**A Brief History of Alcohol Use in College Students**

Today, around 80 percent of college students consume alcohol and about 20 percent meet the criteria for alcohol use disorder (https://www.alcoholrehabguide.org/resources/college-alcohol-abuse/). The overuse and illegal use of alcohol from college students nationwide is not a new problem. Concerns about alcohol use from college students has been an issue for decades.

In 1945, Dr. Clements Collard Fry published the first article that focused on drinking by college students. This journal, the Quarterly Journal of Studies on Alcohol*,* was an attempt to shift the public’s view of alcohol overuages as a health concern (https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4453500/). After this publication, more studies were conducted about drinking by college students throughout the 1960s. In the 1970s and 80s, more studies attempted point out the enforcement of policies concerning drinking among college students.

One of the first large-scale research projects on alcohol among college students was conducted by Henry Weschsler in 1993. Weschsler, a social psychologist at Harvard University School of Public Health, studied 17,000 students from 140 colleges. He discovered that 44 percent of college students are binge drinkers, meaning that they consume four to five drinks in a row (https://www.chronicle.com/interactives/alcohol\_binge). While his research uncovered ample, alarming statistics about drinking, his research showed the public much more.

Weschsler helped to shift the public’s view that drinking, especially among college students, should be considered a public health concern. In his research, he discovered that there are many factors that influence drinking in colleges that is beyond the colleges’ control. Some of these factors include Greek life’s influence, alcohol sales in close proximity to campuses and

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bars in close proximity to campuses (https://www.chronicle.com/interactives/alcohol\_binge).

Shortly after that research, the U.S. Department of Education created the Higher Education Center for Alcohol, Drug Use and Violence Prevention. This department provided research, training and technical assistance concerning these topics. Research about drinking on college campuses has continued but has only shown small improvements, even with new policies in place (https://www.chronicle.com/interactives/alcohol\_binge).

While many colleges offer alcohol-free housing and run party patrols and around half offer alcohol intervention programs, the majority of college students are still consuming alcohol. Many college policies about alcohol focus on social-norming campaigns, which aim to present the idea that their peers do not drink as much as they may think. While educational programs such as these can be influential, statistics on alcohol consumption have not lessened. Less than half of colleges enforce alcohol consumption at tailgates, dorms and Greek housing. Seven percent restrict alcohol sales at nearby outlets and only two percent reduce cheap drinks from local bars (https://www.chronicle.com/interactives/alcohol\_binge).

Overtime multiple research projects have been conducted and there has been a shift in policies on college campuses. However, alcohol consumption among college students is still a major concern. Around 50 percent of students participate in binge drinking and about 150,000 students develop alcohol-related health problems every year (https://www.alcoholrehabguide.org/resources/college-alcohol-abuse/).

Alcohol-related health problems include liver damage, high blood pressure and inflammation of the pancreas. Also, students who consume alcohol are more likely to become

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alcoholics, leading to many other health problems. People who are struggling with depression, anxiety or other mental health problems are more at risk to commit suicide or commit acts of self-harm with the influence of alcohol. Another alarming statistic shows that around 2,000 students every year die from unintentional, alcohol related injuries (https://www.alcoholrehabguide.org/resources/college-alcohol-abuse/).

Health concerns are not the only problem that consuming alcohol creates for college-aged students. Research has shown that around 700,000 people who sexually or physically assault students have been drinking prior to the attack, and around 100,000 students are victims of alcohol-influenced sexual assaults. These actions can lead to the transmittion of STDs, unwanted pregnancies and lasting psychological damage. When students are influenced by alcohol, they may even commit crimes, putting themselves and others at risk. In fact, around 600,000 students each year accidently injure themselves due to the overuse of alcohol. Students who commit crimes while intoxicated can face fines, probation, license suspension and jail time, which can have lasting effects on their records (https://www.alcoholrehabguide.org/resources/college-alcohol-abuse/).

Another factor about alcohol consumption by college students is that one out of four students report that drinking has negatively influenced their academic performance. The highest period of risk that students face is in the first six weeks of their first year of college. Over the past two decades, binge drinking rates have stayed above 40 percent, and even with research and policies in place, this statistic does not seem to be declining anytime soon. Many of these statistics are not new or have not changed much over the years, and alcohol consumption by college students is still a very current problem.

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(https://www.chronicle.com/interactives/alcohol\_binge).

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