

Patterns and Consequences of Alcohol Use Among UW Students

UNIVERSITY OF
WISCONSIN SYSTEM



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Overview

- Context: US and Wisconsin Drinking Patterns
- Alcohol Use Among US College Students
- Findings from the UW System Study

Contexts for Student Drinking: US and Wisconsin Drinking Patterns

- ❑ Wisconsin is the 5th highest State for alcohol consumption in the past month among persons aged 18-25 with a rate of 72% compared to a national rate of 62% (SAMHSA, 2002).
- ❑ Wisconsin is the 3rd highest State for binge drinking in the past month among persons aged 18-25 with a rate of 55% compared to a national rate of 42% (SAMHSA, 2002).
- ❑ Wisconsin ranks among the 10 lowest States on the percentage of people aged 18-25 who see a lot of risk in binge drinking once or twice a week with a rate of 25% compared to a national rate of 33% (SAMHSA, 2002).

Drinking Among US College Students (1)

- College students have particularly high rates of alcohol consumption and resulting adverse consequences:
 - Approximately 1,500 college students die each year across the United States from alcohol-related trauma and motor vehicle crashes. This does include cases of fatal alcohol overdoses.
 - “Compared to non-binge drinkers, frequent bingers are 17 times more likely to miss a class, ten times more likely to vandalize property, and eight times more likely to get hurt or injured as a result of their drinking. Binge drinking also contributes to poor academic performance and college dropout rates.” (Harvard College Alcohol Survey)

Drinking Among US College Students (2)

- Many non-binge drinking students “experience second-hand effects of others’ binge drinking. Like second-hand smoke, those effects can range from annoying to serious. Non-binge drinking students and abstainers who live on **high-binge campuses** are especially at risk. In 1999, they were twice as likely to suffer second-hand effects as were students at low-binge campuses.” (Harvard College Alcohol Survey)
- “Heavy alcohol use, coupled with inexperience with drinking, puts young women in serious jeopardy for sexual assault. About 10 percent of female students who are frequent binge drinkers report being raped or subjected to nonconsensual sex, compared to only 3 percent of non-bingeing female.” (Harvard College Alcohol Survey)
- www.hsph.harvard.edu/cas

Findings from the UW System Study

- ❑ Alcohol and Other Drug Use
- ❑ Indirect and Direct Consequences of Alcohol Use
- ❑ Link between Harms and Binge Drinking
- ❑ Correlates of Binge Drinking Among UW Students

Past 30 Day Rates of Substance Use

- Alcohol 78%
- Cigarettes 27%
- Cannabis 20%
- Other Drugs < 6%

Alcohol Use Among UW Students

- ❑ Almost 80% of UW students used alcohol in the past month.
- ❑ Students tend to do most of their drinking during a few days each week (12 drinks/week for males; 5 drinks/week for females).
- ❑ Binge drinking is measured as the consumption of 5 or more drinks in one sitting during the past two weeks for males (and 4 or more for females).
- ❑ About 60% of UW students recently engaged in binge drinking (compared to the 44% national student rate).
- ❑ Our binge drinking rate for female students is underestimated since we only asked about '5 or more' drinks.

Indirect Consequences

- Many UW students experience negative effects as a result of drinking by other students:
 - 42% reported that it interrupted their studying
 - 29% said it led to damage of their personal property or environment
 - 22% said it interfered with class attendance or class activities
 - 20% felt it was a threat to their safety
 - 16% felt it prevented their enjoyment of campus events
 - And 14% had ridden in a car with an intoxicated student driver

Direct Consequences (1)

- UW students reported various direct consequences that they associated with their own drinking:
 - 38% of students that drink reported missing a class at least once during the school year due to their use of alcohol. About 20% performed poorly on a test or an important project.
 - 13% had been in trouble with police or campus authorities. Almost half (48%) reported doing something they later regretted, 39% had gotten into an argument or fight, and 23% had been hurt or injured.
 - A large number of these UW students (35%) reported having driven while under the influence of alcohol, although only 1% had been arrested for DWI/DUI. This behavior presents a serious risk to both self and others.

Direct Consequences (2)

- Also, with respect to high risk behavior, 21% of students who drink reported having engaged in unprotected sex at least once in the past year. This is likely an under-estimate since 45% reported having memory loss or black-outs.
- About 15% of the UW students who used alcohol thought they might have a drinking or other drug problem. This may be a point of leverage for campus-based intervention programs.

Link with Binge Drinking

- ❑ Not surprisingly, UW students who engage more often in binge drinking also tend to experience more of these harms and experience them more frequently.
- ❑ Binge drinking is the primary source of alcohol-related problems among UW students.
- ❑ The final question is **“What factors help to predict how often UW students will engage in binge drinking?”**
- ❑ Knowing what environmental, demographic, behavioral and perceptual factors are at play might help to refine our prevention and intervention efforts.

UW Student Correlates of Binge Drinking

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|---------------------------|------------|
| Overall | 59% |
| ❑ Seniors | 65% |
| ❑ Independent residence | 67% |
| ❑ Males | 69% |
| ❑ Intra-collegiate sports | 71% |
| ❑ Greek participation | 79% |
| ❑ Regular drinking games | 86% |
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- ❑ White students tend to engage in binge drinking more frequently than Hispanic or Black students
 - ❑ Overestimating how much other students drink may also be a contributing factor.

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