



**IOWA**

**THE NATIONAL COLLEGE  
HEALTH ASSESSMENT III**  
UNDERGRADUATE SUMMARY REPORT  
THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA  
**SPRING 2021**



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## ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION, CONSIDERATIONS & LIMITATIONS

The National College Health Assessment (NCHA) survey was conducted between late February to mid-March of 2021, a period in which the COVID-19 pandemic was causing significant disruption and impacting the health and behaviors of the student body. Eight hundred seventy-two University of Iowa undergraduates completed the survey.

Important considerations should be taken into account:

- The findings from this study are impossible to compare to pre-pandemic NCHA survey results. For instance, at the time of survey, most classes at the University of Iowa were online, and many students lived out of the area with family members.
- Other limitations that hamper our ability to comparatively analyze this cycle's findings include significant changes in:
  1. NCHA survey questions and format - Student Wellness administered the new version of the National College Health Assessment (NCHA-III) for the first time this year, after administering an older survey version (NCHA-II) for several years. Many questions on the NCHA-III survey were not the same as in previous years, which limited the ability to examine health behavior trends over time.
  2. Survey administration – The administration methods were very different from past years. In previous years, surveys took place in physical classrooms with students over a period of a few days, but in 2021, the survey moved online, and students answered over a three-week period.
  3. Response rate – The pandemic and survey changes likely contributed to far lower response rates compared to previous years (e.g., 9.7% in 2021 compared to 99% in 2019). The low response rates also make it difficult to know if those who responded were a good reflection of the entire student body.

Student Wellness plans to administer the NCHA-III again in spring of 2023.

This report & NCHA-II reports from previous years can be viewed at <https://studentwellness.uiowa.edu/ui-health-data>. Questions can be directed to Trish Welter at [trisha-welter@uiowa.edu](mailto:trisha-welter@uiowa.edu).

## COMPARISON TO NATIONAL UNDERGRADUATE SAMPLE\*

### UI undergraduate students are...



- more likely to report a sense of belonging at the college/university
- more likely to meet the physical activity recommendations
- less likely to report issues with stress
- more likely to report getting adequate sleep



- more likely to use alcohol, drink in high-risk ways and report negative consequences from use
- more likely to use cannabis
- more likely to report using e-cigarettes and tobacco products
- more likely to drive while distracted (texting, app use, etc.)

*\*compared to spring 2021 national sample of undergraduate students (70,087 students from 137 schools)*

## COMPARISON TO UI GRADUATE & PROFESSIONAL STUDENTS

### UI undergraduate students are...



- less likely to report driving after alcohol use
- more likely to meet the physical activity recommendations
- more likely to report getting the recommended amount of sleep on weeknights



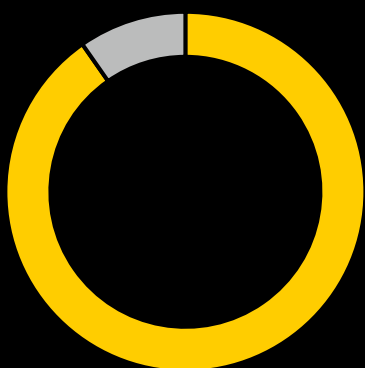
- less likely to report feeling safe on campus and in the surrounding community
- more likely to report high-risk drinking and negative consequences from alcohol use
- more likely to use e-cigarettes and cannabis in last 3 months
- less likely to wear a helmet on a bicycle, scooter or motorcycle
- more likely to experience violence
- more likely to report psychological distress, self-injury and suicide attempts

## ACADEMIC IMPEDIMENTS\*

1. Procrastination: 53.6%
2. Stress: 45.3%
3. Anxiety: 37.4%
4. Chronic health conditions: 29.7%
5. Depression: 28.0%
6. Sleep difficulties: 24.5%
7. Headaches/migraines: 14.1%
8. ADHD: 12.2%
9. Finances: 10.9%
10. Career: 9.7%

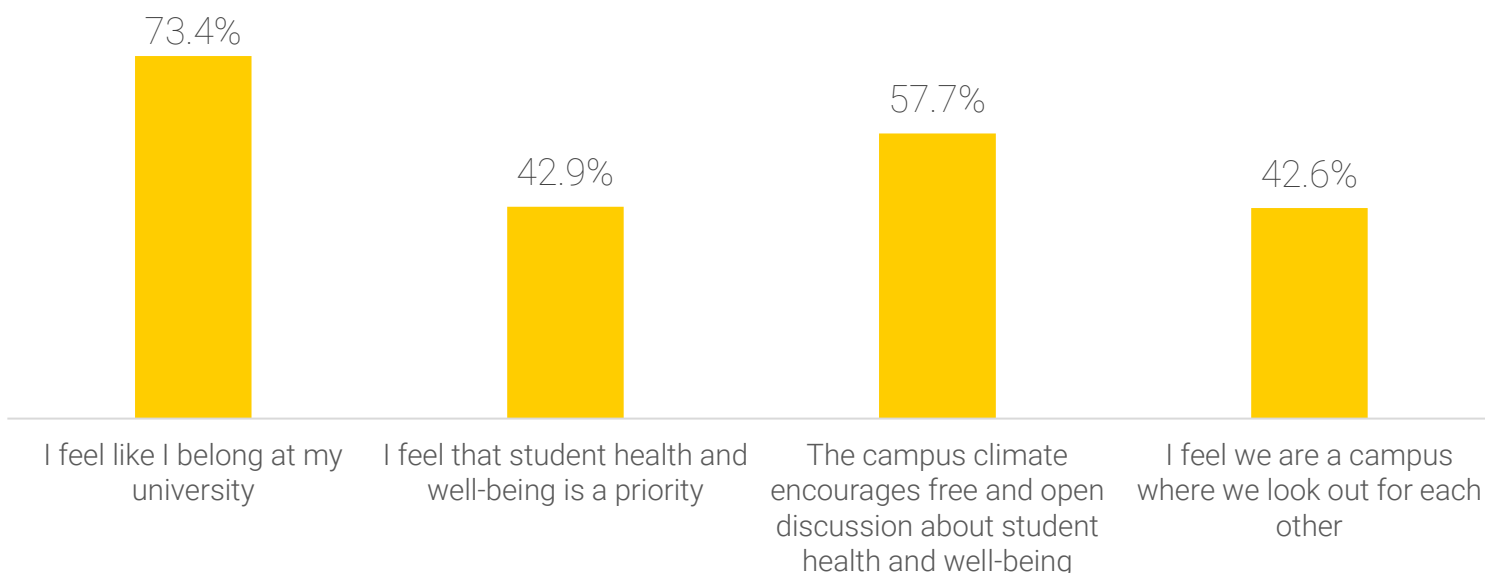
*\*Top ten of 49 items that negatively impacted academic performance in the last 12 months*

## GENERAL HEALTH



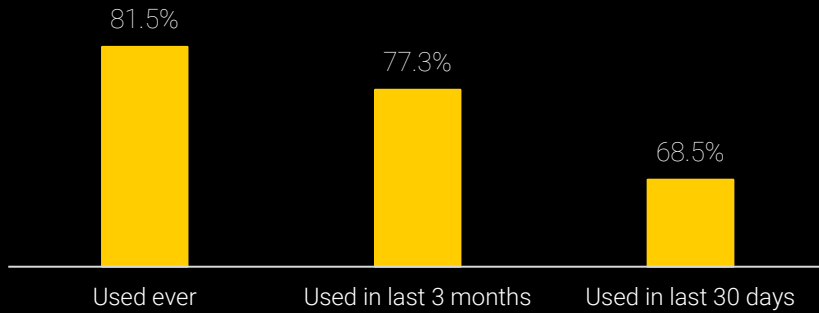
**90.3%** of UI undergraduate students report being in good, very good or excellent health.

## CAMPUS CULTURE\*



*\*percent of students who responded "agree" or "strongly agree"*

# ALCOHOL USE



## High-risk Drinking

33.0% of all undergraduate respondents and 58.2% of undergraduate students who reported alcohol use in the last two weeks have had at least one instance of high-risk drinking in that time frame (females: 4+ drinks / males: 5+ drinks).

## Number of Drinks\*

**3.9**: average number of drinks last time they drank alcohol in a social setting

**67.8%** of students drank 4 or fewer drinks the last time they drank alcohol in a social setting

*\*of those who used alcohol in the last 3 months*

## Blood Alcohol Concentration\*

**0.06**: average blood alcohol concentration (BAC)

**73.4%** of students had an average BAC of <0.08

*\*of those who used alcohol in the last 3 months*

## ASSIST Scores

**7.1**: average alcohol score on the Alcohol, Smoking & Substance Involvement Screening Test (ASSIST)

**14.8%** of students had a moderate-risk ASSIST score

**0.9%** of students had a high-risk ASSIST score

## Negative Consequences

43.7% of undergraduate students who used alcohol in the last 12 months experienced at least one negative consequence from their use.

1. Brownout: 27.3%
2. Did something I regretted: 25.2%
3. Blackout: 15.0%
4. Unprotected sex: 14.4%
5. Physically injured myself: 8.4%
6. Seriously considered suicide: 2.5%
7. Someone had sex with me without my consent: 2.2%
8. Trouble with police: 0.7%
9. Needed medical help: 0.7%
10. Trouble with university: 0.6%
11. Physically injured another person: 0.4%
12. Had sex with someone without their consent: 0.1%

**2.9%**

reported that their alcohol use negatively impacted their academics

**9.9%**

reported driving after drinking in the last 30 days

**31.8%**

of students under 21 have used a fake ID

**47.3%**

reported drinking to get drunk the last time they drank\*

**46.0%**

reported getting drunk the last time they drank\*

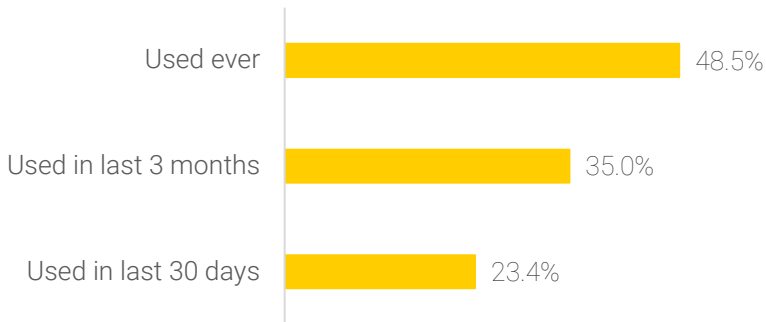
**0.8%**

are in recovery from at least one substance

*\*of those who have used alcohol in the last 3 months*

# OTHER SUBSTANCE USE

## Cannabis



35.5% of undergraduate students reporting cannabis use in the last 30 days have driven within 6 hours of use at least once.

2.6% of all undergraduate student respondents reported that cannabis had negatively impacted their academics in the last 12 months.

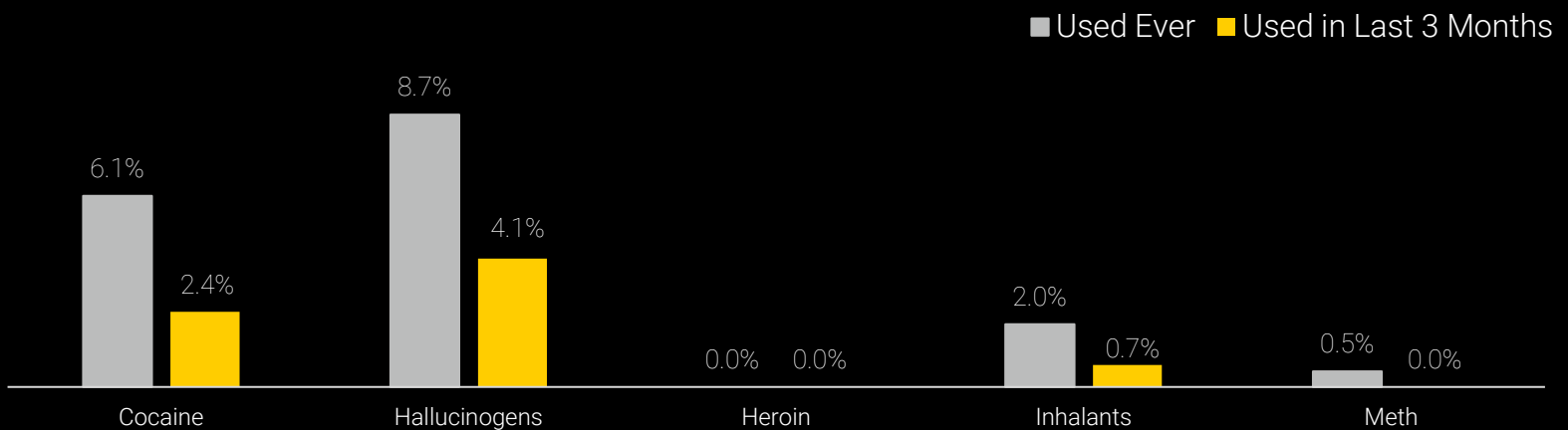
### *Cannabis ASSIST Scores*

**5.9** average score

**20.6%** moderate-risk

**1.1%** high-risk

## Other Illicit Drugs

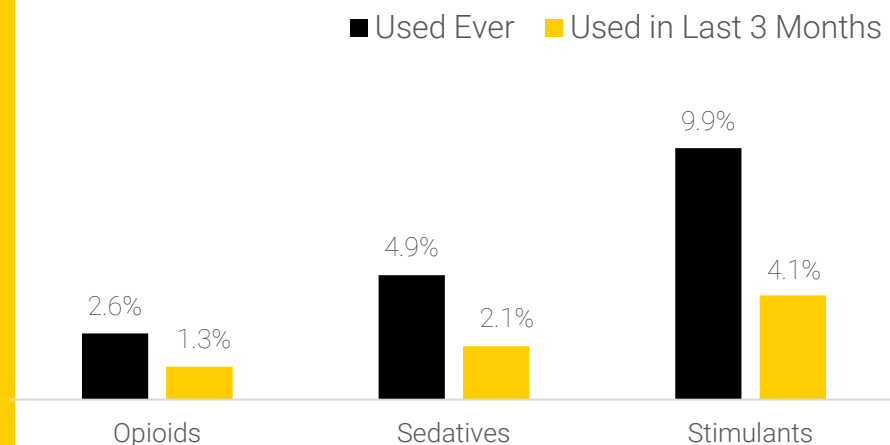


## Nicotine

37.7% have ever used nicotine. 25.6% have used at least one nicotine product in the last 3 months:

1. E-cigarettes or other vape products: 21.9%
2. Cigarettes: 8.3%
3. Cigars: 3.2%
4. Chewing/Smokeless Tobacco: 1.9%
5. Hookah: 1.5%

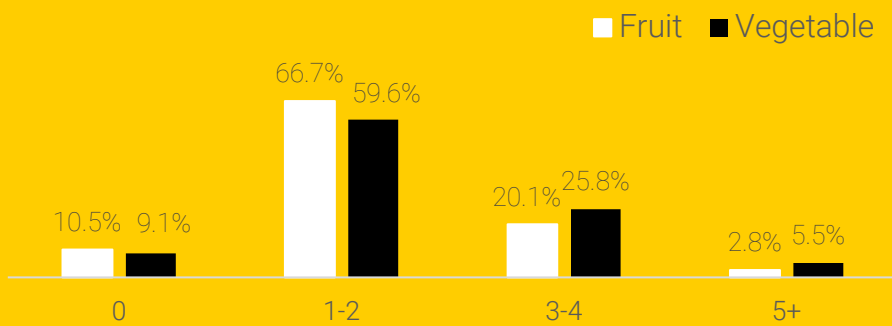
## Illegal Use of Prescription Drugs



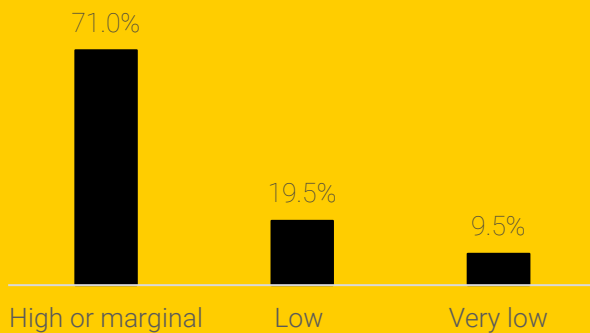


# NUTRITION & FOOD SECURITY

## Average Daily Fruit & Vegetable Intake\*\*



## Food Security\* (USDA Food Security Index)



\*\*last 7 days  
\*last 30 days

**64.2%**

drink 1+  
sweetened  
beverage  
per day\*\*

**9.0%**

have had energy  
drinks/shots at  
least 5 days in  
the last month

Average USDA  
Food Security  
Index Score\*

**1.19**

**32.2%**

were unable to  
afford to eat  
balanced  
meals\*

**22.3%**

cut the size of or  
skipped meals\*

**9.3%**

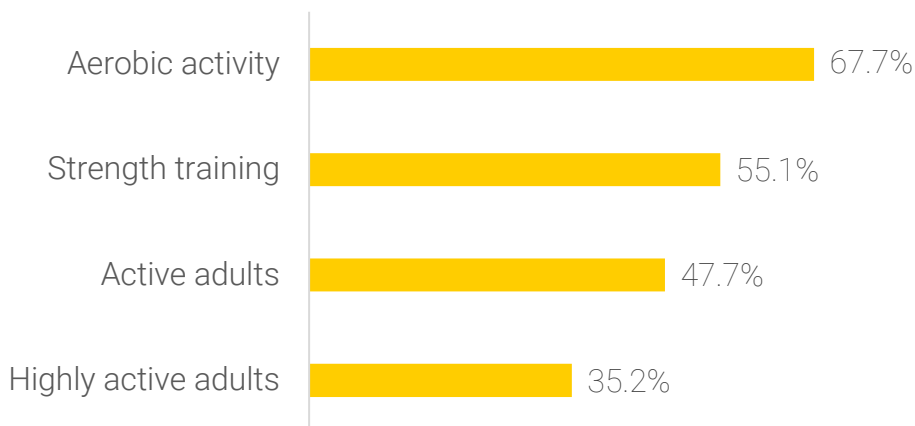
reported going  
hungry\*

**14.5%**

reported eating  
less\*

# PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

## Percent of Students Meeting Recommendations\*



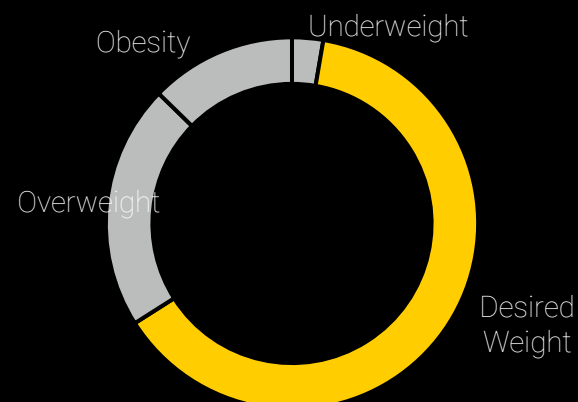
\*Aerobic activity: 75+ min of vigorous intensity activity, 150+ min of moderate intensity activity or a combination of the two per week

Strength training: 2+ days per week of moderate or greater intensity activities for all major muscle groups

Active adults: meeting both the aerobic & strength training recommendations

Highly active adults: meeting the strength training recommendation and attaining more than double the recommended amount of aerobic activity

# WEIGHT



63.3% of UI undergraduate students are in the desired weight range (BMI of 18.5-24.9), with an average BMI of 24.5. Despite that, 50.5% are trying to lose weight.



# STRESS

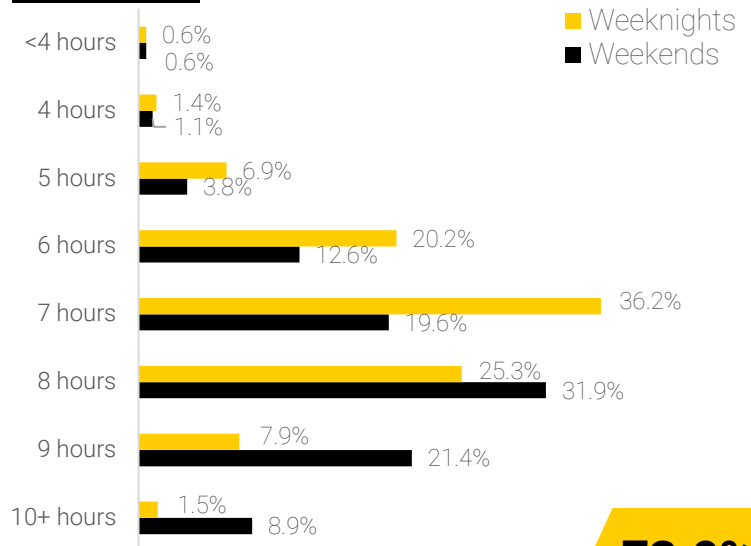
78.8% of UI undergraduate students reported a moderate or high stress level in the last year.

## Top Stressors (last 12 mos)

1. Procrastination: 76.3%
2. Personal appearance: 56.6%
3. Academics: 52.8%
4. Health of someone else: 38.6%
5. Finances: 37.6%
6. Intimate relationships: 36.6%
7. Roommate/housemate: 35.6%
8. Family: 33.6%
9. Career: 30.6%
10. Death of family or friend: 22.5%

92.7% reported at least one thing (of 18) to be difficult or challenging, with the average undergraduate student reporting experiencing 4.8 challenges/stressors in the last 12 months.

# SLEEP



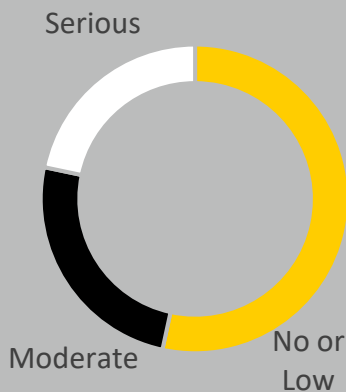
69.5% of undergraduate students get the recommended 7-9 hours of sleep on weeknights, compared to 72.9% on weekends.

**57.6%**  
nap at least once a week

**73.0%**  
feel tired or sleepy 3+ days/week

# MENTAL HEALTH

## Psychological Distress



On the Kessler-6, 24.9% and 21.7% of undergraduate students reported moderate and serious psychological distress, respectively.

## Self-Harm

10.6% of undergraduate students have attempted self-injury and 2.0% have attempted suicide in the last 12 months.

## Conditions

13.0% of UI undergraduate students reported having one mental health condition, and 29.1% reported having two or more.

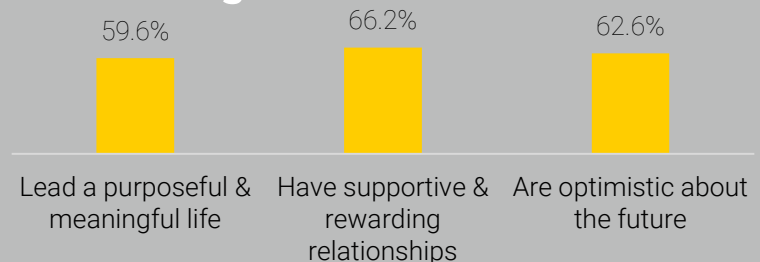
Top conditions ever diagnosed include:

1. Anxiety: 33.8%
2. Depression: 26.6%
3. ADD/ADHD: 10.5%

## Services

50.1% of UI undergraduate students reported receiving psychological or mental health services in their lifetime, and 33.1% reported using them in the last 12 months. Of those who have received services in the last 12 months, 41.3% reported receiving on campus services.

## Flourishing\*



\*percent of students who agree or strongly agree

## SEXUAL HEALTH

	Had Sex in Last 30 Days	Mostly/Always Use Barrier*
Vaginal Sex	42.0%	43.6%
Oral Sex	41.3%	4.5%
Anal Sex	3.7%	21.9%

*\*among sexually active students*

Average number of sexual partners in the last 12 months\*

**2.0**

**92.2%**

used pregnancy prevention the last time they had vaginal intercourse\*

**0.4%**

experienced unintentional pregnancy in the last 12 months\*

Top pregnancy preventions\*:  
Birth control pills: 56.1%  
External condoms: 52.3%

**14.2%**

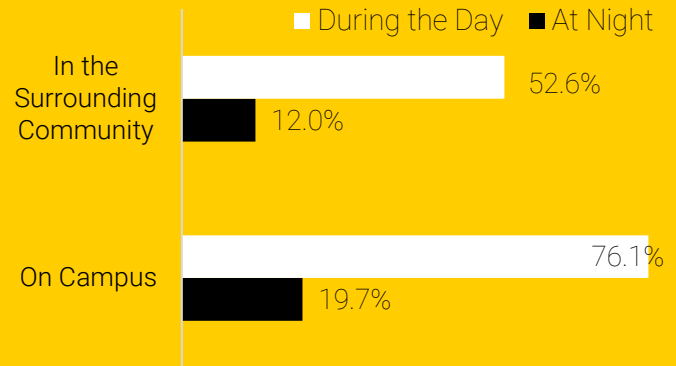
have used emergency contraception in the last 12 months\*

**16.2%**

have ever been tested for HIV

## SAFETY

### Feelings of Safety



### Behaviors

#### Mostly or Always Wear a Helmet\*:

Motorcycle or scooter: 45.0%

Bicycle: 39.3%

*\*last 12 months; of those who have ridden*

#### Driving:

While texting/emailing/using apps\*\*: 60.0%

Had an accident\*\*\*: 6.3%

*\*\*last 2 weeks; of those who have driven*

*\*\*\*last 12 months; of those who have driven*

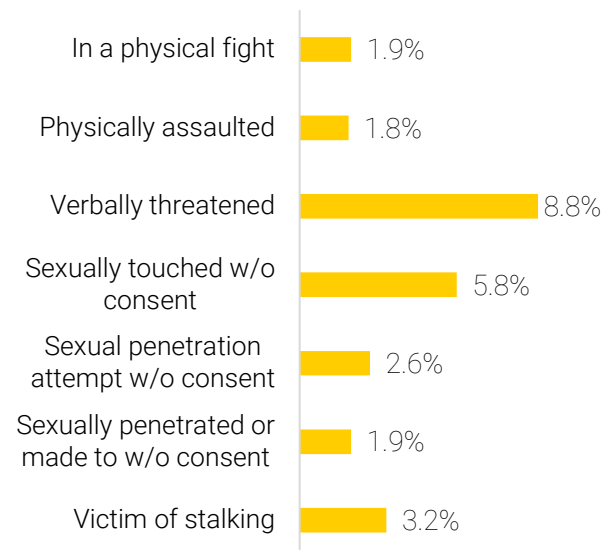
## VIOLENCE\*

### Intimate Partner Violence

**9.0%** were called names, insulted or put down  
**5.0%** had partner(s) who insisted on knowing who they were with and where they were or who tried to limit contact with family/friends  
**2.4%** were pushed, grabbed, shoved, slapped, kicked, bit, choked or hit without consent  
**1.3%** were forced into unwanted sexual contact by being held down or hurt in some way  
**2.8%** were pressured into unwanted sexual contact by threats, coercion, alcohol or other drugs

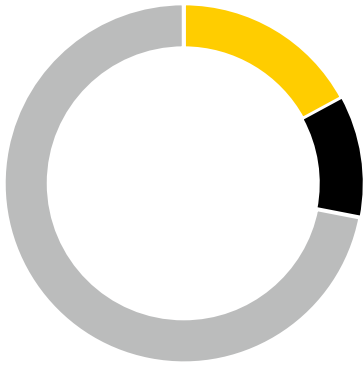
*\*last 12 months*

### Violence Outside Intimate Relationships



# COVID-19

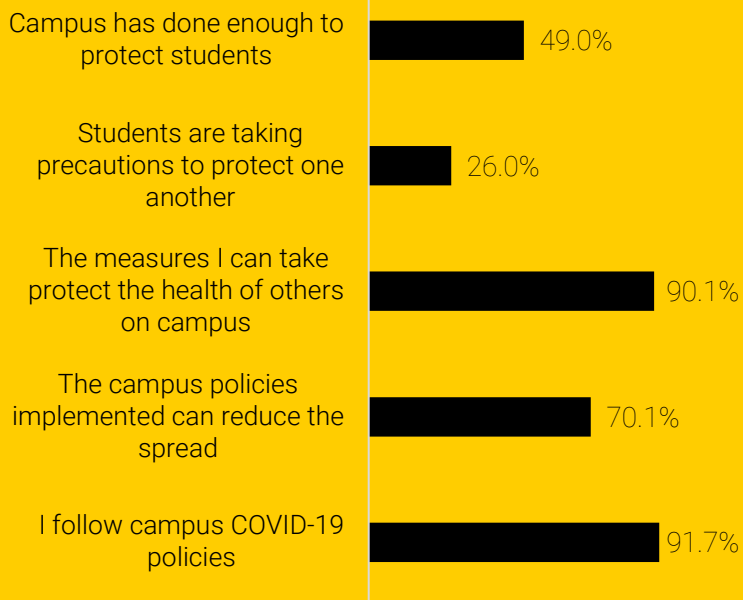
## Experience



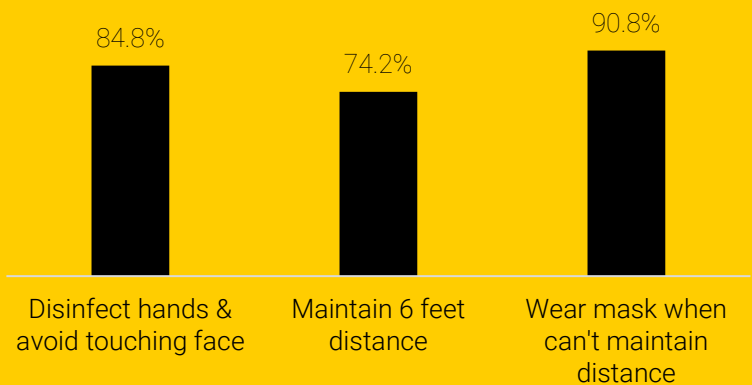
**19.2%** of UI undergraduate students reported that they had COVID-19 (confirmed by a healthcare provider) and another **12.3%** suspected they had COVID-19. Of those who had confirmed or suspected COVID-19, 43.4% reported moderate and 3.6% reported severe symptoms, and 1.8% reported that they had been hospitalized from COVID-19.

**24.9%** of students had a loved one who had long-term effects and **10.6%** had a loved one who died from COVID-19.

## Perceptions



## Protective Behaviors\*



*\*often/frequently*

**74.8%** said they would be likely to get the COVID-19 vaccine once available, and another **13.9%** had already been vaccinated before taking the survey (Feb-Mar 2021).

## Pandemic Impact

**70.6%** of UI undergraduate students reported that their professors were supportive.

**3.8%** reported that they were at a different college/university than intended.

**36.8%** reported that as a result of the pandemic, they had witnessed discriminatory or hostile behavior towards others based on race/ethnicity, and **3.3%** said they experienced discrimination or hostile behavior because of their race/ethnicity. **23.1%** of Asian or Pacific Islander students reported experiencing this kind of behavior as a result of the pandemic.

**52.0%** of those who have received counseling or therapy thought access to mental health services became more difficult during the pandemic.

**55.5%** had more financial stress and **88.6%** had more overall stress due to the pandemic.