

Study Description

The Color of Drinking Study examined the impacts of UW–Madison’s alcohol culture on undergraduate students of color. This study is primarily aimed at studying the internal and external effects to self these students endured from the UW–Madison alcohol culture.

Respondents

1195 (25.2%) of undergraduate students of color responded to the survey. 333 (16.7%) of a sample of white undergraduate students responded to the survey

Deployment Dates

The survey was deployed November 20, 2017 and closed January 1, 2018.

Microaggressions:

For this study, microaggressions were defined as “brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults towards people of color (Sue et al, 2007).”

IRB:

The study went through UW-Madison Institutional Review Board (IRB) and is considered research

Survey Team:

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Significant Summary Findings

- Students of color reported higher rates of abstaining and nondrinking than white students.
- Students in both groups reported avoiding places on- and off-campus due to concerns about the alcohol use of others, students of color at 42% and white students at 31%.
- Both groups named fraternity and sorority housing and Langdon Street as the top two places they avoided
- African American/Black students have considered leaving the University at three times the rate of white students.
- Students of color cited the racial climate as the number one reason, and white students cited academic reasons.
- Students of color are more likely to report struggling financially or that they have enough to get by but not much left over.
- White high-risk drinkers scored higher on the Diener Flourishing Scale than students of color in any drinker category and white students in the other drinker categories.
- White students report at higher rates that alcohol impacts their overall health and wellbeing than students of color.
- Approximately 62% of students of color experience microaggressions at UW-Madison, consistent with 2015 Color of Drinking results.
- Students of color reported witnessing and intervening microaggressions at higher rates than white students.
- Both groups report having to find alternative study spaces because of the alcohol culture (average 46%), and schedule group meetings around alcohol consumption (average 40%).

Describe the alcohol culture at UW-Madison.

Top Themes and Selected Comments

Students of Color

The alcohol culture is prevalent.

"I think that it's a pretty prevalent part of campus culture - I've met a handful of students who have cited UW's "party scene" as one of their deciding factors when they considered attending the university. Whether you want to avoid alcohol or not people will have it, which is unfortunate for those who choose not to drink."

"It's strong, everywhere, encouraged, supported, expected, ridiculed, and accepted all at once. "Everyone does it," is a saying that applies here. Alcohol consumption is rampant across UW by students of all ages. For better or for worse, it is a cornerstone of UW."

The alcohol culture is how UW-Madison students socialize.

"The alcohol culture at UW-Madison is extremely active. Drinking is a form of recreation to both take the edge off of the stresses of being in college and as a way to socialize and enjoy time with friends. It is the go-to option for most activities. Social engagements are assumed to have alcohol."

"Alcohol is something that is "required to have a good time" in the eyes of many students at UW-Madison. It's viewed as essential at parties, essential to wind down, essential to any socialization."

The pressure to participate in the drinking culture is high.

"The drinking culture at UW-Madison is also very IN YOUR FACE and annoying. Everyone pressures people to drink, even if they say they don't. There is no escape. Even if you are not a drinker, you are constantly hearing your neighbors come home drunk or listening to songs that promote drinking. I wish it would stop."

"People drink basically every day at UW-Madison and if you don't, then you are basically forced to drink at different events when going out. My freshman year, I was forced to drink alcohol as about ten people stood around me until I drank (one of which was forcing the bottle into my mouth). This past year I went out and this guy says to me, "I would love to see you take this shot" as he and his friends stood around me staring me down like I was an animal and being an African American woman, I am sure you can imagine how that made me feel. I ended up not taking the shot but I did leave the bar and no person should be forced out of a bar just because they don't want to do what everyone else is doing. Every time I go out, there has never been a time where someone did not force me to drink or take a shot of something."

White Students

The alcohol culture is how UW-Madison students socialize.

"Alcohol is used commonly by UW-Madison students, but in varying degrees with different social circles. I have noticed that certain friends drink more, and I am more likely to drink more when around them than when I am with friends who don't drink as heavily."

"Alcohol is a permanent and predominant part of Madison's culture. It's what a lot of people do on the weekend and activity that brings people together for a variety of social events."

The UW-Madison alcohol culture encourages drinking heavily.

"Practically every person I've met over the past two years drinks heavily and encourages the people around them to drink and party. I didn't drink before coming to UW and now I feel pressure to drink every weekend."

"People drink very frequently, even those who you wouldn't have expected to. One of my friends from high school now drinks and parties on some weekends--he was a totally quiet kid before. It's terrible on the weekends; I live in an apartment and there are parties on every floor from Thursday night to sometimes even Sunday night, starting anywhere from early evening to 3 or 4 in the morning. Seeing drunk college kids on the streets on a Saturday afternoon on football game days is not an uncommon sight. In short, it seems like everyone here is an alcoholic."

Participation in the alcohol culture is dependent on who you socialize with.

"Alcohol is used commonly by UW-Madison students, but in varying degrees with different social circles. I have noticed that certain friends drink more, and I am more likely to drink more when around them than when I am with friends who don't drink as heavily."

"The alcohol culture at UW-Madison involves a lot of binge-drinking both in the house party setting and at local college bars. The younger undergraduate students drink illegals at house parties, in dorms, or with fake I.D.s. I'm not sure about the amounts of students that partake in illegal activity, but I know from my experience many do. Over 21, many students go out to drink and average of 2 times a week, but consume alcohol more often than that."

Within the last 30 days have you used alcohol?

	Students of Color	White Students	Color of Drinking (2015)**
Yes*	67.7%	81.9%	71.7%
No*	17.6%	10.3%	14.5%
I Don't Drink*	14.6%	7.9%	13.8%

	Black/African American Student	Asian/Asian American	Middle Eastern/North African	Different Identity
Yes and No*	86.4%	79.4%	50.0%	78.9%
I Don't Drink*	13.6%	20.6%	50.0%	21.1%

Drinker Categories:

Abstainer: a student who consumed no alcohol in the past year.

Nondrinker: a student who consumed no alcohol in the past two weeks, but may have consumed in the past year.

Moderate Drinker: a student who on the day of highest alcohol use in the past two weeks, had 1-4 drinks (male) or 1-3 drinks (female).

Heavy Episodic Drinker: on the day of highest alcohol use in the past two weeks, the student had 5-9 drinks (male) or 4-7 drinks (female).

Problematic Drinker: on highest day of use in the past two weeks, the student had 10+ drinks (male) or 8+drinks (female).

Nondrinker Rate: a combination of students who reported consuming no alcohol in a year and in the past two weeks. Abstainer +Nondrinker

Low Risk Drinking Rate: male students who report drinking four or less drinks, female students who report drinking three or less.

High-Risk Drinking Rate: students who report on their highest day of alcohol use in two weeks consuming four or more.

	Students of Color	White Students
Abstainer	15.3%	8.4%
Nondrinker	18.8%	10.9%
Moderate Drinker	27.6%	23.6%
Heavy Episodic Drinker	29.2%	35.6%
Problematic Drinker	9.6%	21.4%
Nondrinker Rate	34.1%	19.3%
Low Risk Drinker	61.7%	42.9%
High Risk Drinker	38.8%	57.0%

** Denotes that the data differences between white students and students of color were statistically significant.*

***Color of Drinking (2015) respondents were all undergraduate students of color*

Do you avoid specific areas on or off campus due to concerns about alcohol use of others?

	Students of Color	White Students	Color of Drinking (2015)
Yes*	41.6%	31.3%	40.2%
No*	46.2%	61.5%	59.8%
Unsure*	12.2%	7.2%	N/A

	Black/African American Student	Asian/Asian American	Latinx, Hispanic, Spanish	Biracial	Multiracial	Different Identity
Yes and Unsure*	66.9%	54.0%	56.6%	52.3%	60.9%	38.4%
No*	33.1%	46.0%	43.5%	47.7%	39.1%	61.6%
Odds Ratio compared to White Students	3.26	1.89	2.10	1.77	2.51	2.65

Places Avoided by Group:

Students of Color	White Students
82.7% Fraternity and Sorority housing	85.6% Fraternity and Sorority housing
66.8% Langdon Street	73.1% Langdon Street
47.8% House parties	53.6% State Street and bars
46.7% State Street and bars	48.5% House parties
41.9% Tailgates	38.1% Tailgates
27.1% Lakeshore Path	27.8% Southeast Residence Halls
22.5% Camp Randall	22.6% Lakeshore Path
20.5% Southeast Residence Halls	20.6% Camp Randall
14.8% Regent Street	14.4% Regent Street
5.0% Other locations	4.1% Lakeshore Residence Halls
3.6% Lakeshore Residence Halls	3.1% Other locations

Have you considered leaving the University?

	Students of Color	White Students
Yes*	24.1%	19.9%
Unsure*	4.7%	1.0%
No	71.1%	79.1%%

	Black/African American Student	Latinx, Hispanic, Spanish	Biracial
Yes and Unsure*	43.6%	33.1%	33.1%
No	56.4%	66.9%	66.9%
Odds Ratio compared to White Students	2.97	1.90	1.91

Reasons for considering leaving

Students of Color	White Students
54.5% Racial climate	39.7% Academic reasons
44.5% Mental health reasons	37.9% Mental Health reasons
39.5% Academic reasons	32.7% Interpersonal relationships
25.4% Financial reasons	29.3% Alcohol climate
23.4% Interpersonal reasons	24.1% Other reasons
20.4% Alcohol climate	18.9% Financial reasons
15.7% Family issues	6.9% Racial climate
14.0% Temporary leave	6.9% Temporary leave
9.3% Other reasons	5.2% Family issues
2.7% Medical reasons	3.4% Medical reasons
1.7% Disciplinary reasons	1.7% Disciplinary reasons

Has alcohol use impacted your health (physical, mental, overall well-being) in the time you have attended UW-Madison?

	Students of Color	White Students
Yes*	13.7%	19.1%
No	70%	64.4%
Unsure*	16.4%	16.6%

Top Themes and Selected Quotes

Students of Color

Alcohol use impacted my mental health.

"I was diagnosed with depression before I came to campus and as a result I used alcohol to deal with it. It progressively got worse as I started to drink more. It was to the point I was contemplating suicide again, the drinking culture here isn't good for a person who doesn't know how to deal with depression and is looking for an outlet such as myself."

"I often use alcohol as a way to forget about my problems, which just makes it that much harder to face my problems when I sober up. So I feel like my mental health has been affected because I defer my problems, which makes me sadder in the long run."

Alcohol use has caused me to be concerned for my safety.

"ITS SAD TO SEE MY PEERS KILLING THEMSELVES AND MAKES ME VERY ANXIOUS TO BE AROUND OR INTERACT WITH MUCH OF THE STUDENT BODY. CONSTANT PARANOIA THAT I WILL BE RAPED OR SEXUALLY ASSULTED. I WOULD LIKE TO HEALTHILY CONSUME BUT AM AFRAID SOMEONE WILL TAKE ADVANTAGE OF ME. VOMIT MAKES ME SAD AND INDUCES ANXIETY."

Alcohol use has impacted my social life.

"Drinking beer with new friends is kind of like having coffee with new friends. It's a socializing event. It's a way to make friends and be with old friends."

Alcohol use has impacted my physically.

"It's negatively impacted my health; has made me struggle with me weight. I also feel so pressured to drink heavily which affects my social circles."

White Students

Alcohol use impacted my physically

"Alcohol sometimes makes you feel sluggish the next day and unable to function, it can also make me say/do things I may regret in the morning."

"Tore meniscus and broken fibula due to drinking-related injuries."

"I gained weight due to my drinking."

"I know I don't get over colds as quickly if I drink frequently."

Alcohol use has impacted my social life.

"I feel very anxious in situations when there are drunk people. For example, I leave parties early before people start getting drunk, and I was pressured to drink at a field trip I went on."

Alcohol use has impacted my mental health. *"I felt encouraged to drink for stress relief instead of seeking help for mental health, or for pursuing health stress-relieving activities."*

"It has lead me to partake in things I wouldn't have sober. Then when I am sober I feel regret and self-conscious about my decisions I made while drunk."

Alcohol use has impacted my academics.

"1st year did not know limits and got sick twice due to overconsumption of alcohol, which in turn took away from studying."

"Major disruption to study and sleep habits"



Has your personal alcohol use or the alcohol use of others impacted your overall sense of belonging at UW-Madison?

	Students of Color	White Students
Yes	28.0%	33.0%
No	57.4%	56.5%
Unsure	14.6%	10.5%

Top Themes and Selected Quotes

Students of Color

If you don't drink you don't fit in at UW-Madison.

"If you don't drink then you're almost excluded from most of the university culture, since there's so much drinking involved, and people use parties to bond and socialize."

"A lot of people associate drinking culture with being a UW Madison student, and since I do not drink on campus, I doubted if I really belonged here during my first year"

The privileged culture around drinking and the idea that it is the normal thing to do and how people have fun in college makes me feel like I am not experiencing college the way I am supposed to and that I don't relate to my peers.?

Alcohol use by others, makes me feel isolated.

"I tend to feel isolated if I have a backpack on and am going to study while drink people are hooting and hollering as I walk by."

Alcohol use enhances racial issues.

"I fell that my type of drinking isn't the type others want to do. I prefer drinking a glass of wine/beer while sitting at home doing daily home things. The tailgate culture can be fun, and I love it sometimes, but the huge masses of drunk white people all around me always make me feel very hyperaware. Once there were only a few people of color at a tailgate, and somehow we all ended up helping another out when racial tensions arose with white tailgate goers. When I walk around State St or anywhere near bars/Langdon I am always aware of who is around me and if I am alone. I tend to feel isolated if I have a backpack on and am going to study while drink people are hooting and hollering as I walk by."

White Students

Alcohol helps you fit in and belong.

"It's part of the culture to drink. You fit in if you drink"

If you don't drink, you don't belong.

"I feel like you're most definitely looked down upon/considered an "outsider" if you do not partake in drinking at UW."

"I really don't drink much, and especially before I turned 21 (because I chose not to underage drink), I felt like I didn't belong at UW because I would decline going to parties or drinking together. I felt like an outsider."

Alcohol helps you meet new people.

"So I think drinking or just "going out" in general has been a positive thing because I have gotten to know more people that I don't typically chat with during the week."

Drinking alcohol helps me feel like I belong at UW-Madison.

"I think that enjoying getting drunk helps me feel like I belong here."

"participating in the alcohol culture here brings a feeling of belonging"

Alcohol helps you bond with people socially.

"Going out is a way to see all of your friends in a fun environment. A lot of my friends go to the same bars so I'm guaranteed to see friends out on most weekends"

Have you been impacted by other's alcohol use during your time at UW-Madison?

	Students of Color	White Students
Yes	46.4%	43.0%
No	40.6%	41.9%
Unsure	13.0%	15.2%

Students of Color	White Students
71.2% Taking Care of an Intoxicated Person	68.3% Taking Care of an Intoxicated Person
65.5% Noise Issues	68.3% Noise Issues
53.7% Increased trash such as bottles and cans on property	62.1% Vomit of Others
52.9% Vomit of Others	60.2% Increased trash such as bottles and cans on property
47.4% Disruption to Study	46.6% Disruption to Study
45.8% Pressure to drink even after declining	44.7% Pressure to drink even after declining
27.5% Disruption in other ways	26.1% Sexual Harassment
25.7% Racial Harassment	25.5% Disruption in other ways
23.3% Sexual Harassment	23.6% Calling for help for an intoxicated person
23.1% Accepted into new or different social circles	23.0% Vandalism and Property Damage
18.6% Harassment based on appearance	19.9% Accepted into new or different social circles
16.1% Vandalism/Property Damage	19.3% Harassment based on gender/gender identity.
14.5% Verbal Threats	17.4% Harassment based on your appearance
13.7% Harassment based on gender/gender identity	11.8% Personal Monetary Consequences
13.3% Harassment about political climate/assumed political affiliation.	11.8% Items thrown at you
11.7% Harassment about where you're from	9.3% Harassment about political climate/assumed political affiliation
10.9% Items thrown at you	9.3% Verbal Threats
10.7% Personal Monetary Consequences	8.7% Event being cancelled because of disruptive behavior linked to drinking.
9.6% Physical Threats	6.8% Physical threats
9.6% Event being cancelled because of disruptive behavior linked to drinking.	5.0% Other reasons
4.8% Harassment based on your speech or accent	4.4% Fundraising opportunities
3.9% Harassment based on your religion or assumed religion	3.1% Harassment based on sexual orientation
3.6% Harassment based on sexual orientation	2.5% Racial Harassment
2.9% Other reasons	1.9% Harassment about where you're from
	0.6% Harassment based on religion/assumed religion



Have you experienced any microaggressions at UW–Madison?

	Students of Color	Color of Drinking (2015)
Yes	61.7%	62.0%
No	38.3%	38.0%

	Black/African American Student	Asian/Asian American	Latinx, Hispanic, Spanish	Middle Eastern/ North African	Biracial	Multiracial	Different Identity
Yes	79.1%	55.3%	63.5%	62.5%	52.3%	60.9%	38.4%
No	20.9%	44.7%	36.5%	37.5%	47.7%	39.1%	61.6%

Detail your experiences with microaggressions at this University in the box below. Examples can include, but are not limited to: alcohol-related experiences, classroom interactions, on/off campus living, etc.

Top Themes and Selected Quotes:

Harassment based on student's race, ethnicity, or assumed race and ethnicity

"Students who ask to touch my hair, students who touch/pull my hair without asking, probing questions about how my hair works and if it's real, constant comments at every small change in my hair, "your hair isn't cool/pretty anymore" after removing weave, casual use of racial slurs from friends and acquaintances, "you're very articulate", "you're pretty cool!" in comparison to other black people, "you all are so amazing" referring to groups of black women in stem, multiple people referring to me by the name of the other black woman in my dorm (who looks nothing like me), "it was tough for black women, but it was hard for ALL WOMEN back then," and more I'm sure aren't coming to mind."

Classroom interactions

"Professors mostly; one has commented on how articulate I am. Another professor accused me of plagiarism (when I didn't) because she didn't think I had the capabilities to write well."

"I sometimes find in my classrooms that people often chose to ignore me or turn to a different person when given time to discuss certain topics. I have to go out of my way to talk to others, but even then I can sense some individuals do not feel comfortable talking to me."

Stereotypes about race ethnicity or assumed race and ethnicity

"Always asked about where I'm from, get remarks and threats made at me because of being Mexican, had people make fun of me right in front of me because I'm Mexican, been asked if I'm an illegal immigrant or if anyone in my family is, have been told that I'm going to be deported."

Alcohol-related microaggressions

"I have been frequently confused with other south Asian students who do not look like me by intoxicated people. One time a very drunk white guy (college student) told me he rules Saudi Arabia (where I am not from) and used the n word. I've heard lots of white students use the n word. I've frequently heard people complain about their TA's accents. I've been harassed by presumable straight white men because I am queer."

"Touching my hair, describing how I smell (coconut oil smell=Pina colodas apparently to drunk people), making remarks about who I am with based on their race, judging my opinions on an issue due to my race, list goes on to be honest."

Harassment around language or assumed language spoken

"What kind of Asian are you," "do you speak English", classroom interactions (people asking me to represent my identity, microaggressions by instructors, racist readings), random microaggressions in public (people saying "chink" or assuming I don't speak English)"

Have you witnessed a microaggression during your time at UW-Madison?

Have you intervened in a situation where you witnessed a microaggression at UW-Madison?

	Students of Color		White Students	
	Witnessed	Intervened	Witnessed	Intervened
Yes and Unsure*	84.1%	50.0%	60.1%	45.0%
No	15.9%	50.0%	39.9%	55.0%

	Black/African American Student		Asian/Asian American		Latinx, Hispanic, Spanish	
	Witnessed	Intervened	Witnessed	Intervened	Witnessed	Intervened
Yes and Unsure*	91.2%	61.87%	79.1%	43.0%	86.2%	49.0%
No	8.8%	38.13%	20.9%	57.0%	13.8%	51.0%

Have you experienced the following?

	Students of Color	White Students
I have to find alternative study spaces because of the alcohol culture.	46.6%	43.7%
When assigned group work, group meetings are scheduled around the consumption of alcohol.	37.4%	41.8%
My professors or TAs discuss alcohol in the classroom.*	49.3%	57.0%

In the past year, because of your alcohol use have you experienced the following?

	Students of Color	White Students
I have been too hungover to attend class.*	17.9%	29.1%
I chose to drink instead of study.*	39.2%	47.9%
I received a poor final grade because I chose to drink instead of study.	12.4%	13.0%
I missed a class because of alcohol use.	16.1%	19.5%
I performed poorly on an assignment because of alcohol use.*	15.7%	25.3%

How would you characterize your and/or your family's financial status before coming to college?

	Students of Color	White Students
Struggle, not enough to get by*	5.7%	2.6%
Enough to get by, but not much left over*	37.8%	20.6%
Comfortable	42.1%	53.7%
Well to do	13.5%	22.1%
Other	0.9%	1.1%

Diener Flourishing Scale

Students were asked how much they agreed, on a scale of 1-7, with the following statements:

- I lead a purposeful life.
- My social relationships are supportive
- I am interested in my daily activities.
- I actively contribute to the wellbeing of others.
- I am competent in the activities that are important to me.
- I have a good life.
- I am optimistic about my future.
- People respect me.

Students with the highest possible score (56) on the Diener Scale:

	Students of Color	White Students
Abstainer	19.0%	4.5%
Nondrinker	27.2%	4.5%
Moderate Drinker	27.8%	15.9%
Heavy Episodic Drinker	15.6%	47.7%
Problematic Drinker	10.2%	27.3%
Nondrinker Rate	46.2%	9.0%
Low Risk Drinker	74.0%	24.9%
High Risk Drinker	25.8%	75.0%