PennState Student Affairs | Timothy J. Piazza Center for Fraternity and Sorority Research and Reform

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COVID-19 Fraternity and Sorority Member Readiness to Return to Campus Survey

Summer 2020 Aggregate Data

Penn State University

Introduction

During this time of COVID-19 and fall semester planning, student input about feelings and attitudes is essential. The Piazza Center created a national survey to ask how fraternity and sorority students feel about returning to campus. Our goal is to provide staff and administrators with quality information to assist with their decision-making. There are five sections to this survey asking about demographics and living situation, opinions on COVID-19, how students imagine studying and living in the fall, thoughts about their fraternity/sorority chapter, and overall well-being. This report provides highlights from each of those topic areas.

Response Rate and Limitations

Overall, 60 institutions were interested in participating and 20 institutions administered the survey. The summary report below is from 13 institutions that have participated in the survey at this time, which included 126 chapters: 67 fraternities and 59 sororities. To increase data confidence, we did not use any survey results if less than two-thirds of the survey was completed.

The response rate for the entire population was 9.2%, with a confidence interval of roughly ±0.35%. Based on Carnegie classifications, there are three small, one mid-size, and nine large institutions in this report; eight are public institutions and five are private institutions. Geographically there were institutions from Arizona, Illinois, Indiana, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, and Washington.

Table 1: Summary of council membership

Council Type	n	%	Reporting Chapters
IFC	614	25.9	48
MGC	114	4.8	32
NPHC	24	1.0	7
PHC	1,583	66.8	35
Other*	36	1.5	8

Results should be interpreted with caution, particularly when examining differences among councils, due to the small sample size. As more institutions complete their survey administrations the data will be updated; please see our website for details.

*The “other” council type includes professional fraternities, many of which are co-ed.

The following report summarizes the major findings from the current survey respondents broken out by their council membership. For this report, we present data for the four primary fraternity and sorority councils including Interfraternity Council (IFC), Multicultural Greek Council (MGC), National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC), and National Panhellenic Council (PHC) as reported by participating campuses. Please note, this report will be updated on the Piazza Center website with more data the week of September 7th.

Direct Impact of COVID-19

Students were asked about the impact that COVID-19 has had on them and their friends and family; those results are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Direct impact of COVID-19 by council

Council Type	*I have not been directly impacted by COVID-19 beyond limiting interaction and travel*	*I and/or someone I know works on the front line of the pandemic response*	*I and/or someone I know has lost an internship or work because of the pandemic*	*I or someone I know has been diagnosed with COVID-19*	*Someone I know has passed away due to COVID-19.*
IFC	27.2%	28.7%	57.2%	46.4%	10.7%
MGC	26.3%	36.0%	57.0%	52.6%	15.8%
NPHC	8.3%	54.2%	75.0%	62.5%	33.3%
PHC	21.7%	37.8%	60.5%	52.2%	12.9%

Current Plans for Fall Semester

The survey gauged students' current plans about the upcoming semester. The majority of students are planning to continue their education at their current institution (see Table 3 for a breakdown by council).

Table 3. Current plans for the Fall 2020 semester by council

Council Type	*Continue my education at my college or university*	*Continue my education at my college or university, but reduce the number of credits*	*Request a leave of absence*
IFC	93.6%	3.1%	1.3%
MGC	93.0%	5.3%	0.0%
NPHC	91.7%	4.2%	0.0%
PHC	96.5%	1.0%	0.5%

Classroom Settings

Students were asked to rate their likelihood of engaging in various behaviors within the classroom setting related to preventing the spread of the virus (see Table 4 for a complete breakdown by council).

Table 4. Percent of students somewhat or very unlikely to exercise protective behaviors in the classroom by council

Council Type	Wear a mask in classrooms	Maintain six feet of physical distance in classrooms	Have my temperature scanned when entering classrooms
IFC	9.8%	14.4%	15.2%
MGC	2.6%	5.3%	7.9%
NPHC	4.3%	8.7%	13.0%
PHC	3.3%	6.7%	5.0%

Public Settings Outside of the Classroom

Students were also asked about their likelihood of engaging in various behaviors while in public spaces. The following show the overall results and a breakdown of fraternity and sorority students can be found in Tables 5 and 6.

Table 5. Percent of students responding somewhat or very unlikely to engage in protective behaviors in public spaces by council

Council Type	Wear a mask in public spaces	Maintain six feet of physical distance in shared spaces	Follow guidance on foot traffic patterns
IFC	10.9%	16.6%	23.5%
MGC	5.3%	0.9%	7.9%
NPHC	8.7%	4.3%	13.6%
PHC	2.9%	11.1%	9.9%

Table 6. Percent of students responding somewhat or very likely to engage in social activities by council

Council Type	Go to informal gatherings/parties	Go to chapter sponsored gathering/parties	Go to bars
IFC	55.3%	63.3%	38.6%
MGC	23.1%	46.3%	10.3%
NPHC	12.5%	29.2%	4.2%
PHC	50.4%	59.7%	27.2%

Willingness to Test, Contact Trace, and Isolate/Quarantine

A return to campus in the coming semester will require a need for extensive testing, as well as contact tracing and isolating/quarantining if the virus is present in our student population. Students were asked about their willingness to comply with medical advice and campus policy to engage in these actions when necessary (Table 7 shows the breakdown of fraternity and sorority student responses).

Table 7. Percent of students somewhat or very unlikely to undergo testing, tracing, and isolation by council

Council Type	*Undergo COVID-19 testing*	*Participate in contact tracing*	*Participate in isolation or quarantine*
IFC	14.1%	20.7%	16.6%
MGC	10.9%	11.8%	5.5%
NPHC	8.3%	12.5%	4.2%
PHC	7.1%	8.9%	6.8%

Concern about COVID-19

Students are generally concerned about COVID-19 for themselves personally, but even more so for their friends/family, their chapter, and their campus and community. This is somewhat in contrast to the data above as even though students report this concern for others, they still show a likelihood of engaging in numerous behaviors that will increase the risk of spreading the virus among themselves and to their communities.

- 65.8% somewhat or strongly agree they are worried about the impact of COVID-19 on themselves personally
- 87.3% somewhat or strongly agree they are worried about the impact of COVID-19 on their family/friends
- 80.5% somewhat or strongly agree they are worried about the impact of COVID-19 on their chapter
- 87.3% somewhat or strongly agree they are worried about the impact of COVID-19 on their campus and the surrounding community
- 75.8% somewhat or strongly agree they are worried about spreading COVID-19

Fraternity & Sorority House Behaviors

Students who plan to live in fraternity or sorority housing (n=574) were asked about how their organizations might behave upon a return to campus.

- 51.9% report that they are somewhat or very likely to host parties with chapter members only
- 42.5% report that they are somewhat or very likely to hold chapter meetings in their house
- 42.5% report that they are somewhat or very likely to host parties limited in size
- 34.0% report that they are somewhat or very likely to host philanthropy events open to other chapters
- 15.7% report that they are somewhat or very likely to host parties open to another chapter
- 10.6% report that they are somewhat or very likely to host parties as usual

Priorities for Fraternities & Sororities

Fraternity and sorority members were asked what the top 3 priorities should be for their chapter in Fall 2020. Below are their top responses:

- Recruitment (66.3%)
- Brotherhood/sisterhood events (63.9%)
- Philanthropy (60.9%)

Students were also asked about their concerns for their chapter in Fall 2020, which are summarized in Table 8.

Table 8. Percent of students indicating they are somewhat or very concerned about the following chapter activities in Fall 2020 by council

Council Type	*Ability to collect dues*	*Ability to host functions*	*Ability to attract new members*	*Ability to keep members involved*
IFC	66.8%	87.6%	91.4%	89.4%
MGC	72.8%	87.7%	87.7%	86.0%
NPHC	45.8%	83.3%	82.6%	79.2%
PHC	69.8%	89.7%	91.2%	94.4%

Fraternity & Sorority Student Leadership Plans

Executive board members of fraternities and sororities were asked about various plans for Fall 2020. Below is a summary of their responses:

- 25.9% report that they do not know their recruitment plans yet; among respondents who do know their recruitment plans, 44.3% report that they plan to hold in-person recruitment with changes to meet social distancing guidelines and 52.6% report that they plan to only recruit online
- 61.2% report that they expect that their chapter will be smaller in the fall
- 60.1% report that they have had contact with their national chapter office or chapter advisor weekly or more than once a week
- 65.2% report that they are not aware of resources from their national insurance provider regarding COVID-19
- 9.8% report that they are somewhat or very unlikely to follow the guidelines outlined by their national office and/or national insurance carrier regarding COVID-19 related safety measures

Concerns about Returning to Campus

Students have numerous concerns related to a return to campus and their chapter's operations in Fall 2020. Tables 9 and 10 highlight some of these concerns.

Table 9. Percent of students indicating health and safety concerns by council

Council Type	Safety of myself	Safety of others	Being around others coming from "hot spots"	Being around large number of people/crowds
IFC	52.0%	66.6%	53.7%	51.1%
MGC	78.9%	85.1%	75.4%	78.1%
NPHC	83.3%	83.3%	87.5%	83.3%
PHC	68.9%	80.3%	68.2%	68.5%

Table 10. Percent of students indicating educational and day-to-day need concerns by council

Council Type	Ability to pay tuition/fees	Access to resources to complete coursework/ research projects	Access to health care (physical and mental)	Housing (e.g., paying rent, bills)
IFC	32.4%	57.7%	27.4%	25.9%
MGC	55.3%	63.2%	37.7%	48.2%
NPHC	37.5%	54.2%	37.5%	50.0%
PHC	38.4%	65.8%	34.8%	34.6%

Effects of COVID-19 on Well-being

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a marked negative impact on the student population in a variety of ways.

- 60.1% report their overall psychological well-being is worse or much worse
- 60.6% report the ability to pursue their studies is worse or much worse
- 44.8% report a decrease in income because of the pandemic
- 37.9% report that financial changes have made it difficult for them to participate in their fraternity or sorority; 12.8% report that they are somewhat or very unlikely to continue their chapter membership in the fall
- 6.1% report that they have personally experienced violence or discrimination due to COVID-19 and 25.4% have witnessed violence or discrimination towards others

Receiving Information about their Campus's Response

The top five ways students receive information about their college or university's response are:

- Messages from the administration (e.g., town halls, emails) (89.6%)
- Other students (57.4%)
- Their campus social media accounts (46.4%)
- Other faculty/staff (26.3%)
- Other campus websites (25.8%)

The Piazza Center

The Piazza Center is an interdisciplinary research center dedicated to creating sound professional practice in fraternity and sorority advising. Our vision is to create successful, safe, and sustainable fraternities and sororities through research informed practice. Research projects include the National Fraternity and Sorority Scorecard, Fraternity and Sorority Experience Survey and Professional Practice Research Studies. Please visit the Piazza Center website at https://studentaffairs.psu.edu/piazzacenter or contact the Piazza Center for more information at PiazzaCenter@psu.edu.

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