One-third of LGBTQ college students experienced housing disruption during the COVID-19 pandemic

A new study from the Williams Institute at UCLA School of Law conducted in collaboration with the Point Foundation, the nation's largest LGBTQ scholarship fund, finds that the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the educational opportunities, financial security, and housing stability of many college students in the U.S., including an estimated 3.4 million LGBTQ students ages 18-40.

Using data from the Access to Higher Education Survey, a nationally representative sample of adults ages 18 to 40 conducted in January and February 2021, researchers examined the experiences of LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ students and those who planned to be students during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Results show that over a third (39%) of all students, and nearly two-thirds (65%) of transgender students, reported that their ability to pursue their studies was worse than before the pandemic. One third (33%) of all students experienced a financial disruption, such as loss of financial aid, jobs, internships, or financial support from family, or needing to get a job.

"The economic fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic has disproportionally impacted people of color and LGBTQ people. It could have a long-term effect on the ability of marginalized populations to pursue higher education," said study author Kathryn O'Neill, Policy Analyst at the Williams Institute.

In addition, LGBTQ students were more than twice as likely to have lost student housing than non-LGBTQ students (15% vs 6%, respectively). Nearly half of LGBTQ students who moved home during the pandemic were not out to their families about their sexual orientation or gender identity.

"Living with parents can be challenging for LGBTQ students who are not out to their family or whose families are not accepting of their sexual orientation or gender identity," said Jorge Valencia, Point

Foundation's Executive Director and CEO. "When preparing policies to address future emergencies, colleges and universities should consider that LGBTQ students may not have a safe and supportive place to go."

ADDITIONAL FINDINGS
Illness

- About one in five (20%) LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ students had a family member become seriously ill or hospitalized with COVID-19.
    - Over a quarter (28%) of LGBTQ students of color and 23% of non-LGBTQ students of color reported that a family member had been seriously ill with COVID.

Ability to Pursue Studies

- 23% of all students experienced course disruptions due to the COVID-19 pandemic, including taking a leave of absence, changing schools, postponing starting school, or reducing the number of classes.
- More than one in ten (12%) LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ students have had to take care of children or other family members during this pandemic.
- 10% of LGBTQ students and 3% of non-LGBTQ students reported that they did not have reliable internet and a quiet space to complete online instruction.
    - One in three (31%) transgender students did not have reliable internet, compared to 5% of cisgender students.

Housing Disruptions

- 31% of LGBTQ students experienced a housing disruption due to the pandemic compared to 17% of their non-LGBTQ counterparts.
- Before the pandemic, LGBTQ students were more than three times as likely to report choosing a school in a different city or state from where they grew up to get away from family as non-LGBTQ students (30% vs. 9%, respectively).

Financial Disruptions

- LGBTQ students were twice as likely as their non-LGBTQ counterparts to have lost financial aid (6% vs 3%, respectively).
- 14% of LGBTQ students reported losing an internship, fellowship, or job, compared to 6% of non-LGBTQ students.

Read the report [link TK]

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The Williams Institute at UCLA School of Law, a think tank on sexual orientation and gender identity law and public policy, is dedicated to conducting rigorous, independent research with real-world relevance.