



Student Affairs Information and Research Office

In collaboration with the Bruin Resource Center

A department of Student Affairs

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2006-2009 Alcohol Use and Consequences among UCLA Undergraduates

The Student Affairs Information and Research Office (SAIRO) is the research and assessment office within UCLA's Student Affairs organization. The mission of SAIRO is to support the learning and development of the whole student by providing reliable, timely, and useful information about students and their experiences; by developing the capacity of student affairs and other stakeholders to collect, interpret, and utilize data to enhance the quality of students' educational experience and environment; and by helping Student Affairs units assess and document the effectiveness of their programs and practices.

CONTENTS:

Executive Summary	1
Data Source	2
Alcohol Consumption	2
Consequences of Drinking	2

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Executive Summary

National research highlights the prevalence of heavy drinking on college campuses and the relationship of heavy drinking to increased negative consequences to students' academics, social environments, and safety. A few of these consequences include student's drinking and driving, riding with a drinking driver, missing class, falling behind in school work, engaging in unplanned sexual activity, and damaging property (see Wechsler & Nelson, 2008). Thus it is important to understand consumption and the consequences, or harm, related to drinking.

This brief summarizes data collected between 2006 and 2009 focusing on the reported consumption of alcohol by undergraduate students at UCLA and on the consequences of students' own and others' drinking. Key findings include:

- UCLA undergraduates are less likely than the national average to report having 5 or more drinks in one sitting,
- Respondents showed a consistent pattern of inflated perceptions of the amount of alcohol other students consume,
- Low rates of harm were reported overall, with the majority of consequences reported by fewer than 10% of respondents,
- Between 2006 and 2009, there were no changes in use, perceptions, and consequences except for the following:
 - An increase in percent reporting social motivations for drinking (e.g., being a part of a group, were more fun to be with, enjoyed social gatherings more, and bonded with friends).
 - An increase in going to class with a hangover.
 - A decrease in percent reporting riding with a driver who was under the influence.

Data Source

This brief is based on data collected through the AlcoholEdu Evaluation Survey conducted by SAIRO and the Bruin Resource Center. Each year, 6,250 UCLA undergraduate students were invited to participate in the online survey. The sample was stratified by entry year and entry status in an attempt to target a representative cross-section of the student population every year. Demographics of respondents from each annual cohort were consistent across four years, 2006-2009. Similar to other surveys conducted on campus, there is a stable overrepresentation of female respondents, Asian/Asian American students, and respondents in their first year at UCLA.

Alcohol Consumption

The survey asked a number of items related to individuals' alcohol consumption and their perceptions of others' consumption (see Table 1). There were no significant differences in alcohol consumption reported from 2006 and 2009. Approximately half of respondents reported having one or more drinks in a sitting in the past 2 weeks while one quarter reported having 5 or more drinks. The national average for heavy episodic drinking (5+ in one sitting in the past 2 weeks) consistently hovers around 40% (Hingston, Heeren, Winter, & Wechsler, 2005) while only 25% of UCLA respondents reported such consumption.

Also important to note were students' perceptions of drinking on campus among other UCLA students. Students were highly likely to inflate the amount that they perceived others to drink in any sitting, at a rate double to students' self-reported drinking behaviors.

Consequences of Drinking

The survey posed thirty one questions about the consequences of students' own drinking (see Table 2). UCLA students report low rates of consequences overall, with the majority of harmful consequences being reported by fewer than 10% of respondents. Rates for all except five consequences remained unchanged between 2006 and 2009.

Notably, each of four social outcomes increased. There was a significant increase in the number of students who reported that they felt more a part of a group (35% vs. 47%), were more fun to be with (35% vs. 46%), enjoyed a social gathering more (49% vs. 59%), and had bonded with friends (46% vs. 57%) as a result of drinking. In terms of consequences to students' academics, there was a significant increase in the percentage of students who reported attending class with a hangover (11% vs. 15%).

The survey also posed eleven questions regarding consequences of others' drinking. There was a significant decrease between 2006 and 2009 in the proportion of students who reported riding with a driver who was under the influence (13% vs. 8%) (see Table 3).

Table 1. Reported Consumption of Alcoholic Beverages in the Past 2 Weeks

	2006 (N=1,300)	2007 (N=730)	2008 (N=747)	2009 (N=835)
Consumed 1 or more drinks in one sitting	53%	51%	41%	48%
Consumed 5 or more drinks in one sitting	25%	26%	25%	24%
Average number of drinks consumed	2.4	2.4	2.4	2.3
Average number of drinks UCLA students believe other students have when they drink or party	4.8	4.9	4.6	4.5

Table 2. Percent of Undergraduate Students Reporting Various Consequences of Drinking in the Past Year

	2006 (N=1,300)	2007 (N=730)	2008 (N=747)	2009 (N=835)
Social				
Felt more like part of a group**	34.8	35.8	33.5	47.1
Were more fun to be with**	34.7	35.9	48.2	44.5
Enjoyed a social gathering more**	49.4	47.1	62.3	59.2
Bonded with your friends**	46.3	45.1	61.9	57.3
Academic				
Went to class with a hangover*	10.6	10.7	9.5	15.0
Went to class under the influence	2.5	2.7	2.4	2.1
Did poorly on an assignment or exam	5.0	3.2	3.8	6.4
Earned a lower grade in a class	3.1	3.0	3.3	4.3
Missed class	10.1	10.7	11.2	10.0
Relationships				
Were criticized by someone you know	8.7	7.8	11.0	10.5
Argued with friends	8.5	9.5	12.8	11.5
Were rude, obnoxious, or insulting after drinking	7.2	7.4	9.9	8.8
Felt pressured to drink more than you wanted to	13.1	14.8	19.4	16.5
Damaged a relationship	4.2	3.7	5.7	4.2
Drinking and Driving				
Drove when you were under the influence	5.5	3.8	6.8	4.7
Rode with a driver who was under the influence	10.8	7.9	11.3	9.8
Sexual and Health				
Had sex or sexual behavior you later regretted	4.8	4.5	6.1	6.3
Did not use a condom or other protection	1.8	2.2	3.2	2.9
Pressured someone into sex or sexual behavior	0.6	0.5	1.3	0.7
Were pressured into sex or sexual behavior	2.9	2.5	3.6	3.1
Required medical treatment	1.3	0.7	1.1	0.8
Got nauseated or vomited	18.3	18.9	24.7	18.9
Drank enough to pass out	9.4	9.2	10.1	8.0
Forgot where you were or what you did	13.5	14.4	18.2	15.6
Blacked out (had memory loss)	7.5	7.7	10.9	9.6
Violence, Injuries, and Legal				
Damaged property	3.2	3.7	4.7	3.1
Got hurt or injured	6.5	6.7	10.4	5.7
Got into a physical fight	1.8	0.5	1.7	1.2
Hurt or injured someone	1.8	1.5	0.9	1.0
Got in trouble with school authorities	1.4	1.4	1.1	1.3
Got in trouble with the campus or local police	1.6	1.5	1.1	1.7

Notes: ** Indicates a significant difference at $p \leq .01$ between 2006 and 2009; * Indicates a significant difference ($p < .05$)

Table 3. Percent of Undergraduate Students Reporting Various Consequences From Others' Drinking in the Past Year

	2006 (N = 1,300)	2007 (N = 730)	2008 (N = 750)	2009 (N = 835)
Violence and Injury				
You got hurt or injured	5.0	4.4	4.8	4.1
You had a serious argument or quarrel	8.0	8.7	8.8	7.2
You were insulted or humiliated	12.7	12.2	11.0	11.1
You had your property damaged	5.6	6.8	6.1	3.6
You rode with a driver who was under the influence*	12.6	8.7	9.8	8.1
Sexual and Health				
You were pressured into unwanted sex or sexual behavior	3.6	2.8	3.5	1.8
You required medical treatment	0.9	0.3	0.6	0.2
You experienced an unwanted sexual advance	11.6	10.3	10.0	9.4
Quality of Life				
You had to "baby-sit" or take care of another student who drank too much	34.2	33.1	31.5	29.7
You found vomit in the halls or bathroom of your residence	16.5	18.3	17.5	14.7
You had your sleep or study interrupted	35.3	36.7	32.8	32.9

* Indicates a significant difference ($p \leq .05$) between 2006 and 2009

References

- Wechsler H, & Nelson TF. (2008). What We Have Learned From the Harvard School of Public Health College Alcohol Study: Focusing Attention on College Student Alcohol Consumption and the Environmental Conditions That Promote It. *Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs*, 69(4), 481-490.
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