

The Relationship between Alcohol and Drug Use and Student Wellness

Center for the Study of Student Life

January 2017

INTRODUCTION

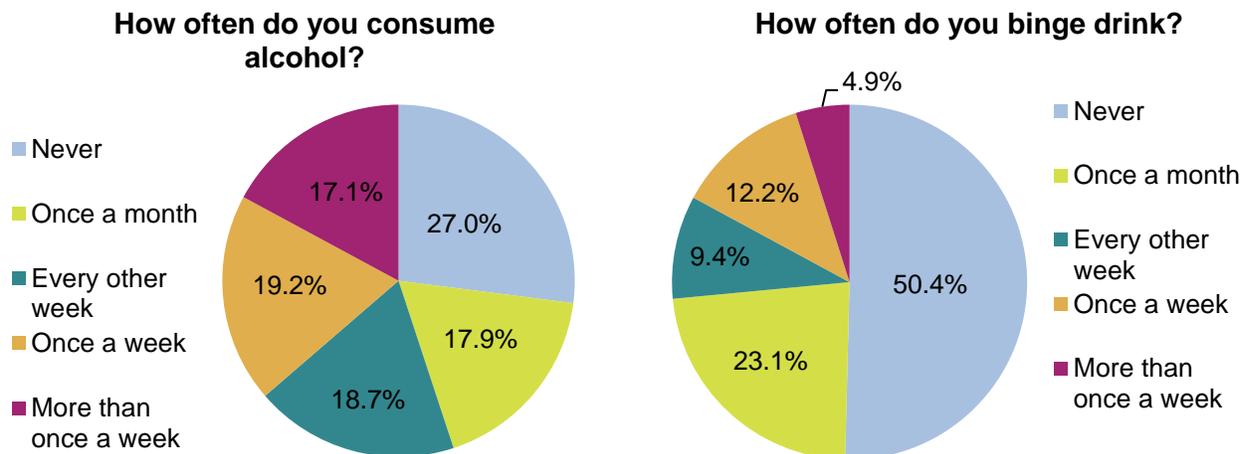
This report examines patterns in self-reported alcohol use and other drug use by Ohio State students, as well as the relationship between alcohol and other drug use and other dimensions of student wellness. Data come from the 2015 Wellness Assessment. The Wellness Assessment was designed to measure nine dimensions of wellness in order to give students a better understanding of their own wellness and provide them with resources that they can utilize at Ohio State to improve their wellness. The Wellness Assessment survey was open to all students on the Columbus campus of the Ohio State University during October 2015 as well as emailed to a random sample of 5,000 undergraduate, graduate and professional students. This report uses data only from the random sample of students who participated in the survey and consented to sharing their educational records for research purposes (5,000 recruited, 760 responded for a 15.2% response rate). For more information about the wellness assessment, please see <http://go.osu.edu/WA2016report>. For demographics of survey respondents and questions that comprise each wellness scale, please see the appendix.

FINDINGS

RESULTS FOR UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

Alcohol and Drug Use

About half of the undergraduate respondents reported risky drinking behaviors, such as binge drinking or using substances to manage emotional issues. Almost 50 percent of respondents reported binge drinking at least once a month, while 47 percent reported using substances to manage their stress within the past month (see table on next page).



Note: Binge drinking was defined as 5+ drinks in about 2 hours for males or 4+ drinks in about 2 hours for females.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

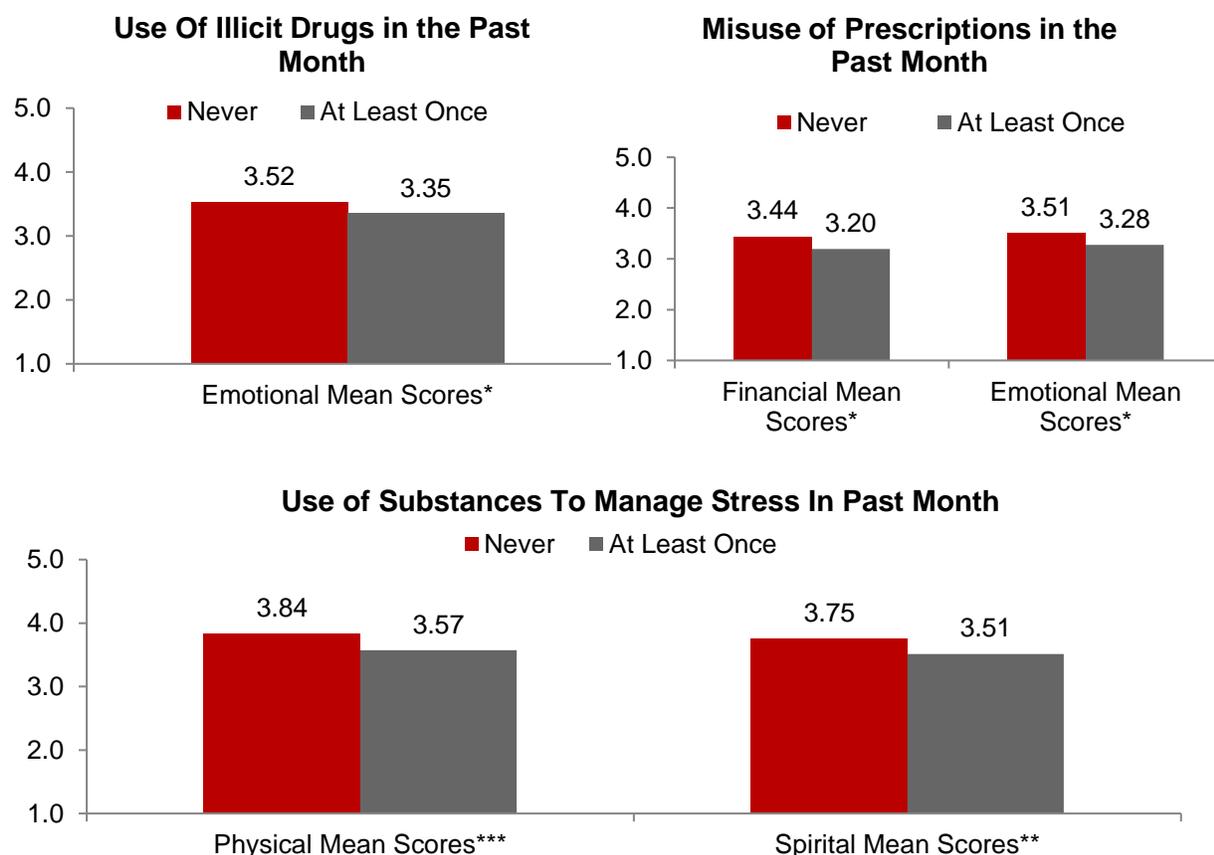
While nearly three-quarters of the undergraduate respondents reported using alcohol at least once a month, the use of illicit drugs, prescription medication and tobacco products was less common. About 20 percent of undergraduate respondents reported using illicit drugs, about 8 percent reported misusing prescription medications and about 13 percent reported using tobacco products within a month of taking the wellness assessment.

Use in the Past Month (Undergraduate Students)

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
Illicit drugs(e.g. marijuana, cocaine, Ecstasy) (n = 386)	79.3%	9.1%	6.5%	3.4%	1.8%
Prescription medication that is not prescribed (e.g. Adderall, Xanax, Valium) (n = 385)	91.7%	5.2%	1.8%	1.0%	0.3%
Tobacco products (n = 384)	87.2%	8.1%	2.1%	1.8%	0.8%
Alcohol/nicotine/other substances to manage stress (n = 386)	52.8%	21.8%	17.6%	5.7%	2.1%

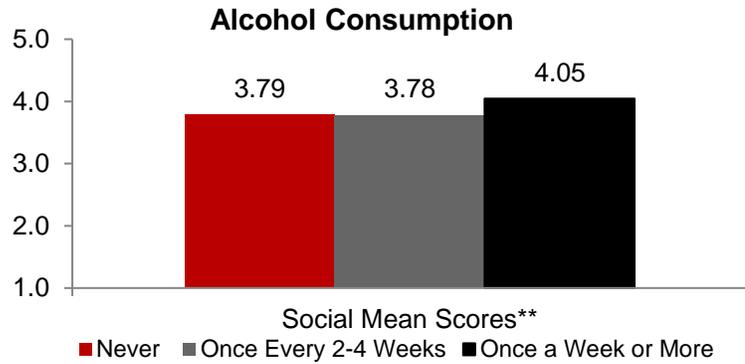
Substance Use and Student Wellness (Undergraduate Students)

We examined whether undergraduate students who used alcohol or drugs demonstrated differences in nine dimensions of wellness. Emotional wellness was lower among students who reported using illicit drugs or misusing prescription drugs. Prescription drug misuse was also associated with lower financial wellness. Using alcohol, nicotine or other substances to manage stress was associated with lower physical and spiritual wellness.

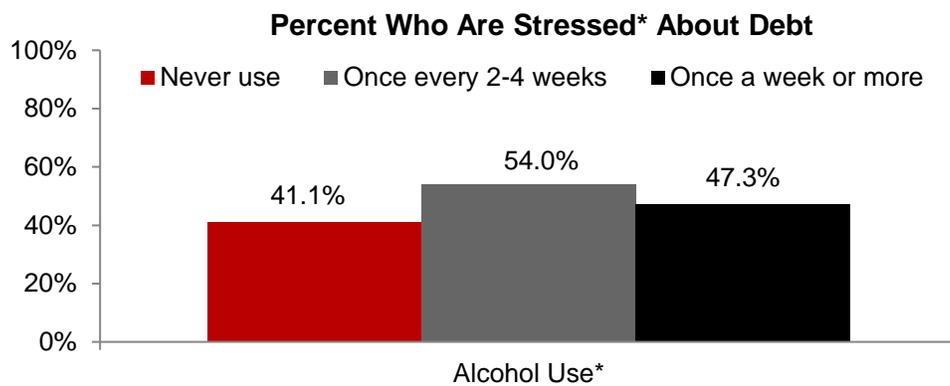


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Undergraduate respondents who drank alcohol at least once a week reported higher social wellness. Similarly, students who binge drank at least once a week reported higher social wellness (4.42) than those who binge drank less often (3.87) or never (3.74). These findings could suggest that students perceive a link between drinking and social opportunities.

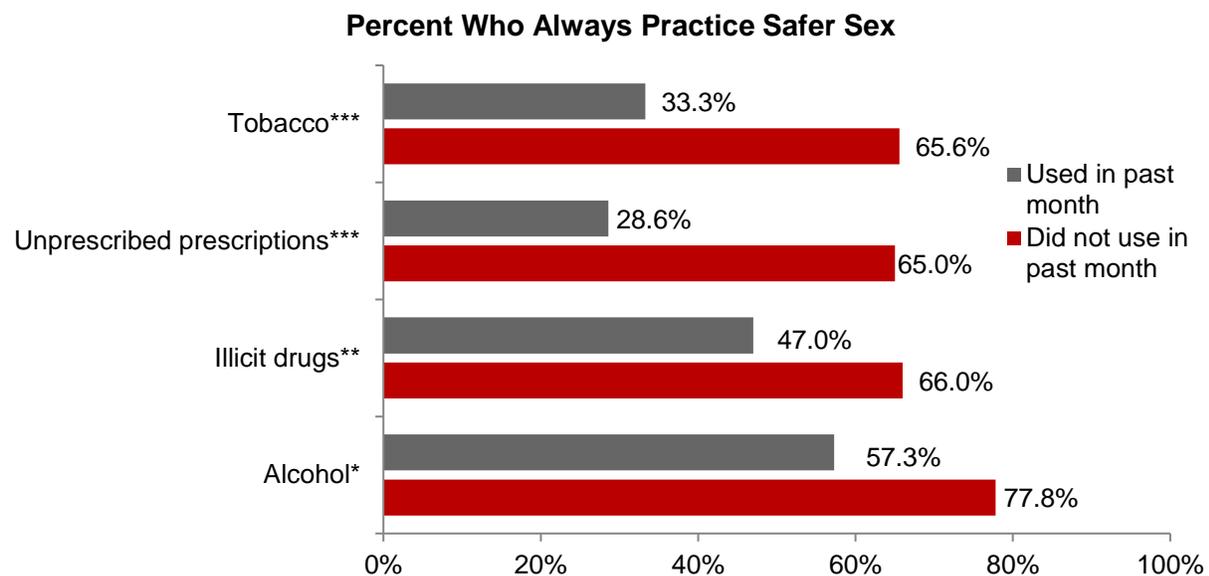


Students who drank alcohol were also more likely to report being stressed about debt.



Note: Stressed about debt includes those who agreed or strongly agreed that they are stressed about the money they owe. Students who selected "not applicable" are not included in this analysis.

Finally, lower proportions of students who reported using alcohol, tobacco, illicit drugs or misusing prescriptions stated that they always practiced safer sex than students who did not use these substances.

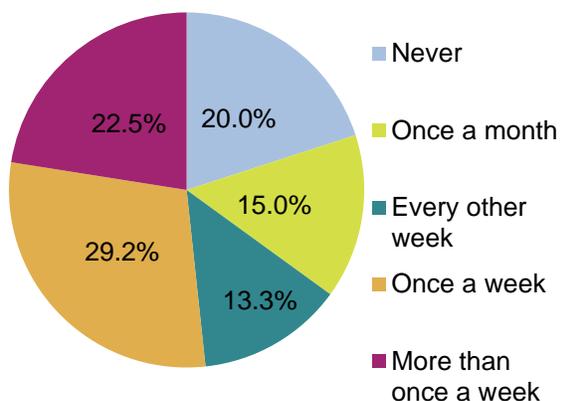


Note: Students who reported that they were not sexually active were excluded from the analysis.

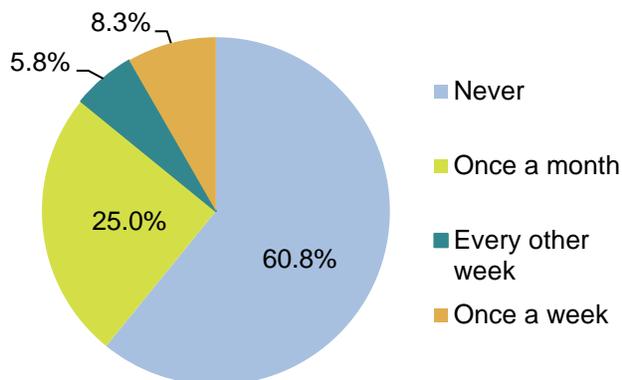
*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001

RESULTS FOR GRADUATE AND PROFESSIONAL STUDENTS

How often do you consume alcohol?



How often do you binge drink?



Note: Binge drinking was defined as 5+ drinks in about 2 hours for males or 4+ drinks in about 2 hours for females.

About 46 percent of graduate and professional students reported using alcohol, nicotine or other substances to manage stress; this percentage is slightly lower than among undergraduate students. About 61 percent of graduate and professional students reported never binge drinking. None of the graduate and professional students reported binge drinking more than once a week.

Compared to undergraduate students, a greater proportion of graduate and professional students reported never using illicit drugs or misusing prescription medications in the past month. The proportion that reported using tobacco products was fairly similar, while regular alcohol consumption was more common among graduate and professional students.

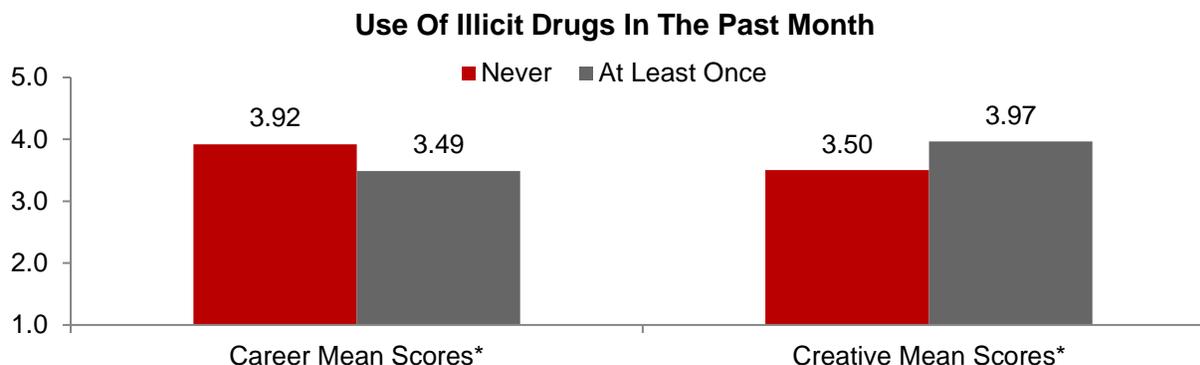
Use in the Past Month (Graduate/Professional Students)

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
Illicit drugs(e.g. marijuana, cocaine, Ecstasy) (n = 386)	90.1%	5.8%	2.5%	1.7%	0.0%
Prescription medication that is not prescribed (e.g. Adderall, Xanax, Valium) (n = 385)	97.5%	1.7%	0.0%	0.8%	0.0%
Tobacco products (n = 384)	87.6%	6.6%	2.5%	3.3%	0.0%
Alcohol/nicotine/other substances to manage stress (n = 386)	46.3%	31.4%	16.5%	5.0%	0.8%

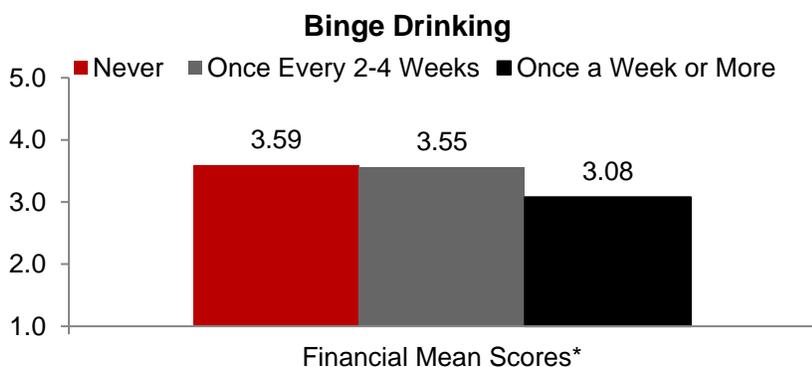
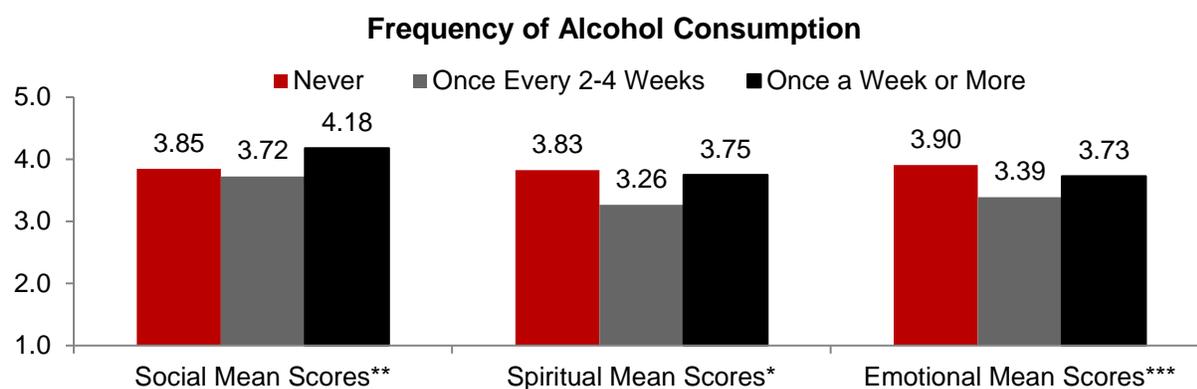
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Substance Use and Student Wellness (Graduate and Professional Students)

Among graduate and professional students, the use of illicit drugs within the past month was associated with higher career wellness, but lower creative wellness.



Similar to the findings for undergraduate respondents, graduate and professional students who drank once a week or more reported higher social wellness than students who used alcohol less often. However, not drinking alcohol was associated with higher spiritual and emotional wellness scores. However, frequent binge drinking was associated with lower financial wellness scores.

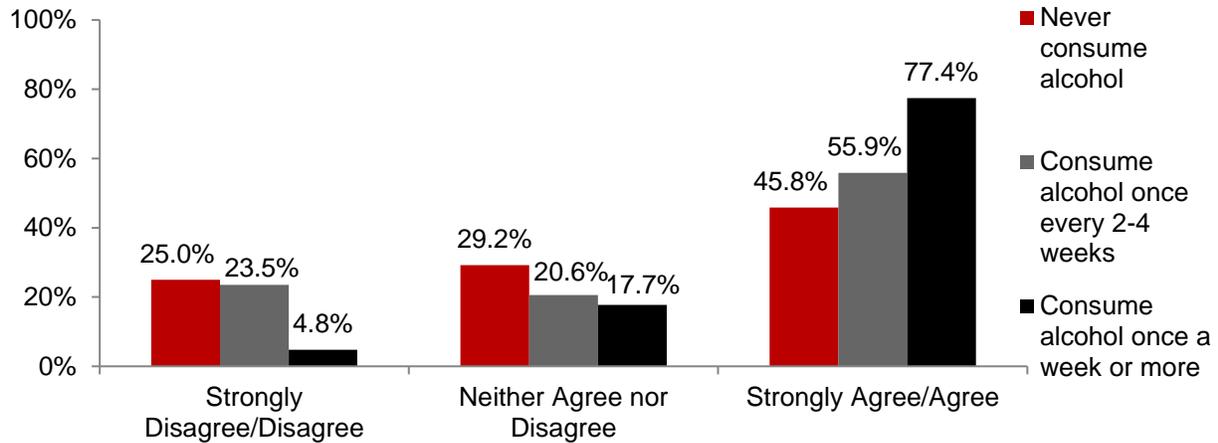


Note: Binge drinking was defined as 5+ drinks in about 2 hours for males or 4+ drinks in about 2 hours for females

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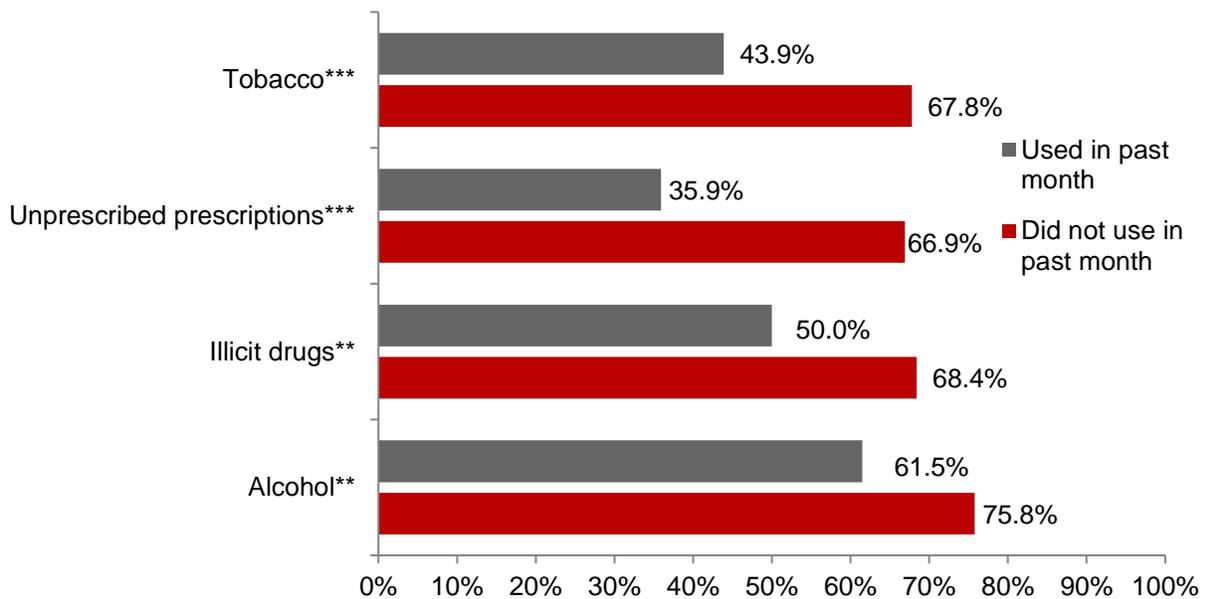
A greater proportion of graduate and professional students who drank once a week or more reported having a strong social network, compared with students who drank less frequently.

Have a strong social network*



Finally, similar to the trends observed among undergraduate students, there was a significant relationship between substance use and safer sex practices.

Percent Who Always Practice Safer Sex



Note: Students who reported that they were not sexually active were excluded from the analysis.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

APPENDIX: DEMOGRAPHICS OF PARTICIPANTS

	Undergraduate Respondents (n = 385)	Graduate/Professional Respondents (n = 120)
Male	42.9%	42.4%
Female	57.1%	57.6%
First generation	19.1%	23.3%
Non-first generation	80.9%	76.7%
International	4.2%	20.0%
Domestic	95.8%	80.0%
Race/Ethnicity		
African American/Black or African descent	3.6%	2.5%
Asian American/Asian (East, South Southeast)	9.6%	20.0%
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0.0%	0.0%
Latino(a)/Hispanic American	2.1%	4.2%
Native American/American Indian/Alaskan Native	0.0%	0.0%
Middle Eastern/Arab American	0.5%	0.0%
White/European American	74.8%	64.2%
Other	0.0%	1.7%
Multiracial	9.1%	7.5%
Prefer not to answer	0.3%	0.0%
Sorority or fraternity member	7.6%	---
Student unaffiliated with sorority or fraternity	92.4%	---
Athlete	3.4%	--
Non-athlete	96.6%	--
Veteran/Military	2.6%	1.7%
Not Veteran/Military	97.4%	98.3%
Year in School/Academic Level		
First-year	27.3%	---
Second-year	22.3%	---
Third-year	23.6%	---
Fourth-year	19.5%	---
Fifth + year	7.3%	---
Master's	---	35.8%
Professional	---	23.3%
Doctoral	---	40.8%
Residence		
Campus residence	41.4%	4.2%
Within 43201 zip code	40.9%	30.3%
Outside 43201 zip code	14.8%	63.0%
Sorority or fraternity house	1.6%	---
None of these	1.3%	2.5%

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APPENDIX: DIMENSIONS OF THE WELLNESS ASSESSMENT

EMOTIONAL

- I use alcohol/nicotine/other substances to manage stress.
- I am able to appropriately manage my feelings.
- I use relaxation techniques to manage stress.
- I am able to appropriately express my feelings.
- I would be willing to seek help from others when I am having a difficult time.
- I feel that I am able to cope with my daily stress.
- I have a positive image of my body.

CAREER

- I am confident about my career decisions.
- I envision my future career as a means to contribute to society.
- I feel that my current studies will be helpful to my future career.
- I feel that my major/career decision is an appropriate expression of my abilities and personal strengths.
- I feel that I work in a positive environment.
- I feel that I work in a stressful environment.
- I feel that my current job interferes with other aspects of my life.
- I am able to balance my current job with the rest of my life.

FINANCIAL

- I am comfortable leaving a balance on my credit card(s).
- I think it is important to spend less than I earn.
- I am confident that I can plan a financial budget.
- I pay off the entire balance of my credit card(s) each month.
- I have enough money saved to handle financial emergencies.
- I track my spending to stay within my budget.
- I feel stressed by the amount of money I owe (credit cards, student loans, etc.).
- I stress about my finances.

CREATIVE

- I express myself through creative activities.
- I attend arts-related events or programs.
- I think of myself as a creative person.
- I value multiple perspectives when thinking about complex topics.
- The arts help me appreciate other perspectives and cultures.

PHYSICAL

- I am confident that I can exercise regularly.
- I am confident that I can maintain a nutritious diet.
- I use illicit drugs (e.g. marijuana, cocaine, ecstasy).
- I use tobacco products.
- I use prescription medication that is not prescribed to me (e.g. Adderall, Xanax, Valium).
- I eat a nutritious diet.
- I engage in cardiovascular exercise 3-5 times per week for at least 30 minutes.
- I engage in flexibility exercise/stretching.
- I engage in strength training/resistance exercise 2-3 times per week.
- I get at least 8 hours of sleep per night.
- Do you get an annual flu vaccine?
- Do you maintain annual physical exams(s)?
- How often do you binge drink? (Males: 5+ drinks in about 2 hours, Females: 4+ drinks in about 2 hours)
- How often, in general, do you consume alcohol?

ENVIRONMENTAL

- I engage in environmentally friendly behaviors (turn off lights/faucets, walk or bike).
- I feel safe in my living environment.
- I feel that I live in a stressful environment.
- I often feel that I have little control over my safety.
- I take time to appreciate my surroundings.
- I take time to appreciate nature.
- I think it is important to conserve natural resources.
- If given the opportunity, I recycle.

SPIRITUAL

- I consider myself to be a spiritual person.
- I engage in self-reflection.
- I engage in spiritual practices.
- I feel a connection to something larger than myself.
- I seek out meaning in my life.

INTELLECTUAL

- I am able to resolve conflicts peacefully.
- I am confident about my academic major decisions.
- I am confident in my ability to find solutions to my problems.
- I am confident that I can learn new skills.
- I am interested in learning new things.
- I engage in intellectually engaging activities.
- I feel that my education is a priority.
- I felt challenged by my academics during my most recent academic term.
- I was able to manage my academic workload during my most recent academic term.

SOCIAL

- I feel a sense of belonging in a community.
- I feel supported by my family.
- I feel that I am a person who other people like to be around.
- I have a strong social network.
- I have at least one close friend whom I trust and can confide in.
- I feel comfortable communicating face-to-face with others.
- I rarely feel lonely.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

