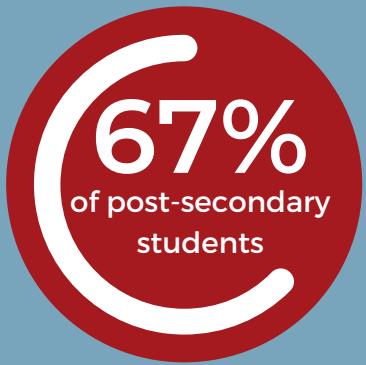




# TRAUMA AND PTSD AMONG STUDENTS

Rates of trauma exposure are shown to peak sharply between the ages of 16 and 20, as research shows that:



have experienced at least one traumatic event in their lifetime;



up to nearly half of which occur while they are on campus.

Some of the most commonly reported traumatic events that post-secondary students experience include:

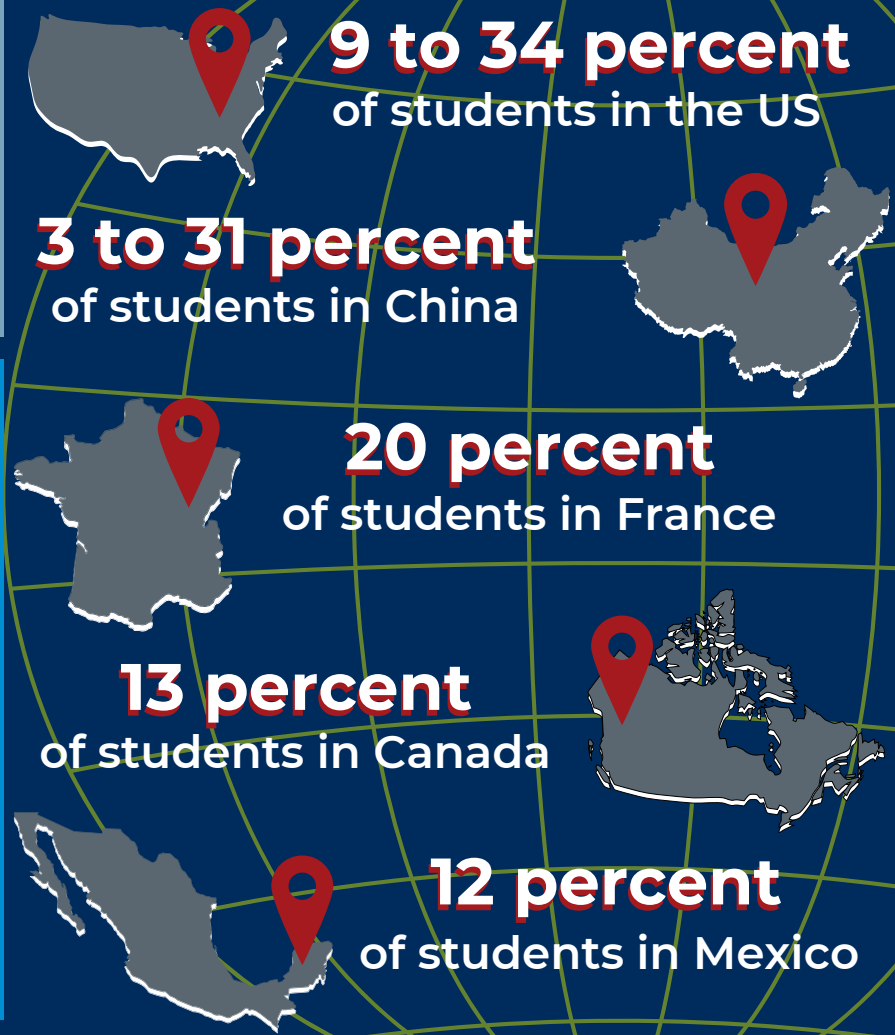
- Sexual harassment and assault
- Violence and physical abuse
- Racial trauma
- Isolation or alienation
- Threats or executed acts of mass violence
- Adverse childhood experiences (ACE)



As such, research concludes that minority (e.g., Black, Queer, Female/Trans/Non-binary), international, and first-generation students are at elevated risk of trauma exposure and PTSD.

## Trauma and PTSD at a Glance:

23 percent of students around the world meet criteria for probable PTSD, including:



Some of the main challenges students face following a traumatic event or onset of PTSD include:

- **Dissolution of social support networks**
- **Impulsivity**
  - 15x more likely to attempt suicide
  - 4x more likely to abuse substances
- **Learned helplessness**
  - Work avoidance
  - Withdrawal
- **Lack of self-efficacy**
- **Sense of detachment, lack of meaning**
  - 3x more likely to experience depression
- **Numbness or "cloudy" perspective**
- **Heightened startle response, hypervigilance, anxiety**
- **Increased sense of vulnerability**
- **Confusion or disorientation**
- **Comorbid mental health issues**



To combat these challenges, campus leaders can leverage:



### Peer-to-Peer Support

Research suggests that "deep connection with others" is a strong protective factor against PTSD; moreover, "vicarious experiences," like observing role models, and support groups, i.e., bonding with peers with shared experiences, are proven to inspire help-seeking and self-help efforts among students.

- Strategies Include:**
- Group therapy opportunities
  - Peer mentorship/ambassador programs
  - Collaboration with student groups on training and awareness campaigns
  - Utilizing student theatre groups to facilitate role-playing exercises



### 24-hour Crisis Support

While blue light systems and 24-hour campus safety services are a great way to cultivate physical safety on campus—and are already utilized across most campuses around the world—implementing a 24-hour crisis hotline that allows students to easily access mental health support is regarded as a key way to create psychological safety on campus.

- Through a 24hr crisis hotline, students have access to:**
- In-the-moment counseling support
  - Tips for healthy coping mechanisms
  - Referrals to the right, localized support
  - Confidential, culturally-competent care



### Campus-Wide Training

According to trauma professionals, cultivating a trauma-informed campus climate requires that everyone—students, faculty, and staff alike—be engaged in routine training and professional development on how they can recognize signs and symptoms of post-traumatic stress (PTS) in themselves or others, how they can effectively cope or help others to do so, and how they can prevent PTS altogether.

- Potential topics to explore through training include:**
- Mental health and help-seeking stigma
  - Cultural stereotypes and unconscious bias
  - Coping strategies like journaling, exercising, goal-setting, avoiding alcohol/caffeine, getting quality sleep
  - How to recognize when professional help is needed

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