

A Weekly FAX from the Center for Substance Abuse Research

University of Maryland, College Park

Slightly More Than Half a Million College Students Experience Alcohol-Related Injury or Death Each Year

Nearly 1,500 college students die each year from alcohol-related unintentional injuries, according to a study conducted by the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism's Task Force on College Drinking. The study examined data from several national surveys and government agencies to estimate the number of alcohol-related deaths, injuries, and other health problems experienced annually by college students ages 18 to 24. More than 500,000 students are estimated to have incurred an alcohol-related injury each year and more than 700,000 are estimated to have been physically or sexually abused by someone who had been drinking. Risky behavior while drinking was also frequently reported by college students—2.1 million drove under the influence and an estimated 400,000 reported that alcohol caused them to have unprotected sex. The authors conclude that “there is an urgent need for expanding prevention and treatment programs to reduce alcohol-related harm among U.S. college students and other young adults” (p. 136).

Estimated Number of College Students (Ages 18-24) Reporting Alcohol-Related Behaviors or Consequences per Year

Alcohol-Related Behaviors/Consequences	Number of College Students
Rode with a drinking driver	3,112,041
Drove under the influence	2,106,988
Drank while swimming or boating	1,736,023
Physical assault by someone who had been drinking	632,899
Injury	504,415
Unprotected sex	399,725
Health problems	152,128
Sexual assault/date rape by someone who had been drinking	71,379
Death	1,445

NOTE: The U.S. Department of Education estimates that there were 8,000,106 18-24 year olds enrolled as full- or part-time students in either 2- or 4- year colleges in 1997.

SOURCES: Adapted by CESAR from Hingson R.W., Heeren T., Zakocs R.C., Kopstein A., Wechsler H. “Magnitude of Alcohol-Related Mortality and Morbidity Among U.S. College Students Ages 18-24,” *Journal of Studies on Alcohol* 63: 136-144, 2002. Available online (www.collegedrinkingleadingprevention.gov/). For more information, contact Dr. Ralph Hingson at rhingson@bu.edu.