Findings related to housing and student life from recent COVID-related surveys

May 15, 2020
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More than half of our enrolled students are currently living in Massachusetts.

60% indicate COVID-19 has worsened their mental health and wellbeing.

Students in on campus emergency housing are practicing habits to control the spread of the virus.

While most agree they feel part of the community at MIT, we need to foster a sense of belonging for students in any location.

Most have found it relatively easy to practice social distancing in MIT residence halls.

Many hope to live in campus housing when classes resume this fall; 1 in 4 would consider staying where they are now if MIT has online instruction and reduced campus operations.

While most emergency housing policies are fine as is, residents request some be strengthened and some be relaxed.

April – May 2020 Housing Experience Survey: Invited 1571 students (1349 Grads & 222 Undergrads) on 4/25; 41% return: 54% of UG and 42% of grads responding.

May 2020 Off Campus Survey: Invited ~7300 current and incoming grads & ~4,200 undergrads on 5/3; 57% return: 59% of UG and 56% of grads responding.
Respondents are generally practicing habits to control spread of the virus...

- Wash or sanitize hands after being in areas shared with other building residents or after returning from outside the building: 94% always or most of the time, 29% other residents always or most of the time.
- Practice social distancing to avoid close contact with other people: 93% always or most of the time, 52% other residents always or most of the time.
- Limit leaving room, apartment or unit: 87% always or most of the time, 35% other residents always or most of the time.
- Avoid touching face: 59% always or most of the time, 15% other residents always or most of the time.
- Clean and disinfect surfaces touched everyday: 39% always or most of the time, 9% other residents always or most of the time.

... with the Cambridge emergency order requiring face coverings be worn in all public places, businesses and common areas of residential buildings increasing use of face covers.

- Cover mouth and nose with a mask or cloth face cover in public areas outside the building: 73% before emergency order, 93% after emergency order.
- Cover mouth and nose with a mask or cloth face cover in areas shared with other building residents: 53% before emergency order, 84% after emergency order.

Source: April-May 2020 Housing Experience Survey
Overall, most have found it relatively easy to practice social distancing in de-densified buildings, especially ones where residents do not need to share kitchens or bathrooms.

How easy or difficult is it for you to practice social distancing in the building you currently live in?

Themes for what challenges social distancing in residence halls, and what might make distancing easier:

1. Clearer guidelines about elevator use
2. Find ways to keep distance near entrances and exits and in hallways
3. Modify how residents pickup packages, mail, and deliveries
4. Provide masks to residents and staff
5. Manage how laundry areas are used
6. Manage how bathrooms and/or kitchens are shared
7. Ease access to meals and groceries

Source: April-May 2020 Housing Experience Survey
More than half of the respondents in on-campus emergency housing rated their current overall mental and emotional health as Excellent or Good.

Around 9% said the situation has improved their wellbeing; about 30% said it had not changed.

60% indicated COVID-19 has worsened their mental health and wellbeing.

Source: April-May 2020 Housing Experience Survey
While most agree they feel part of the community at MIT, we need to foster a sense of belonging and community for current and incoming students working or studying in any location.

I feel like part of the community at MIT.

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Sources: April-May 2020 Housing Experience Survey and May 2020 Off Campus Survey; 2019 Undergraduate Enrolled Student Survey; 2019 Graduate Enrolled Student Survey
Respondents indicated which housing plans they were exploring for fall; many hope to live in campus housing. About 1 in 4 would consider staying where they are now if MIT has online instruction and reduced campus operations.

**Sources:** May 2020 Off Campus Survey