

Racial and Ethnic Differences in Alcohol and Other Drug Use

CONTRARY TO STEREOTYPES SEEN IN THE MEDIA, several studies have found use of alcohol and other substances among racial and ethnic minority college students to be lower than among white students. At historically black colleges, for instance, about half the percentage of students report using tobacco, marijuana, or cocaine compared with students at predominantly white colleges.¹ Because of the large variations in use rates, before a college begins prevention work it is important for program administrators to identify the differing patterns of alcohol and other drug use among the racial and ethnic groups on campus.



Alcohol Consumption

A national study, conducted in 2005 by the Core Institute, of 33,379 college and university students found the largest proportion of abstainers to be among Asian/Pacific Islander and black respondents. The percentages of students who had consumed alcohol in the previous 30 days were as follows: Asian/Pacific Islanders, 59.1 percent; blacks, 52.3 percent; American Indians, 73.1 percent; Latinos, 75.3 percent; and non-Latino whites, 75.3 percent.² A large 2005 study based on the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health found similar racial and ethnic differences in drinking patterns.³

For additional information

The Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse and Violence Prevention

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In 1999, the Core Institute found whites to drink, on average, twice the number of drinks per week as non-whites; six drinks to three drinks respectively (specific data within the “non-whites” group were unavailable).⁴

The 2005 Core Institute study found large differences in so-called binge drinking patterns (defined in this study as five or more drinks in a row for men and four or more for women in the previous two weeks). In this survey, the proportions of students reporting “binge drinking” were black students, 23.3 percent; Asian/Pacific Islander, 33.7 percent; Latinos, 49.3 percent; non-Latino whites, 50.2 percent; and American Indians, 52.6 percent.²

Drawing on surveys from over 12,000 students, researchers found that students at historically black colleges had on average 1.8 drinks per week compared with 4.6 drinks per

week among students at predominantly white colleges of comparable size and geographic region. They also found that 22 percent of students at historically black colleges reported binge drinking (defined as five or more drinks in one sitting) in the past two weeks compared with 38 percent of students at predominantly white colleges. Reported drinking among



Making Prevention Programs Culturally Appropriate

A good place to start in making alcohol and other drug prevention programs more targeted is to conduct a needs assessment of students on campus. Some experts have argued that a “one-size-fits-all” approach to prevention program design may not be effective in reaching the different racial and ethnic groups on campus.^{5,6}

One reason is that particular substance use problems may be of greater or lesser importance depending on the group. For instance, for black women, binge drinking has not been found to be a widespread problem. But for Latino, American Indian, Asian/Pacific Islander and white students, between one-third and one-half are binge drinkers, with men in these groups drinking more than women.²

Programs designed primarily for white students may not be perceived as relevant or responsive by racial or ethnic minority students. For example, some research has found African American students reluctant to use school health services at predominantly white universities.⁶

The Core Alcohol and Drug Survey, which has been used widely at colleges and universities around the country, includes questions on racial and ethnic background together with items about alcohol and other drug use.² The 39-question Core survey is comprehensive, but short and easy to use, and takes about 25 minutes to fill out.⁷



African American students remained comparatively low, regardless of the type of institution they attended. White students enrolled at predominantly white colleges, however, reported drinking significantly more than white students at historically black colleges.¹ Other studies of students at historically black colleges report similar low rates of drinking compared with other colleges.^{5,8,9}

A 2006 NCAA survey of 19,676 college student athletes found that a larger percentage of African American athletes than white athletes abstain from alcohol. For example, 52.9 percent of African American athletes drank in the previous year, while 82.1 percent of white athletes did. Further, the percentage of African American athletes drinking decreased from 59.1 percent in 2001.¹⁰



Other Drug Use

The 2005 Core Institute analysis of 33,379 college students reveals that in the previous year, 33.5 percent of American Indians had used marijuana, as had 31 percent of non-Latino whites, 33.4 percent of Latinos, 21.4 percent of blacks, and 18 percent of Asian/Pacific Islanders. Amphetamine and cocaine use was comparatively infrequent, with non-Latino whites' and Latinos' use far exceeding blacks' and Asian/Pacific Islanders' use.²

A 2007 study examining race and ethnicity and gender differences in drug abuse mirrors the Core Institute findings. Marijuana was most commonly abused, followed by opioid analgesics, prescription stimulants, and psychedelics. Use of these substances tended to be higher among Hispanic and white students than among Asian and African American students.¹¹

References

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RESOURCES

The Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse and Violence Prevention



Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools (OSDFS)

U.S. Department of Education
<http://www.ed.gov/osdfs>; 202-245-7896

OSDFS supports efforts to create safe schools, respond to crises, prevent alcohol and other drug abuse, ensure the health and well-being of students, and teach students good character and citizenship. The agency provides financial assistance for drug abuse and violence prevention programs and activities that promote the health and well-being of students in elementary and secondary schools and institutions of higher education.

The U.S. Department of Education's Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse and Violence Prevention

<http://www.higheredcenter.org>; 1-800-676-1730; TDD Relay-friendly, Dial 711

The Higher Education Center offers an integrated array of services to help campuses and communities come together to identify problems; assess needs; and plan, implement, and evaluate alcohol and other drug abuse and violence prevention programs. Services include training; technical assistance; publications; support for the Network Addressing Collegiate Alcohol and Other Drug Issues; and evaluation activities. The Higher Education Center's publications are free and can be downloaded from its Web site.

The Network Addressing Collegiate Alcohol and Other Drug Issues

<http://www.thenetwork.ws>; see Web site for telephone contacts by region

The Network Addressing Collegiate Alcohol and Other Drug Issues (Network) is a national consortium of colleges and universities formed to promote healthy campus environments by addressing issues related to alcohol and other drugs. Developed in 1987 by the U.S. Department of Education, the Network comprises member institutions that voluntarily agree to work toward a set of standards aimed at reducing AOD problems at colleges and universities. It has more than 1,600 members nationwide.



Other Organizations

African American Family Services

<http://www.aafs.net>; 612-871-7878

African American Family Services (AAFS) offers community-based programs for substance abuse prevention and treatment and related issues. AAFS is an umbrella organization comprising the Institute on Black Chemical Abuse, the African American Counseling Center, the African American Resource Center, and the Technical Assistance Center. Technical Assistance Center staff are available to provide trainings and technical support for college health educators and administrators nationwide to help in developing and improving alcohol and other drug prevention programs for African American students.

Bureau of Indian Affairs

<http://www.doi.gov/bia>; 202-208-3711

The Office of Alcohol and Substance Abuse Prevention (OASAP) coordinates and oversees alcohol and other drug prevention programs for the Bureau of Indian Affairs. OASAP offers training and technical assistance for college health educators and administrators leading alcohol and other drug prevention efforts for American Indian and Alaska Native students. It also conducts policy planning, program monitoring, and evaluation and serves as a source of funding and resource information for tribes and health educators.

Center for Substance Abuse Prevention

Office of Minority Health Concerns Liaison
Office of Intergovernmental and External Affairs
<http://www.prevention.samhsa.gov>; 301-443-5266

The Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (CSAP) is one of the primary agencies leading federal efforts to prevent alcohol and other drug abuse. CSAP supports prevention programs on the local, state, and national level through trainings, technical assistance, curriculum development and testing, project grants, and information services, including the National

Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information and *Prevention Pipeline*, a bimonthly periodical. Through the Office of Minority Health Concerns Liaison, college health educators can receive training and technical assistance in developing alcohol and other drug prevention programs for students of color.

Minnesota Indian Women's Resource Center

<http://www.miwrc.org>; 612-728-2000

The Minnesota Indian Women's Resource Center works with substance abuse prevention programs and other organizations to improve services for American Indian women. Center staff are available to provide prevention workshops, trainings, and technical assistance to colleges nationwide that are developing alcohol and other drug prevention programs for American Indian students. The center also serves as a clearinghouse for materials on American Indian alcohol and other drug abuse and related issues.

National Asian Pacific American Families Against Substance Abuse

<http://www.napafasa.org>; 213-625-5795

National Asian Pacific American Families Against Substance Abuse (NAPAFASA) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to alcohol and other drug use prevention efforts in Asian American and Pacific Islander communities. The organization sponsors national and regional conferences on prevention and treatment issues for prevention specialists and service providers. NAPAFASA conducts workshops on college campuses and provides technical assistance and training for college health program planners working with Asian Pacific Islander students.

United National Indian Tribal Youth, Inc.

<http://www.unityinc.org>; 405-236-2800

United National Indian Tribal Youth, Inc. (UNITY), is a national nonprofit organization set up to serve American Indian and Alaska Native youth ages 15 to



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24. With an emphasis on alcohol and other drug use prevention, UNITY programming encourages youth leadership skills development and community building. UNITY supports over 150 American Indian substance-free youth councils across the country in colleges, high schools, villages, and urban communities to promote youth organizing and peer education. Trainers and workshop leaders are available through UNITY to assist in the development of alcohol and other drug prevention programming for American Indian college students.

White Bison, Inc.

<http://www.whitebison.org>; 719-548-1000

White Bison, Inc., is an American Indian nonprofit organization offering training programs for colleges, corporations, tribes, and community groups to promote public health and other social programs for American Indians. White Bison staff conduct alcohol and other drug prevention workshops on college campuses and offer technical assistance to college health educators developing programs for American Indian students.

White House Initiative on Historically Black Colleges and Universities

<http://www.ed.gov/about/inits/list/whhbcu/edlite-index.html>; 202-502-7900

The White House Initiative on Historically Black Colleges and Universities was established to strengthen the capacity of HBCUs to provide excellence in education. Its Web site offers a list of HBCUs, information on the Department of Education's National HBCU Week Conference, and other resources.



Other Materials

***Handling Cultural Diversity on Campus*, 1993. 116 pages**

International Association of Campus Law Enforcement Administrators
<http://www.iaclea.org/visitors/resources/publication/index.cfm>; 860-586-7517

This monograph addresses ways to manage crime resulting from racial and ethnic bias on campus. Five chapters highlight incidents that have taken place on colleges around the country, the development of cultural awareness programs, and the management of bias-related incidents. Appendices include policies and procedures adopted at universities to prevent bias incidents on campus.

***Networking for Healthy Campuses: New York State College Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Prevention Programs*, by F. M. Harding, 1996. 146 pages**

New York State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services
<http://www.oasas.state.ny.us>; 518-473-3460

Although prepared for New York State colleges, *Networking for Healthy Campuses* is a valuable resource for prevention specialists working on campuses across the country. Part 1 of this comprehensive programming manual offers information on national alcohol statistics, cultural competence, fraternities and sororities, college athletes, sexual assault, prevention strategies, and other issues. Part 2 outlines the components of a model campus alcohol and other drug abuse prevention program and addresses needs assessment, evaluation, and the publication of results.

The manual is free of charge and can be ordered by writing to the New York State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services or through the agency's Website.



Other Internet Resources

National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information

<http://www.ncadi.samhsa.gov>; 1-800-729-6686

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA's) National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information (NCADI), administered by the federal Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (CSAP), is the nation's largest resource for current information and materials concerning substance abuse prevention. NCADI's information services staff is equipped to answer questions from the public and to do customized bibliographic searches on request in alcohol and other drug databases. The clearinghouse also distributes fact sheets, brochures, pamphlets, posters, videotapes, and other educational material free of charge and disseminates information on federal funding opportunities.



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