



**STUDY ABROAD
HEALTH AND SAFETY
REPORT 2020**

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About the Minnesota Office of Higher Education

The Minnesota Office of Higher Education is a cabinet-level state agency providing students with financial aid programs and information to help them gain access to postsecondary education. The agency also serves as the state's clearinghouse for data, research and analysis on postsecondary enrollment, financial aid, finance and trends.

The Minnesota State Grant Program is the largest financial aid program administered by the Office of Higher Education, awarding up to \$207 million in need-based grants to Minnesota residents attending eligible colleges, universities and career schools in Minnesota. The agency oversees other state scholarship programs, tuition reciprocity programs, a student loan program, Minnesota's 529 College Savings Plan, licensing and early college awareness programs for youth.

About This Report

This is a legislative-mandated data collection. As requested by Minnesota Statutes, section 3.197, the agency estimates that this report cost approximately \$3,999.97 to prepare, including staff time for survey design, data collection, and data analysis for submission to the Secretary of State.

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Executive Summary

The Study Abroad Health and Safety data informs students and parents about the health and safety incidents during studying abroad. Incidents as reported on the Study Abroad Health and Safety Survey are defined as deaths and hospitalizations that occurred during, and as a result of, participation in a study abroad program. Minnesota legislation ([Minn. Stat. § 5.41¹](#)) aims to strengthen student safety by asking Minnesota colleges and universities with study abroad programs to report annually on:

- Hospitalizations and deaths of students as a result of and during program participation
- Country, primary program host and program type of each incident
- Whether the program complied with health and safety standards set by the nationally recognized Forum on Education Abroad or a similar standard

Key Takeaways

- Since 2015, 53,245 Minnesota students have participated in study abroad programs.
- Only 172 incidents that resulted in hospitalizations have occurred since 2015.
- There have been no deaths of students participating in study abroad programs.
- Europe continues to be the most common destination for study abroad students. The United Kingdom (7,337), Italy (5,620), Spain (4,167), and France (3,194) are the most popular study abroad destinations.
- Ecuador and India have had the most reported incidents involving hospitalizations, but their incident rates are only 1.17% and 0.82% respectively.
- The University of Minnesota – Twin Cities sends the largest number of students on study abroad programs (16,443). The University of St. Thomas (5,468) sends the second highest number of students on study abroad programs.

¹ <https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/5.41>

Data Privacy

The Minnesota Office of Higher Education (OHE) adheres to current federal and state data privacy laws and best practices to protect the privacy of individual students. [Minn. Stat. § 135A.15, Subd. 6](#)² requires that reports and data are prepared and published as summary data, as defined in [Minn. Stat. § 13.02, Subd. 19](#)³ and are consistent with federal and state laws governing access to educational data and student privacy.

OHE's policy for complying with federal and state laws governing access to student records is to suppress student data in cells containing fewer than 10 students. In this report, cells with counts under 10 are suppressed.

² <https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/135A.15#stat.135A.15.6>

³ <https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/13.02#stat.13.02.19>

Study Abroad Data

Table 1: Total Participants by School Year

School Year	Total Participants
2015	10,031
2016	9,632
2017	9,785
2018	9,100
2019	9,010
2020	5,687
Grant Total	53,245

Source: Study Abroad Health and Safety Survey 2015-2020

The number of study abroad participants was significantly lower in 2019-2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic, which forced many cancelations of study abroad programs. In the 2019-2020 school year, 5,687 students participated in study abroad. For context, during a typical year about 9,000 students participate in study abroad programs from institutions across Minnesota.

Table 2: Students Who Returned Home Prior to Study Abroad Program End

Institution Name	Returned Prior to End Date	Did Not Return Prior To End Date	Total Participants
Augsburg University	20	94	114
Bethel University	38	270	308
College of Saint Benedict/Saint John's University	136	274	410
College of Saint Scholastica	19	68	87
Concordia College	20	16	36
Gustavus Adolphus College	38	251	289
Macalester College	141	159	300
Minnesota State University, Mankato	30	8	38

Institution Name	Returned Prior to End Date	Did Not Return Prior To End Date	Total Participants
Mitchell Hamline School of Law	0	28	28
St. Catherine University	12	152	164
St. Cloud State University	34	36	70
St. Olaf College	112	435	547
University of Minnesota Crookston	0	21	21
University of Minnesota Twin Cities	1,067	787	1,854
University of Northwestern - St. Paul	11	112	123
University of St. Thomas	140	590	730
Winona State University	29	41	70

Source: Study Abroad Health and Safety Survey 2015-2020

Study abroad hosts are institutions or organizations responsible for the study abroad program. Hosts are responsible for the administrative details of the study abroad program along with any other aspect of the program that assures its success including, but not limited to, student housing, local transportation, and emergency response and support. There are six classifications of study abroad hosts: 1) a study abroad program taught by home university faculty or staff, 2) a study abroad program from a university overseas, 3) a third party program host, 4) a study abroad program from another U.S. university, 5) a study abroad program from a consortium, and 6) a study abroad program taken as an independent study. The majority of study abroad participants in Minnesota (74.3%) are participating in study abroad programs hosted by their home university faculty or staff.

Incident Details

Table 3: Total Incidents by School Year

School Year	Total Incidents
2015	38
2016	36
2017	15
2018	34
2019	39
2020	10
Grand Total	172

Source: Study Abroad Health and Safety Survey 2015-2020

Over six years of data collection (2015-2020), 0.32% of participants (172 out of 53,245 students) were involved in any type of incident while participating in a study abroad program. Over the same time period, the highest number of incidents reported by a single college is 33, however the overall incident rate at that institution was only 0.20% over the same time period.

All of the incidents reported between 2015-2020 were hospitalizations. The most frequent known causes of hospitalization were gastrointestinal illnesses or bacterial/viral infections. Other hospitalizations with a known cause were the result of physical injury, rashes, animal bites, psychological illness, parasitic infections, urological conditions, respiratory illness, seizures, and dental conditions. None of the reported incidents for school year 2019-2020 were due to COVID-19.

Although most study abroad students participate in programs hosted by their home university faculty or staff only 0.21% of incidents can be attributed to this host type. The other program hosts have a combined incident rate of 0.41%.

Locations of Incidents

While incidents involving study abroad participants occur on every continent, the majority of incidents occurred in Europe (33%) and Asia (23%). Europe had the largest concentration of study abroad participants with over 36,000 participants in the last six years. Country participation counts are higher

than student participation because a student can study in multiple countries during the same study abroad period (one student participant, multiple country participation).

Table 4: Total Participants and Incidents by Continent

Continents	Total Participants	Incidents
Africa	3,723	14
Asia	10,742	47
Australia	3,900	9
Europe	36,878	57
North America	5,836	21
South America	4,722	24
Grand Total	65,801	172

Source: Study Abroad Health and Safety Survey 2015-2020

COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic created many challenges for study abroad programs both from the institution and student perspective. Many institutions with students studying abroad scrambled to have students return home safely. COVID-19 forced many institutions to cancel or delay study abroad programs well into the 2020-2021 school year. During the study abroad annual survey (administered in the fall of 2020), institutions were asked optional questions about students who returned early due to the COVID-19 pandemic, along with questions on details of the cancellations. Twenty-eight institutions answered the optional questions about study abroad and COVID-19.

Table 5: Total Participants and Study Abroad Participants Who Returned Home Prior to Program End

Total Participants (from 28 COVID respondents)	Returned Prior to Program End
5,578	1,861

Source: Study Abroad Health and Safety Survey 2015-2020

Out of the 5,687 students who participated in study abroad programs, many came home prior to the completion of their study abroad program. Institutions were encouraged, but not required, to report on how many students came back to the U.S. early. Institutions reported that 1,861 students returned home early in the 2019-2020 school year — roughly one in three students who studied abroad.

Table 6: Entity Who Initiated Study Abroad Cancellations

Program Cancellation Initiated by	No	Yes
Institution Cancellation	19	9
Participant or Family Cancellation	9	19
Study Abroad Program Cancellation	18	10
Cancellation Due to Travel Restriction	21	7

Source: Study Abroad Health and Safety Survey 2015-2020

Table 7: Study Abroad Confirmed and Planned Cancellations

Study Abroad Cancellations and Planned Cancellations	No	Yes	Unknown
Cancelled May - July 2020	2	26	
Cancelled August - December 2020	2	26	
Planned to Cancel January - April 2021	2	21	5
Planned to Cancel May - July 2021	4	4	20

Source: Study Abroad Health and Safety Survey 2015-2020

Appendix A: Participation by Country

Table 8: Participation Totals by Country 2015-2020 (Sorted by Total Participants)

Country	Participants
United Kingdom	7,337
Italy	5,620
Spain	4,167
France	3,194
Germany	2,702
Ireland	2,428
China	2,400
Australia	2,339
Greece	1,623
New Zealand	1,501
Japan	1,494
Denmark	1,443
India	1,341
Argentina	1,271
South Africa	1,261
Costa Rica	1,250
Ecuador	1,197
Austria	1,158
Thailand	1,078
Chile	972
Mexico	898
Norway	892
Sweden	871
Belize	806
Netherlands	773
Morocco	758
South Korea	701
Czech Republic	671
Peru	633

Country	Participants
Switzerland	619
Cuba	599
Israel	589
Hungary	580
Guatemala	564
Poland	463
Brazil	438
Tanzania	422
Iceland	382
Turkey	364
Bahamas	354
Singapore	312
Malaysia	290
Russia	284
Nicaragua	272
Dominican Republic	260
Jordan	254
Jamaica	252
Hong Kong	246
Laos	233
Vietnam	221
United Arab Emirates	218
Belgium	213
Kenya	208
Ghana	189
Taiwan	169
Indonesia	168
Estonia	163
Senegal	154
Slovenia	153
Namibia	151
Finland	148
Oman	145

Country	Participants
Nepal	145
Latvia	134
Croatia	131
Panama	128
Portugal	118
Canada	118
Uganda	117
Philippines	117
Zambia	103
Slovakia	95
Palestine	93
Honduras	91
Egypt	90
Bolivia	85
Lithuania	79
Trinidad and Tobago	76
Myanmar (Burma)	71
Rwanda	69
Cambodia	61
Botswana	61
Fiji	60
Uruguay	59
Macedonia	56
Venezuela	47
Bangladesh	43
Haiti	38
Mauritius	37
Ukraine	36
Barbados	33
Serbia	32
Saint Lucia	28
Netherlands Antilles	26
Zimbabwe	25

Country	Participants
Bosnia	25
Cameroon	24
Cyprus	23
Romania	22
Ethiopia	22
British West Indies	22
El Salvador	21
Belarus	21
Colombia	20
Albania	20
Madagascar	18
Kazakhstan	16
Eritrea	14
Armenia	14
Mongolia	13
Sri Lanka	10
Qatar	10
Lebanon	10
Bhutan	10

Appendix B: Incident Rates by Country

Table 9: Incident Rates by Country 2015-2020 (Sorted Alphabetically)

Country	Incident Rate
Afghanistan	0.00%
Albania	0.00%
Algeria	0.00%
Antigua and Barbuda	0.00%
Argentina	0.08%
Armenia	0.00%
Australia	0.30%
Austria	0.35%
Azerbaijan	25.00%
Bahamas, The	0.00%
Bangladesh	0.00%
Barbados	0.00%
Belarus	0.00%
Belgium	0.00%
Belize	0.00%
Bhutan	0.00%
Bolivia	1.18%
Bosnia	0.00%
Botswana	0.00%
Brazil	0.46%
British West Indies	0.00%
Bulgaria	0.00%
Burundi	0.00%
Cambodia	3.28%
Cameroon	4.17%
Canada	0.00%
Chile	0.10%
China	0.29%
Colombia	0.00%

Country	Incident Rate
Congo	0.00%
Costa Rica	0.32%
Croatia	0.00%
Cuba	0.33%
Cyprus	0.00%
Czech Republic	0.15%
Denmark	0.28%
Djibouti	0.00%
Dominica	0.00%
Dominican Republic	0.77%
Ecuador	1.17%
Egypt	1.11%
El Salvador	0.00%
Eritrea	0.00%
Estonia	0.00%
Ethiopia	4.55%
Fiji	0.00%
Finland	0.00%
France	0.13%
Georgia	0.00%
Germany	0.22%
Ghana	1.06%
Greece	0.12%
Grenada	0.00%
Guatemala	1.06%
Haiti	0.00%
Honduras	0.00%
Hong Kong	0.00%
Hungary	0.17%
Iceland	0.00%
India	0.82%
Indonesia	1.19%
Ireland	0.16%

Country	Incident Rate
Israel	0.34%
Italy	0.18%
Jamaica	0.00%
Japan	0.20%
Jordan	1.18%
Kazakhstan	0.00%
Kenya	1.44%
Kiribati	0.00%
Kosovo	0.00%
Kuwait	0.00%
Kyrgyzstan	0.00%
Laos	0.00%
Latvia	0.00%
Lebanon	0.00%
Lithuania	0.00%
Macedonia	0.00%
Madagascar	0.00%
Malawi	0.00%
Malaysia	0.69%
Malta	0.00%
Mauritania	0.00%
Mauritius	0.00%
Mexico	0.33%
Mongolia	0.00%
Morocco	0.13%
Mozambique	0.00%
Multiple Countries (Europe)	0.00%
Myanmar (Burma)	0.00%
Namibia	0.00%
Nepal	1.38%
Netherlands	0.39%
Netherlands Antilles	0.00%
New Zealand	0.13%

Country	Incident Rate
Nicaragua	1.10%
Niger	0.00%
Nigeria	0.00%
Norway	0.11%
Oman	0.00%
Palestine	0.00%
Panama	0.78%
Peru	0.79%
Philippines	0.00%
Poland	0.00%
Portugal	0.00%
Qatar	0.00%
Republic of Korea	0.00%
Romania	0.00%
Russia	0.00%
Rwanda	0.00%
Saint Lucia	0.00%
Saint Vincent	0.00%
Samoa	0.00%
Senegal	0.00%
Serbia	0.00%
Sierra Leone	0.00%
Singapore	0.00%
Slovakia	0.00%
Slovenia	0.00%
Somalia	0.00%
South Africa	0.40%
South Korea	0.29%
Spain	0.22%
Sri Lanka	0.00%
Sudan	0.00%
Swaziland	0.00%
Sweden	0.34%

Country	Incident Rate
Switzerland	0.16%
Taiwan	0.00%
Tajikistan	0.00%
Tanzania	0.00%
Thailand	0.83%
Togo	0.00%
Trinidad and Tobago	0.00%
Tunisia	0.00%
Turkey	0.00%
Uganda	0.00%
Ukraine	0.00%
United Arab Emirates	0.46%
United Kingdom	0.05%
Uruguay	0.00%
Venezuela	0.00%
Vietnam	0.00%
Yemen	0.00%
Zambia	0.00%
Zimbabwe	0.00%



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