



AICAD Data Brief: Data from the Healthy Minds Study Suggests Shifting Mental Health Concerns for AICAD and non-AICAD Students

Summary

This data brief highlights key results of AICAD schools' most recent consortial participation in the Healthy Minds Study during the 2021-22 academic year. Results are compared with a non-AICAD sample from the Spring 2021 national administration as well as results from the 2017-18 administration (the last time AICAD schools participated as a consortium).

Findings suggest that while AICAD students continue to experience mental health challenges at a higher rate than their peers, the differences between the two groups may be shrinking. Results of screening measures showed large increases in severe levels of anxiety and depressive symptoms and a decrease in psychological well-being for non-AICAD students, and only marginal changes for AICAD students. The rate at which all students are receiving professional diagnoses, particularly for anxiety disorders, has also increased substantially.

A few areas of risk stood out for AICAD students. First, AICAD students appear to be experiencing much higher levels of loneliness than their peers. In particular, almost half of the AICAD participants said they often feel left out and almost a third said they often lack companionship. Although some of these feelings of extreme loneliness may have been a function of pandemic-related distancing, rates were significantly higher than for their non-AICAD peers.

It's also worth noting two areas where the gap between AICAD and non-AICAD students has widened considerably. First, AICAD students reported much higher rates of non-suicidal self-injurious behavior than they did four years previously (37% reported engaging in this behavior in 2018; 45% in 2022). Second, the rate of clinical diagnosis of obsessive/compulsive disorder (OCD) more than doubled (from 6% to 13% of participants) from 2018 to 2022. Rates for non-AICAD students in both these areas remained relatively low and unchanged.

The continued good news for AICAD students is that when they perceive that they need support, they appear to be more likely to seek it out from both formal and informal sources than their peers. AICAD schools' participation in HMS continues to underscore the profound importance of providing accessible mental health services for our students. Ongoing participation will be critical in helping to understand shifts in the mental and behavioral health of our students and the short-term and long-term impacts of the pandemic on student well-being.

About Healthy Minds

The Healthy Minds Study (HMS) is an annual web-based survey study developed and directed by Dr. Daniel Eisenberg at the University of Michigan. HMS examines mental health issues (e.g., depression, anxiety, substance use) and service utilization among undergraduate and graduate students. The study has a special emphasis on understanding service utilization and help-seeking behavior, including factors such as stigma, knowledge, and the role of peers and other potential gatekeepers. Since its national launch in 2007, HMS has been fielded at over 450 colleges and universities, with over half a million survey respondents.

Methodology / Notes on this report.

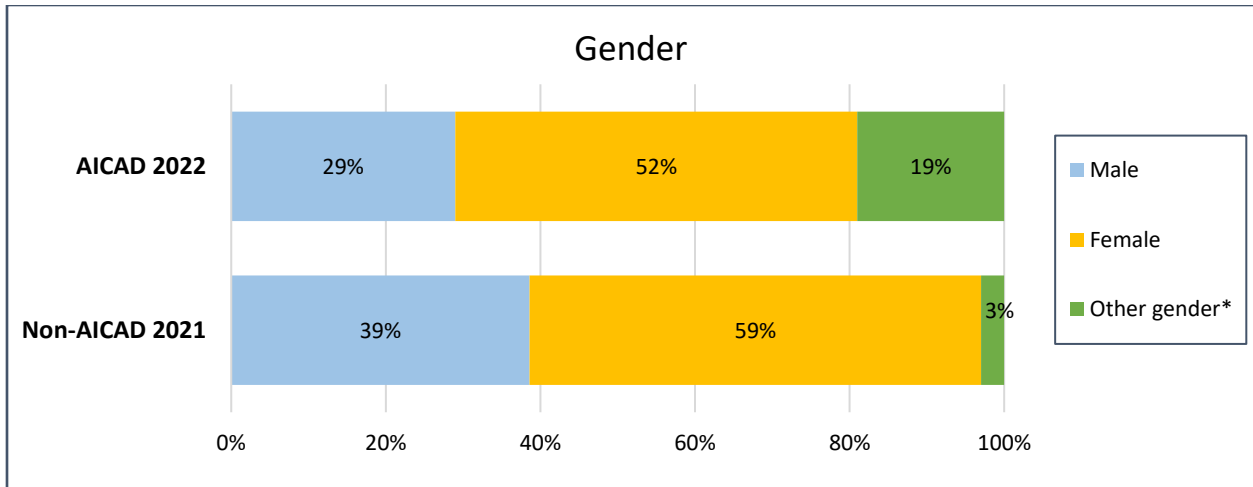
During the 2021-22 academic year, 4,025 students from 10 AICAD schools participated in HMS. Results from AICAD respondents are compared here to a national sample of 103,748 non-AICAD students who participated in Spring 2021. As in the data brief that AICAD prepared in 2018, we chose to compare the results of AICAD students to the results from the prior year's national sample so that we could compare against a fully non-AICAD sample. Although the non-AICAD sample in Spring of 2021 were subject to significantly different class formats (note 48% of the non-AICAD sample were in fully online classes versus only 4% of the AICAD sample who participated during the 2021-22 academic year), in most cases this approach provided a much cleaner basis for comparison. There are, in some cases, stark differences between the AICAD and non-AICAD samples that are more pronounced when the national sample does not include any AICAD students. In several places, where noted, results from the full national sample of 2021-22 participants (N=95,860) are also presented in order to provide a fuller picture. The results from the AICAD 2018¹ sample (N = 7,477) and the national (non-AICAD) 2017 sample (N = 68,427) are also included in this report in order to show how both AICAD and non-AICAD students have changed over time.

We are grateful to the following AICAD schools for their participation in this important study:

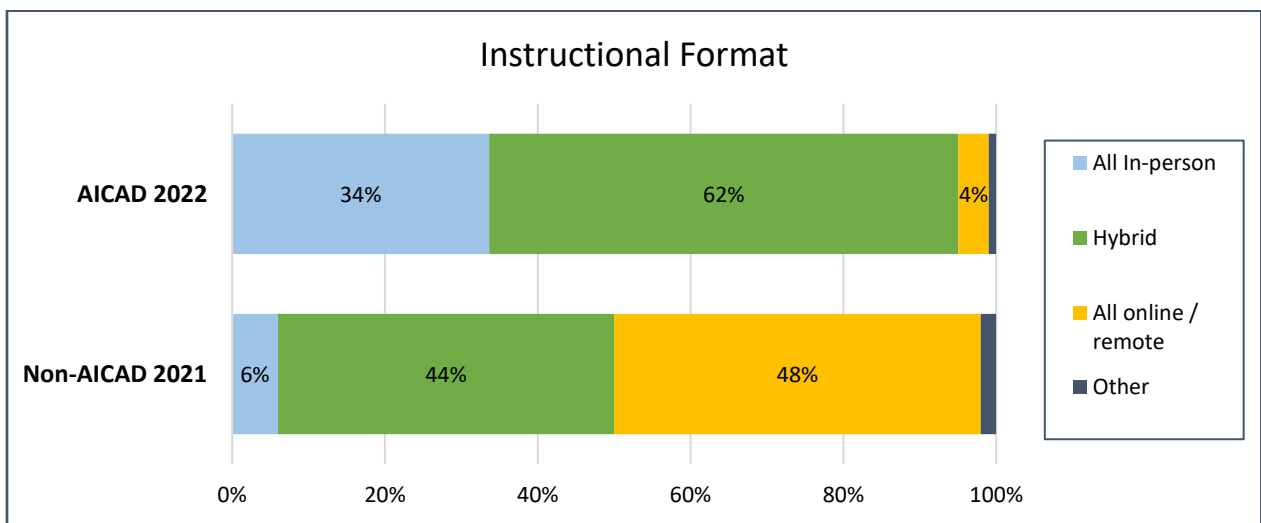
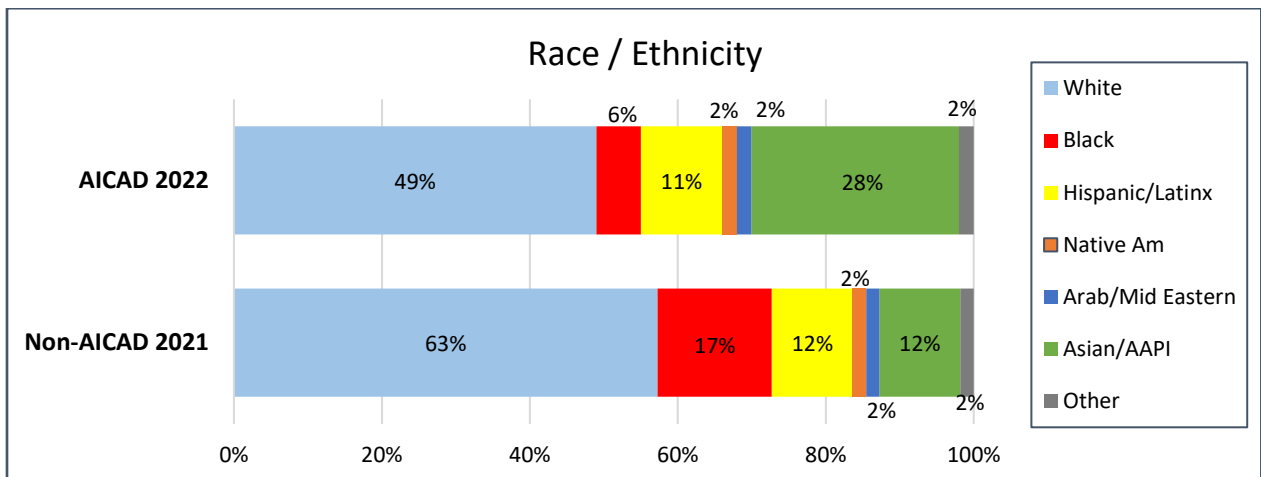
- California Institute of the Arts
- Columbus College of Art and Design
- Maryland Institute College of Art
- Massachusetts College of Art and Design
- Minneapolis College of Art and Design
- Montserrat College of Art
- Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts
- Rhode Island School of Design
- Ringling College of Art & Design
- School of Visual Arts

¹ In 2018, the following AICAD institutions participated in HMS: Alberta University of the Arts, College of Creative Studies, Columbus College of Art & Design, Maryland Institute College of Art, Massachusetts College of Art & Design, Minneapolis College of Art & Design, New Hampshire Institute of Art, Pratt Institute, Rhode Island School of Design, Ringling College of Art & Design, School of the Art Institute of Chicago, & Watkins College of Art

Demographics / Sample Characteristics

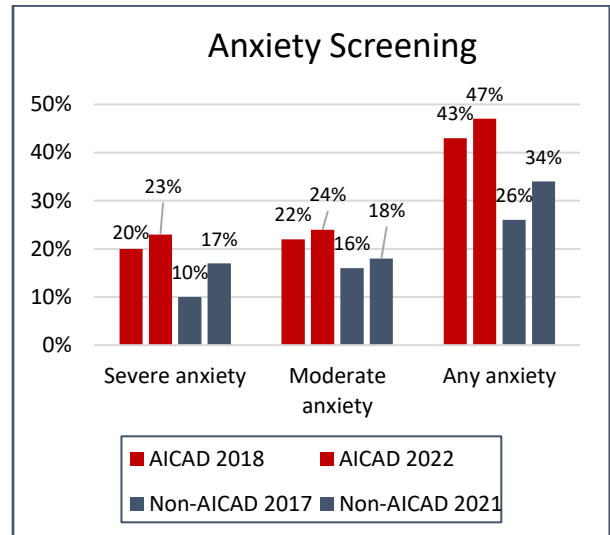
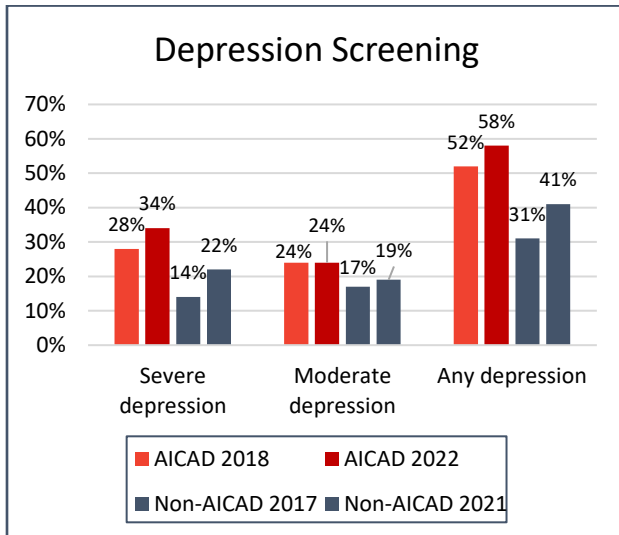


*Other gender includes transgender male, transgender female, genderqueer/gender non-conforming, non-binary, and other self-identified gender

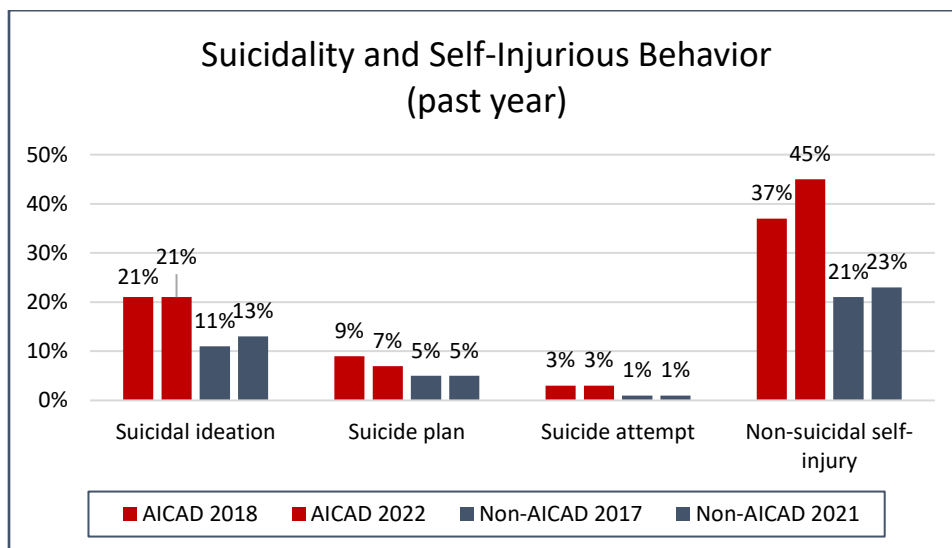


Key Mental Health Findings

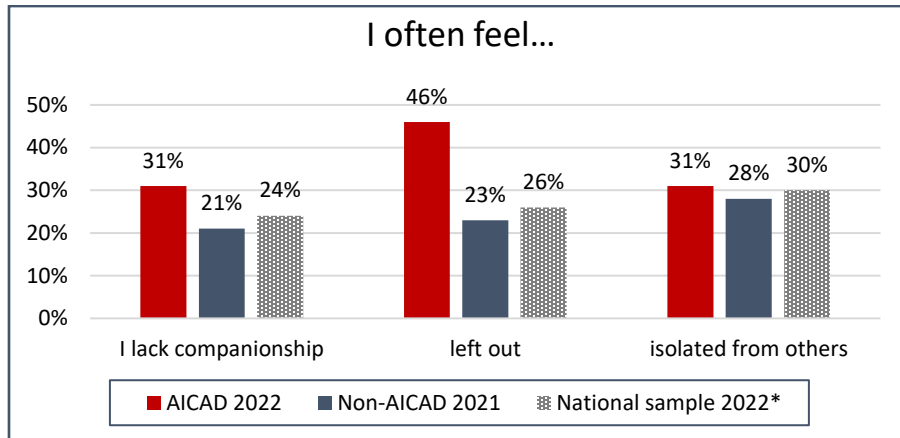
HMS data suggests that college students’ overall mental health has deteriorated over the last several years. Based on the results of screening measures, the rates of depression and anxiety have risen for the national (non-AICAD) sample and for AICAD students. However, the gap between AICAD students and their peers in other educational settings on these measures has narrowed; rates have risen more dramatically for the national sample.



Suicidality and self-injurious behavior. AICAD students continue to report suicidality and self-injurious behavior at higher rates than their peers, although rates appear to have remained largely stable over time. One notable exception is that AICAD students reported a marked increase in non-suicidal self-injurious behavior.

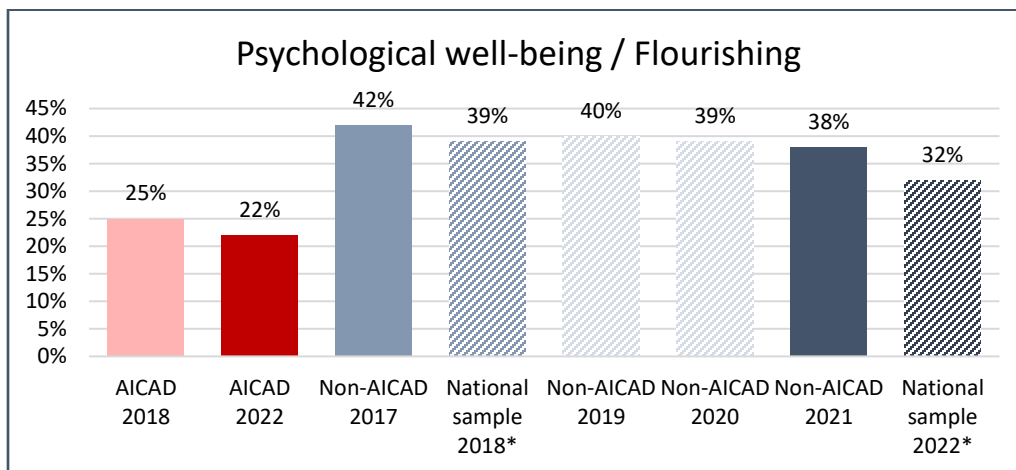


Loneliness. HMS now asks three questions that measure loneliness. National sample data for two years is included here because of the great variation in instructional formats between the two.² Results indicate that AICAD students may experience greater feeling of loneliness than their peers. Specifically, AICAD students report that they often feel left out at twice the rate of their peers.



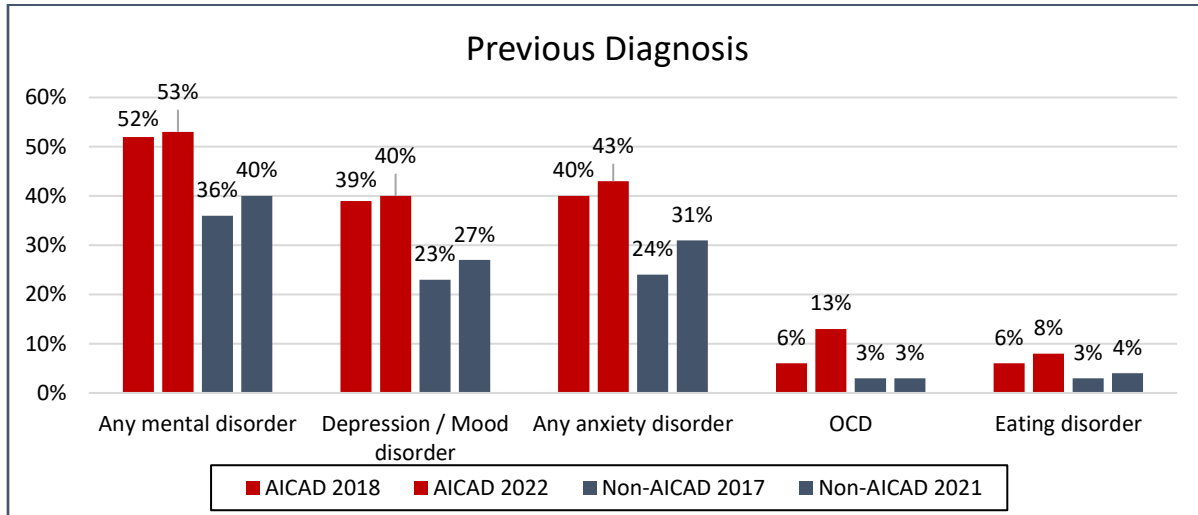
* National Sample 2022 includes AICAD participants

Psychological wellbeing. AICAD students continue to demonstrate lower levels of well-being than their peers. There was a small drop in the percentage of AICAD students who scored in the positive range on the Flourishing Scale from 2018 to 2022. Data from the national samples tell a different, and more complicated, story. Included in the graph below are six years of national data. The 2018* and 2022* samples include data from AICAD participants, so it is not clear the extent to which the data from these students impact aggregate results, but these years are included as they suggest that overall, psychological well-being of college students deteriorated slightly (and gradually) from 2017 to 2021, and then more sharply in the 2021 – 22 academic year.



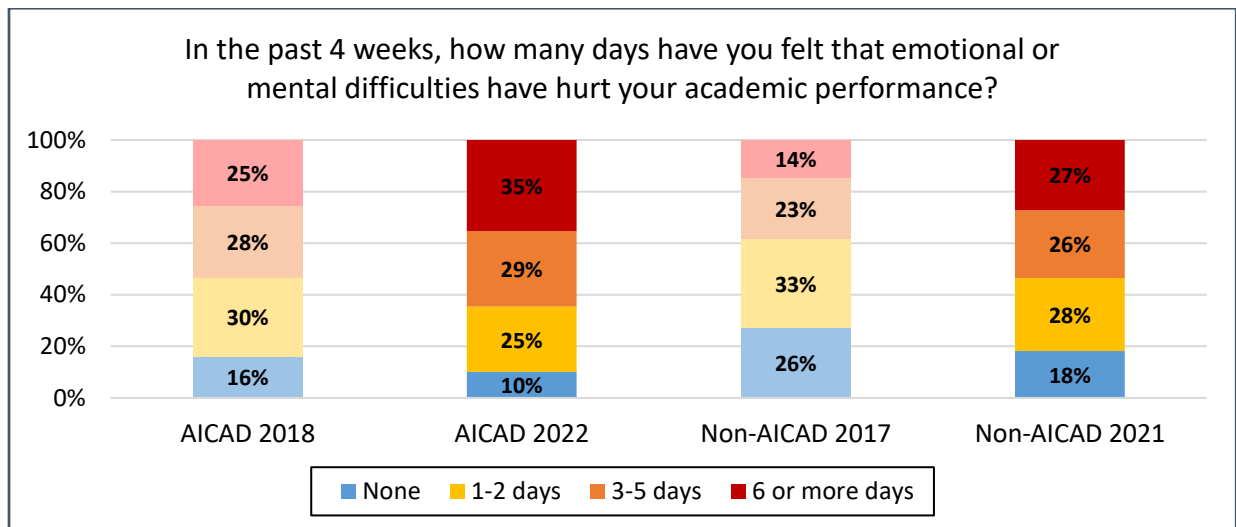
² In the Winter 2021 national sample, almost half (48%) of the students attended class fully online and only 6% were fully in-person. For the 2022 participants, only 15% were attending classes fully online and 50% reported being fully in-person. For comparison, during the 2021-22 academic year, only 4% of participating AICAD students reported attending classes fully online, 34% were all in-person, and the majority (62%) experienced a hybrid model.

Previous diagnoses. AICAD students continue to be more likely to have had a lifetime diagnosis of some type of mental disorder, however the gap between AICAD students and their peers is shrinking in several areas, primarily in depression and anxiety disorders. There was a marked 7% increase in the diagnosis of anxiety disorder in the general college student population. There was minimal change in the percentage of AICAD students who had received a previous diagnosis of any kind, with the notable exception of obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), which more than doubled for AICAD students from 2018 to 2022.

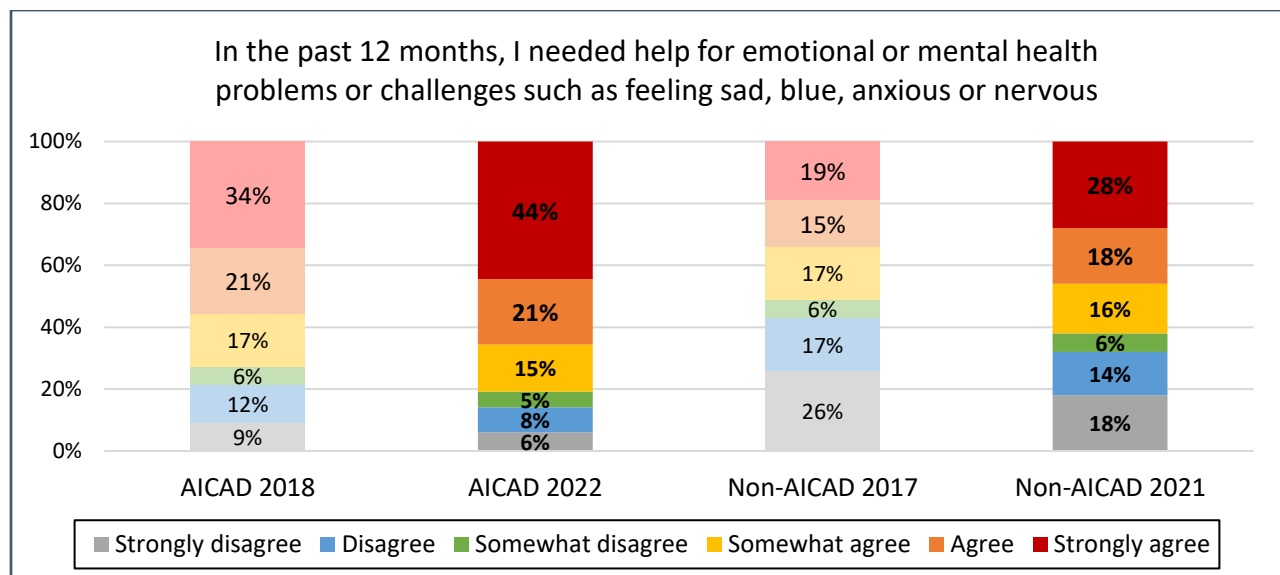


Student Perceptions

Academic impairment. Both AICAD and non-AICAD students reported more frequent disruption to their academic performance due to mental or emotional distress than four years ago; however, AICAD students continue to report greater academic impairment than their peers. In 2018, over half of participating AICAD students felt like their academic performance had been impaired by mental health challenges at least three days during the last four weeks, and one-quarter of them felt their performance had been impacted at least six days. In 2022, those rates rose to two-thirds and over one-third, respectively. For non-AICAD students, the percentage who felt their academic performance had been negatively affected at least six days almost doubled.



Perceived need for help. Approximately two-thirds (65%) of AICAD students agreed or strongly agreed that they felt like they needed help for emotional or mental health problems at some point during the year compared to a little bit less than half (46%) of non-AICAD students. For both groups, these rates have risen considerably, especially for students who strongly agree that that they needed help.



Help-seeking and use of services

The continued good news for AICAD students is that when they perceive that they need support, they appear to be more likely to seek it out from both formal and informal sources than their peers, and they are seeking it out at a higher rate than ever. On the other hand, although non-AICAD participants showed heightened levels of anxiety and depressive symptoms, their help seeking behaviors increased only marginally.

