



FACTS ON COLLEGE STUDENT DRINKING

College Drinking Overview

Full-time college students tend to drink more than others in their age group. In 2014, 60 percent of full-time college students reported any alcohol use, 38 percent reported engaging in binge drinking, and 12 percent reported heavy drinking during the past 30 days. Among individuals ages 18–22 not enrolled full time in college, the percentages were 52 percent, 34 percent, and 10 percent, respectively.*⁽⁵⁾

Many students come to college with established drinking habits. Among 12th graders in 2014, 58 percent reported alcohol use and 38 percent reported having been drunk at least once during the year.⁽⁶⁾

Risk of alcohol abuse appears greater among some college groups. For example, fraternity or sorority membership has been associated with a greater than average increase in heavy episodic drinking and marijuana use during college.⁽⁷⁾ Among student athletes, 81 percent indicated that they drank alcohol within the last 12 months in 2013. Thirty percent of student athletes reported experiencing memory loss and/or doing something they regretted after drinking.⁽⁸⁾

Binge and Heavy Drinking by Gender

In 2014, 44 percent of male college students and 33 percent of female college students ages 18–22 reported binge drinking during the past 30 days. Fifteen percent of male students and 9 percent of female students reported heavy drinking.⁽⁵⁾

Based on 2005–2014 data, about 13 percent of college students ages 19–22 reported having 10 or more drinks in a row at least once, and 5 percent reported having 15 or more drinks in a row at least once in the past 2 weeks.⁽⁹⁾

Alcohol Use Consequences

About one-quarter of college students report having negative academic consequences because of their drinking, including missing class, falling behind in their studies, doing poorly on exams or papers, and receiving lower grades overall.⁽³⁾

Each year, among college students ages 18–24, an estimated:

- 696,000 students are assaulted by another student who has been drinking;
- 599,000 students under the influence of alcohol are unintentionally injured; and
- 2.7 million students drive under the influence of alcohol.⁽¹⁰⁾

In 2014, an estimated 14 percent of male students and 12 percent of female students met the criteria for alcohol abuse or alcohol dependence.⁽⁵⁾

Between 1999 and 2008, hospitalizations among 18- to 24-year-olds increased by 25 percent for alcohol overdoses and 76 percent for combined alcohol and drug overdoses.⁽¹¹⁾ A conservative estimate based on the percentage of this age group attending a four-year college is that 20,000 hospitalizations for alcohol overdoses alone or in combination with other drugs involved college students in just 2008.⁽¹²⁾

FAST FACTS

Of the 12 million students between the ages of 15 and 24 enrolled in college in 2014, more than half were under age 21, the U.S. minimum legal drinking age.⁽¹⁾

About half of the alcohol consumed by students at four-year colleges is consumed by students under age 21.⁽²⁾

High blood alcohol concentrations and impairment levels associated with binge drinking place those who binge drink and those around them at substantially elevated risk for negative consequences, such as motor vehicle crashes, injuries, unsafe sexual practices, and sexual victimization.⁽³⁾

Alcohol contributes to an estimated 1,825 deaths/year among college students.⁽⁴⁾

Alcohol Use Prevention

In a 2010 survey of 351 four-year colleges, 98 percent of colleges used educational programs to address student drinking, and 50 percent offered intervention programs that were effective with students at high risk for alcohol problems. Few colleges reported that empirically supported, community-based alcohol control strategies (e.g., compliance checks, mandatory responsible beverage service training, or restrictions on alcohol outlet density) were operating in their community.(13)

A large-scale study involving 14 California campuses found that environmental prevention strategies that target settings where students most often engage in heavy drinking appear to significantly reduce the incidence and likelihood of intoxication among college students. The environmental interventions included nuisance party enforcement operations, minor decoy operations, driving-under-the-influence checkpoints, social host ordinances, and use of campus and local media to increase the visibility of the prevention measures.(14)

For more information about underage drinking prevention, visit <https://www.StopAlcoholAbuse.gov>, the web portal of the Interagency Coordinating Committee on the Prevention of Underage Drinking.

Also visit the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism's *CollegeAIM* website (<http://www.collegedrinkingprevention.gov/CollegeAIM/Default.aspx>) for a matrix-based decision tool that organizes what is known about college drinking interventions by factors such as the strength of the research evidence and ease of implementation.

Sources

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