

# Report: The Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on CUNY students

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A recent survey of the approximately 274,000 City University of New York (CUNY) students published in the *Journal of Urban Health* found that the COVID-19 pandemic has taken a toll on their mental health and financial security.

The population-representative survey, conducted by a team of CUNY SPH faculty in collaboration with researchers at Healthy CUNY, found that more than half of CUNY students (54%) reported experiencing depression and/or anxiety in April 2020, at the height of the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. Further, they found disturbingly high levels of financial instability and noted that [food insecurity](#) and housing worries were strong predictors of anxiety/depression in multivariable models.

"We found concerning levels of financial instability in our [student](#) body, with clear effects on CUNY students' [mental health](#) and well-being," says Associate Professor Heidi Jones. "Further, over a quarter of CUNY students reported anticipating graduating later than originally planned as a result of the pandemic. CUNY is known to be an important 'equalizer' in terms of the upward social mobility of many of its graduates, and increased time to graduation or drop-out could exacerbate existing inequities."

Fifty percent of CUNY students reported often or sometimes worrying about running out of [food](#) before being able to afford more, and 27% reported often or sometimes skipping a meal because they could not afford food. These estimates are considerably higher than reported in an earlier Healthy CUNY survey in 2018.

"Food insecurity continues to burden the lives of too many CUNY students and disrupt their academic and life success," said CUNY SPH Distinguished Professor Nicholas Freudenberg, Executive Director of Healthy CUNY. In response to this problem, Healthy CUNY recently received a \$500,000 grant from the Andrew Mellon Foundation to implement a two-year campaign to enroll eligible CUNY students in SNAP, add new services to campus food pantries, and promote student use of community and campus-based food assistance programs.

**More information:** Heidi E. Jones et al, The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on College Students' Health and Financial Stability in New York City: Findings from a Population-Based Sample of City University of New York (CUNY) Students, *Journal of Urban Health* (2021). [DOI: 10.1007/s11524-020-00506-x](https://doi.org/10.1007/s11524-020-00506-x)

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