

A Weekly FAX from the Center for Substance Abuse Research

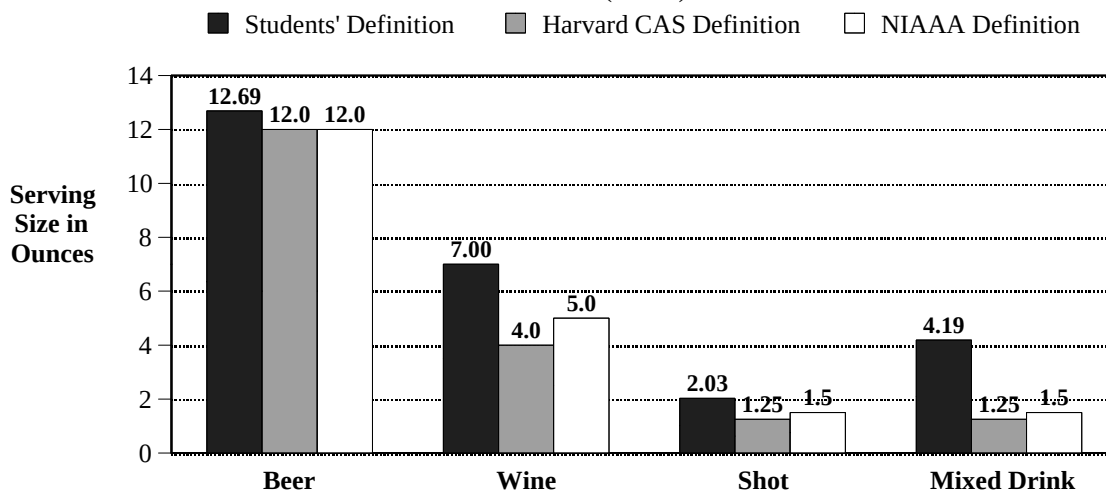
University of Maryland, College Park

College Students Overestimate Standard Wine and Liquor Drink Volumes; May Impact Their Reported Alcohol Use

College students overestimate how many ounces constitute standard servings of wine and liquor, according to a study of undergraduate students at a private university in the southern United States. When asked how many ounces they thought constituted a single serving of beer, wine, or liquor in a shot or mixed drink, students defined wine and liquor more liberally than standard definitions commonly used by researchers and government agencies.* For example, the students' average definition of the amount of liquor in a mixed drink was more than twice the standard definitions (see figure below). Furthermore, students asked to free-pour an average drink consistently poured drinks larger than the standard definitions (data not shown). According to the authors, these findings suggest that students who ignore the definition of a standard drink provided on alcohol surveys may be underreporting their drinking habits. In addition, students' liberal definitions of drinks puts them at risk for hazardous drinking. For example, a male college student who is taught that binge drinking is five drinks will go well beyond the five-drink threshold by using his definition of a standard drink. The authors suggest that "alcohol education initiatives should include a component that addresses the issue of standard drink sizes" (p. 636).

Undergraduate College Students', Harvard CAS, and NIAAA Definitions of Single Servings of Alcohol, 2003

(N=133)



*The serving size definitions used by the Harvard College Alcohol Study (CAS) and the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) were used as standard definitions.

SOURCE: Adapted by CESAR from White A.M., Kraus, C.L., Flom, J.D., Kestenbaum, L.A., Mitchell, J.R., Shah, K., Swartzwelder, H.S. "College Students Lack Knowledge of Standard Drink Volumes: Implications for Definitions of Risky Drinking Based on Survey Data," *Alcoholism and Clinical Experimental Research* 29(4):631-638, 2005.

• 301-405-9770 (voice) • 301-403-8342 (fax) • CESAR@cesar.umd.edu • www.cesar.umd.edu •

CESAR FAX is supported by BYRN 2004-1206, awarded by the U.S. Department of Justice through the Governor's Office of Crime Control and Prevention. CESAR FAX may be copied without permission. Please cite CESAR as the source.