



# Student Experiences During the COVID-19 Pandemic

A Research Report from the  
2022 Student Life Survey

Center for the Study of Student Life

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THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY  
OFFICE OF STUDENT LIFE

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report examines Ohio State students' stress, support and attitudes related to the COVID-19 Pandemic. Data for this report are from the 2022 Student Life Survey. In January 2022, 11,701 students on the Columbus campus were surveyed, out of which 1,639 responded, resulting in a response rate of 14.0%. A sample of 6,741 undergraduate students were surveyed; 14.4% responded ( $n = 970$ ). A sample of 3,795 graduate students were surveyed; 14.5% responded ( $n = 552$ ). A sample of 1,100 professional students were surveyed; 10.4% responded ( $n = 114$ ). Data were weighted to be representative of the Ohio State Columbus campus population.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- **66.8%** of all students reported being stressed out by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- A significantly higher percentage of professional students (**62%**) were worried about personally contracting COVID-19 when compared to **60.0%** of graduate students and **50.4%** of undergraduate students.
- **76.6%** of all students worried about loved ones contracting COVID-19
- **89.9%** of professional students expressed concern about the long-term effects of COVID-19 on society, compared to **82.1%** of graduate students and **76.7%** of undergraduate students.
- More than 8 in 10 of all students were worried about how long the COVID-19 pandemic would last.
- Less than half of all students (**45.5%**) reported that Ohio State has been supportive during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- A significantly higher percentage of undergraduate students (**65.7%**) reported concerns about future career plans compared to graduate students (**59.8%**) and professional students (**48.1%**).
- **65.7%** of all students reported that wellness had become more important to them as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- A significantly higher percentage of undergraduate students (**60.4%**) reported that they had difficulties concentrating in class during the COVID-19 pandemic when compared to professional students (**57.7%**) and graduate students (**48.4%**).

## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to examine how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted students' experiences at The Ohio State University. The questions included in the spring 2022 administration of the Student Life Survey (fielded in January 2022) help us better understand students' feelings, and attitudes related to the pandemic.

## METHODOLOGY

The Student Life Survey is administered annually by the Center for the Study of Student Life to examine trends in student engagement, sense of belonging and satisfaction with the college experience. The 2022 Student Life Survey was administered to a stratified, random sample of 11,701 Ohio State students at the beginning of spring semester (January 2021). This sample comprised 6,741 undergraduate students, 3,795 graduate and 1,100 professional students, all on the Columbus campus. A total of 1,639 students responded to the survey. Three respondents were removed for mischievous or careless response patterns, resulting in a final sample of 1,636 respondents and an overall response rate of 14.0%. The response rate was 14.4% among undergraduate students, 14.5% among graduate students and 10.4% among professional students. See the Appendix for a summary of respondents' demographic and academic characteristics.

Students who did not respond to the items used for this report were removed from analyses, resulting in an unweighted sample size of 1,489 students for this report with 869 undergraduate students, 510 graduate students and 110 professional students. Demographics of the students included in the report did not substantially vary from the overall Student Life Survey sample.

## WEIGHTING PROCEDURE

Responses were weighted to address differences between the demographic characteristics of the survey respondents compared to the general student population at Ohio State in the spring semester of 2022. Weights were adjusted so the survey data are representative of the student population at Ohio State. For example, 63.1% of the survey respondents in the Student Life Survey were female, but 52.3% of the total population at Ohio State was female. The rake weight procedure adjusts for the over-representation of female students in the data to make responses more reflective of the student population, thus making the data more generalizable to Ohio State students. The procedure adjusted the base weight to the demographic data available on the sampling frame using sex, race/ethnicity and student status (i.e., undergraduate, graduate student or professional student). Weighted and unweighted demographic data for survey respondents is available in the Appendix.

## STUDENT LIFE SURVEY FINDINGS

### STUDENT STRESS, SUPPORT AND ATTITUDES RELATED TO COVID-19

The following tables compare undergraduate, graduate and professional students' responses to items assessing a range of attitudes, feelings and perceived support related to the COVID-19 pandemic. All data in the following tables are weighted. To investigate whether differences between the three groups of students were significant, chi-square tests of independence were conducted. A significantly higher percentage of graduate students (55.6%) reported that Ohio State has been supportive throughout the pandemic with under half of undergraduate (42.8%) and professional (48.7%) students reporting the same. A significantly higher percentage of professional students (62.0%) worry about personally contracting COVID-19 compared to 60.6% of graduate students and 50.4% of undergraduate students. Additionally, 89.9% of professional students expressed concern about the long-term societal impacts of the pandemic, compared to 82.1% of graduate students and 76.7% of undergraduate students. Professional students more frequently reported stress related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Table 1: Percentage of students who 'strongly agree' or 'agree' with the following statements by educational level**

% Agree or Strongly Agree	Undergraduate Students	Graduate Students	Professional Students	Statistical Significance
I feel stressed out by the COVID-19 pandemic. <sup>^</sup>	65.5%	69.8%	75.0%	
I am worried about personally contracting COVID-19.	50.4%	60.6%	62.0%	*
I worry about my loved ones contracting COVID-19.	75.6%	79.8%	79.7%	
I feel more connected to my friends as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.	20.0%	18.7%	24.1%	
I worry about the long-term effects of COVID-19 on society. <sup>^</sup>	76.7%	82.1%	89.9%	

% Agree or Strongly Agree	Undergraduate Students	Graduate Students	Professional Students	Statistical Significance
My friends regularly use protective measures, such as social distancing and wearing a mask while indoors.	65.0%	75.4%	70.1%	*
I worry about how long the COVID-19 pandemic will last. ^	82.2%	82.1%	86.1%	
Overall, Ohio State has been supportive during the COVID-19 pandemic.	42.8%	55.6%	48.7%	**

*Note.* Because different numbers of respondents answered each item, *ns* are presented in ranges. Undergraduate  $n = 1,059-1,063$ ; graduate student  $n = 251-252$ ; professional student  $n = 78-80$ .

^ Significance tests were not run for these questions due to low sample sizes within some categories.

Notable differences in responses existed on a number of questions. A significantly higher percentage of undergraduate students (65.7%) reported concerns about their future career when compared to graduate students (59.8%) and professional students (48.1%). Further, more professional students (44.2%) reported struggling financially than undergraduate (40.8%) or graduate students (37.3%). Additionally, just over 30% of all students agreed or strongly agreed that they spent more time outside and found new creative outlets for self-expression during the COVID-19 pandemic. A significantly higher percentage of undergraduate students (48.4%) reported difficulty concentrating in class compared to 57.7% of professional students and 48.4% of graduate students. Finally, a significantly higher percentage of undergraduate students agreed or strongly agreed that they were more engaged with their academic coursework.

**Table 2: Percentage of students who ‘strongly agree’ or ‘agree’ with the following statements by educational level**

% Agree or Strongly Agree	Undergraduate Students	Graduate Students	Professional Students	Statistical Significance
I am concerned about my future career plans.	65.7%	59.8%	48.1%	**
I have found new creative outlets for my self-expression.	37.0%	30.6%	34.6%	
I have been spending more time outside.	31.2%	29.8%	34.6%	
I am struggling financially.	40.8%	37.3%	44.2%	
I am more engaged in my academic coursework.	32.6%	27.4%	28.6%	*
My relationships with other students are less fulfilling.	49.1%	50.2%	53.8%	
Wellness in general has become more important to me.	65.9%	66.5%	60.3%	
I have had difficulty concentrating in class.	60.4%	48.4%	57.7%	**

*Note.* Because different numbers of respondents answered each item, *ns* are presented in ranges. Undergraduate  $n = 1,042-1,045$ ; graduate student  $n = 248-249$ ; professional student  $n = 77-78$ .

## CONCLUSION

This report documents students' stress, support and attitudes related to the COVID-19 pandemic during the spring 2022 semester. The findings suggest that students experienced a notable amount of stress and worry as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, regardless of educational level. However, significant differences between the three groups of students were detected on questions related to personally contracting COVID-19, the use of protective measures by friends and the support provided by the university throughout the pandemic. Despite these differences, all students expressed concern that their loved ones would contract COVID-19 and that the COVID-19 pandemic would last a long time. Further, majorities of students at every educational level reported concerns about the long-term societal impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Less than half of all students agreed or strongly agreed that Ohio State had been supportive during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Students also reported wide-ranging effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on different aspects of their own wellness. In general, students reported that they were worried about their future career plans, found relationships with other students to be less fulfilling and had difficulty concentrating in class. However, 1 in 3 students reported that they had been spending more time outside and found new creative outlets for self-expression since the pandemic. Significant differences between the three groups of students existed on questions related to concern about future career plans, engagement with academic coursework and difficulty concentrating in class. Finally, a majority of all students reported that wellness had become more important to them during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This report helps us learn more about the various ways the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the student experience at Ohio State. The findings of this report suggest that it is important to continue developing and maintaining holistic approaches designed to address the negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on Ohio State students.

## APPENDIX A: PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS<sup>1</sup>

Note: Participant demographics below represent all respondents in the 2022 Student Life Survey. Demographics of respondents for this report did not substantially vary from the overall sample.

	Undergraduate Students			Graduate Students			Professional Students		
	<i>n</i>	Un-weighted Percent	Weighted Percent	<i>n</i>	Un-weighted Percent	Weighted Percent	<i>n</i>	Un-weighted Percent	Weighted Percent
<b>Total</b>	<b>970</b>			<b>552</b>			<b>114</b>		
<b>Academic Level</b>	<b>947</b>			—			—		
First-year undergraduate	203	21.4%	21.1%	—	—	—	—	—	—
Second-year undergraduate	287	30.3%	30.7%	—	—	—	—	—	—
Third-year undergraduate	223	23.5%	23.4%	—	—	—	—	—	—
Fourth-year undergraduate	185	19.5%	19.1%	—	—	—	—	—	—
Fifth-year or beyond undergraduate	49	5.2%	5.7%	—	—	—	—	—	—
<b>Gender Identity</b>	<b>970</b>			<b>552</b>			<b>114</b>		
Man	321	33.1%	43.7%	217	39.3%	49.3%	30	26.3%	35.9%
Woman	610	62.9%	52.0%	325	58.9%	48.6%	81	71.1%	61.1%
Another identity not listed	30	3.1%	3.4%	4	0.7%	0.8%	3	2.6%	3.1%
Prefer not to say	9	0.9%	0.9%	6	1.1%	1.3%	0	0.0%	0.0%
<b>Transgender Status</b>	<b>930</b>			<b>536</b>			<b>114</b>		
Transgender	18	1.9%	2.2%	5	0.9%	1.1%	2	1.8%	1.9%
Cisgender	896	96.3%	96.0%	524	97.8%	97.4%	110	96.5%	95.7%
Not sure	9	1.0%	0.9%	0	0.0%	0.0%	1	0.9%	1.2%
Prefer not to say	7	0.8%	0.9%	7	1.3%	1.5%	1	0.9%	1.2%

	Undergraduate Students			Graduate Students			Professional Students		
	<i>n</i>	Un-weighted Percent	Weighted Percent	<i>n</i>	Un-weighted Percent	Weighted Percent	<i>n</i>	Un-weighted Percent	Weighted Percent
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>	<b>970</b>			<b>545</b>			<b>114</b>		
African American or Black	53	5.5%	8.7%	23	4.2%	6.6%	2	1.8%	2.0%
Asian or Asian American	119	12.3%	11.9%	146	26.8%	23.9%	17	14.9%	16.1%
Latinx or Hispanic	28	2.9%	2.8%	28	5.1%	5.1%	4	3.5%	2.9%
Middle Eastern or Arab American	12	1.2%	1.3%	11	2.0%	1.9%	1	0.9%	0.8%
White or European American	721	74.3%	71.3%	315	57.8%	58.2%	80	70.2%	68.5%
Prefer not to answer	20	2.1%	2.1%	10	1.8%	2.2%	8	7.0%	7.7%
Another identity not listed	16	1.6%	1.8%	11	2.0%	1.9%	2	1.8%	2.0%
Biracial or Multiracial	1	0.1%	0.1%	1	0.2%	0.3%	0	0.0%	0.0%
<b>Sexual Orientation</b>	<b>930</b>			<b>537</b>			<b>114</b>		
LGBQ+	243	26.1%	25.5%	96	17.9%	17.5%	23	20.2%	18.4%
Heterosexual/straight	659	70.9%	71.4%	419	78.0%	78.7%	87	76.3%	78.3%
Prefer not to say	28	3.0%	3.2%	22	4.1%	3.8%	4	3.5%	3.3%
<b>Generational Status</b>	<b>970</b>			<b>552</b>			<b>114</b>		
First-generation student	756	77.9%	77.4%	485	87.9%	87.4%	105	92.1%	92.1%
Continuing-generation student	214	22.1%	22.6%	67	12.1%	12.6%	9	7.9%	7.9%
<b>Disability Status</b>	<b>933</b>			<b>539</b>			<b>114</b>		
Has a disability	92	9.9%	9.7%	43	8.0%	7.7%	9	7.9%	6.7%
Does not have a disability	802	86.0%	86.0%	481	89.2%	89.3%	101	88.6%	90.2%
Prefer not to say	39	4.2%	4.3%	15	2.8%	2.9%	4	3.5%	3.1%
<b>Education Route</b>	<b>940</b>			—			—		
Campus change	63	6.7%	7.5%	—	—	—	—	—	—
Transfer student	152	16.2%	16.6%	—	—	—	—	—	—
Continuing Ohio State student	725	77.1%	75.9%	—	—	—	—	—	—

	Undergraduate Students			Graduate Students			Professional Students		
	<i>n</i>	Un-weighted Percent	Weighted Percent	<i>n</i>	Un-weighted Percent	Weighted Percent	<i>n</i>	Un-weighted Percent	Weighted Percent
<b>Residence</b>	<b>954</b>			—			—		
On-campus	402	42.1%	42.0%	—	—	—	—	—	—
Off-campus	535	56.1%	56.3%	—	—	—	—	—	—
Sorority or fraternity housing	17	1.8%	1.6%	—	—	—	—	—	—



## APPENDIX B: STRESS, SUPPORT AND ATTITUDES RELATED TO COVID-19 ITEM RESPONSES

The following tables include all answer options by educational level for Student Life Survey questions related to the COVID-19 pandemic. The sample size (*n*) reflects the weighted sample.

**Table B1: Stress and Support Related to the COVID-19 Pandemic**

	Undergraduate Students	Graduate Students	Professional Students
I feel stressed out by the COVID-19 pandemic.	( <i>n</i> = 1,063)	( <i>n</i> = 252)	( <i>n</i> = 80)
Strongly Disagree / Disagree	18.2%	13.9%	12.5%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	16.4%	16.3%	12.5%
Agree / Strongly Agree	65.5%	69.8%	75.0%
I am worried about personally contracting COVID-19.	( <i>n</i> = 1,062)	( <i>n</i> = 251)	( <i>n</i> = 79)
Strongly Disagree / Disagree	32.5%	24.3%	25.3%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	17.1%	15.1%	12.7%
Agree / Strongly Agree	50.4%	60.6%	62.0%
I worry about my loved ones contracting COVID-19.	( <i>n</i> = 1,060)	( <i>n</i> = 252)	( <i>n</i> = 79)
Strongly Disagree / Disagree	14.8%	10.7%	8.9%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	9.6%	9.5%	11.4%
Agree / Strongly Agree	75.6%	79.8%	79.7%
I feel more connected to my friends as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.	( <i>n</i> = 1,064)	( <i>n</i> = 251)	( <i>n</i> = 79)
Strongly Disagree / Disagree	53.4%	54.2%	55.7%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	26.6%	27.1%	20.3%
Agree / Strongly Agree	20.0%	18.7%	24.1%
I worry about the long-term effects of COVID-19 on society.	( <i>n</i> = 1,059)	( <i>n</i> = 251)	( <i>n</i> = 79)
Strongly Disagree / Disagree	11.8%	7.2%	5.1%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	11.5%	10.8%	5.1%
Agree / Strongly Agree	76.7%	82.1%	89.9%
My friends regularly use protective measures, such as social distancing and wearing a mask while indoors.	( <i>n</i> = 1,061)	( <i>n</i> = 252)	( <i>n</i> = 77)
Strongly Disagree / Disagree	16.0%	10.7%	15.6%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	18.9%	13.9%	14.3%
Agree / Strongly Agree	65.0%	75.4%	70.1%
I worry about how long the COVID-19 pandemic will last.	( <i>n</i> = 1,061)	( <i>n</i> = 251)	( <i>n</i> = 79)
Strongly Disagree / Disagree	9.2%	8.0%	2.5%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	8.6%	10.0%	11.4%
Agree / Strongly Agree	82.2%	82.1%	86.1%



Overall, Ohio State has been supportive during the COVID-19 Pandemic	(n = 1,062)	(n = 252)	(n = 78)
Strongly Disagree / Disagree	31.9%	22.2%	24.4%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	25.2%	22.2%	26.9%
Agree / Strongly Agree	42.8%	55.6%	48.7%

**Table B2: Attitudes Related to the COVID-19 Pandemic**

	Undergraduate Students	Graduate Students	Professional Students
I am concerned about my future career plans.	(n = 1,043)	(n = 249)	(n = 77)
Strongly Disagree / Disagree	17.6%	24.1%	23.4%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	16.7%	16.1%	28.6%
Agree / Strongly Agree	65.7%	59.8%	48.1%
I have found new creative outlets for my self-expression.	(n = 1,042)	(n = 248)	(n = 78)
Strongly Disagree / Disagree	34.8%	37.9%	35.9%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	28.1%	31.5%	29.5%
Agree / Strongly Agree	37.0%	30.6%	34.6%
I have been spending more time outside.	(n = 1,044)	(n = 248)	(n = 78)
Strongly Disagree / Disagree	44.0%	41.5%	35.9%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	24.8%	28.6%	29.5%
Agree / Strongly Agree	31.2%	29.8%	34.6%
I am struggling financially.	(n = 1,045)	(n = 249)	(n = 77)
Strongly Disagree / Disagree	32.1%	33.3%	26.0%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	27.2%	29.3%	29.9%
Agree / Strongly Agree	40.8%	37.3%	44.2%
I am more engaged in my academic classwork.	(n = 1,045)	(n = 248)	(n = 77)
Strongly Disagree / Disagree	42.6%	37.9%	42.9%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	24.8%	34.7%	28.6%
Agree / Strongly Agree	32.6%	27.4%	28.6%
My relationships with other students are less fulfilling.	(n = 1,043)	(n = 249)	(n = 78)
Strongly Disagree / Disagree	25.5%	19.3%	17.9%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	25.4%	30.5%	28.2%
Agree / Strongly Agree	49.1%	50.2%	53.8%
Wellness in general has become more important to me.	(n = 1,042)	(n = 248)	(n = 78)
Strongly Disagree / Disagree	14.7%	10.9%	12.8%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	19.4%	22.6%	26.9%
Agree / Strongly Agree	65.9%	66.5%	60.3%
I have had difficulty concentrating in class.	(n = 1,044)	(n = 248)	(n = 78)
Strongly Disagree / Disagree	21.3%	31.0%	16.7%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	18.3%	20.6%	25.6%
Agree / Strongly Agree	60.4%	48.4%	57.7%

