



Student Organization Membership: Involvement and Belonging

A Research Report from the
2022 Student Life Survey

Center for the Study of Student Life

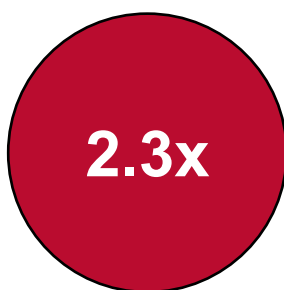
September 2022

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

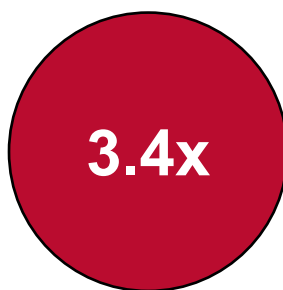
This report compares the overall involvement and sense of belonging between students who participated and did not participate in a student organization. Data for this report are from the 2022 Student Life Survey. In January 2022, 11,701 total students on the Columbus campus were surveyed, out of which 1,639 responded, resulting in a response rate of 14.0%. A total of 14.4% of undergraduate students responded ($n = 970$). A total of 14.5% graduate students responded ($n = 552$). A total of 10.4% professional students responded ($n = 114$). Data were weighted to be representative of the Ohio State Columbus campus population.

SENSE OF BELONGING

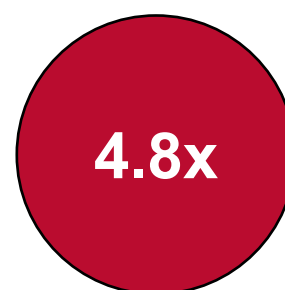
Compared to students who are not involved in student organizations, students that are involved in student organizations are...



more likely to feel that they are a member of the Ohio State community (among undergraduates)

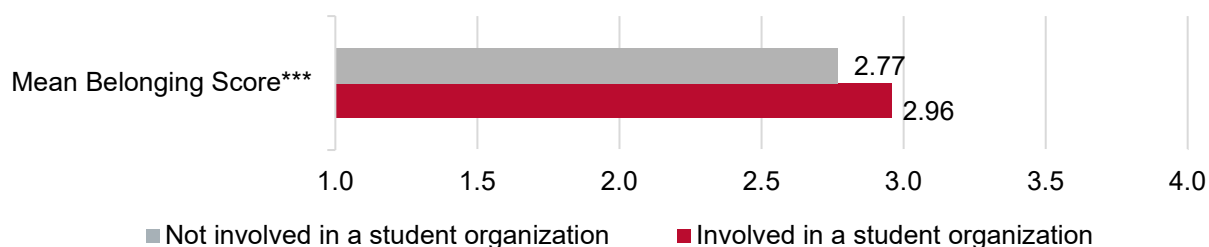


more likely to have relationships with other Ohio State students (among undergraduates)

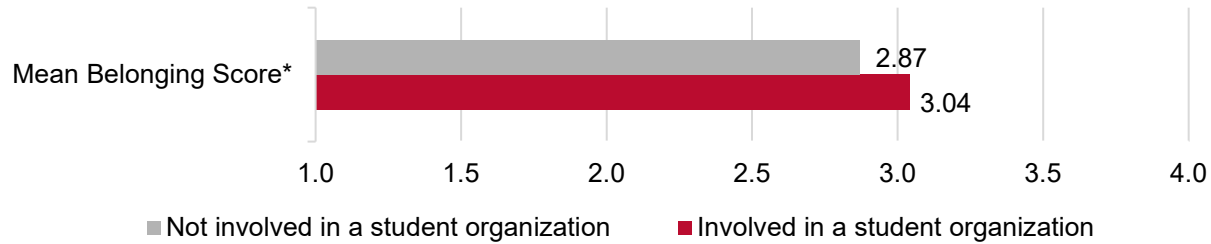


more likely to have relationships with other Ohio State students (among graduate and professional students)

- Undergraduate students who were involved with a student organization had **significantly higher sense of belonging scores on average (2.96 out of 4)** compared to undergraduate students who were not involved with a student organization (**2.77 out of 4**).



- Graduate and professional students who were involved with a student organization had **significantly higher sense of belonging scores on average (3.04 out of 4)** compared to graduate and professional students who were not involved with a student organization (**2.87 out of 4**). Graduate and professional students were combined for this calculation due to small sample sizes.



STUDENT ORGANIZATION INVOLVEMENT HIGHLIGHTS

- **49.3%** of all Ohio State students report being involved with at least one student organization, including **54.3%** of undergraduate students, **22.7%** of graduate students and **63.2%** of professional students.
- **Overall, students in student organizations were more likely to be involved in *additional* campus activities than students not in student organizations for undergraduate, graduate and professional students.**

INTRODUCTION

This report compares students who are and are not members of student organizations, and those two groups' involvement in other campus activities and their sense of belonging at The Ohio State University. These groups were examined within the undergraduate, graduate and professional student populations.

METHODS

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). 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 ($n = 970$), 14.5% among graduate students ($n = 552$) and 10.4% among professional students ($n = 114$). 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.

To examine the association between involvement in a student organization and one's sense of belonging, chi-square tests of independence and logistic regressions were employed. Graduate and professional students were combined in these calculations due to small sample sizes.

Students were asked in the survey to select from a list the campus activities that they were involved in. Involvement percentages in campus activities were compared between students in a student organization versus students *not* in a student organization for undergraduate, graduate and professional students.



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.

FINDINGS

STUDENT ORGANIZATION INVOLVEMENT AND BELONGING AT OHIO STATE

Within the Student Life Survey, students were presented with several statements and asked to indicate their level of agreement with them. These statements were designed to measure their sense of belonging at Ohio State. Associations between student responses and student organization involvement status were examined. Logistic regression analyses were also used to determine if the association between student organization involvement and student belonging remained after taking into account demographic and academic characteristics. Control variables included gender identity, race/ethnicity, international student status, living on campus, academic rank, cumulative GPA and first-generation student status. These analyses suggest that student organization involvement had strong associations with students' sense of belonging across several of the statements below.

Table 1: Undergraduate Student Organization Involvement: Belonging and Other Student Success Outcomes

% Agree or Strongly Agree	Involved in a Student Organization	Not involved in a Student Organization	Odds Ratio ^a
I feel that I am a member of the Ohio State community	89.9%	79.8%	2.3***
I have relationships with other Ohio State students	92.1%	77.4%	3.4***
I have relationships with Ohio State faculty (e.g., professors)	58.5%	53.3%	1.2
I have relationships with Ohio State staff (e.g., academic advisors, hall directors, Student Life employees)	53.6%	48.3%	1.2
I participate in Ohio State traditions	75.3%	64.4%	1.7***
I feel a sense of belonging to Ohio State	84.1%	73.7%	1.9***
Ohio State offers me opportunities to engage in difficult dialogues	80.3%	73.2%	1.5**
Ohio State has helped me progress in my career development	88.7%	84.0%	1.5*
Ohio State has contributed to my personal growth	89.0%	86.7%	1.3
My experiences at Ohio State have helped me to set personal goals	91.5%	83.6%	2.1***

My experiences at Ohio State have helped me to set professional goals	89.1%	85.5%	1.4
I have developed as a leader during my time at Ohio State	76.5%	65.1%	1.7***
During my time at Ohio State, wellness (i.e., physical, mental and emotional health) has become more important to me	81.9%	78.3%	1.2
Academic programs at Ohio State meet my needs	85.8%	85.5%	1.0
Programs and services at Ohio State meet my needs (e.g., student support offices, student activities)	80.3%	75.9%	1.3
I would recommend Ohio State to other students	91.6%	86.0%	1.8**
Overall, I am satisfied with my experiences at The Ohio State University	89.9%	83.0%	1.8***

^a Results from logistic regression controlling for, or taking into account: gender, race, international status, living on campus, academic rank, cumulative GPA and first-generation student status.

A similar set of analyses employing chi-square tests of independence and logistic regressions were used to examine how involvement shapes graduate and professional students' sense of belonging and perceptions of Ohio State. Due to small sample sizes, graduate and professional students were analyzed together rather than separately. As with the previous set of analyses, associations between student responses and involvement status were first examined. Second, logistic regression analyses were used to determine if the association between involvement and student outcomes remained after taking into account demographic and academic characteristics. Control variables included gender identity, race/ethnicity, international student status, graduate/professional status, cumulative GPA and first-generation student status.

As Table 8 demonstrates, the relationship between graduate and professional student involvement and sense of belonging was relatively weak, except for the items related to relationships with other Ohio State students and leadership development.

Table 2: Graduate and Professional Student Organization Involvement: Belonging and Other Student Success Outcomes

% Agree or Strongly Agree	Involved in a Student Organization	Not involved in a Student Organization	Odds Ratio ^a
I feel that I am a member of the Ohio State community	88.2%	78.9%	1.9*
I have relationships with other Ohio State students	95.5%	81.6%	4.8**
I have relationships with Ohio State faculty (e.g., professors)	85.5%	84.1%	1.1
I have relationships with Ohio State staff (e.g., academic advisors, hall directors, Student Life employees)	53.6%	53.5%	1.0
I participate in Ohio State traditions	53.6%	44.1%	1.5
I feel a sense of belonging at Ohio State	75.5%	72.5%	1.1
Ohio State offers me opportunities to engage in difficult dialogues	71.8%	73.1%	1.0
Ohio State has helped me progress in my career development	90.8%	92.1%	0.8
Ohio State has contributed to my personal growth	88.1%	85.5%	1.2
My experiences at Ohio State have helped me to set personal goals	88.2%	87.3%	1.1

My experiences at Ohio State have helped me to set professional goals	92.6%	91.0%	1.2
I have developed as a leader during my time at Ohio State	81.7%	71.5%	1.8*
During my time at Ohio State, wellness (i.e., physical, mental and emotional health) has become more important to me	83.3%	78.3%	1.4
Academic programs at Ohio State meet my needs	86.1%	90.5%	0.8
Programs and services at Ohio State meet my needs (e.g., student support offices, student activities)	75.9%	79.5%	0.9
I would recommend Ohio State to other students	88.1%	89.5%	0.9
Overall, I am satisfied with my experiences at The Ohio State University	88.1%	88.7%	0.9

^a Results from logistic regression controlling for, or taking into account: gender, race, international status, graduate/professional status, cumulative GPA and generational status.

The final set of analyses examined variations in students' average sense of belonging. To obtain a mean score, select items from Table 3 and Table 4 were used to create a sense of belonging scale. Table 9 illustrates which items were incorporated into the scale. Additional analyses demonstrated that the items had an acceptable reliability score ($\alpha = 0.81$) and loaded onto a single factor, indicating this is a reliable scale for measuring sense of belonging. Each item was a four-point Likert question (i.e., Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree), meaning that a minimum possible score was one, and a maximum possible score was four. Students were given a score if they answered at least four out of the five questions on the belongingness scale. Graduate and professional students were analyzed together due to small sample sizes.

Table 3: Items in Sense of Belonging Scale

Based on your experience at Ohio State thus far, please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements:

I feel that I am a member of the Ohio State community

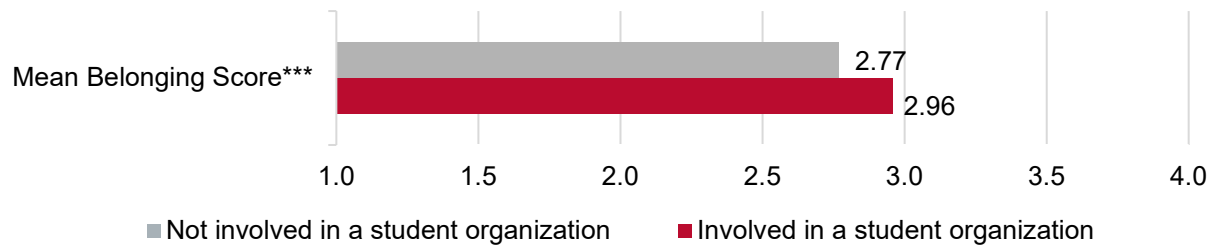
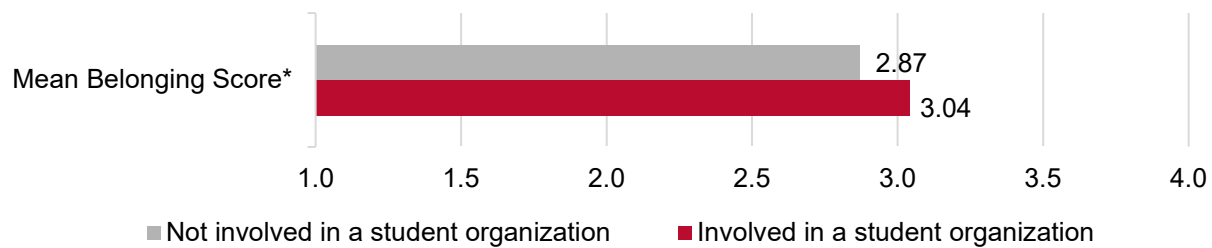
I have relationships with other Ohio State students

I have relationships with Ohio State faculty (e.g., professors)

I have relationships with Ohio State staff (e.g., academic advisors, hall directors, Student Life employees)

I feel a sense of belonging at Ohio State

The first set of analyses involved independent sample *t*-tests to examine whether average scores in sense of belonging differed by involvement. Figure 1 and Figure 2 below summarize these findings. Undergraduate students who were involved in at least one student organization in Table 1 had a significantly higher average belonging score than students who were not involved at least one student organization. Similarly, graduate and professional students who were involved with student organizations had a significantly higher average belonging score than students who were not involved with student organizations. Graduate and professional students were analyzed together due to small sample sizes.

Figure 1: Average Undergraduate Belonging Scores**Figure 2: Average Graduate and Professional Student Belonging Scores**

STUDENT ORGANIZATION INVOLVEMENT AND CAMPUS INVOLVEMENT

The percentage of involved students was calculated by examining participation across ten different campus activities. Among all respondents, 49.3% report being involved in at least one student organization. More than half (54.3%) of undergraduate students, 22.7% of graduate students and 63.2% of professional students reported involvement in at least one student organization.

Additionally, student involvement in service-learning was examined across three items. The tables below summarize student campus involvement and service-learning involvement by student organization participation status. Among undergraduate students, statistically significant differences in participation were found for 6 of the 10 campus involvement activities presented on the survey.

Table 4: Undergraduate Student Campus Involvement

	Undergraduate students in a student organization (n = 621)	Undergraduate students <i>not</i> in a student organization (n = 521)	Significance
Student-Life sponsored program (e.g., Buck-I-Serv, Wellness Ambassadors)	2.3%	1.9%	
A social fraternity or sorority	11.3%	8.4%	
A business fraternity or sorority	3.2%	0.8%	**
Intramural sports	8.4%	6.5%	
Sports clubs	8.9%	5.4%	*
Community service and/or service-learning (e.g., Pay It Forward, Buck-I-Serv, Nonprofit Immersion Program)	11.0%	2.7%	***

Undergraduate research or research with a faculty member	14.0%	7.1%	***
Working at an on-campus job	34.6%	20.5%	***
A learning community in the Residence Halls (e.g., Engineering House, Stadium Scholarship Program, Morrill Scholars Program, Global Business)	9.8%	2.5%	***
A capstone project or experience (e.g., senior thesis, portfolio)	5.2%	4.2%	
Service-learning			
An academic course with a service-learning component	5.6%	6.5%	
A one-day service event	18.2%	9.4%	***
An ongoing service/volunteer program	21.3%	6.5%	***

Table 5: Graduate Student Campus Involvement

	Graduate students in a student organization (n = 58)	Graduate students <i>not</i> in a student organization (n = 198)	Significance
Student-Life sponsored program (e.g., Buck-I-Serv, Wellness Ambassadors)	1.7%	1.0%	
A social fraternity or sorority	0.0%	0.5%	
A business fraternity or sorority	0.0%	0.0%	
Intramural sports	3.4%	1.0%	
Sports clubs	6.9%	2.0%	
Community service and/or service-learning (e.g., Pay It Forward, Buck-I-Serv, Nonprofit Immersion Program)	1.7%	1.5%	
Undergraduate research or research with a faculty member	49.2%	46.0%	
Working at an on-campus job	17.2%	20.7%	
A learning community in the Residence Halls (e.g., Engineering House, Stadium Scholarship Program, Morrill Scholars Program, Global Business)	0.0%	0.0%	
A capstone project or experience (e.g., senior thesis, portfolio)	25.9%	18.6%	
Service-learning			
An academic course with a service-learning component	8.6%	7.6%	



A one-day service event	15.5%	3.5%	***
An ongoing service/volunteer program	15.5%	8.0%	

Table 6: Professional Student Campus Involvement

	Graduate students in a student organization (<i>n</i> = 58)	Graduate students <i>not</i> in a student organization (<i>n</i> = 198)	Significance
Student-Life sponsored program (e.g., Buck-I-Serv, Wellness Ambassadors)	3.8%	0.0%	
A social fraternity or sorority	5.9%	6.7%	
A business fraternity or sorority	3.8%	0.0%	
Intramural sports	3.8%	10.0%	
Sports clubs	0.0%	0.0%	
Community service and/or service-learning (e.g., Pay It Forward, Buck-I-Serv, Nonprofit Immersion Program)	15.4%	6.7%	
Undergraduate research or research with a faculty member	25.0%	20.0%	
Working at an on-campus job	13.7%	3.3%	
A learning community in the Residence Halls (e.g., Engineering House, Stadium Scholarship Program, Morrill Scholars Program, Global Business)	0.0%	0.0%	
A capstone project or experience (e.g., senior thesis, portfolio)	5.8%	6.7%	
Service-learning			
An academic course with a service-learning component	11.8%	16.7%	
A one-day service event	28.8%	6.7%	*
An ongoing service/volunteer program	30.8%	10.0%	*

CONCLUSION

Nearly half of all students reported being involved in at least one student organization at Ohio State. This report investigated involvement in student organizations and its associations with other campus involvement, service-learning participation and students' sense of belonging, along with other student success outcomes.

Undergraduate student organization involvement status was associated with statistically significant differences in feelings of membership in the Ohio State community, relationships with other students, participation in Ohio State traditions, belonging to Ohio State, helping with setting personal

goals, leadership development, and overall satisfaction at Ohio State. This suggests that student organizations could possibly provide an avenue for exercising and developing interpersonal skills and relationships, although further research would be necessary to confirm the existence of this relationship. Undergraduate students involved in student organizations also had a higher mean belonging score than students not involved in student organizations.

In contrast, graduate and professional student involvement in student organizations was associated with statistically significant differences only in feelings of membership in the Ohio State community, relationships with other students and leadership development. Although significant differences were found in fewer areas than with undergraduates, this still suggests the possibility of a relationship between student organization membership and the exercising and development of interpersonal skills and relationships for graduate and professional students among their peers. Again however, further research would need to confirm this relationship. Despite having fewer areas of statistically significant differences than undergraduates, the mean belonging score of graduate and professional students was higher for those involved in student organizations than those not involved in student organizations.

Among undergraduate students, there were statistically significant differences between those involved in student organizations and those not involved in student organizations regarding many other areas of campus involvement. The strongest differences were found between the groups for participation in service activities, research, on-campus jobs, and learning communities, with students involved in student organizations being more likely to be involved in those activities.

When comparing those involved and not involved in student organizations for service-learning participation, for undergraduate students, statistically significant differences were found for 2 of the 3 service-learning activities presented on the survey (one-day events and ongoing programs), with students in student organizations being more likely to be involved in those activities.

Among both graduate and professional students, there were no statistically significant differences between those involved in student organizations and those not involved in student organizations regarding additional campus involvement except for service-learning activities.

For graduate students regarding service-learning, a statistically significant difference was found between the groups for one-day events, with students in student organizations being more likely to be involved.

For professional students regarding service-learning, statistically significant differences were found for 2 of the 3 service-learning activities presented on the survey (one-day events and ongoing programs), with students in student organizations being more likely to be involved in those activities.

Further efforts should also be made to study the effects of student organization involvement among graduate and professional students, especially the differences in their experiences with student organizations compared to undergraduates' experiences with student organizations.



APPENDIX: PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS¹

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
Total	970			552			114		
Academic Level	947			—			—		
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%	—	—	—	—	—	—
Gender Identity	970			552			114		
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%
Transgender Status	930			536			114		
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
Race/Ethnicity	970			545			114		
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%
Sexual Orientation	930			537			114		
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%
Generational Status	970			552			114		
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%
Disability Status	933			539			114		
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%
Education Route	940			—			—		
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
Residence	954			—			—		
On-campus	402	42.1%	42.0%	—	—	—	—	—	—
Off-campus	535	56.1%	56.3%	—	—	—	—	—	—
Sorority or fraternity housing	17	1.8%	1.6%	—	—	—	—	—	—