

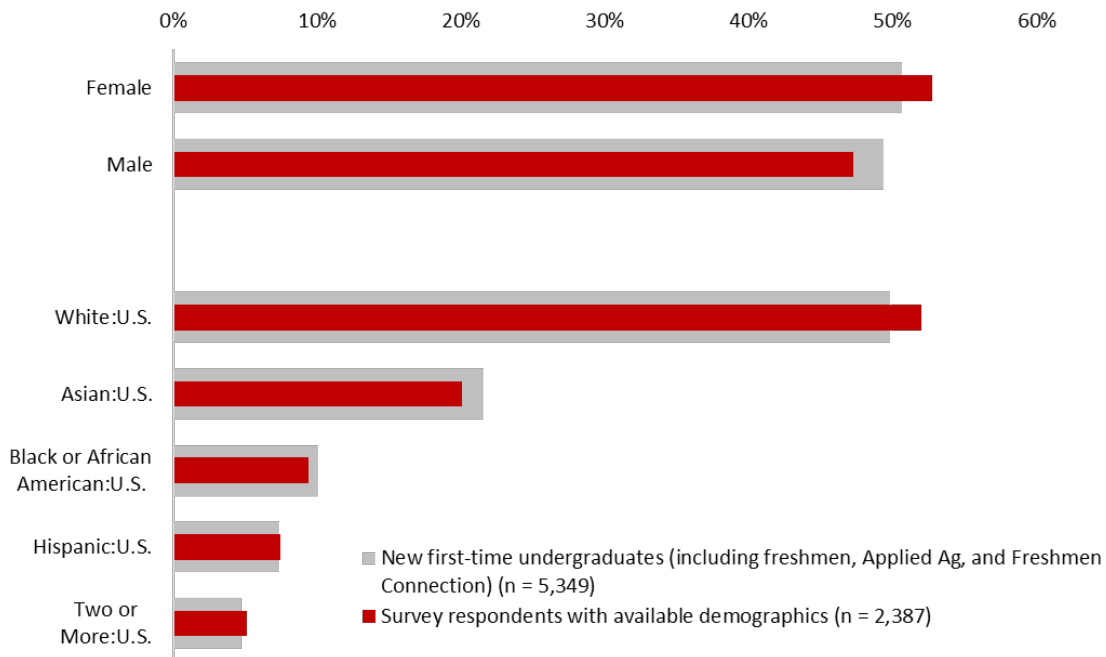
# WELLNESS AND ACADEMICS

University of Maryland

2021 – Issue 2, April

This Campus Assessment Working Group (CAWG) Snapshot by the Retention & Completion (RetComp) subgroup reports findings on first-year students' perceptions of their wellness and academic performance. The data represent results from the University of Maryland Beginning Student Survey (BSS), an annual survey administered by the CAWG Beginnings Subgroup. Respondents completed the survey during the 2019 fall semester in English 101, University 100 (including Freshman Connection), Honors 100, Gemstone 100, Academy for Innovation & Entrepreneurship 100, and Civicus 181.

## Respondent Demographics



Out of 5,349 new first-time undergraduates, 2,582 completed the BSS. Demographic information was available for 92% ( $n = 2,387$ ) of respondents. The chart above shows that respondents' demographics mirror those of all new first-time students.

Fewer than 5% of respondents identified as American Indian or Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, Unknown, or Foreign; they are not included in this graph.

This snapshot only reports on data from survey respondents, not all UMD students. Therefore, use caution when generalizing. Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

# Wellness and Academics

## Background

The Retention and Completion subgroup surveys current students and alumni in order to identify the kinds of conditions, behaviors, and experiences that contribute to degree completion. Continuing our recent assessment of wellness, stress, and academic success we asked beginning students how a number of potential stressors affect their general wellness and academic experience.

Our hope is to establish a baseline of self-reported wellness, to gather a general sense of the relative impact of environments and behaviors, and to revisit this cohort with some analysis of outcomes in subsequent terms. The questions we asked were informed by the subgroup's understanding of the kinds of experiences and environments we expect to correlate with persistence or attrition. For instance, we sought to understand how time management and study habits, contact with faculty and advisors, and a sense of belonging contributed to students' wellness. Some inspiration for items was gleaned from the National Collegiate Health Assessment instrument administered by the University Health Center adapted to fit our purposes. Our questions and this report are organized thematically to align with the University Health Center's [Dimensions of Wellness](#).

Finally, we point out that our questions were included in the Beginnings subgroup's annual Beginning Student Survey and followed a number of questions about students' financial conditions, which, due to how the questions were worded, may have primed students to respond in a more negative fashion than they might have otherwise.

## Student Perceptions of their Well-Being, Academics, and Health

A lower percentage of Black or African American, Hispanic, and Asian respondents rated their wellness as “excellent” or “fine” than White respondents.

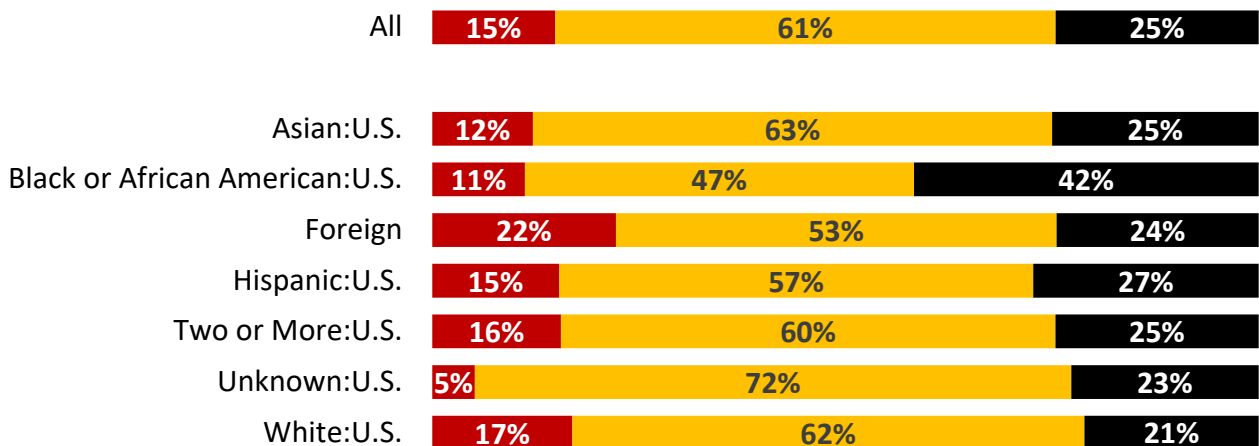
Students were asked to rate themselves on their management of stress, overall well-being, academic performance, mental health, and physical health.

The next three pages provide results for each of the five items by race-ethnicity.

***Rate yourself on each of the following for this semester***

### ***Managing your stress***

■ Excellent ■ Fine ■ Poor



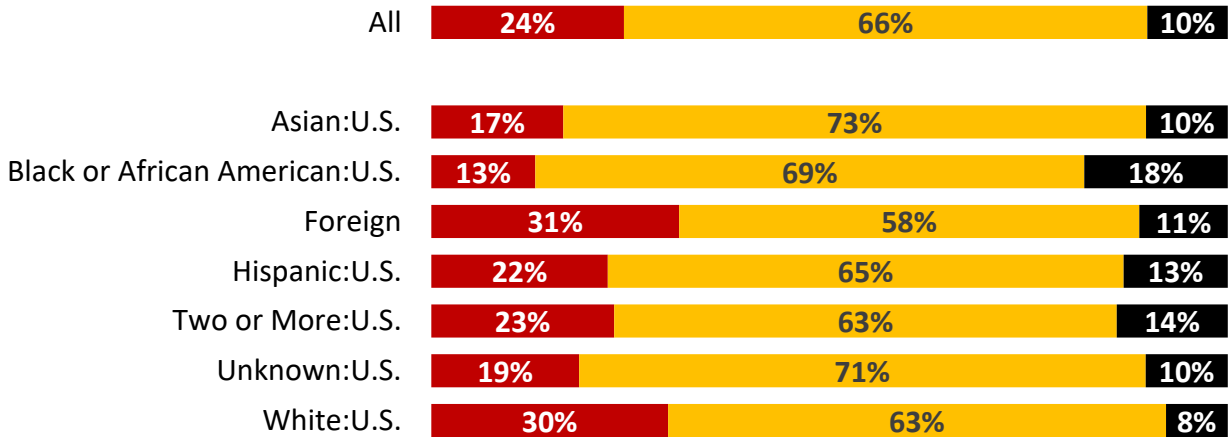
*n* = 2,377

- Only 15% of all respondents reported that they are “excellent” at managing stress.
- In each category, a lower percentage of Black or African American, Hispanic, and Asian respondents rated their wellness as “excellent” or “fine” than White respondents. More than 40% percent of Black or African American respondents reported that their ability to manage stress is “poor,” compared to 21% to 27% of all other groups.

# Student Perceptions of their Well-Being, Academics, and Health

## Overall well-being

■ Excellent ■ Fine ■ Poor

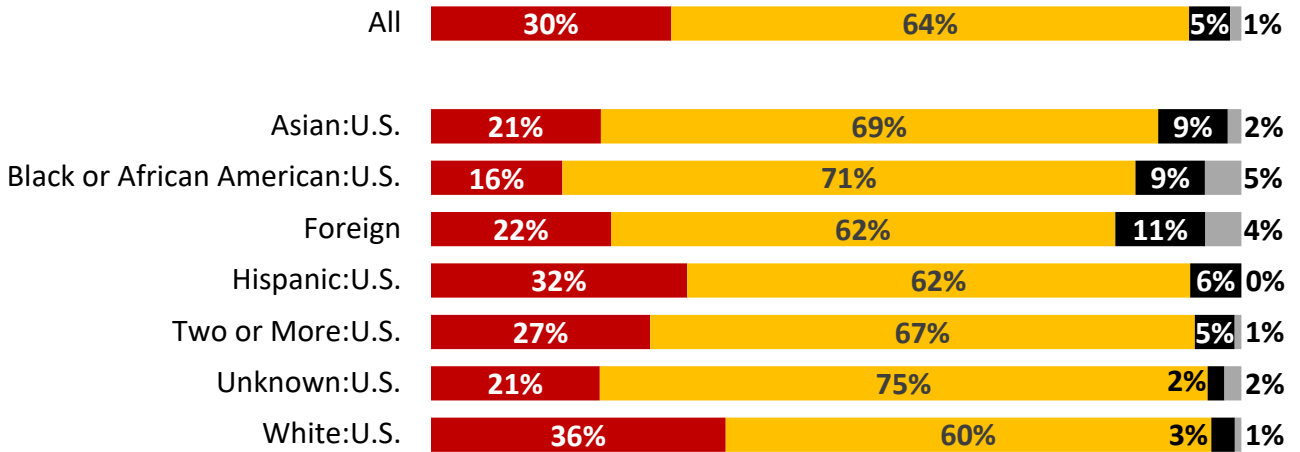


n = 2,377

- Eighteen percent of Black or African American respondents reported that their overall well-being is “poor,” a higher rate than the 10% of Asian and 8% of White respondents who reported the same. About thirty percent of White and Foreign respondents reported “excellent” overall well-being, a higher rate than any other group.

## Academic performance

■ Excellent ■ Fine ■ Poor ■ Not Sure



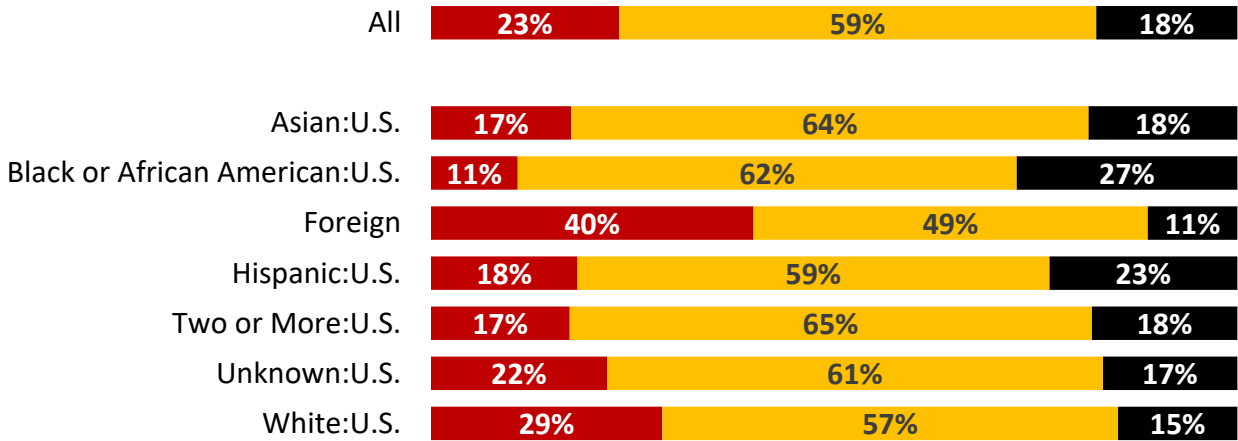
n = 2,373

- Foreign, Black or African American, and Asian respondents rated their academic performance as “poor” in higher percentages than White respondents.

# Student Perceptions of their Well-Being, Academics, and Health

## Mental health

■ Excellent ■ Fine ■ Poor

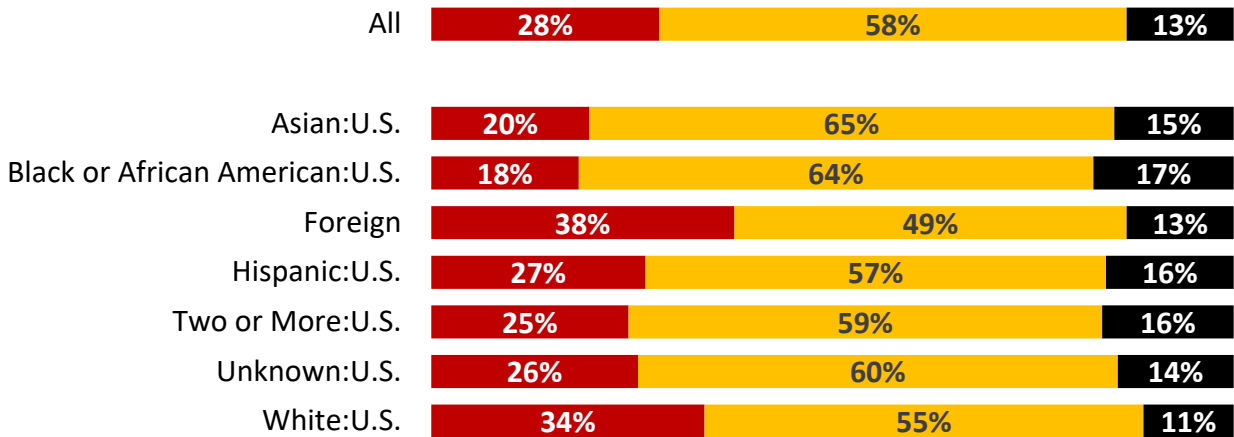


n = 2,376

- Eighteen percent of all respondents reported their mental health as “poor.”
- Black or African American and Hispanic respondents rated their mental health as “poor” at higher rates (27% and 23%) than any other group.

## Physical health

■ Excellent ■ Fine ■ Poor



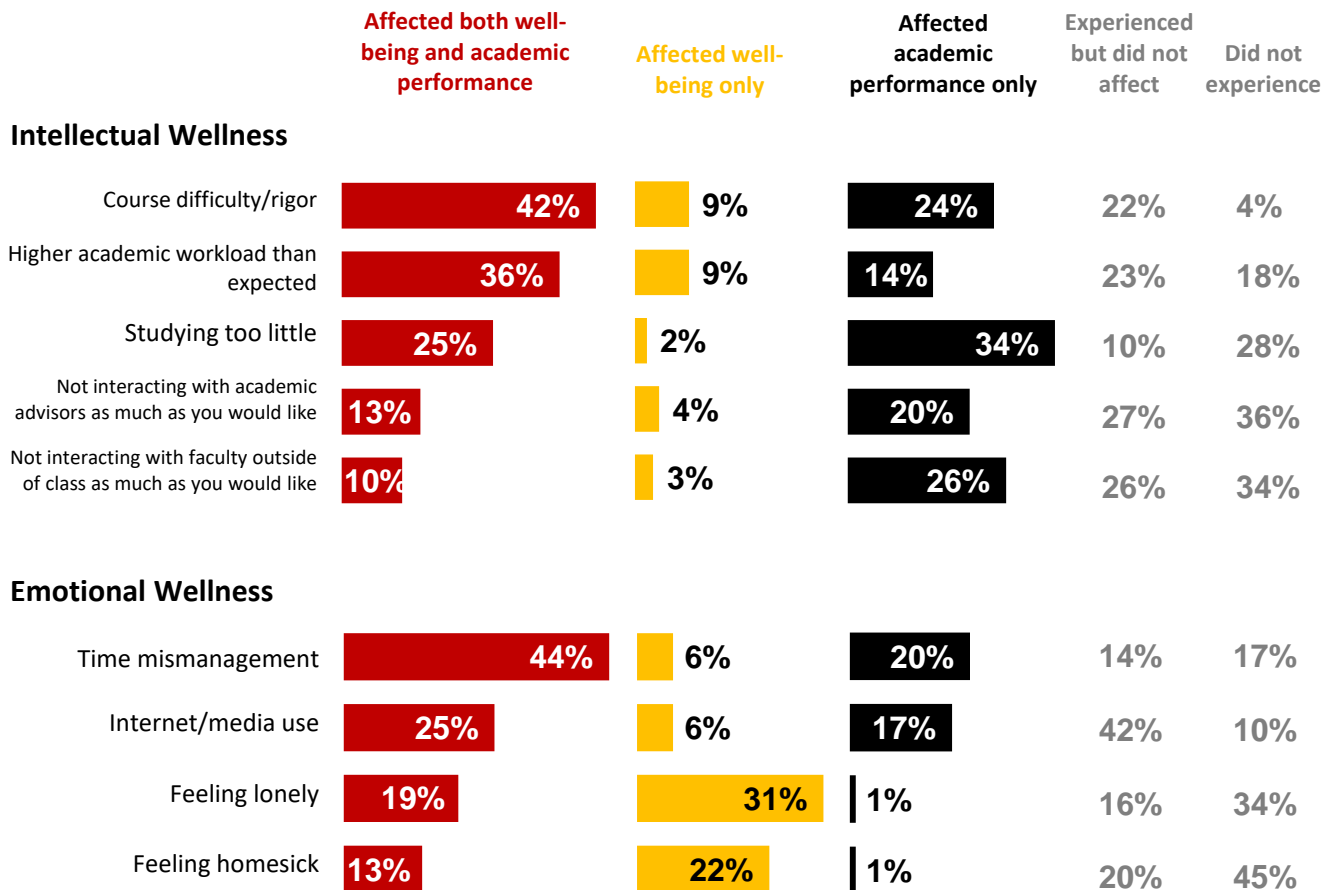
n = 2,376

- Thirteen percent of all respondents reported their physical health as “poor.”

## Challenges

Students were asked to report the degree to which different stressors affected their well-being and academic performance. These challenges are grouped into the University Health Center's [Dimensions of Wellness](#) and presented over the next two pages.

*Since the beginning of the semester,  
have the following NEGATIVELY affected you?*



*n* = 2,546 – 2,557

- Twenty percent of respondents report negative effects on academic performance due to not interacting with academic advisors as much as they would like. Similarly, 26 percent of respondents report negative effects on academic performance due to not interacting with faculty as much as they would like.
- At least one-third of respondents reported that course difficulty, academic workload, and time mismanagement affected both their well-being and academic performance.

## Challenges

	Affected both well-being and academic performance	Affected well-being only	Affected academic performance only	Experienced but did not affect	Did not experience
<b>Social Wellness</b>					
Relationships (e.g., friendships, significant others, family)	25%	6%	17%	42%	10%
Participation in extracurricular activities	19%	31%	1%	16%	34%
Inadequate sense of community	13%	22%	1%	20%	45%
<b>Physical Wellness</b>					
Sleep difficulties	36%	16%	3%	14%	31%
Exercise and physical activity	15%	19%	1%	36%	29%
Unhealthy diet	12%	27%	1%	18%	42%
<b>Environmental Wellness</b>					
Roommate(s)	10%	11%	1%	43%	35%
Discrimination	2%	3%	0%	8%	87%
<b>Financial and Vocational Wellness</b>					
Financial stress	11%	13%	1%	14%	61%
Employment	6%	2%	2%	9%	81%

*n* = 2,539 – 2,557

- More than half of respondents experienced an inadequate sense of community.
- More than half of respondents were negatively affected by sleep difficulties.
- Eighty-seven percent responded they did not experience discrimination.
- A quarter of respondents were negatively affected by financial stress.

## Wellness and Academics



### Questions to consider

- This survey's results were gathered before the pandemic. How might they help us as we attempt to understand wellness and academic success during COVID-19?
- How do we prioritize support for respondents who reported the poorest sense of wellness and the highest negative impact of stressors?
- How can we mitigate the impact of stressors with the most reported effect on wellness and success?
- Of all potential stressors, discrimination seems to have affected the fewest number of students compared to the other stressors included. How did the 87% who reported not experiencing discrimination define that term?
- How might these results reflect in student retention? Which responses deserve the most attention when we revisit this cohort to observe retention?
- What relationships exist between a sense of community, connection, support, wellness, and success?

## Retention & Completion Subgroup Members

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*The Campus Assessment Working Group (CAWG) regularly gathers and exchanges information about UMD student and alumni experiences. The group is charged with developing a campus "Culture of Evidence" in which data and assessment can inform campus decision making. Its three subgroups focus on freshman experiences, junior/senior student experiences, and retention and completion efforts. For more information, to view past reports, or to join a CAWG subgroup, please visit <http://ter.ps/CAWG>.*