



Student Drinking March 2006

INTRODUCTION

This survey provides data on alcohol use and high-risk drinking behavior of undergraduate students at University Park. Replicated regularly since 1995, the survey provides the ability to track changes over time.¹ These findings are used to test the effectiveness of prevention efforts, to identify at-risk populations, and to inform policy and practice. This survey, conducted by Student Affairs Research and Assessment, was administered by phone and also by Web² at the request of the Office of Health Promotion and Education.

In total, 1,315 undergraduate students responded to the survey. By phone, 545 University Park students responded for a 20.5% response rate and, of those contacted, 58.3% participated. By Web, 770 responded for a 30.8% response rate. The confidence interval for the total sample is +/-2.65%. Of the respondents, 51.3% are male; 86.0% are white/Caucasian; 57.5% are 21 or older; and 70.0% live off campus. For additional information on the Pulse methodology, please visit <http://www.sa.psu.edu/sara/qa.shtml>.

Definitions

High-risk, or binge drinking, is defined as having four or more drinks in a row for women and five or more drinks in a row for men at least once over a two-week period.

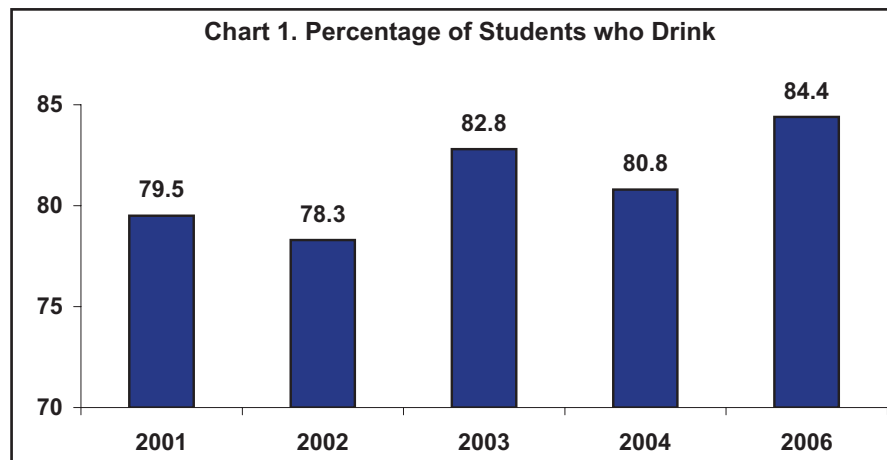
Frequent high-risk drinkers are those students who reported having binged three or more times during a two-week period. Occasional high-risk drinkers are those who reported having binged one or two times during a two-week period.

FINDINGS

Alcohol Consumption

Prevalence of Alcohol Use

- In 2006, 84.4% reported they drink alcohol, an increase from 80.8% in 2004 (see Chart 1).



For more information
please visit Student Affairs
Research and Assessment at
<http://www.sa.psu.edu/sara>

¹ Please note that the 2006 survey administration occurred later in the spring semester than previous surveys causing a limitation in our ability to compare across years. In 2006, the two weeks prior to the survey included spring break and St. Patrick's Day.

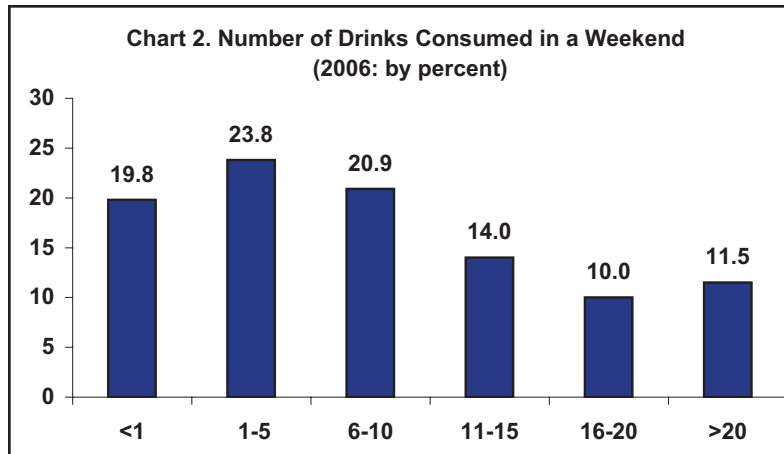
² The Web survey administration is utilized in order to account for students for whom local phone information was unavailable.



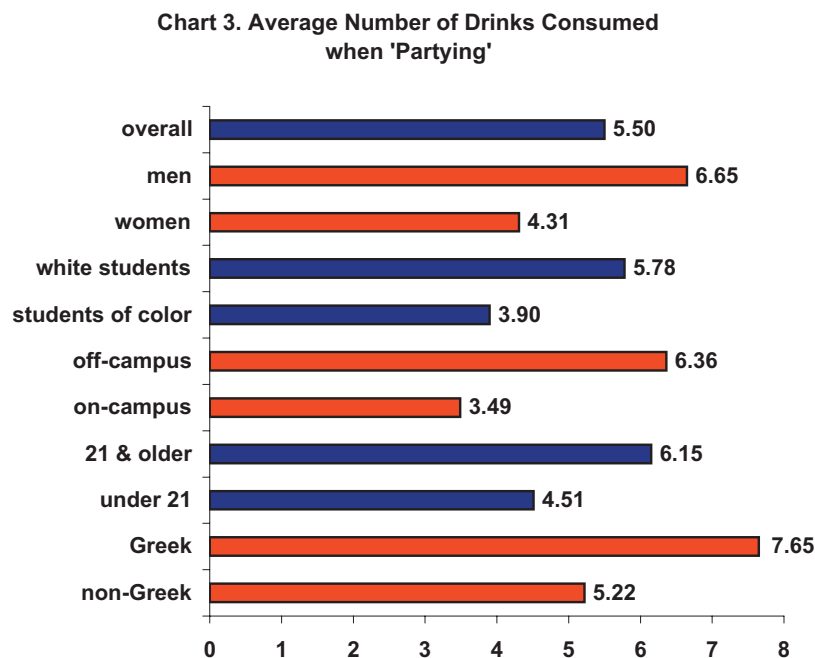
Quantity of Consumption

Students were asked several questions regarding the volume of alcohol they consume.

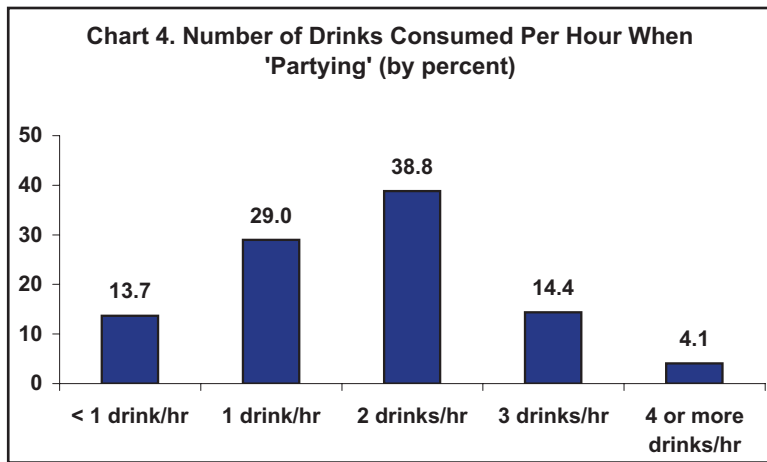
- On average, in 2006, students reported consuming 9.59 drinks during a weekend, compared to 8.18 in 2004 (data not shown).
- In addition, 43.6% indicated they typically consume less than six drinks during a weekend (see Chart 2).
- Evidence suggests an increase in alcohol consumption in high school. In 2006, students reported averaging 3.39 drinks when 'partying' in high school compared to 2.99 in 2004 (data not shown).



- In 2006, students reported averaging 5.50 drinks when 'partying' currently (see Chart 3) compared to 5.02 drinks in 2004 (data not shown).
- As demonstrated in Chart 3, there are significant differences in drinking behavior between students. Men, white students, off-campus residents, students of legal drinking age, members of Greek-letter organizations, and students with lower GPAs reported drinking significantly more drinks when 'partying' than did their respective counterparts. These differences were consistent across the various measures of the quantity of alcohol consumed.
- The majority of students (81.5%) reported averaging 2 or fewer drinks an hour when 'partying' (see Chart 4).³
- Most frequently, students reported drinking beer (73.7%) when 'partying' (data not shown).



³ These data are based on the calculation between the average number of drinks and the average number of hours they spend drinking when 'partying.'



High-Risk Drinking

- As depicted below, 58.9% of students reported engaging in high-risk drinking behavior, an increase from 55.2% in 2004. *Please note: this increase may be attributed in part to the timing of the survey. In 2006, the two weeks prior to the survey included spring break and St. Patrick's Day whereas the 2004 survey was administered prior to spring break.*
- Students who were more likely than their peers to report high-risk drinking include men, white students, off-campus residents, students of legal drinking age, members of Greek-letter organizations, and students with lower GPAs.
- In 2006, 39.3% of men reported being frequent high-risk drinkers compared to 30.2% of women (see Chart 6).

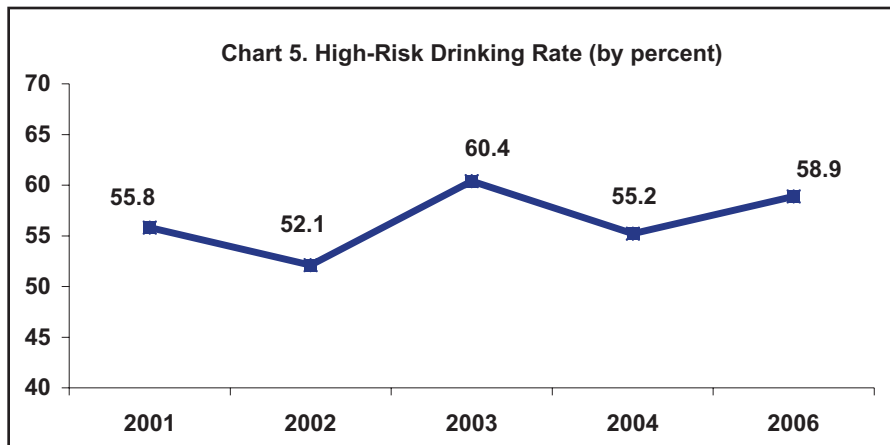
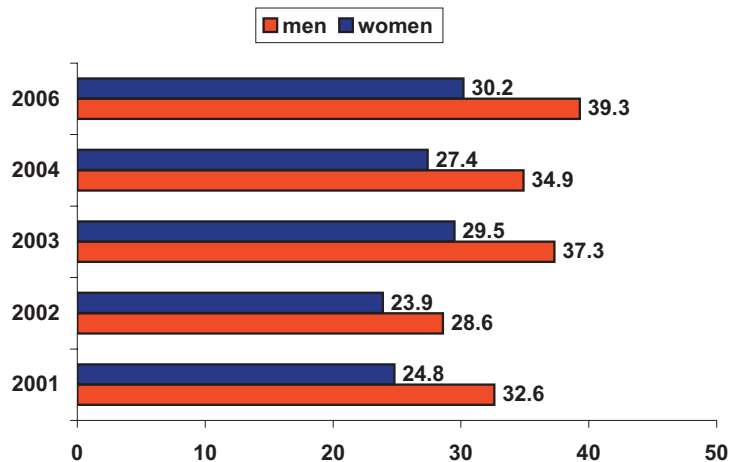


Chart 6. Percentage of Frequent High-Risk Drinkers



Consequences of Alcohol Use

Students were also asked about a series of consequences of alcohol use – both indirect (resulting from other students' drinking) and direct (resulting from their own drinking) consequences.⁴

Indirect Consequences

- In 2006, 70.5% of students reported having their studying or sleep interrupted by other students' drinking, an increase from 59.4% in 2003 and 64.7% in 2004 (see Table 1).
- The data show a similar increase in students who reported having had to 'baby-sit' a student who drank too much – 64.0% in 2006 compared to 60.0% in 2004 and 56.4% in 2003 (see Table 1).
- Moreover, in 2006 24.7% reported experiencing an unwanted sexual advance (up from 20.5% in 2004) and 20.1% reported having been pushed, hit, or assaulted (up from 14.7% in 2004) (see Table 1).

Table 1. Percent of Students Experiencing Consequences from Other Students' Drinking

Indirect Consequences	2003	2004	2006
Had your studying or sleep interrupted	59.4	64.7	70.5
Had to 'baby-sit' a student who drank too much	56.5	60.0	64.0
Had a serious argument or quarrel	32.0	36.6	44.5
Been insulted or humiliated	27.4	32.1	36.9
Had your property damaged	22.5	24.7	31.4
Experienced an unwanted sexual advance	16.5	20.5	24.7
Been pushed, hit, or assaulted	12.6	14.7	20.1
Been a victim of unwanted sexual experience	3.5	5.5	5.8

Direct Consequences

- In 2006, 70.1% of students reported having had a hangover, an increase from 59.8% in 2004 (see Table 2).
- In addition, in 2006, 38.0% reported they missed a class because of their own drinking (up from 25.9% in 2004) and 26.5% reported getting behind in their school work (up from 20.7% in 2004) (see Table 2).
- Regarding sexual health, 27.3% reported engaging in unplanned sexual activity (up from 17.0% in 2004) and 13.0% reported not using protection when having sex (up from 6.5% in 2004) as a result of their own drinking (see Table 2).

Table 2. Percent of Students Experiencing Consequences from Their Own Drinking

Direct Consequences	2003	2004	2006
Have a hangover	63.3	59.8	70.1
Forget where you were/what you did	35.6	33.8	43.0
Do something you later regretted	33.9	33.2	43.8
Argue with friends	29.6	26.6	36.1
Miss a class	29.6	25.9	38.0
Get behind in school work	23.0	20.7	26.5
Engage in unplanned sexual activity	16.9	17.0	27.3
Get hurt or injured	14.7	14.4	20.5
Damage property	11.0	9.3	12.6
Not use protection when having sex	9.2	6.5	13.0
Get into trouble with campus/local police	5.3	4.4	6.0
Require medical treatment for an alcohol overdose	0.5	0.6	0.9

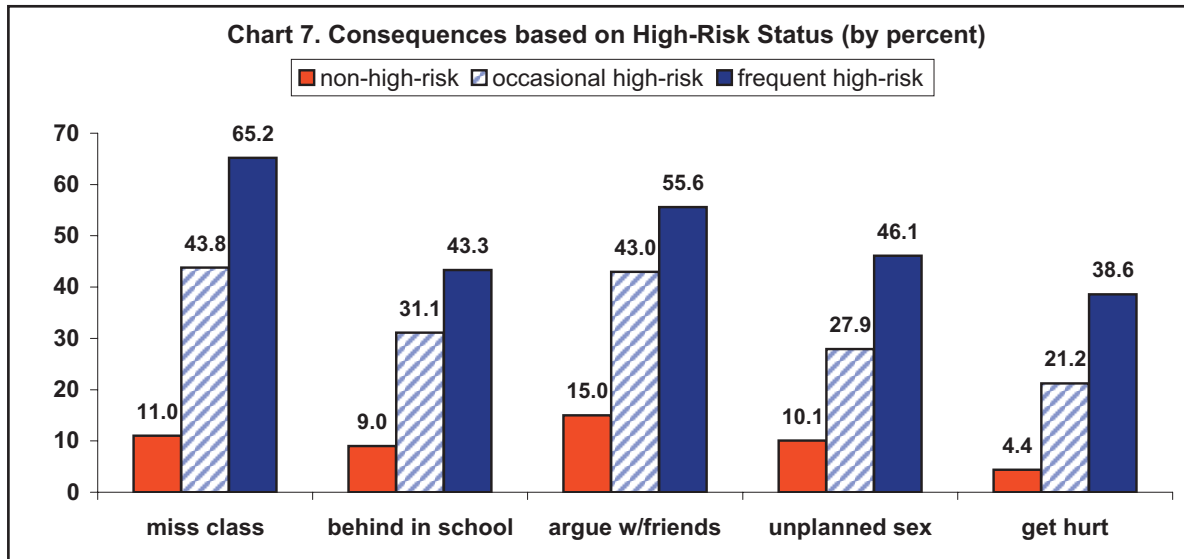
Consequences Based on High-Risk Status

In addition, students who engaged in occasional or frequent high-risk drinking behavior were significantly more likely to experience physical, social, and academic consequences as a result of their own drinking.

- For example, 65.2% of frequent high-risk drinkers reported having missed a class because of their drinking compared to 43.8% of occasional high-risk drinkers and 11.0% of non-high-risk drinkers (see Chart 7).
- Furthermore, 38.6% of frequent high-risk drinkers reported getting hurt because of their drinking compared to 21.2% of occasional high-risk drinkers and 4.4% of non-high-risk drinkers (see Chart 7).

⁴These questions are used with permission from the Harvard School of Health.

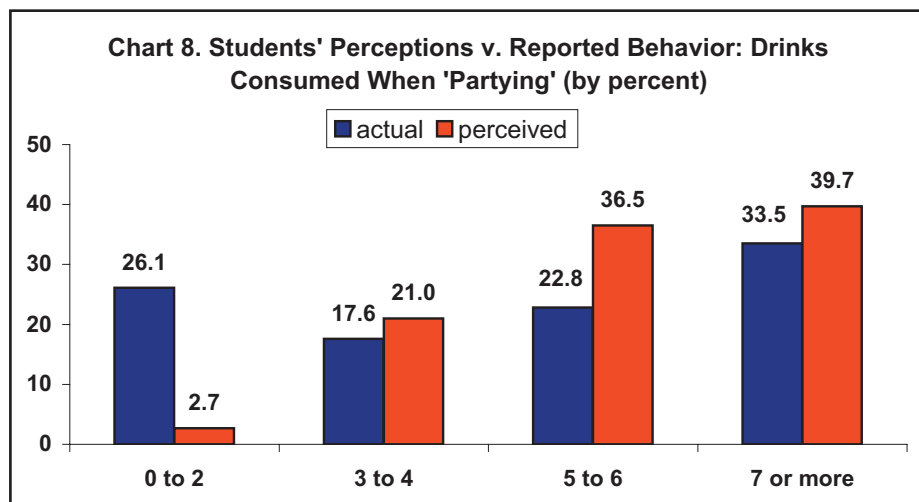
- In addition, the comparisons based on GPA indicate an inverse relationship between high-risk drinking and GPA; 54.8% of students with a 3.30 or higher reported engaging in high-risk drinking behavior compared to 64.0% for students with a 2.76 to a 3.29 GPA and 66.7% for students with a 2.75 or lower (data not shown).



Prevention Efforts

The 2005-06 alcohol health marketing campaign, created by University Health Services with a grant from the Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board, was designed to educate University Park students about the rate of negative consequences experienced by students as a result of their alcohol use. The campaign, an aspect of the environmental management prevention approach, is based on social norms theory. The theory's premise is that students overestimate how much their peers drink, thus negatively influencing their own drinking behavior. The campaign seeks to correct these misperceptions by providing information on accurate drinking norms and, hence, decreasing drinking on campus.

- While only 23.7% of students reported that most Penn State students typically consume 4 or fewer drinks when 'partying', 43.7% reported drinking 4 or fewer drinks when 'partying' (see Chart 8).
- Furthermore, on average, students reported that most Penn State students consume 6.40 drinks when 'partying' whereas the reported behavior was an average of 5.50 drinks (data not shown).



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- Approximately 86% of respondents recalled seeing any Penn State materials on student drinking (data not shown), and 67% had seen the alcohol awareness posters from the 2005-06 alcohol health marketing campaign (see Chart 9).
 - Half (51%) reported seeing the poster that read “20% of Penn State students don’t drink alcohol” (data not shown).
 - In addition, students saw alcohol awareness messages through a variety of materials:
 - 65.6% saw the HUB bathroom stall posters,
 - 46.6% saw posters in CATA buses,
 - 64.2% saw posters in other locations, and
 - 37.0% saw the *Collegian* ads (data not shown).

Chart 9. Percent who Saw Alcohol Awareness Materials

