

# Research In Brief

## Alcohol Use of College Students In Illinois Illinois Higher Education Center for Alcohol, Other Drug and Violence Prevention, Eastern Illinois University

Alcohol use by colleges student is pressing public health concern for institutions of higher education as highlighted by the 2002 NIAAA Report “A Call to Action”. In Illinois alcohol consumption by college students mirrors national

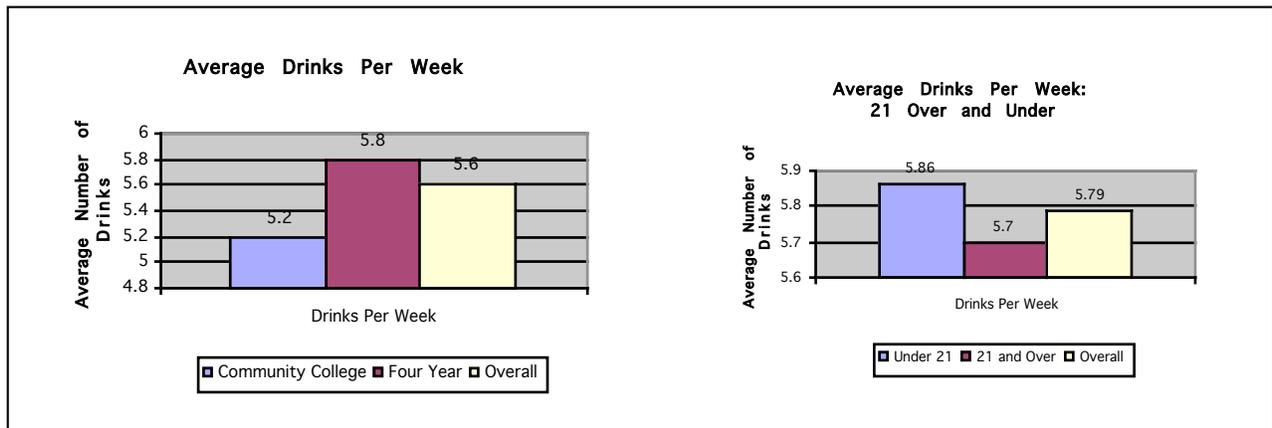
data and points toward important variations in subgroups use of alcohol along with the impact of alcohol consumption of academic performance. Using data from the CORE Institute’s survey of alcohol and other drug behavior at Southern Illinois University some state and national comparisons of self-reported student consumption behavior can be made. Respondents at 33 institutions

<b>Table A: National and State Comparison</b>	National CORE 2000 (n=55,026)	33 State Institutions 2002 (n=11,198)
Binge Drinking in past two weeks	46.5%	46.7%
Drinks consumed in average week	5.85 drinks	5.6 drinks
Percentage consuming 3x or more per week	Not available	22.8%
Percentage who have consumed in past 30 days	72.1%	69.3%
Percentage who have consumed in past year	84.1%	82.5%

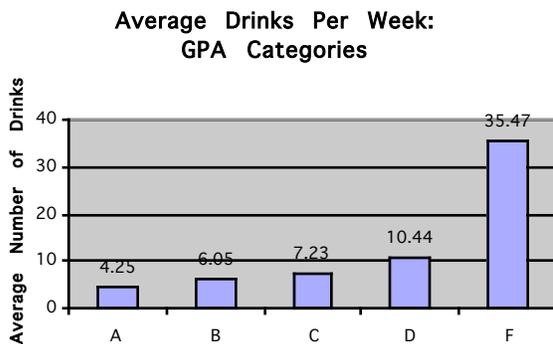
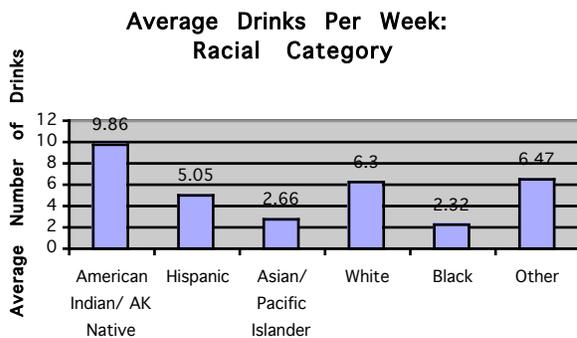
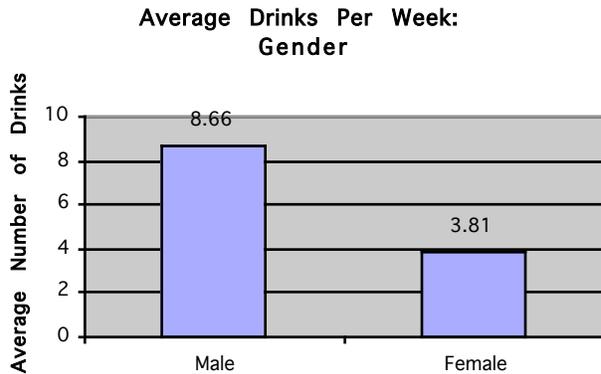
National data from the 2000 CORE survey results. This sample is not a national probability sample. State of Illinois sample is from 2002 CORE survey results at 33 Illinois Institutions of Higher Education, including 19 four-year public or private institution. Samples from institutions are intended to be representative of institutions, but not the state.

of higher education in Illinois 46.7% reported drinking 5 or more drinks (binge drinking) in one sitting in the past two week that is nearly identical to the national average of 46.5%. Average responses from individuals at reporting institutions in Illinois mirror National numbers for consumption in the past week, along with 30 day and annual consumption (see table A).

Unique variations in student use reported by institutions of higher education in Illinois include differences between sector of higher education, age, gender and race/ ethnicity. Four year public and private students report a higher average weekly consumption level than do students at the 13 community colleges that participated in the 2002 survey. This difference is important as frequently community



College students, who are demographically quite different from those attending four year colleges, are none the less lumped together in discussions of alcohol use by college students. In addition to the difference between four year and community college students, an important age distinction was noted in the difference between those under and over 21. Those under 21 in the sample reported consuming more than in an average week than those over 21, thus confirming concerns of the consumption of college students in their first years of college.



One of the most striking differences between college students was the gap between average weekly consumption levels of men and women in the Illinois sample (Average Drinks Per Week: Gender). Men reported consuming almost 5 drinks per week more than women, thus contradicting some national evidence that male and female consumption trends were converging.

Racial and ethnic group differences in alcohol self reported alcohol consumption point to important differences in how student experience the social atmosphere of college life. American Indian/ Alaska Natives, Whites, and those in the other race category consuming the most, while African-Americans and Asian/ Pacific Islanders consuming far less in an average week.

Understanding alcohol use by college students in Illinois is placed in context when examining the potential connection between alcohol use and academic performance. The graph “Average Drinks Per Week: GPA Categories” clearly delineates a trend where moderate alcohol use is related to high academic performance and high alcohol use is related to low academic performance. This pattern points toward the importance of addressing heavy alcohol use by students attending higher education in the state of Illinois.

For more information about this publication or the prevention of alcohol and other drug use among college students please contact the Illinois Higher Education Center for Alcohol, Other Drug and Violence Prevention at Eastern Illinois University at 217-581-2019 or e-mail kamwall@mac.com.