

## **Survey: Effects of COVID-19 Pandemic on College Students in Nevada**

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In February 2021, surveys were distributed to students at six institutions of higher education (IHEs) in Nevada, including College of Southern Nevada (CSN), Great Basin College (GBC), Nevada State College (NSC), University of Las Vegas, Nevada (UNLV), University of Reno, Nevada (UNR), and Western Nevada College (WNC). Surveys were distributed either by the investigators through Qualtrics, using email listservs provided by the institution (GBC, UNR undergraduates, CSN, WNC), or through emails sent by administrative staff at the institution (UNR graduates, NSC, UNLV). Emails sent through Qualtrics included reminders each week for approximately three weeks.

The survey focused on COVID-19 pandemic effects on social determinants of health related to economic stability, education, health and healthcare, and other factors that are often associated with health inequities. This report focuses on descriptive data collected through the survey.

**GBC: The survey was sent on February 22, 2021, through Qualtrics, to 2,199 GBC students, who were invited to complete the survey by clicking on the Qualtrics link within the recruitment email.**

**Reminders were sent on February 26 and March 5, and responses from all NSHE institutions were collected on March 15, 2021.**

### I. Characteristics of respondents.

Demographic information of participants is shown in Table 1, both for the total population (6 NSHE institutions) and for GBC.

Students were eligible to participate in the survey if they were 18 years or older. The Qualtrics questionnaire automatically ended for respondents who answered they were <18 years old, diverting respondents to a script thanking them for their interest. Once data were collected, observations were retained if respondents answered at least one question in addition to their primary institution of enrollment. After deleting empty observations, including those for students <18 years of age (n = 26), a total of 3,733 observations remained for analysis.

The majority of respondents were female (67.5%), white (54.9%), and never married (61.9%). Over half (54.2) of the respondents reported living in a large city, and the majority of respondents (92%) reported Nevada as their state of residence.

### II. Educational characteristics of respondents.

Approximately one third (32.6%) of the respondents were first generation students (Table 2). The majority (82.3%) of respondents were undergraduate students, and 10.6% were graduate students. Although 15.8% of the respondents reported they were completely online students before the pandemic, 19% reported they would like to take only online courses when “everything is back to normal” after the pandemic (“plan for future courses” in Table 2), and approximately 29% reported they

would like to take a mixture of online and on-campus courses. In other words, 48% of the respondents identified the desire to take online courses either completely or in combination with on-campus courses after the pandemic. As expected, the majority (70%) of respondents were taking online courses only in the spring semester. When asked about their academic performance during the pandemic, 47% reported they felt their performance was worse than expected.

### III. Financial and Housing Effects of the Pandemic

Over half of the respondents (61.3%) were employed at the time of survey (February 2021), including 27.4% who were employed full-time (Table 3). Of all respondents, 44.2% reported they had experienced a change in employment status since the beginning of the pandemic that affected them negatively. When asked to identify what bills or fees had been difficult to pay during the pandemic, students identified school (39%), housing (30.9%) and food (29.7%) as the most frequent difficulties. On the other hand, 38.8% of the respondents reported they had experienced no difficulties in making any payments. Many students (61.1%) reported no changes in housing during the pandemic, although 13.4% reported moving in with family.

### IV. Physical and Mental Health

Several questions focused on access to health care, including health insurance (Table 4). The majority (82.8%) of students had insurance at the time of the survey, and approximately 24% experienced a change in health insurance during the pandemic. The most striking results related to mental health experienced during the pandemic: nearly 85% of respondents reported at least some negative effects on their emotional or mental health, and 43% of these reported “a lot” of negative effects. Over one-third of the respondents (35.6%) reported having depressive or suicidal thoughts, and of those definitely or “maybe” experiencing depressive/suicide thoughts, approximately 38% had not talked with anyone about them.

We used questions modified from the shortened version of the validated UCLA Loneliness Scale and asked students to choose statements that described how they felt. Nearly 62% of the respondents chose at least one statement, and 17.1% chose all three statements. Of the three loneliness questions, 51.4% of the students chose “I feel isolated from others”.

Nearly one third (32.6%) of the students reported experiencing some type of discrimination for the first time during the pandemic. Political discrimination (20.4%) was the most frequent type of discrimination identified, followed by racial discrimination (13.0%).

When asked about unintentional changes in weight during the pandemic, 47.2% reported an overall weight gain, while 12.2% reported an overall weight loss. The most frequent factors contributing to unintentional change in weight included emotions (75.6% of those who had changes), change in physical exercise (68.5%), and change in nutrition (73.2%). Nearly 65% of the population reported that maintaining their physical fitness during the pandemic was more difficult than before the pandemic.

## V. COVID Characteristics of the Population

At the time of the survey (February 2021), nearly 17% of the respondents had tested positive for COVID. Another 18% suspected they had contracted COVID but did not receive a test. On the other hand, nearly two-thirds (64.4%) had a close friend or family member who had tested positive for COVID. Approximately 18% reported that either they or a family member had been hospitalized for COVID.

Nearly 20% of the respondents reported having been vaccinated against COVID. Of those who had not received the vaccine (n = 3,059), approximately 30% reported vaccine hesitancy (17.5% very reluctant, 11.5% somewhat reluctant). However, 43.2% expressed eagerness to receive the vaccine (14.9% somewhat eager, 28.3% very eager). Factors related to feelings about the vaccine or the decision to be vaccinated included the desire to protect family and friends (57.5%), the desire to protect oneself (52.9%), the desire to assist in “making things normal again” (51.8%) and belief that the vaccine is safe and effective (45.1%). Some respondents reported being suspicious of vaccines (8.5%) or concerned about side effects (30.2%).

Students were asked about their primary source of information about COVID-19 or health in general. Over one third (34.2%) reported that the CDC or other public health agency was their primary source of information; in contrast, 20.7% reported social media to be their primary source.

**Table 1. Characteristics of Respondents**

	NSHE Institutions	%	GBC	%
<b><u>Participants</u></b>	3773*		166*	4.4
<b><u>Age groups</u></b>				
<18*	26	0.7	0	0
18 – 20	1202	31.6	31	18.7
21 – 25	1108	29.2	28	16.9
26 – 30	486	12.8	23	13.9
31 – 35	314	8.3	16	9.6
36 – 40	241	6.3	26	15.7
41 – 45	159	4.2	11	6.6
46 – 50	98	2.6	13	7.6
50 – 55	71	1.9	11	6.6
> 55	76	2.0	6	3.6
Prefer not to answer	16	0.4	1	0.6
[Missing]	2	0.1	0	0
<b><u>Gender</u></b>				
Female	2546	67.5	122	73.5
Male	1012	26.8	36	21.7
Other	66	1.8	2	1.2
Prefer not to answer	75	2.0	4	2.4
[Missing]	74	2.0	2	1.2
<b><u>Race</u></b>				
American or Alaska Indian	48	1.3	9	5.4
Asian	381	10.1	7	4.2
Black or African American	185	4.9	7	4.2
Multiple race	519	13.8	13	7.8
Native Hawaiian or Other	33	0.9	0	0
White	2072	54.9	103	62.1
Prefer not to answer	457	12.1	24	14.5
[Missing]	78	2.1	3	1.8
<b><u>Ethnicity</u></b>				
Hispanic or Latino or Spanish origin	973	25.8	27	16.3
Not Hispanic or Latino or Spanish origin	2432	64.5	110	66.3
Prefer not to answer	288	7.6	26	15.7
[Missing]	80)	2.1	3	1.8
<b><u>Marital status</u></b>				
Living with partner	349	9.3	17	10.2
Married	680	18.0	65	39.2
Never Married	2336	61.9	56	33.7
Separated/Divorced	183	4.6	12	7.2
Widowed	18)	0.5	1	0.6
Prefer not to answer	142	3.8	12	7.2
[Missing]	65	1.7	3	1.8

<b><u>Residence environment</u></b>				
Large city	2046	54.2	27	16.3
Rural area	201	5.3	54	32.5
Small town	511	13.5	72	43.4
Suburb area	960	25.4	11	6.6
[Missing]	55	1.5	2	1.2
<b><u>State</u></b>				
Nevada	3462	91.8	143	86.1
California	172	4.6	1	0.6
Other	99	2.6	20	12.0
[Missing]	40	1.1	2	1.2

(\*) Survey ended automatically for respondents < 18 years of age, who were not eligible to participate. These responses (n = 26) were removed from the data.

**Table 2. Educational Characteristics of Respondents**

	<b>NSHE Institutions</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>GBC</b>	<b>%</b>
<b><u>First generation college student</u></b>				
No	2,533	67.1	114	68.7
Yes	1,231	32.6	51	30.7
[Missing]	9	0.2	1	0.6
<b><u>Online student</u></b>				
No	3,071	81.4	94	56.6
Yes	595	15.8	69	41.6
[Missing]	107	2.8	3	1.8
<b><u>Student Status in Spring 2021 semester</u></b>				
Undergraduate Student	3,106	82.3	143	86.1
Master's Student	242	6.4	2	1.2
Doctoral Student	158	4.2	1	0.6
Post-doctoral	1	0.0	0	0
Not enrolled but taking Courses	177	4.7	18	10.8
[Missing]	89	2.4	2	1.2
<b><u>Online courses Spring 2021</u></b>				
None of my courses online	78	2.1	7	4.2
A few of my courses are online	89	2.4	6	3.6
About half of my courses are online	99	2.6	5	3.0
Most of my courses are online	649	17.2	14	8.4
All my courses are online	2,641	70.0	129	77.7
I am not taking courses	90	2.4	1	0.6
[Missing]	127	3.4	4	2.4
<b><u>Hybrid courses Spring 2021</u></b>				
None of my courses are hybrid	2,704	71.7	124	74.7
A few of my courses are hybrid	551	14.6	13	7.8
About half of my courses are hybrid	87	2.3	7	4.2
Most of my courses are hybrid	77	2.0	4	2.4
All my courses are hybrid	113	3.0	13	7.8
I am not taking courses	100	2.7	1	0.6
[Missing]	141	3.7	4	2.4
<b><u>Academic performance during the pandemic</u></b>				
Better than expected	551	14.6	13	7.8
Worse than expected	1,776	47.1	67	40.4
Not much change from before	1,288	34.1	82	49.4
[Missing]	158	4.2	4	2.4

<b>Plans for future courses</b>				
Take all my courses on campus	1,370	36.3	22	13.3
Take all my courses online	720	19.1	79	47.6
Take hybrid courses	387	10.3	21	12.7
Take courses online and others on campus	1,088	28.8	34	20.5
None of these	61	1.6	6	3.6
[Missing]	147	3.9	4	2.4

**Table 3. Financial and Housing Effects of the Pandemic**

	<b>NSHE Institutions</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>GBC</b>	<b>%</b>
<b><u>Employment status</u></b>				
Employed full-time (32 hours or more)	1,032	27.4	81	48.8
Employed part-time (less than 32 hours)	1,278	33.9	30	18.1
Not employed	1,306	34.6	52	31.3
[Missing]	157	4.2	3	1.8
<b><u>Negative change in employment status</u></b>				
No	1,269	33.6	72	43.4
Yes	1,669	44.2	60	36.1
[Missing]	835	22.1	34	20.5
<b><u>Difficulty paying bills or fees<sup>1</sup></u></b>				
Housing	1,166	30.9	39	23.5
Medical	684	18.1	27	16.3
School	1,470	39.0	50	30.1
Food	1,119	29.7	41	24.7
Other	769	20.4	40	24.1
No difficulties	1,462	38.8	76	45.8
<b><u>Housing changes during the pandemic<sup>1</sup></u></b>				
No changes in housing	2,304	61.1	121	72.9
Moved out of my apartment or house	337	8.9	7	4.2
Moved off campus	242	6.4	2	1.2
Moved in with friends	146	3.9	1	0.6
Moved in with family	504	13.4	11	6.6
Found a new apartment or house	424	11.2	14	8.4
Bought an apartment or house	104	2.8	9	5.4

<sup>1</sup>Respondents could choose multiple responses; percentages reflect the percent respondents choosing each specific response (i.e., 30.9% reported difficulty paying for housing, 18.1% reported difficulty paying for medical expenses, etc.)



**Table 4. Physical and Mental Health Effects During the Pandemic**

	<b>NSHE Institutions</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>GBC</b>	<b>%</b>
<b><u>Difficulty accessing health care<sup>1</sup></u></b>				
Medical care	711	18.8	34	20.5
Mental health services	660	17.5	20	12.1
Substance use treatment	46	1.2	0	0
[Does not apply or missing]	2,381	63.1	112	67.5
<b><u>Change in health insurance</u></b>				
No	2,673	70.9	124	74.7
Yes	898	23.8	36	21.7
[Missing]	202	5.4	6	3.6
<b><u>Currently have health insurance</u></b>				
No	444	11.8	17	10.2
Yes	3,125	82.8	142	85.5
[Missing]	204	5.4	7	4.2
<b><u>Health appointments changed to Telehealth</u></b>				
No	971	25.7	48	28.9
Yes	1,643	43.6	77	46.4
Does not apply	918	24.3	33	19.9
[Missing]	241	6.4	8	4.8
<b><u>Negative emotional or mental health</u></b>				
A lot	1,621	43.0	49	29.5
Some	1,577	41.8	78	47.0
Not at all	342	9.1	31	18.7
[Missing]	233	6.2	8	4.8
<b><u>Depressive or suicidal thoughts</u></b>				
No	1,392	36.9	80	48.2
Yes	1,343	35.6	40	24.1
Maybe	616	16.3	20	12.1
Prefer not to answer	180	4.8	15	9.0
[Missing]	242	6.4	11	6.6
<b><u>Talked with anyone about depressive or suicidal thoughts (n= 1,959)<sup>2</sup></u></b>				
No	735	37.5	24	40.0
Yes	1,127	57.5	34	56.7
Prefer not to answer	94	4.8	2	3.3
[Missing]	3	0.2	0	0
<b><u>Diagnosed with depression by a healthcare professional</u></b>				
No	2,740	72.6	115	69.3
Yes	580	15.4	25	15.1
Prefer not to answer	203	5.4	13	7.8
[Missing]	250	6.6	13	7.8
<b><u>Loneliness indicators<sup>1,3</sup></u></b>				
I often feel left out	1,094	29.0	28	16.9
I often lack companionship	1,186	31.4	30	18.1
I feel isolated from others	1,940	51.4	67	40.4

None	1,170	31.0	75	45.2
One indicator	1,072	28.4	50	3.1
Two indicators	608	16.1	15	9.0
Three indicators	644	17.1	15	9.0
[Missing]	279	7.4	11	6.6
<b><u>First-time discrimination<sup>4</sup></u></b>				
Racial	492	13.0	19	11.5
Age	276	7.3	10	6.0
Gender identity	174	4.6	2	1.2
Political	768	20.4	33	19.9
Other	201	5.3	13	7.8
No discrimination	2,182	57.8	95	57.2
Any discrimination <sup>3</sup>	1,231	32.6	55	33.1
<b><u>Maintenance of physical fitness</u></b>				
Easier	404	10.7	15	9.0
More Difficult	2442	64.7	95	57.2
No change	648	17.2	43	25.9
[Missing]	279	7.4	13	7.8
<b><u>Unintentional weight change</u></b>				
Gained weight overall	1,780	47.2	79	47.6
Lost weight overall	461	12.2	13	7.8
No change	956	25.3	49	29.5
Does not know	293	7.8	12	7.2
[Missing]	283	7.5	13	7.8
<b><u>Factors contributing to weight change</u></b>				
<b><u>(n = 2,241)<sup>5</sup></u></b>				
Emotions	1,640	73.2	69	75.0
Change in physical exercise	1,695	75.6	66	71.7
Change in nutrition	1,534	68.5	59	64.1
Health condition	403	18.0	18	19.6
Other	189	8.4	6	6.5
<b><u>Self-reported current weight</u></b>				
Underweight	237	6.3	8	4.8
Normal	1,717	45.5	62	37.4
Overweight	1,522	40.3	80	48.2
[Missing]	297	7.9	16	9.6

<sup>1</sup>Respondents could choose multiple responses; percentages reflect the percent respondents choosing the specific response (i.e., 18.8% reported difficulty accessing medical care, etc.)

<sup>2</sup>Subset of respondents who reported "Maybe" or "Yes" for depressive or suicidal thoughts

<sup>3</sup>One indicator = at least one statement was selected; Two indicators = two statements were selected; Three indicators = three statements were selected.

<sup>4</sup>Respondent checked at least one type of first-time discrimination

<sup>5</sup>Subset of respondents who reported unintentional weight gain or loss

**Table 5. COVID-19 Characteristics of respondents**

	<b>NSHE Institutions</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>GBC</b>	<b>%</b>
<b><u>Tested positive for COVID-19</u></b>				
No	2,768	73.4	119	71.7
Yes	624	16.5	23	13.9
Prefer not to say	42	1.1	7	4.2
[Missing]	339	9.0	17	10.2
<b><u>Suspected COVID but not tested (n = 3,149)<sup>1</sup></u></b>				
No	2,216	70.4	89	62.2
Yes	502	15.9	29	20.3
Prefer not to say	89	2.8	9	6.4
[Missing]	342	10.9	16	11.2
<b><u>Close friend or family tested positive</u></b>				
No	999	26.5	53	31.9
Yes	2,430	64.4	97	58.4
[Missing]	344	9.1	16	9.6
<b><u>Individual or family member hospitalized</u></b>				
No	2,770	73.4	122	73.5
Yes	661	17.5	28	16.9
[Missing]	342	9.1	16	9.6
<b><u>Currently experiencing COVID symptoms</u></b>				
No	3,292	87.3	139	83.7
Yes	71	1.9	1	0.6
Maybe	65	1.7	9	5.4
[Missing]	345	9.1	17	10.2
<b><u>Vaccinated against COVID-19</u></b>				
No	2,692	71.4	102	61.5
Yes	714	18.9	44	26.5
[Missing]	367	9.7	20	12.1
<b><u>Level of interest in being vaccinated (n = 3,059)<sup>2</sup></u></b>				
Very reluctant	535	17.5	44	36.1
Somewhat reluctant	353	11.5	12	9.8
Indifferent	478	15.6	20	16.4
Somewhat eager	457	14.9	9	7.4
Very eager	866	28.3	17	13.9
[Missing]	370	12.1	20	16.4
<b><u>Factors related to vaccine interest<sup>3</sup></u></b>				
Vaccine is safe and effective	1,701	45.1	48	28.9
Protect myself	1,994	52.9	47	28.3
Protect friends and family	2,170	57.5	55	33.1
Assist in making things normal again	1,953	51.8	58	34.9
Vaccines need more research	1,125	29.8	57	34.3
Suspicious of vaccines	319	8.5	15	9.0
Concerned about side effects	1,140	30.2	48	28.9
Other	254	6.7	20	12.1

<b>Primary source of information about COVID-19 or health in general</b>				
CDC or other public health agency	1,295	34.3	53	31.9
Clinic, hospital, or doctor's office	110	2.9	9	10.2
Employer	168	4.5	17	5.4
Family, significant other, friends	314	8.3	14	8.4
Newspaper	118	3.1	0	0
Social media	781	20.7	27	16.3
Television	342	9.1	16	9.6
No one	103	2.7	6	3.6
Other	183	4.9	4	2.4
[Missing]	359	9.5	20	12.1

<sup>1</sup>Question is subset of respondents who did not report positive COVID test in previous question.

<sup>2</sup>Question is subset of respondents who reported not being vaccinated against COVID-19

<sup>3</sup>Respondents could choose multiple responses; percentages reflect the percent respondents choosing the specific response