

Substance Abuse Among College Students





- There is evidence that more extreme forms of drinking by college students are escalating. In one study, frequent binge drinkers grew from 20 to 23 percent between 1993 and 1999. The number of students who reported three or more incidents of intoxication in the past month also increased (Wechsler, et. al., 2002).
- The U.S. Surgeon General and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services have identified binge drinking among college students as a major public health problem.
- In “Healthy People 2010”, the federal government singled out binge drinking among college students for a specific, targeted reduction by the year 2010.

Numbers



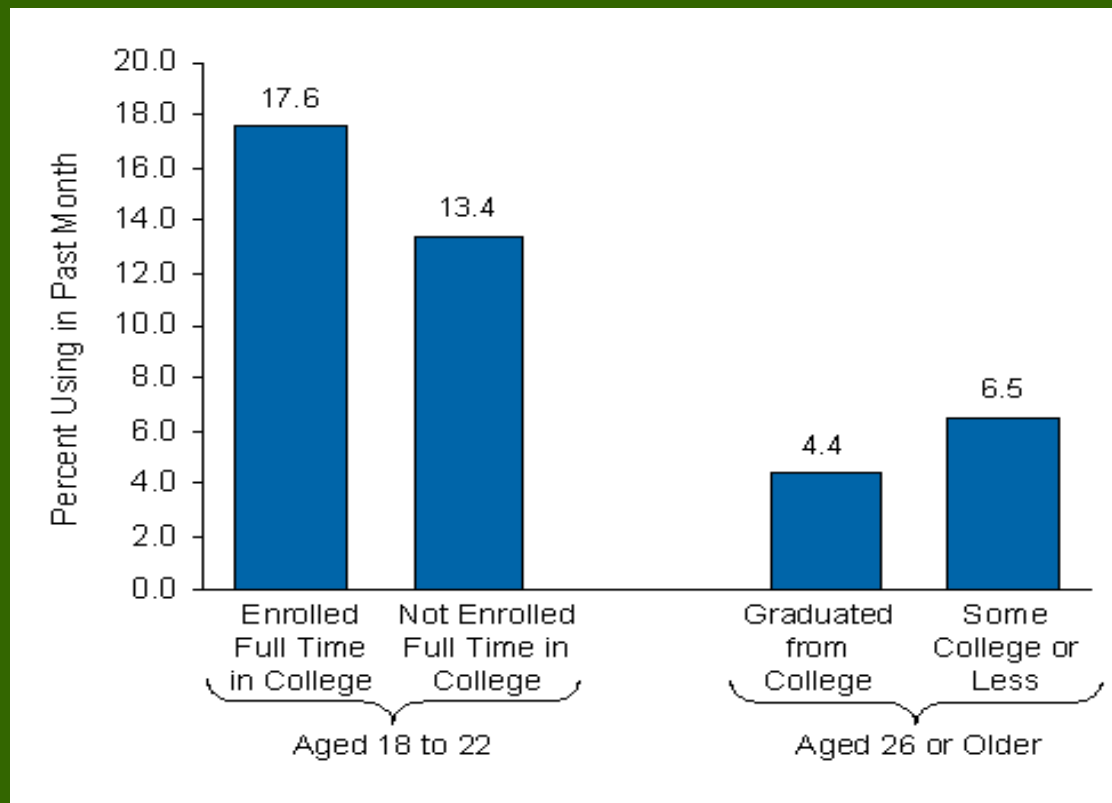
- The ages of 18-21 represent the time of heaviest alcohol consumption for most drinkers (Chen & Kandel, 1995).
- Young adults aged 18-24 show the highest rates of alcohol consumption of all age groups (Fromme, Marlatt, Baer & Kivlahan, 1994).
- The average college student spends nearly \$450 each year on alcohol (Erenberg & Hacker, 1977).

Prescription Drug Abuse

- Among college age young adults 18 to 25, misuse of prescription drugs went from 9.3 percent in 2000 to 12.1 percent in 2001—a 33 percent increase. Painkillers—such as oxycodone (OxyContin) and hydrocodone (Vicodin) account for most of these increases.
- In 1993, the Drug Enforcement Agency estimated prescription drugs sold illegally cost abusers \$25 billion (compared to \$31 billion spent that year on cocaine) (2001 National Household Survey on Drug Abuse).

Heavy Alcohol Use by College Attendance and Age

- 2003 NSDUH Report Findings



Numbers (cont.)

- The majority of today's college students drink, and nearly half of all college students report binge drinking (Haines & Spear, 1996; Wechsler, Lee, Kuo, & Lee, 2000).
- Of an estimated 8 million college students (aged 18-24) in the US, 31% meet the criteria for a diagnosis of alcohol abuse (Knight, et. Al., 2002).

Binge/Hazardous/ Heavy Episodic Drinking

- Binge drinking has been defined as the consumption of five or more drinks in a row by men and four or more drinks in a sitting for women (Wechsler, et. al., 2000). This is generally referred to as the “5/4 definition” (NIAAA report).
- According to this definition, approximately 2 of 5 college students have engaged in binge drinking at least once during the past two weeks (NIAAA report).
- It should be noted that some researchers have voiced concern over Wechsler’s definition of binge drinking due to the use of “in a row” which does not refer to a universally agreed upon time period (NIAAA report). Wechsler believes, however, that “in a row” refers to a relatively short time frame (NIAAA report).

Culture of College Drinking

- Customs that promote college drinking are embedded in the university environment. Specifically, students are exposed to alcohol advertisements on the walls of sports arenas, are witness to alumni drinking, and find themselves surrounded by establishments near campus which serve and sell alcohol, and actually depend on the college clientele for their financial success (NIAAA report).
- Studies indicate that next to peer pressure, exposure to beer ads is second only to peer influence in predicting adolescent behavior in beer drinking (Aikin, et. al., 1984).

Culture (cont.)

- The prevalence of students who play drinking games was over 80% of those age 21 or younger in a 1991 survey of 5,000 students at a variety of college campuses. Often students who participated in such games drank significantly more alcohol than students who did not play, with women students reporting more negative consequences than did the men (Engs & Hanson, 1991). Further, a 2000 study found that higher levels of sensation seeking predict greater involvement in drinking games and more negative alcohol related consequences (Johnson & Cropsey, 2000).
- College customs also reinforce student expectations that alcohol is a necessary ingredient for social success. Research shows that this belief is largely responsible for student attitudes and behavior toward alcohol use (NIAAA report).

Students who drink the most include:

- Males
- Whites
- Members of fraternities and sororities
- Athletes
- Some first-year students

Risk Factors



Students who drink the least attend:

- 2 year institutions
- Religious schools
- Commuter schools
- Historically black colleges and universities

Other variables associated with lower levels of binge drinking include a more competitive school environment, a large percentage of students aged 24 or older, and a larger percentage of students whose parents had a college education (Wechsler, et. al., 1994).

Risk Factors- Living Arrangements

- Drinking rates are highest in fraternity and sorority houses; Wechsler (1996) noted that 80% of women living in sorority houses and 86% of men living in fraternity residences qualified as binge drinkers. Drinking rates are almost equally high in on-campus housing (e.g., dormitories and residence halls) (Presley, et. al., 1996; Wechsler, et. Al., 1998).
- Students who live independently off site (e.g., in apartments) drink less, while commuting students who live with their families drink the least (O'Hare, 1990; Wechsler, et. al., 2002). It should be noted, however, that the Harvard School of Public Health Alcohol Study (1999) noted that bingeing decreased among dormitory residents while increasing among students living off campuses. It is not clear why this occurred, but it may be the result of increased administrative efforts to restrict drinking on campus and the resultant flight to off-campus housing by those who continue these behaviors (Vicary & Karshin, 2002).

Risk Factors- College Characteristics

- Excessive alcohol use is more likely to occur at colleges and universities :
 1. Located in the Northeast,
 2. Where athletic teams are prominent,
 3. Where Greek systems (i.e., fraternities, sororities) dominate

(Presley, et. al., 1996; Wechsler, et. Al., 1996, 1997, 1998, 2000; Werner & Greene, 1992).

Risk Factors- Athletes

- A 1997 study found that in a national sample of 179 colleges, 61% of men involved in athletics were binge drinkers compared to 43% of those who were not involved with athletics in college.
- For female athletes, 50% were binge drinkers compared to 36% for those who were not participants in athletics (Wechsler, Davenport, Dowdall, Grossman, & Zanakos, 1997).
- A CORE Institute survey found that in addition to bingeing, both male and female athletes drank more alcohol weekly and suffered more negative consequences than did non athletes (CORE, 2000).

Risk Factors- First Year Students

- First year college students may be at particular risk for alcohol abuse. The transition to college can be so difficult to negotiate that about 1/3 of college freshmen fail to enroll for their second year (Upcraft, 2000).
- Anecdotal evidence suggests that the first 6 weeks of enrollment are critical to first year student success. Because many students initiate heavy drinking during the early days of college, the potential exists for excessive alcohol consumption to interfere with successful adaptation to campus life.
- A 1995 study surveyed freshmen using the Alcohol Expectancy Questionnaire during their first week of college. Researchers found that expectations that alcohol will increase social assertiveness and is associated with global positive changes, the “social value” of alcohol, were positively correlated with increases in beer consumption over the first two months of college for male students, although not for female students (Kidorf, Sherman, Johnson, & Bigelow, 1995).

Risk Factors- Females

- While males tend to drink more than females, female students appear to be at an increased risk for problems related to heavy drinking behaviors (Mumenthaler, Taylor, O'Hara, & Yesavage, 1999).
- Women achieve higher blood alcohol concentrations than men after drinking equivalent amounts of alcohol even when amounts are adjusted for body weight, and may be more susceptible to some impairment of cognitive functioning.
- Women are at greater risk for sexual victimization when drunk.
- Lastly, women may also have a more rapid development of alcoholism than men after fewer years of drinking (Randall, Roberts, Del Boca, Carroll, Connors, & Mattson, 1999).

Risk Factors- Race

- Presley et al (1995) found in their multi campus survey that White students reported the highest level of binge drinking in a two-week period (42 %), with Native Americans at 41 %, Hispanics 31%, Asians 23%, and African Americans 23%.
- As reported in a NIDA study, rates for past 30 day alcohol use by Black students are lower than for whites in the same age range, but higher than those of non-college Blacks aged 18-25 (NIDA, 1995).

Behavioral Risk Factors

- Students who binge drink report more prior family drinking situations, and greater motivation to drink for peer acceptance.
- Binge drinkers are more likely to use drinking as a coping behavior, to drink in high risk situations and to have stronger tendencies toward disinhibition.
- In a 1998 study by Ichiyama and Kruse (1998), males reported drinking more often for the purpose of seeking sex and to facilitate social interactions.

Health and Historical Risk Factors

- A 2000 study reported that college students who screened positive for Attention-deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) reported more frequent episodes of drinking, more drinks per occasion and more alcohol related problems than other students (Smith, White, Stamper, Gant, and Upson, 2000).
- Sher (1993) found college students with family histories of alcoholism and with histories of conduct problems had greater increases in alcohol consumption upon entering college.

Reasons for Drinking

- Four categories of reasons for drinking:
 - To cope with problems
 - To be sociable
 - To enhance one's social confidence
 - For enjoyment

Feeling social pressure to drink predicted sociability, confidence, and problem coping.

Social influence a factor in that the more often subjects' friends drank, the more often they would, too, to be sociable.

Drinking to cope was the strongest reason-to-drink predictor of frequency of heavy drinking, quantity consumed, and drinking alone (Smith, Abbey, & Scott, 1993).

Direct Effects- Death and Injury

- 2.1 million students between the ages of 18 and 24 drove under the influence of alcohol last year (Hingson, et. Al., 2002).
- 1,400 college students between the ages of 18 and 24 die each year from alcohol-related unintentional injuries, including motor vehicle crashes (Hingson, et. al., 2002).
- 500,000 students between the ages of 18 and 24 are unintentionally injured under the influence of alcohol (Hingson, et. al., 2002).
- More than 600,000 students between the ages of 18 and 24 are assaulted by another student who has been drinking (Hingson, et. al., 2002).

Alcohol-Related Sexual Effects

- Undergraduates report using alcohol to enhance their sexual experience or to make their partner more willing (George, Cue, Lopez, Crowe & Norris, 1995).
- More than 70,000 students between the ages of 18 and 24 are victims of alcohol-related sexual assault or date rape (Hingson, et. al., 2002).
- 400,000 students between the ages of 18 and 24 had unprotected sex and more than 100,000 students between the ages of 18 and 24 report having been too intoxicated to know if they consented to having sex (Hingson, et. al., 2002).

Academic and Health Effects

- About 25 percent of college students report academic consequences of their drinking including missing class, falling behind, doing poorly on exams or papers, and receiving lower grades overall (Engs, et. al., 1996; Presley, et. Al., 1996; Wechsler, et. Al., 2002).
- Strong notes that alcohol is a factor in 40 percent of students' academic problems and 28 percent of school dropouts (Strong, 1999).
- More than 150,000 students develop an alcohol-related health problem (Hingson, et. al., 2002) and between 1.2 and 1.5 percent of students indicate that they tried to commit suicide within the past year due to drinking or drug use (Presley, et. al., 1998).

Alcohol-Related Crime

- More than 25 percent of administrators from schools with relatively low drinking levels and over 50 percent from schools with high drinking levels say their campuses have a "moderate" or "major" problem with alcohol-related property damage (Wechsler, et. al., 2002).
- About 11 percent of college student drinkers report that they have damaged property while under the influence of alcohol (Wechsler, et. al., 2002).
- About 5 percent of 4-year college students are involved with the police or campus security as a result of their drinking (Wechsler, et. al., 2002), and an estimated 110,000 students between the ages of 18 and 24 are arrested for an alcohol-related violations such as public drunkenness or driving under the influence (Hingson, et. al., 2002).

Developmental Brain Effects

- In humans, adolescent-onset alcohol abuse has been associated with a reduction in the size of the hippocampus (DeBellis et al., 2000).
- In rats, exposure to high amounts of alcohol produces more extensive brain damage in adolescents than adults (Crews et al., 2000).
- Further animal studies suggest that alcohol may have a greater impact on adolescent than adult memory (Markweise, et. al., 1998, Pyapli, et. al., 1999), and that these effects may be long lasting.

Secondhand Consequences of Drinking

- Students who do not drink or do not abuse alcohol have been victims of others' excessive use. Such consequences include:
 - Physical assault
 - Sexual assault
 - Damaged property
 - Unwanted sexual advances
 - Disrupted sleep and study (Hingson, et. al., 2002, Wechsler, et. al., 1995)

Post-College Consequences



- Frequent, excessive drinking during college can increase the prospects for continuing problems with alcohol and participation in other “health compromising or illegal behaviors” (Schulenberg, et. al., 1996).
- Alternately, a prospective 2001 study of college students found that although fraternity/sorority membership is associated with high levels of alcohol consumption in college, Greek status did not predict post-college heavy drinking levels (Sher, et. al., 2001).

Comparison with Noncollege Peers

- Compared to all other age groups, the prevalence of periodic heavy or high-risk drinking is greatest among young adults aged 18-24; and among young adults, college students have the highest prevalence of high-risk drinking (Johnson, et. al., 2001; Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2001).