



Graduate Student Mental Health Survey Questions

Created and distributed by the Rutgers University Graduate Student Mental Health Committee (MHC) of the Graduate Student Association (GSA)

Start of Block: Informed Consent

TITLE OF STUDY: Graduate Student Mental Health Survey

Principal Investigator: Barbara Bender, EdD

This online consent form is part of an informed consent process for a research study and it will provide information that will help you decide whether you want to take part in the study. It is your choice to take part or not. Ask questions if there is anything in the form that is not clear to you. If you decide to take part, instructions at the end of the document will tell you what to do next. Your alternative to taking part in the research is not to take part in it.

Who is conducting this research study and why is it being done?

You are being asked to take part in research conducted by Barbara Bender, EdD, who is Associate Dean of the School of Graduate Studies and Anthony Yung, MMSc., who is a medical student in the Robert Wood Johnson Medical School. The Rutgers Graduate Student Association (GSA) Mental Health Committee worked in association with Dr. Barbara Bender and Anthony Young to create and distribute this survey. Select members of the GSA Mental Health Committee ("study staff") will analyze the study data. The purpose of this study is to analyze the experiences of graduate students pertaining to mental health and to provide data that can inform University efforts to improve the academic life, student life, and mental and financial health of Rutgers graduate students. We anticipate 1,045 subjects will take part in the research.

Who may take part in this study and who may not?

Rutgers University graduate students in master's, doctorate, and professional degree programs are invited to take part in this study by completing the survey. Undergraduate students, faculty, postdocs, and staff should NOT participate in this study.

What will I be asked to do if I take part?

You will be asked to complete the survey as truthfully as you can. The survey will take about 15 minutes to complete.

What are the risks and/or discomforts I might experience if I take part in the study?

This is a mental health survey. When the research group designed the survey, we ensured the probability and magnitude of harm or discomfort anticipated in the research are not greater in and of themselves than those ordinarily encountered in the daily life of the general population, or during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests. If the subjects have pre-existing mental health disorders, some questions might provoke unpleasant

feelings. Breach of confidentiality is a risk of harm but a data security plan is in place to minimize such a risk. Also, some questions may make you feel uncomfortable. If that happens, you can skip those questions or withdraw from the study altogether. If you decide to quit at any time before you have finished the survey, your answers will NOT be recorded.

Are there any benefits to me if I choose to take part in this study?

You will be contributing to knowledge that will allow us to assess the general mental health of graduate students at Rutgers University. The result of this study will inform and aid administrative efforts to improve the quality of life of Rutgers graduate students and to increase mental health resources for graduate students on campus.

Will I be paid to take part in this study?

You will not be paid to take part in this study.

How will information about me be kept private or confidential?

All efforts will be made to keep your responses confidential, but total confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. We will use Qualtrics to collect and forward your anonymous responses to us. We will not receive any information that can identify you or other subjects. We will download your responses to a secure file that requires a password to access. Only study staff will have access to the password. Responses will be deleted from the file after analysis is complete and study findings are professionally presented or published. No information that can identify you will appear in any professional presentation or publication.

What will happen to information I provide in the research after the study is over?

The information collected about you for this research will not be used by or distributed to investigators for other research.

What will happen if I do not want to take part or decide later not to stay in the study?

Your participation is voluntary. If you choose to take part now, you may change your mind and withdraw later. In addition, you can choose to skip questions that you do not wish to answer. If you do not click on the 'submit' button after completing the form, your responses will not be recorded. However, once you click the 'submit' button at the end of the form, your responses cannot be withdrawn as we will not know which ones are your responses. You may also withdraw your consent for use of data you submit, but you must do this in writing to the research coordinator: Anthony Yung (see below).

Who can I contact if I have questions?

If you have questions about taking part in this study, you can contact the research coordinator: Anthony Yung, Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, ayung@rwjms.rutgers.edu.

Please print out this consent form if you would like a copy of it for your files.

If you do not wish to take part in the research, close this website address. If you wish take part in the research, follow the directions below:

By beginning this research, I acknowledge that I am 18 years of age or older and have read and understand the information. I agree to take part in the research, with the knowledge that I am free to withdraw my participation in the research without penalty.

Select "I consent" below to confirm your agreement to take part in the research.

- I consent
- I do not consent

End of Block: Informed Consent

Start of Block: Demographics

Demographics (all questions in this section are optional)

What is your age?

- 18-24
 - 25-34
 - 35-44
 - 45-54
 - 55-64
 - 65+
-

What is your gender identity?

- Male
 - Female
 - Non-binary/third gender
 - Prefer not to say
-

What is your sexual orientation?

- Straight/heterosexual
 - Gay/lesbian/homosexual
 - Bisexual
 - Queer
 - Questioning or unsure
 - Prefer not to say
 - Other: _____
-

Which category(ies) best describe your race and/or ethnicity? Check all that apply:

- White
 - Hispanic, Latinx, or Spanish origin
 - Black or African American
 - Asian
 - Native American
 - Pacific Islander
 - Other _____
-

What year are you in your current academic program?

- First year
 - Second year
 - Third year
 - Fourth year or more
-

What type of graduate/professional program are you in?

- Dual doctorate degree (MD-PhD, PhD-PhD or other combination)
 - Doctorate degree (PhD/DPhil/MD)
 - Master's degree (MA/MS/MSW or other master's)
-

Are you an international student?

- Yes
- No

End of Block: Demographics

Start of Block: Work-Life Balance

Work-Life Balance

Are you the primary caretaker for/frequently take care of others (such as a family member)?
(Select all that apply.)

- Yes, I take care of child(ren) under 12 years old
 - Yes, I take care of child(ren) over 12 years old
 - Yes, I take care of adult(s)
 - No caretaker responsibilities
-

Do you have a job in addition to your studies? (This may include teaching assistantships, graduate assistantships, etc. for which you are paid a stipend.)

- Yes - less than 15 hours per week
 - Yes - 15-25 hours per week
 - Yes - over 25 hours per week
 - No
-

On average, how many hours per week do you spend on your studies and other graduate program related work (such as lab work, etc.)?

- Less than 10 hours
 - 10-20 hours
 - 21-30 hours
 - 31-40 hours
 - 41-50 hours
 - 51-60 hours
 - 61-70 hours
 - 71-80 hours
 - More than 80 hours
-

On average, how many hours per day do you typically spend on leisure activities unrelated to your graduate program? If you are unsure, think about the last 7 days and answer based on this timeframe.

- None, I do not engage in any regular leisure activities
 - Up to 1 hour per day
 - Up to 2 hours per day
 - 3 or more hours per day
-

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At any point in your graduate program thus far, have you ever seriously contemplated quitting your program?

Yes

No

End of Block: Work-Life Balance

Start of Block: Mental Health

Mental Health

Have you experienced any mental health concerns related to your graduate program workload (such as anxiety, depression, etc.)?

Yes

No

I am not sure

If yes, how would you describe your mental health concern(s) while in graduate school? (Please note, this does not have to be diagnosed by a mental health professional for you to answer. Please answer based on your perceptions/feelings.)

- Anxiety
 - Panic/panic attacks
 - Prolonged sadness/depression
 - Development of an obsessive-compulsive tendency
 - Development of a potentially unhealthy coping behavior (such as increased substance use or self-harm)
 - Prefer not to answer
 - Other (please comment)
-

Have you experienced a mental health crisis while in graduate school? (A mental health crisis is a situation in which your behavior puts you at risk of hurting yourself or others and/or prevents you from caring for yourself or functioning effectively.)

- Yes
 - No
 - I am not sure
-

If yes, what triggered the crisis? (Select all that apply.)

- Intense stress about or overwhelmed by workload/program requirements
 - Extreme feelings of anxiety, panic, and/or depression
 - Difficulty adjusting to a new routine or environment
 - Extreme feelings of homesickness, loneliness, and/or isolation
 - Other (please comment) _____
-

How would you describe your graduate program's response to your mental health crisis?

- I did not consult my program regarding the crisis
 - Please comment _____
-

Are you afraid/concerned that disclosing mental health issues could have an impact on how other students, faculty, and/or staff perceive you?

- Yes
 - No
-

Were you diagnosed by a mental health professional with any mental health condition(s) prior to starting your graduate studies? (Mental health conditions may include depression, anxiety, increased substance use, eating disorder/self-harm, trauma/stressor related disorder, or OCD.)

Yes

No

If yes, please select which mental health condition(s) you were diagnosed with prior to starting your graduate studies. (Select all that apply.)

Depression

Anxiety disorder

Substance use disorder

Trauma and stressor related disorder (such as ASD or PTSD)

Eating disorder

Self-harm disorder

Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD)

Prefer not to answer

Other (please comment)

Have you been diagnosed by a mental health professional with any mental health condition(s) since starting your graduate studies? (Mental health conditions may include depression, anxiety, increased substance use, eating disorder/self-harm, trauma/stressor related disorder, or OCD.)

Yes

No

If yes, please select which mental health condition(s) you were diagnosed with since starting your graduate studies. (Select all that apply.)

Depression

Anxiety disorder

Substance use disorder

Trauma and stressor related disorder (such as ASD or PTSD)

Eating disorder

Self-harm disorder

Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD)

Prefer not to answer

Other (please comment)

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Have you ever sought accommodations through the Office of Disability Services (ODS) for your mental health?

- Yes
 - No
-

When you have a problem or worry that affects your mental health, how often do you let someone in your personal life know about it?

- Never
 - Sometimes
 - Most of the time
 - Always
-

If you ever feel that you are experiencing a mental health issue, how likely would you be to seek professional help (such as a doctor, psychiatrist, or therapist)?

- Very likely
 - Somewhat likely
 - Not likely
 - I would not seek help
-

If you have experienced a mental health concern since starting your graduate program, to whom did you turn for help? (Select all that apply.)

- Mental health professional(s) at Rutgers
 - Mental health professional(s) outside of Rutgers
 - Department faculty/staff member(s)
 - Family member(s)
 - Friend(s) in my department/at Rutgers
 - Friend(s) outside of Rutgers
 - I did not turn to anyone for help
 - Not applicable - I have not had any mental health concerns
-

If you chose not to seek help, what are the reasons? (Select all that apply.)

- Timing (busy schedule, hours of operation)
 - Finances (insurance coverage, could not afford it, etc.)
 - Stigma or embarrassment
 - Waitlist
 - I did not know how to access the resources
 - Other (please comment)
-

How would you rate your mental health overall?

- Poor
 - Fair
 - Good
 - Excellent
-

Since the start of your graduate school experience, would you say that your mental health has:

- Improved greatly
 - Improved slightly
 - Stayed the same
 - Worsened a little
 - Significantly worsened
-

Do you think that your mental health is better or worse than the mental health of the average graduate student in your department/program?

- Better
- Somewhat better
- As good as/average
- Somewhat worse
- Worse

End of Block: Mental Health

Start of Block: Resources & Coping Skills

Resources & Coping Skills

Are you aware of the mental health resources that are available to you on campus as a graduate student (for example, CAPS)?

- Yes
 - No
 - I am not sure
-

Do you feel that you need help finding healthy ways to cope with mental health concerns (stress, anxiety, depression, etc.)?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

End of Block: Resources & Coping Skills

Start of Block: Imposter Phenomenon (IP)

Imposter Phenomenon (IP): To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

I often compare my ability to those around me and think that others are more intelligent or capable than I am.

- Strongly agree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Neutral (neither agree nor disagree)
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Strongly disagree
-

I feel bad/discouraged if I am not "the best" or at least well above average in situations that involve achievement.

- Strongly agree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Neutral (neither agree nor disagree)
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Strongly disagree
-

I feel confident in my abilities as a student.

- Strongly agree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Neutral (neither agree nor disagree)
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Strongly disagree
-

I feel that I am at the same level of ability as other graduate students in my department/program.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neutral (neither agree nor disagree)
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

End of Block: Imposter Phenomenon (IP)

Start of Block: Mental Health Support at Rutgers

Mental Health Support at Rutgers: To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

Rutgers offers adequate one-to-one mental health support/counseling.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neutral (neither agree nor disagree)
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

Rutgers offers different types of support to promote mental health and wellbeing beyond one-to-one support/counseling (such as workshops, seminars, etc.).

- Strongly agree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Neutral (neither agree nor disagree)
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Strongly disagree
-

Mental health and wellbeing services at Rutgers are tailored to and appropriate for the needs of graduate students.

- Strongly agree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Neutral (neither agree nor disagree)
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Strongly disagree
-

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My advisor/supervisor/PI (or other faculty you frequently interact with) have good awareness of support services and can refer me to them if needed.

- Strongly agree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Neutral (neither agree nor disagree)
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Strongly disagree
-

Members of my department make time for conversations about student mental health and wellbeing.

- Strongly agree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Neutral (neither agree nor disagree)
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Strongly disagree
-

My program/department at Rutgers supports a healthy work-life balance.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neutral (neither agree nor disagree)
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

I am hesitant to seek counseling on campus because I do not want to be seen by my peers.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neutral (neither agree nor disagree)
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

End of Block: Mental Health Support at Rutgers

Start of Block: Open-ended Questions

Open-ended Questions: Mental Health Support

How could your advisor/supervisor/PI (or other mentors) be more supportive of your mental health and wellbeing?

What would you like to see from your GSA Mental Health Committee?

What do you want Rutgers University to know about mental health as a graduate student?

End of Block: Open-ended Questions
