

SSID Fact Sheet

College Alcohol Use

The College Alcohol Study (CAS) defines college binge drinkers as male students who have five or more drinks in a row at least once in a two-week period and female students who have four or more drinks in a row. A drink is defined as a 12-ounce beer, a four-ounce glass of wine, a 12-ounce wine cooler, or a shot of liquor taken straight or in a mixed drink. An occasional binge drinker is a student who binges once or twice in a two-week period and a frequent binge drinker is a student who binges three or more times in a two-week period.

The CAS surveyed a cross-section of American colleges in 1993, 1997, 1999, and 2000 to note trends in binge drinking. What the surveys shows over time is an increased polarization of those classified as binge drinkers and those as abstainers. Approximately 16% of students abstained from drinking in 1993 compared to 19% in 2001. And the binge drinkers follow a similar pattern with 20% classified as such in 1993 and 23% in 2001.

Breakdown by race/ethnicity, membership in fraternal organizations, and location you find a similar pattern of polarization; an **increase in abstention** for the following groups:

	<u>1993</u>	<u>2001</u>
▪ Hispanics	15%	19%
▪ Native Americans	16%	22%
▪ Students living in residence halls	18%	21%
▪ Fraternity or sorority house	1%	6%
▪ Those living with parents off campus	22%	27%
▪ Students attending Northeastern colleges	12%	15%
▪ Students attending commuter colleges	11%	15%
▪ Students in rural areas/small towns	14%	19%

The **rise in binge drinkers** are represented by the following groups:

	<u>1993</u>	<u>2001</u>
▪ Seniors	19%	23%
▪ Students who were high school binge drinkers	40%	46%
▪ Those living off campus with a spouse	3%	8%
▪ Those attending a highly competitive school	17%	20%
▪ Students attending western colleges	13%	15%

The rise in **frequent binge drinking** and the **decline in abstention** in the 4 study years is represented by only one subgroup:

	<u>1993</u>	<u>2001</u>
▪ All-women's colleges (Abstention) (Frequent Binge Drinking)	26% 5%	21% 12%

Source: Wechsler H., Lee J.E., Kuo M., Seibring M., Nelson T.F., Lee H. (2002). Trends in college binge drinking during a period of increased prevention efforts: Findings from 4 Harvard School of Public Health College Alcohol Study Surveys: 1993-2001. *Journal of American College Health*, 50(5), 203-217.