



# Sexual and Gender Minority PA Students: Wellness and Student Experiences

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## BACKGROUND

People who are sexual and gender minorities (SGM) experience stress, poverty, discrimination, impaired health access, and healthcare disparities, at higher rates than the general population. It has been shown that diversity in healthcare providers is important for narrowing these gaps. This requires the recruitment and retention of diverse students to join the workforce. There are currently no studies describing Physician Assistant/Associate PA students who identify as SGM status. This study aims to assess the current status of PA students who self-identify as SGM status with a focus on outcomes related to well-being and student experience

## METHODS

Data was collected via surveys of matriculating (n=13,877) and graduating (n=9,344) PA students by the PA Education Association (PAEA) Research team in 2018, 2019, and 2021. Chi-square tests were used to compare means for overall mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing, financial concerns, overall quality of life, and negative experiences.

## RESULTS

- Overall, **5.8% of matriculating student** and **4.6% of graduating students** identified as SGM (Figure 1).

- At graduation, SGM students were similar to non-SGM students in that they identified as **White (76%)**, **non-Hispanic (87%)**, have a **Bachelors Degree (84%)**, be **single (78%)**, and indicate they **did not currently or previously live in a rural area (70%)**. They also tended to be older (26.4 years vs 25.5 years old) and have fewer legal dependents.

## RESULTS

Figure 1. Percent of SGM students by Year and Overall

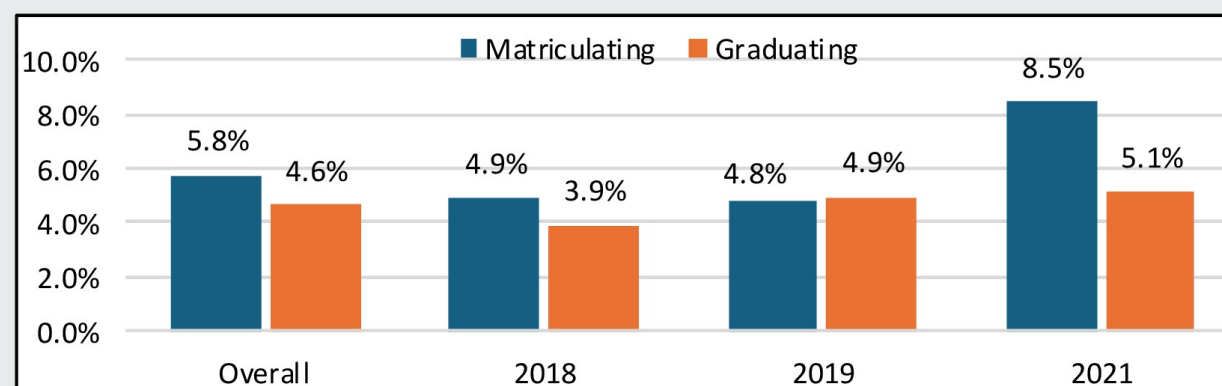


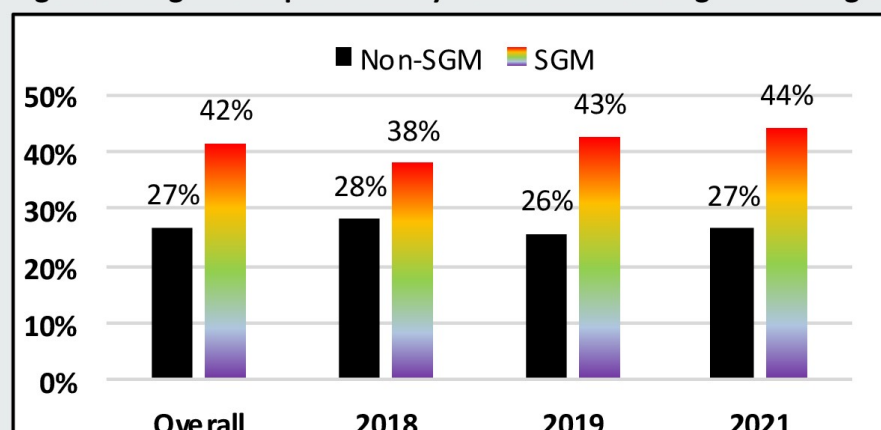
Table 1. Overall Self Report Measures by Survey

For matriculating and graduating students, there was a **statistically significant difference for overall quality of life and overall mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being** between SGM and non-SGM students (see Table 1).

Self-Report Measure	Matriculating Students			Graduating Students		
	SGM	Non-SGM	$\chi^2$	SGM	Non-SGM	$\chi^2$
Overall Mental Well-Being	7.2	7.7	59.72***	6.8	7.4	72.1***
Overall Physical Well-Being	7.2	7.6	60.4***	6.6	7.2	61.5***
Overall Emotional Well-Being	7.1	7.5	60.0***	6.7	7.3	60.3***
Overall Spiritual Well-Being	7.0	7.5	72.6***	6.5	7.2	53.4***
Financial Concerns	6.0	5.6	25.0**	6.7	6.3	12.9
Overall Quality of Life	7.9	8.2	58.8***	7.4	7.9	41.1***
PSS-4 Score	5.1	4.8	18.7	6.2	5.5	47.4***

\*\*\* = .000 \*\* <.01

Figure 2. Negative Experiences by Year & SGM Among Graduating Students



Overall, **significantly more SGM students (42%; p<0.000)** compared to non-SGM students (27%) **reported having a negative experience or behavior** (such as public humiliation or threatened with physical harm; see Figure 2).

## CONCLUSIONS

This study is the first of its kind to analyze associations between student SGM status and multiple outcome variables. SGM students reported significantly poorer mental, physical, spiritual, and emotional health than non-SGM students. Additionally, differences were found between students identifying as SGM and those who do not in several self-reported negative experiences in PA School. These findings indicate disparities between SGM and non-SGM learners that warrant further exploration and development of targeted strategies at the program and potentially national levels to improve belonging and student experiences. Further research could explore SGM student qualitative experiences to contextualize these findings and support the development of improvement strategies

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## REFERENCES

