsible Leadership During College (n = 554)

	<i>n</i>	Mean	Significance
All Students	554	3.87	
Gender Identity			**
Man	160	3.74	
Woman	341	3.95	
Transgender/Gender Non-Conforming	--	--	
Racial/Ethnic Identity			
White	322	3.86	
Black	27	4.13	
Asian	59	3.96	
Latinx	23	3.89	
Other race/ethnicity	57	3.76	
Multiracial/ethnic	26	3.99	
Sexual Orientation			
Heterosexual	378	3.89	
LGBQ+	134	3.85	
Preferred response not listed	--	--	
First-Generation College Student			
Continuing-generation	440	3.88	
First-generation	72	3.82	
Don't know	--	--	
Citizenship/Generation Status			
Second-generation or higher	377	3.88	
First-generation U.S.-born	78	3.85	
Foreign-born (naturalized/permanent resident)	25	4.10	
International student	39	3.76	
Disability Status			
No disability	432	3.87	
Has disability	84	3.91	
Political Affiliation			
Liberal	277	3.95	
Moderate	191	3.76	
Conservative	79	3.88	

REFERENCE

Higher Education Research Institute. (1996). *A social change model of leadership development: Guidebook version III*. College Park, MD: National Clearinghouse for Leadership Programs.

APPENDIX A: RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

	<i>n</i>	%
Gender Identity		
Man	160	31.0%
Woman	341	66.1%
Transgender/Gender Non-Conforming	15	2.9%
Racial/Ethnic Identity		
White	322	62.6%
Black	27	5.3%
Asian	59	11.5%
Latinx	23	4.5%
Multiracial/ethnic	57	11.1%
Other race/ethnicity	26	5.1%
Sexual Orientation		
Heterosexual	378	73.3%
Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Queer, Questioning	134	26.0%
Preferred response not listed	4	0.8%
First-Generation College Student		
Continuing generation college student	440	84.8%
First-generation college student	72	13.9%
Don't know	7	1.3%
Citizenship/Generation Status		
Second-generation or higher	377	72.6%
First-generation U.S.-born	78	15.0%
Foreign-born (naturalized/permanent resident)	25	4.8%
International student	39	7.5%
Disability Status		
No disability	432	83.7%
Has disability	84	16.3%
Political Affiliation		
Liberal	277	50.6%
Moderate	191	34.9%
Conservative	79	14.4%

Note. A number of respondents did not complete demographic items; subtotals within each demographic category are less than the overall reported number of respondents for each year. Due to sample sizes, students who identified their gender as transgender/gender non-conforming, selected 'preferred response not listed' for sexual orientation, or selected 'don't know' for first-generation college student status were not included in demographic analyses for gender identity, sexual orientation or first-generation college student status. Students in the Latinx and international student oversample did not all respond to the demographic items.