

The Availability, Use and Effectiveness of Support Services: Comparisons by Gender & Sexual Orientation

KEY FINDINGS

Supplementing the classroom environment are students' perceptions regarding support services in the campus community. Students were asked about their perceived comfort levels in a variety of settings or activities. In addition, they were asked about their use of and satisfaction with a series of campus services and programs. These key findings focus on differences between men and women and between heterosexual students and gay, lesbian, and bisexual (GLB) students.

Students were asked to rate their comfort level regarding how they would feel in each setting or activity. Regarding students' comfort level participating in a number of campus events and activities and using campus facilities, the following findings are highlighted:

- GLB students were significantly more comfortable than heterosexual students participating in ethnical/cultural events on campus. Similarly, women were more comfortable than men.
- GLB students were significantly less comfortable attending football/basketball games than heterosexual students. Almost 39% of GLB students indicated that they would be uncomfortable compared to only 10% of heterosexual students. Moreover, women were significantly less comfortable than men were.
- Overall, GLB students and women indicated that they would be less comfortable joining a social fraternity or sorority or attending a Greek event than heterosexual students and men (respectively) indicated they would be.
- Regarding using campus facilities, GLB students were significantly more comfortable using the library but less comfortable using recreational sports facilities and computing labs. Women reported being less comfortable than men reported in all three settings.
- GLB students reported being significantly less comfortable hanging out in the union compared to heterosexual students, but there was no significant difference in the two groups' comfort level hanging out in outdoor areas on campus. Women, on the other hand, were more comfortable hanging out in the union and less comfortable hanging out in outdoor areas on campus than men were.

Because the surrounding community often influences students' college experiences, students were also asked about their comfort level in Columbus, specifically about eating at a restaurant, shopping, and looking for a place to rent.

- In all three areas, women expressed a higher comfort level than men did.
- Similarly, GLB students were as comfortable in the Columbus community as heterosexual students were. In fact, they were significantly more comfortable shopping in Columbus than heterosexual students were.

Students were also asked about their comfort level utilizing a number of campus services including academic advising, counseling services, residence life, on-campus employment, student cultural/support offices, administrative offices, and campus police.

- Women and GLB students reported being significantly more comfortable getting counseling at Counseling and Consultation Services and visiting one of the student cultural/support offices compared to men and heterosexual students respectively.
- Furthermore, women reported being more comfortable than men utilizing most of the other campus services including academic advising, on-campus employment, administrative offices, and OSU police. The only exception was regarding living in a residence hall to which 32.6% of women responded that they would be “somewhat” or “very uncomfortable” compared to 26.2% of men.
- On the other hand, GLB students reported being significantly less comfortable than heterosexual students utilizing campus services (with the exceptions noted above). The differences in comfort level were greatest with regard to living in a residence hall to which only 33.5% of GLB students responded that they would be “very” or “somewhat comfortable” compared to 64.6% of heterosexual students.

In addition to their perceived comfort level, students were asked about their use of and satisfaction with a variety of campus support services. A total of 16 services were included in the survey; the following statements highlight the findings:

- Men were more likely to report having used Career Connection and their college career services office than women were.
- Although women had reported being more comfortable using Counseling and Consultation Services than men reported, they were less likely to use the services (16.7% compared to 20.8% of men). GLB students were more likely to use the services (28.0% GLB students compared to 24.6% of heterosexual students) and were more satisfied with the services than heterosexual students were.
- The greatest differences between men and women and between GLB students and heterosexual students were found in the usage and satisfaction levels with Recreational Sports. Over 62% of men reported using Recreation Sports facilities and services compared to only 39% of women; only 26% of GLB students used Recreational Sports compared to 52% of heterosexual students. Similarly, women and GLB students were significantly less satisfied with Recreational Sports compared to their counterparts. For example, 38.5% of heterosexual students expressed “high satisfaction” compared to only 19.7% of GLB students.
- Interestingly, men were more likely to use the Financial Aid Office than women were (53.0% compared to 47.7%) and GLB students, more likely than heterosexual students (59.9% compared to 49.8%). All four groups expressed similar satisfaction levels with the office with average scores indicating a rating of less than “medium satisfaction.”

- While men, women, GLB students, and heterosexual students used the Office of Fees and Deposits at similar rates, women were slightly more satisfied with the office than men were, and GLB students were less satisfied than heterosexual students. Over 39% of GLB students expressed “low satisfaction” with the office compared to 28.5% of heterosexual students.
- GLB students were more likely to use Disability Services than heterosexual students were (10.4% compared to 5.5%). On average, men were significantly more satisfied with the office’s services than women were.
- Women were significantly more satisfied with both Ethnic Student Services and Student Gender and Sexuality Services. Almost 50% of the women who had used Student Gender and Sexuality Services expressed “high satisfaction” compared to only 17.5% of the men. GLB students were noticeably more likely to use Student Gender and Sexuality Services than heterosexual students were (21.8% compared to 3.7%).
- Although men were slightly more likely to use the Student Advocacy Center than women (8.1% compared to 5.2%), women expressed greater satisfaction with the office with over 50% reporting “high satisfaction” compared to 32% of men.
- Men (37.8%) and heterosexual students (32.3%) reported using campus police services at a higher rate than women (26.7%) and GLB students (27.5%). GLB students were significantly less satisfied with police services than heterosexual students were.