

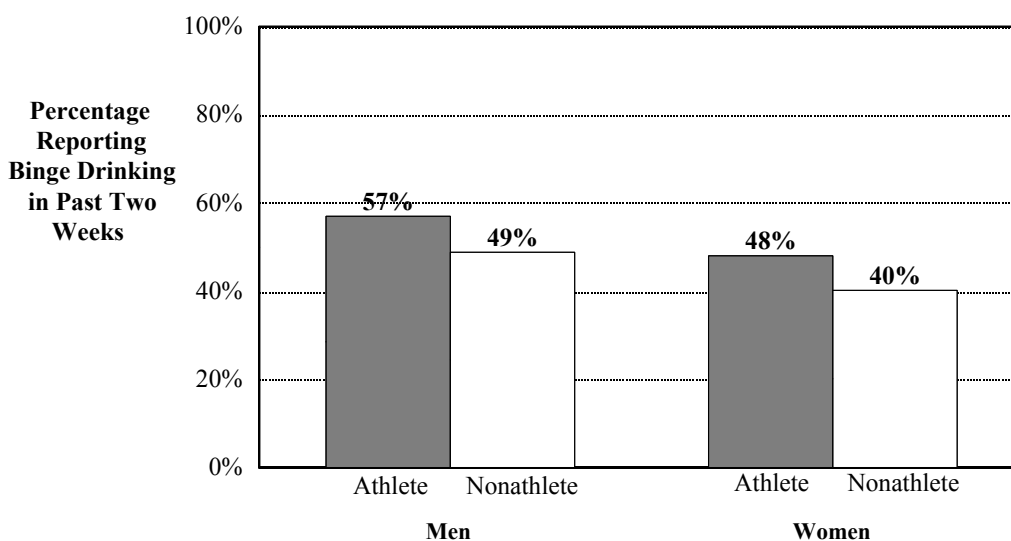
A Weekly FAX from the Center for Substance Abuse Research

University of Maryland, College Park

College Athletes More Likely to Engage in Binge Drinking Than Nonathletes, Despite More Exposure to Prevention Efforts

College athletes are more likely than nonathletes to engage in binge drinking, according to an analysis of data from the College Alcohol Survey.¹ Fifty-seven percent of male athletes reported at least one binge drinking episode in the two weeks prior to the survey, compared to 49% of nonathletes (see figure below). Yet the survey also found that athletes were significantly more likely than nonathletes to have been exposed to alcohol educational efforts. “Given the high rate of binge drinking among athletes, it appears that educational efforts highlighting the risks of alcohol are not a sufficient strategy to reduce the rate of binge drinking” (p. 46). The authors recommend that other measures, such as reinforcing “the motives athletes already express when they choose not to drink or to limit their drinking,” be used to complement current alcohol education and prevention efforts (p. 46).

Percentage of U.S. College Students Reporting Binge Drinking, by Athletic Status, 1997



¹The 1997 Harvard School of Public Health College Alcohol Survey (CAS) was a survey of randomly selected students attending a nationally representative sample of 130 4-year colleges and universities in the United States. The final sample for this analysis was 12,777 students, including 2,172 athletes. Binge drinking was defined as consuming five or more drinks in a row for men (four for women) on one or more occasions during the two weeks prior to the survey.

SOURCE: Adapted by CESAR from Nelson T.F., Wechsler, H., “Alcohol and College Athletics,” *Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise* 33(1): 43-47, 2001. For more information, contact Toban F. Nelson at tnelson@hsph.harvard.edu.