

# **Wellness Assessment: First Year Trends from 2015 to 2017**

Center for the Study of Student Life

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## INTRODUCTION

Student wellness is an essential component of academic success in higher education and subsequent opportunities in the labor market. Yet wellness itself has many facets. The Ohio State University Office of Student Life's Student Wellness Center uses a model that includes nine key dimensions of wellness: career, creative, emotional, environmental, financial, intellectual, physical, social and spiritual.

The Wellness Assessment was designed to measure these nine dimensions of wellness in order to give students a better understanding of their own wellness and provide them with resources that they can utilize at Ohio State to improve their wellness. The Wellness Assessment survey is open year-round to all students. Additionally, in October 2015 and October 2017, the survey was emailed to random samples of approximately 5,000 undergraduate, graduate and professional students. In 2015, 5,000 students were recruited and 761 responded for a 15.2% response rate. In 2017, 4,989 students were recruited and 631 responded for a 12.6% response rate. This report documents trends in first-year students' overall wellness from 2015 to 2017, specifically investigating demographic differences.

## METHODOLOGY

Each wellness dimension contains items to assess a range of attitudes and behaviors. Scores were calculated by adding the values of each component within a given dimension, then dividing by the total number of components, which produced an average wellness score for each dimension. The scores for respondents who did not answer all of the components of a dimension were calculated by summing the scores for the answered items and dividing by the total number of items answered. Students who failed to provide several responses for a dimension were excluded from the analysis, since creating wellness scores based on too few elements would not be an accurate representation of the overall dimension. Demographic items were not forced-choice. Therefore, not all students answered all demographic items.

Attitudes and beliefs were measured using Likert scales; respondents indicated their level of agreement with various statements on 5-point scale. When asked about behaviors, students reported the frequency of the occurrence, also on a 5-point scale. Wellness scores range from 1 to 5, with higher scores indicating more positive attitudes and behaviors. Negative items were reverse coded so that unhealthy responses were associated with a lower score. The findings presented below are either analyses of variance (ANOVA) tests or independent samples t-tests of differences in average wellness scores by student demographic characteristics. Analyses were limited to comparisons where each category contained 20 or more students; student samples with fewer than 20 respondents would be too susceptible to extreme scores.

## KEY FINDINGS

- Overall scores for emotional, environmental, social and spiritual dimensions of wellness had statistically significant differences between the 2015 and 2017 samples of first-year students.
- Non-first generation students in the 2017 sample had lower scores compared to students in the 2015 sample for both social (3.82 vs 4.00<sup>\*\*\*</sup>) and spiritual wellness (3.47 vs 3.67<sup>\*\*</sup>). However, environmental wellness scores increased from the 2015 non-first generation students (4.05) to the 2017 non-first generation students (4.15<sup>\*\*</sup>).
- Social wellness scores decreased from 2015 to 2017 for first-year students who "do not work" (3.97 vs 3.68<sup>\*\*\*</sup>).

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

## DIMENSIONS OF THE WELLNESS ASSESSMENT

### EMOTIONAL

- I use alcohol/nicotine/other substances to manage stress.
- I am able to appropriately manage my feelings.
- I use relaxation techniques to manage stress.
- I am able to appropriately express my feelings.
- I would be willing to seek help from others when I am having a difficult time.
- I feel that I am able to cope with my daily stress.
- I have a positive image of my body.

### CREATIVE

- I express myself through creative activities.
- I attend arts-related events or programs.
- I think of myself as a creative person.
- I value multiple perspectives when thinking about complex topics.
- The arts help me appreciate other perspectives and cultures.

### SPIRITUAL

- I consider myself to be a spiritual person.
- I engage in self-reflection.
- I engage in spiritual practices.
- I feel a connection to something larger than myself.
- I seek out meaning in my life.

### INTELLECTUAL

- I am able to resolve conflicts peacefully.
- I am confident about my academic major decisions.
- I am confident in my ability to find solutions to my problems.
- I am confident that I can learn new skills.
- I am interested in learning new things.
- I engage in intellectually engaging activities.
- I feel that my education is a priority.
- I felt challenged by my academics during my most recent academic term.
- I was able to manage my academic workload during my most recent academic term.

### CAREER

- I am confident about my career decisions.
- I envision my future career as a means to contribute to society.
- I feel that my current studies will be helpful to my future career.
- I feel that my major/career decision is an appropriate expression of my abilities and personal strengths.
- I feel that I work in a positive environment.
- I feel that I work in a stressful environment.
- I feel that my current job interferes with other aspects of my life.
- I am able to balance my current job with the rest of my life.

### PHYSICAL

- I am confident that I can exercise regularly.
- I am confident that I can maintain a nutritious diet.
- I use illicit drugs (e.g. marijuana, cocaine, ecstasy).
- I use tobacco products.
- I use prescription medication that is not prescribed to me (e.g. Adderall, Xanax, Valium).
- I eat a nutritious diet.
- I engage in cardiovascular exercise 3-5 times per week for at least 30 minutes.
- I engage in flexibility exercise/stretching.
- I engage in strength training/resistance exercise 2-3 times per week.
- I get at least 8 hours of sleep per night.
- Do you get an annual flu vaccine?
- Do you maintain annual physical exams(s)?
- How often do you binge drink? (Males: 5+ drinks in about 2 hours, Females: 4+ drinks in about 2 hours)
- How often, in general, do you consume alcohol?

### FINANCIAL

- I am comfortable leaving a balance on my credit card(s).
- I think it is important to spend less than I earn.
- I am confident that I can plan a financial budget.
- I pay off the entire balance of my credit card(s) each month.
- I have enough money saved to handle financial emergencies.
- I track my spending to stay within my budget.
- I feel stressed by the amount of money I owe (credit cards, student loans, etc.).
- I stress about my finances.

### ENVIRONMENTAL

- I engage in environmentally friendly behaviors (turn off lights/faucets, walk or bike).
- I feel safe in my living environment.
- I feel that I live in a stressful environment.
- I often feel that I have little control over my safety.
- I take time to appreciate my surroundings.
- I take time to appreciate nature.
- I think it is important to conserve natural resources.
- If given the opportunity, I recycle.

### SOCIAL

- I feel a sense of belonging in a community.
- I feel supported by my family.
- I feel that I am a person who other people like to be around.
- I have a strong social network.
- I have at least one close friend whom I trust and can confide in.
- I feel comfortable communicating face-to-face with others.
- I rarely feel lonely.

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



## DEMOGRAPHICS FOR FIRST YEAR SAMPLES

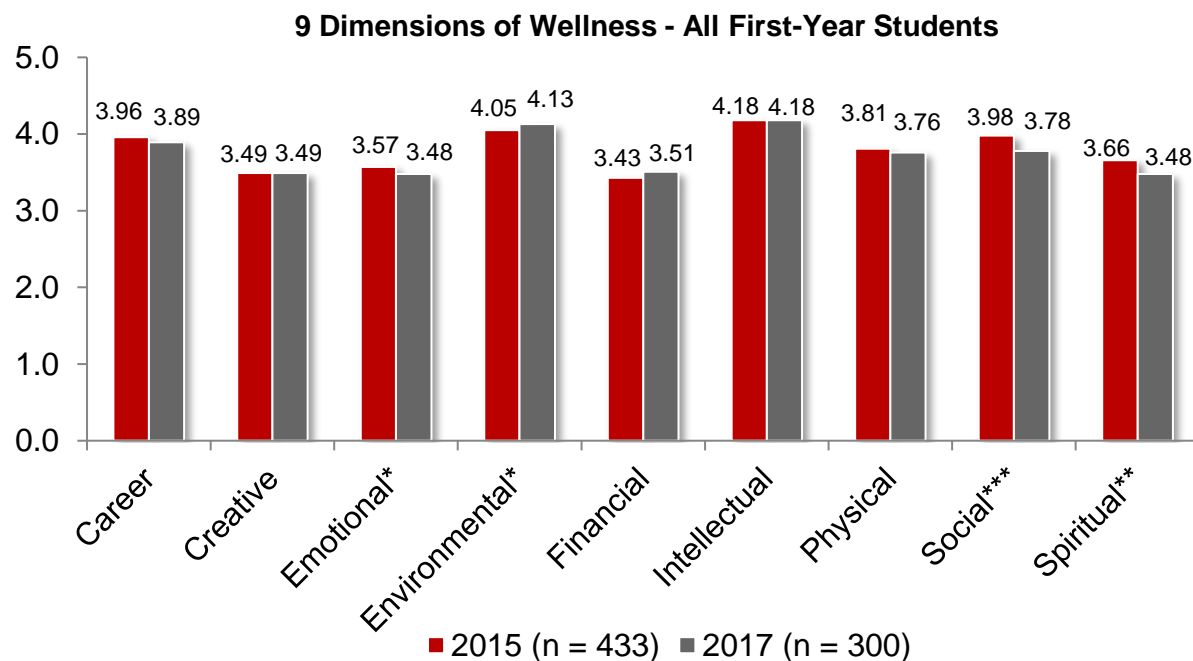
		2015 (n = 433)	2017 (n = 300)
Gender	Male	35.9%	29.9%
	Female	64.1%	70.1%
Sexual Orientation	Heterosexual	91.6%	82.9%
	Bisexual, Gay/Lesbian, Questioning	6.8%	15.8%
First Generation	First generation student	18.1%	16.8%
	Non-first generation student	81.9%	83.2%
International Student	International student	4.1%	3.1%
	Domestic student	95.9%	96.9%
Race/ Ethnicity	White/Caucasian	80.4%	76.4%
	African American/Black	3.3%	2.7%
	Asian American	6.3%	10.8%
	Latino(a)/Hispanic	1.4%	1.7%
	Other Race/Ethnicity	1.6%	3.0%
Varsity Athletes	Athlete	3.9%	4.5%
	Non-athlete	96.1%	95.6%
Military Status	Ever been in US military	0.5%	2.1%
	Never been in US military	99.5%	97.9%
Age	Traditional age (17 to 19)	99.8%	98.0%
	Nontraditional age (20 or older)	0.2%	2.0%
Employment Status	Not employed	34.8%	35.8%
	Currently employed	65.2%	64.2%
Employment Hours	Work less than 20 hours a week	91.7%	86.8%
	Work more than 20 hours a week	8.3%	13.2%
Residence	Lives on-campus	97.1%	90.2%
	Lives off-campus, within walking distance	1.0%	1.1%
	Lives off-campus, within driving distance	1.9%	8.7%
Greek Status	Affiliated with fraternity or sorority	0.5%	0.3%
	Not Affiliated with fraternity or sorority	99.5%	99.7%

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

## FINDINGS

### AVERAGE WELLNESS SCORES ACROSS DIMENSIONS FOR 2015 & 2017

The following chart compares the scores for the nine dimensions of wellness for both the 2015 and 2017 first-year student samples. T-tests were conducted to investigate whether there were statistically significant differences between these two groups of students. Asterisks denote statistically significant differences between the two groups' average scores. Overall, statistically significant differences were detected between the first-year student samples for the emotional, environmental, social and spiritual dimensions of wellness.



### FOCUS ON FIRST GENERATION STUDENTS

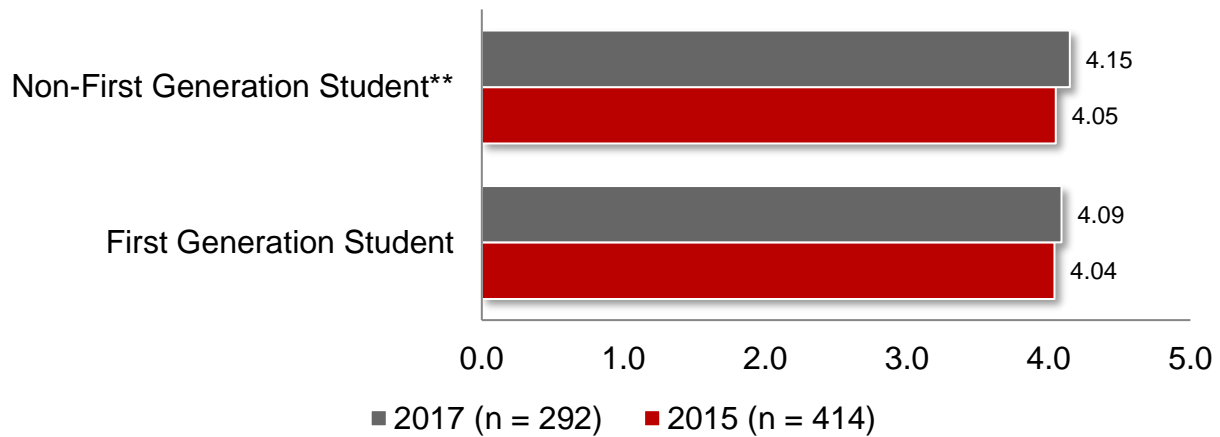
In an effort to further investigate differences between the first-year student samples from 2015 and 2017, the following sections examine differences between non-first generation students and first generation students within each first-year student sample across environmental, social and spiritual dimensions of wellness.

#### Environmental Wellness

The following chart compares average environmental wellness scores for both the 2015 and 2017 non-first generation and first generation student samples. Statistically significant differences were detected between the non-first generation students in the 2015 first-year student sample compared to the 2017 non-first generation student sample. Specifically, environmental wellness scores increased from the 2015 non-first generation students (4.05) to the 2017 non-first generation students (4.15\*\*). No statistically significant differences were detected between environmental wellness scores for first generation and non-first generation students within each sample year.

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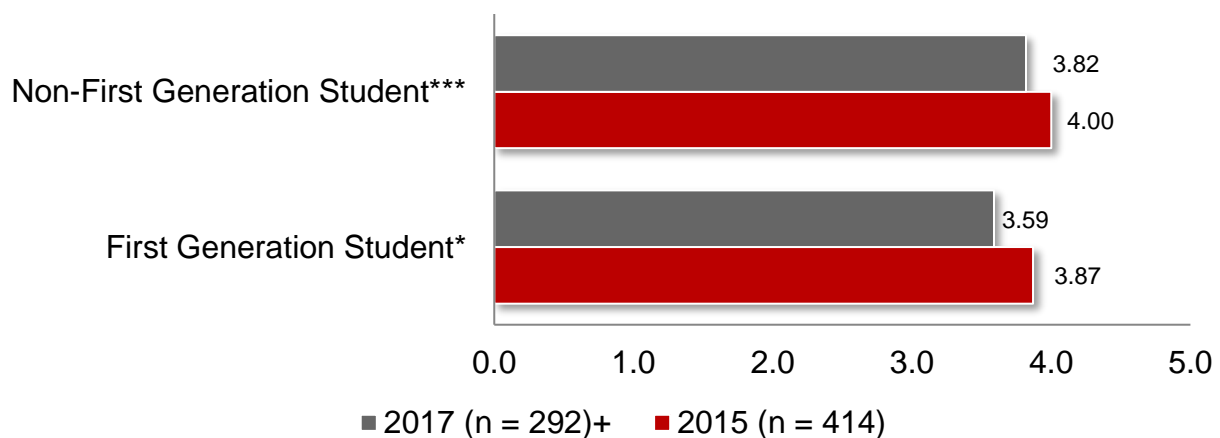
### Average Environmental Wellness Scores - All First-Year Students



### Social Wellness

The following chart compares average social wellness scores between the 2015 and 2017 first-year student samples. Non-first generation students in the 2017 sample had lower scores compared to the non-first generation students in the 2015 sample (3.82 vs 4.00\*\*\*). Additionally, first generation students in the 2017 sample had lower scores compared to first generation students in the 2015 sample (3.59 vs 3.87\*). No statistically significant differences were detected between social wellness scores for first generation and non-first generation students within the 2015 sample year. However, statistically significant differences were detected between social wellness scores for first generation and non-first generation students within the 2017 sample year, as denoted by a plus sign.

### Average Social Wellness Scores - All First-Year Students

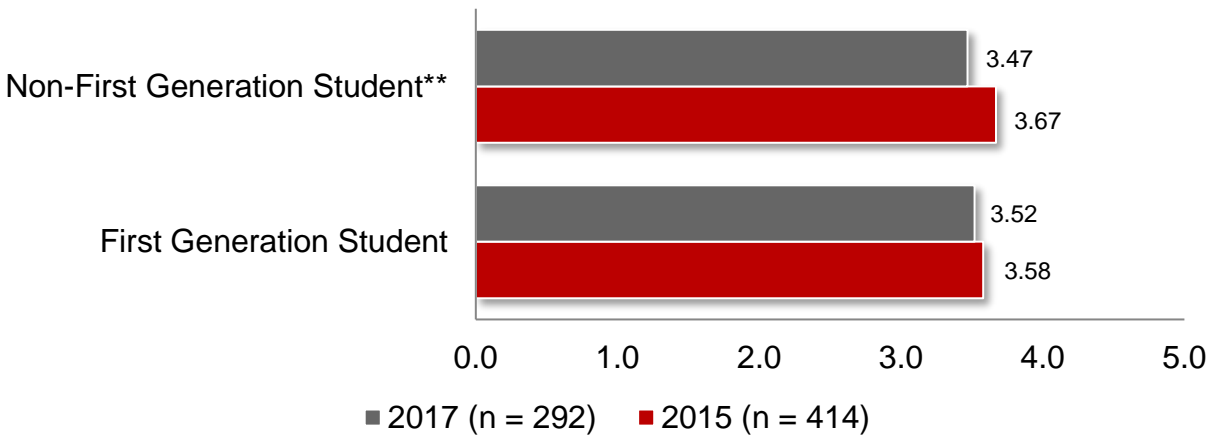


### Spiritual Wellness

The following chart compares average spiritual wellness scores for both the 2015 and 2017 first-year student samples. Non-first generation students in the 2017 sample had lower scores compared to the non-first generation students in the 2015 sample for spiritual wellness (3.47 vs 3.67\*\*). No statistically significant differences were detected between spiritual wellness scores for first generation and non-first generation students within each sample year.

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

### Average Spiritual Wellness Scores - All First-Year Students



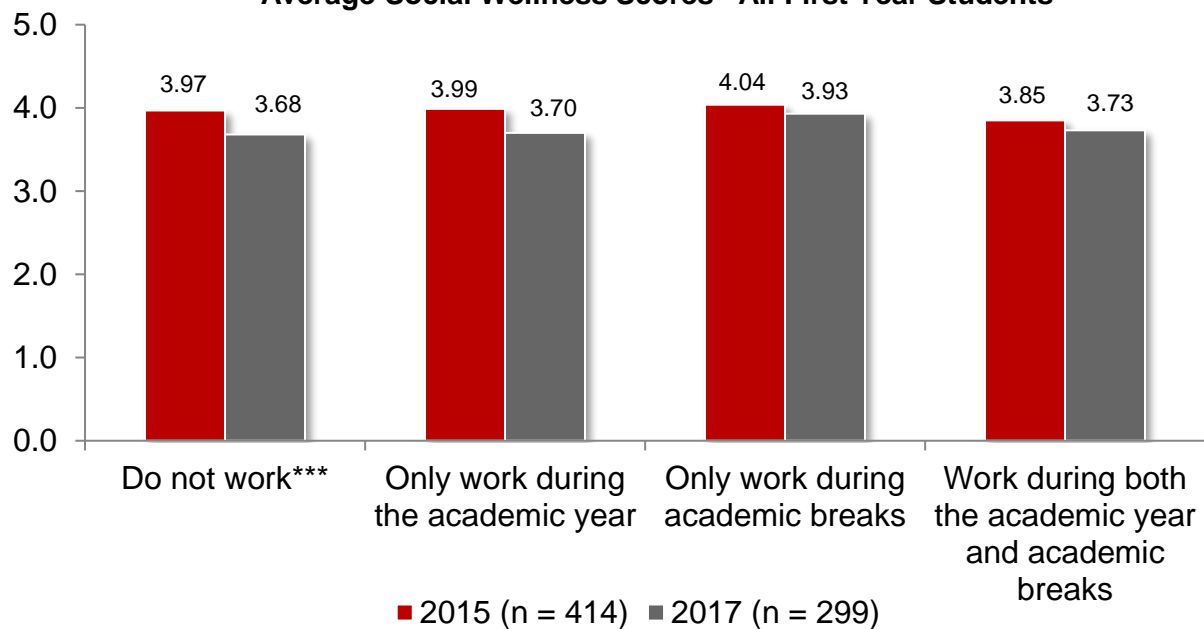
### FOCUS ON EMPLOYMENT STATUS

The following sections further examine social wellness across the 2015 and 2017 first-year student samples based on employment status. Again, t-tests were conducted to investigate whether the differences between the 2015 and 2017 students were significantly different, and asterisks denote statistically significant differences between the two groups' average scores.

#### Social Wellness

The following chart compares average social wellness scores for both the 2015 and 2017 first-year student samples based on employment status. Statistically significant differences were detected between the 2015 and 2017 samples for students who “do not work.”

### Average Social Wellness Scores - All First Year Students



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

## CONCLUSION

The Wellness Assessment data offers insight into wellness trends for first-year students across samples from 2015 to 2017, specifically investigating demographic differences. This report shows that the 2017 first-year student sample differs significantly from the 2015 first-year student sample on the emotional, environmental, social and spiritual dimensions of wellness. More specifically, the 2017 sample has lower scores as compared to the 2015 sample in emotional wellness (3.48 vs 3.57\*), social wellness (3.78 vs 3.98\*\*\*) and spiritual wellness (3.48 vs 3.66\*\*). Environmental wellness scores increased from the 2015 sample (4.05) to the 2017 sample (4.13\*). Additionally, non-first generation students in the 2017 sample had lower scores compared to the non-first generation students 2015 sample in social wellness (3.82 vs 4.00\*\*\*) and spiritual wellness (3.47 vs 3.67\*\*). Environmental wellness scores significantly increased from the 2015 non-first generation students (4.05) to the 2017 non-first generation students (4.15\*\*). When investigating employment status across the 2015 and 2017 first-year student samples, social wellness scores decreased for students who “do not work.” These results contribute to our understanding of trends and differences in wellness among first-year students at Ohio State.

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