

# Substance Use and Related Behaviors Among College Students in Texas

## Abstract

*Alcohol and drug use among college students is a serious problem. Campus environments are often seen as comforting not only use but abuse. Binge drinking is one form of substance abuse that is quite common among college students. Students who binge drink are more likely than non-binge drinkers to experience negative consequences due to their alcohol use, and they are more likely to engage in other risk behaviors besides binge drinking. Many students also suffer impairment as a result of others' abuse of alcohol.*

*This report presents main findings of the 2005 Texas College Survey of Substance Use. In the spring of 2005, the Texas Department of State Health Services, in conjunction with the Public Policy Research Institute at Texas A&M University, conducted a statewide survey of substance use and related behaviors among undergraduate students 18 to 26 years of age. Some 4,634 students from 40 randomly selected public and private universities, colleges, and community colleges participated in the study. Fifty-eight percent of underage college students reported drinking an alcoholic beverage within the past month prior to the survey and 27% reported bingeing on alcohol.*

## Methodology

A multi-stage cluster design was utilized in the 2005 college survey. Campuses were assigned to one of 6 strata based on the size of student enrollment and type of institution. The sampling frame included full-time undergraduate students 18 to 26 years of age at all public and private universities, colleges, and community colleges across the state. With the addition of community colleges and small institutions, sampling bias toward large four-year institutions was significantly reduced.

Survey data was collected through telephone interviews and online survey forms. A total of 761 telephone interviews and 3,873 online questionnaires were completed from the 40 participating campuses. Of those campuses, 17 were public and private community colleges and 23 were public and private 4-year institutions. In order to control access to the online survey, each sampled student was assigned a unique alphabetic password. A password and its resultant survey record were active for two days, so that a respondent could leave the survey

and return within 2 days to complete the record. Respondents surveyed by telephone were not offered passwords, nor given the option to return to the survey online. Validation rules were also used to prevent errors related to skip patterns within the survey.

The college survey instrument was developed to measure alcohol and drug usage and attitudes as well as other addictive behaviors. Much of the focus was on alcohol use and abuse. Questions related to student life (housing, academic major, grade point average, and student activities), knowledge of the school's alcohol policies and programs, gambling and sexual behaviors, and basic demographic information were also included.

To ensure the sample data accurately represented the population of the selected schools, weights were calculated to adjust the data analysis for the sample design and for differences in mode of data collection. All the survey findings in this report are weighted. Table 1 is a description of the student sample.

Table 1. Demographic Description of Sample: Texas College Students, 2005

	N	Weighted %		N	Weighted %
<b>Total Sample</b>	4,634				
<b>Gender</b>			<b>Class Standing</b>		
Male	1,722	42.7%	Freshman	1,068	28.9%
Female	2,908	57.3%	Sophomore	1,169	33.1%
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>			Junior	1,129	20.1%
Anglo	3,143	60.5%	Senior	1,248	18.0%
Hispanic	939	25.7%	<b>Grade Point Average (GPA)</b>		
African American	228	8.8%	A+ to A-	1,558	34.3%
Asian, Pacific Islander	223	4.6%	B+ to B-	2,006	48.9%
Native American	20	0.3%	C+ to C	701	14.1%
Other	4	0.1%	C- to F	135	2.7%
<b>Age</b>			<b>Fraternity/Sorority Member</b>		
Age 18 to 20	2,310	50.4%	Non-Member	4,034	88.6%
Age 21 to 26	2,324	49.6%	Member	590	11.4%

## Prevalence of Licit Substance Use

### Tobacco

- More than half (52%) of all college students in Texas reported having used some type of tobacco product (cigarettes, cigars, or smokeless tobacco) during their lifetime; 28% reported tobacco use in the past month.
- College students were much more likely to smoke cigarettes or cigars than use smokeless tobacco. Twenty-six percent have smoked cigarettes or cigars in the past month and 6% have used smokeless tobacco in the past month.

### Inhalants

- About 5% of college students reported ever having used inhalants (nitrous oxide, poppers, Freon, etc.) in their lifetime. Only 0.3% had used inhalants in the past month.
- Males (6%) were more likely than females (3%) to report lifetime inhalant use. Anglos and Hispanics were much more likely to use

inhalants than other ethnic or racial groups.

### Alcohol

- Alcohol is the most commonly used substance among college students. Eighty-four percent of students have drunk an alcoholic beverage at least once during their lifetime, 78% have drunk alcohol in the past year, and 66% have drunk alcohol in the past month.
- Almost 30% of college students reported binge drinking, which is defined as consuming 5 or more drinks in a row for men and 4 or more drinks in a row for women on at least 2 occasions within the past month.
- Sixteen percent of college students reported getting drunk often and 9% had abused alcohol. Getting drunk often refers to becoming drunk on 3 or more occasions within the past month. Alcohol abuse is defined as having suffered 6 or more negative experiences as a result of drinking since the beginning of the school year.

## Factors Related to Alcohol Use and Binge Drinking

### Demographic Factors

- Although the legal drinking age in Texas is 21, about 58% of college students 18 to 20 years of age reported drinking an alcoholic beverage within the past month (Appendix 1).
- Women were almost as likely as men to have ever used alcohol, but they were less likely than men to currently drink, binge drink, and abuse alcohol.
- Thirty-five percent of Anglos and 25% of Hispanics reported binge drinking in the past month. African American students had the lowest rate of binge drinking rate at 9%.
- Students in 4-year institutions were more likely than those in 2-year colleges to report past-month use of alcohol, binge drinking, and abusing alcohol.
- Prevalence use of alcohol increased linearly by class standing and peaked at the senior year. However, junior students reported the highest rate of binge drinking (38%) and abusing alcohol (11%).

### Lifestyle Factors

- Binge drinking and abusing alcohol were positively associated with a student's attending parties or clubs daily/weekly, skipping a class or lab daily/weekly, and having a majority of friends who are heavy or problem drinkers.
- Members of fraternities or sororities were more likely than non-members to currently drink (72% versus 65%), binge drink (42% versus 28%), get drunk often (26% versus 15%), and abuse alcohol (14% versus 8%).

- Students who lived with a spouse/partner or parent/relative and students who regularly attended religious services were less likely to binge drink, get drunk often, or abuse alcohol than other students.
- Overall, athletes were more likely than non-athletes to binge drink (40% versus 29%) or abuse alcohol (16% versus 9%).

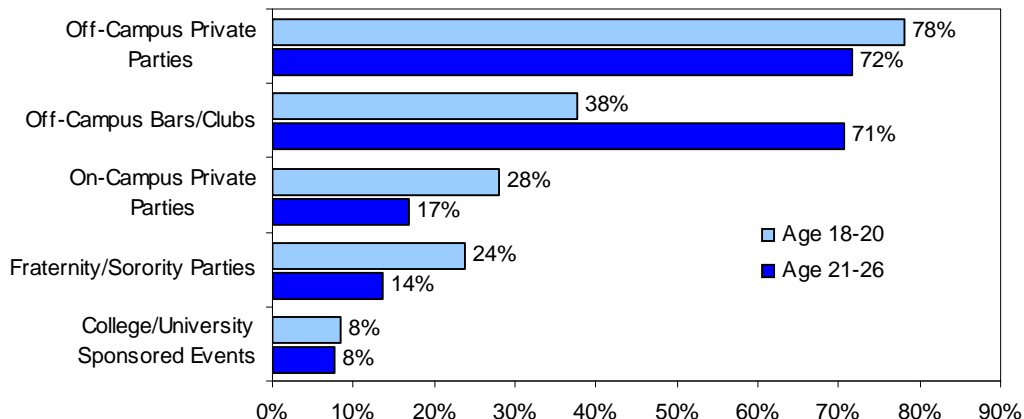
### High School Drinking Behavior

- Many students had already established a pattern of drinking before coming to college. Sixty-seven percent of all college students have drunk alcohol before reaching 18 years of age.
- College students who reported drinking at least several times a month in high school were more likely than those who drank less frequently in high school to binge drink in college.
- Students who binge drank during their last year in high school were 3 times more likely (59%) than students who did not binge drink during their last year (18%) to be binge drinkers in college.

### Availability of Alcohol

- Among underage past-year drinkers, 81% obtained alcohol from someone 21 years of age or older, 38% from someone under 21 years of age, 38% from parents or other relatives, 27% from someone else who made it, and 23% bought it without getting carded.
- About 8% of underage past-year drinkers said they obtained alcohol by using a fake identification at a bar or store. Men (11%) were 2 times more likely than women (5%) to do so.

**Figure 1. Percentage of Current Drinkers in College Who Attended Various Places to Obtain Alcohol, by Age: Texas, 2005**



- More than one fourth of college students said they usually could get alcohol without being carded from a local restaurant, a local bar or club off campus, or a local gas station.
- Most of the current alcohol users had drinks at off-campus private parties and off-campus bars (Figure 1).

#### Perceptions of Peer Alcohol Use

- Most students disagreed with the notion that drinking is an important part of the college experience either for themselves or their peers. Eighty percent of college students opposed the statement, "You can't make it socially without drinking" or "It's important to show how much you can drink."
- Students on college campuses tended to overestimate the levels of alcohol consumption and the percentage of heavy or problem drinkers among their peers and school student body.
- The average of students' estimates of past-month alcohol use among all campus students was about 71%, compared to their own reported rate of past-month drinking at 66%.

Students also estimated that on average 13% of their close friends at school were heavy or problem drinkers, compared to the actual rate of reported behavior at 4%.

#### Perceptions of Parental Attitudes and Their Use of Alcohol

- Some 32% of college students believed that their family did not approve of drinking alcohol, 46% said their family accepted light drinking, but disapproved of heavy drinking, and only 3% said their family accepted heavy drinking.
- Students who said their family disapproved of drinking were much less likely to currently drink, binge drink, and abuse alcohol than those who said their family accepted alcohol use.
- Students' drinking problems are related to their father's and/or mother's use of alcohol. Female binge drinkers (21%) were 2 times more likely than male binge drinkers (11%) to have been brought up by their alcoholic fathers and/or mothers.

## Prevalence of Illicit Substance Use

### Marijuana

- Marijuana was the most popular used illicit drug and the third most prevalent substance that college students reported using, after alcohol and tobacco. About 37% of college students have used marijuana during their lifetime and 11% have used it in the past month.
- Males (15%) were twice as likely as females (7%) to smoke marijuana in the past month. Anglos and Hispanics were 3 times more likely than African Americans to smoke marijuana in the past month.

### Cocaine or Crack

- Nearly 9% of college students reported using cocaine or crack at least once during their lifetime, and 1.4% reported past-month use.
- Males students and members of fraternities/sororities were more likely to report prevalence use of cocaine or crack.

### Stimulants

- Ten percent of all college students reported ever using stimulants (uppers, amphetamine, crystal meth, Ritalin, etc.) and only 2% have used them in the past month.
- Anglo students (3%) were more likely than Hispanics or Asians (1%) to use stimulants in the past month. Students in 4-year institutions also reported much higher use of stimulants than their peers in 2-year colleges.

### Sedatives

- Over 9% of college students have ever used sedatives (downers, red devils, yellow jackets, Valium, etc.) during their lifetime and only 2%

have used downers in the past month.

- Males and Anglos were more likely to use sedatives.

### Hallucinogens or Psychedelics

- Ten percent of students reported using hallucinogens or psychedelics at least once during their lifetime and less than 1% reported use during the past month.
- Males were 2 times more likely than females to use hallucinogens or psychedelics.

### Heroin or Other Opiates

- Five percent of college students reported ever using heroin or other opiates (codeine, morphine, oxycodone, Vicodin, etc.) and only 1% have used them during the past month.
- Anglo students reported the highest prevalence use of heroin or other opiates.

### Club Drugs

- Nine percent of students reported using Ecstasy (methylenedioxymethamphetamine, MDMA) in their lifetime and only 1% of students have used Ecstasy in the past month.
- About 2% of students have ever used Ketamine (Special K) or GHB (gamma hydroxy butyrate, Fantasy) during their lifetime.
- Males, older students 21 to 26 years of age, and students in 2-year colleges were more likely to report lifetime use of these club drugs.

### Rohypnol

- Over 1% of students reported lifetime use of Rohypnol (flunitrazepam). Males, Anglos, and

students 21 to 26 years of age were more likely to have used Rohypnol in their lifetime.

#### Dextromethorphan (DXM)

- Five percent of college students reported using DXM, such as Robitussin-DM, Coricidin, and Drixoral cough suppressant without a doctor's prescription at some point in their lives. Less than 1% abused these drugs in the past month.
- DXM is often used in combination with other drugs such as marijuana, Ecstasy, or alcohol, which increases the risk for dangerous physiological effects.

#### Factors Related to Illicit Drug Use

##### Perceptions of the Danger of Drug Use

- Marijuana was thought to be the least threatening illicit drug to use. Only 13% of college students thought marijuana was very dangerous to use. Fifty-seven percent and 69% believed that sedatives and stimulants were very dangerous, respectively.
- Some 72% to 75% of college students believed that hallucinogens, club drugs, and Rohypnol were very dangerous to use, and 86% to 89% thought that cocaine, crack, and heroin were very dangerous.
- Students who thought that drugs were dangerous to use were less likely to actually use those drugs. For example, only 7% of college students who believed marijuana was very dangerous to use had actually used it in the past month; whereas, 52% of those who believed marijuana was not dangerous at all had used it.

#### Availability of Illicit Drugs

- Among college students who have ever used illicit drugs, only 4% said they have obtained a drug from an online pharmacy, store, or seller for non-medical purposes.
- Among students who have ever taken prescription drugs to get high, 27% said they got the drugs from a doctor's prescription, 36% got them from someone with a prescription, and 21% took them from someone without a prescription.

#### Comparisons to College Students Nationwide

- Texas college students reported lower prevalence use of marijuana than their counterparts nationally (2005 Monitoring the Future study).<sup>1</sup> For example, past-month use of marijuana was 11% among college students in Texas compared to 17% in the nation.
- Findings on lifetime and past-month use of cocaine/crack or Ecstasy were remarkably similar between college students in Texas and college students nationwide.
- Past-month use of cigarettes was slightly higher among Texas college students (26%) than their counterparts in the nation (24%).

<sup>1</sup>Johnston LD, O'Malley PM, et al. Monitoring the Future national survey results on drug use, 1975-2005. Volume II: College students and adults ages 19-45 (NIH Publication No. 06-5884). 2006. Bethesda, MD: National Institute on Drug Abuse, 302 pp. [http://www.monitoringthefuture.org/pubs/monographs/vol2\\_2005.pdf](http://www.monitoringthefuture.org/pubs/monographs/vol2_2005.pdf).

## Risky Behavior Associated with Substance Use

### Driving While Drunk or High from Drugs

- Twenty-nine percent of Texas college students said they have driven after drinking within the past month, and 11% said they have driven after drinking 5 or more drinks. Twelve percent of all students believed they could consume 4 or more drinks in an hour and still drive safely.
- Over 8% of students admitted having driven when they were high or stoned from drugs. Twenty-three percent reported riding as a passenger with a driver while drunk or high from drugs.
- Binge drinkers were much more likely than non-binge drinkers to put themselves and others at risk as a result of drinking and driving.

### Gambling Behavior

- Thirty-eight percent of college students in Texas said they have placed a bet or gambled money on various gambling activities at least once within the past year.
- Males and athletic-team members were more likely to gamble and to have gambling problems if they did gamble. Gambling and problem gambling were also significantly associated with binge drinking, alcohol abuse, and heavy or problem drinking.

### Risky Sex

- About 19% of students who have been sexually active reported they were drinking the last time they had sex, and 4% said they were using

illicit drugs the last time they had sex.

- Among sexually active students who had drunk alcohol in the past year, 12% said that at least once they failed to use protection as a result of drinking alcohol.
- Members of fraternities/sororities, students with 2 or more sexual partners, binge drinkers, and heavy or problem drinkers often were more likely to fail to use protection as result of drinking alcohol.

## Student Knowledge and Opinions of Campus Substance-Related Policies and Programs

- Forty-one percent of college students in Texas reported that their school prohibits all alcohol use on campus by students. About 35 % did not know what the alcohol policy was on their campus.
- Nearly 90% of all students said they would support their university if it were to offer free alcohol and drug counseling to students, if it were to make the alcohol rules more clear, or if it were to have the policy of drug testing student athletes.
- About 37% to 40% have received information about the dangers of alcohol overdose, where to get help for alcohol-related problems, or the long-term health effects of heavy drinking.
- Only 10% of all students said they have ever attended a drug and alcohol abuse prevention event provided by their college's drug and alcohol program. Half of the college students did not know if there was a

drug and alcohol abuse prevention program on their campus.

### Acknowledgement

The aim of the 2005 Texas College Survey of Substance Use, sponsored by Texas's Strategic Prevention Framework State Incentive Grant (SPF SIG) from the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (CSAP), Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), is to assess

and characterize the levels in behaviors and attitudes toward alcohol and drug use among college population across the state. It also allows for substance abuse prevention programs to be targeted as needed for this age group.

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Appendix 1. Prevalence and Recency of Substance Use Among College Students, by Age: Texas, 2005

	Lifetime Use		Past-Year Use		Past-Month Use	
	Age 18-20	Age 21-26	Age 18-20	Age 21-26	Age 18-20	Age 21-26
Alcohol	78.1%	90.5%	71.7%	85.3%	57.6%	73.7%
Tobacco	44.2%	59.4%	33.9%	42.6%	23.9%	32.4%
Cigarettes	43.4%	58.1%	32.7%	40.9%	22.4%	30.5%
Smokeless Tobacco	13.6%	18.2%	8.8%	9.1%	5.5%	6.2%
Inhalants	3.1%	6.0%	1.1%	0.6%	0.3%	0.2%
Any Illicit Drug	32.3%	45.1%	23.0%	24.8%	11.9%	13.5%
Marijuana	30.3%	42.8%	20.2%	21.3%	10.4%	11.0%
Cocaine/Crack	5.8%	11.3%	3.5%	4.0%	1.3%	1.6%
Stimulants	8.4%	12.4%	5.4%	5.1%	2.4%	2.0%
Sedatives	6.5%	12.5%	3.7%	6.0%	2.0%	2.2%
Hallucinogens	6.2%	14.3%	3.5%	3.5%	0.6%	0.6%
Heroin/Other Opiates	3.4%	6.6%	1.9%	2.9%	0.8%	1.0%
Rohypnol	0.2%	2.6%	0.1%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%
DXM (e.g. Coricidin)	4.1%	5.2%	2.1%	2.3%	0.6%	0.7%
Ketamine	0.9%	2.7%	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%
GHB	1.1%	2.2%	0.7%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%
MDMA (e.g. Ecstasy)	5.9%	12.1%	3.5%	3.0%	0.8%	0.9%