



Introduction

The higher education experience—and student housing—will likely be viewed differently for years to come.

Generations are always shaped by shared experiences and formative societal events.

In a 2018 article, *Is Your Student Housing Ready for Gen Z*, Scion Advisory Services provided college and university housing professionals with insights on how to best engage with this cohort. The article stimulated a conversation around key trends shaping Generation Z and their experiences in student housing. Without a doubt, the COVID-19 pandemic is a formative event that will have a lasting impact on today's generation of college-aged students. With many campuses abruptly closing housing, and education primarily driven online for up to a year, the higher education experience—and student housing—will likely be viewed differently for years to come.

Scion reconnected with Kim Lear, Founder and Content Director of Inlay Insights, to discuss the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on Gen Z students and specifically the trends identified in 2018. Over the following pages, we revisit the characteristics initially discussed in our earlier guide and reexamine them through a post-pandemic lens. Our goal is to share information that on- and off-campus housing professionals can apply as they welcome Gen Z students back to the physical campus.

In many ways, the COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated many of the trends previously identified. This generation has become even more socially conscious and tied to a sense of common cause. Due to the influence of constant connectivity and social media, Gen Z has become more vocal and motivated to engage in social causes important to them. In addition, these students' focus on well-being has taken on new dimensions in the wake of both physical and mental health crises. Furthermore, with the growing economic inequity resulting from this pandemic, Gen Z has honed its existing sense of competition and has sharpened the edge needed to drive successful careers. Finally, the pandemic has created a new sense of longing for community and a focus on lost rites of passage that have become even more important in the age of social distancing. This loss, coupled with Gen Z's characteristic resourcefulness, has done much to strengthen resolve and demonstrate a powerful resiliency.

The accelerating traits that define this generation will continue to influence how Gen Z makes housing decisions and what they expect from their residential experience. From any perspective, housing managers must prepare for a cohort of students deeply affected by the events of 2020.