

THE FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH ATTEMPTS TO DECREASE OR STOP
ALCOHOL AND/OR DRUG USE BY COLLEGE UNDERGRADUATES

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Alcohol, Drug, Undergraduates

Purpose: The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between self reported attempts to reduce alcohol and/or drug use and associated health behaviors among undergraduate students at a large public university. Alcohol and drug abuse contribute to poor academic performance, relationship difficulties, criminal activity, and untimely deaths.

Method: A random sample of 1700 undergraduate students 18-24 years of age at a major university in the southeastern United States was surveyed. A total of 903 usable questionnaires were returned for a response rate of 57.6%. The instrument, an adaptation of the Center of Disease Control and Prevention National College Health Risk Behavior Survey, requested information on attempts to reduce alcohol and/or drug use, negative consequences resulting from alcohol and drug use, and other health behaviors.

Findings: Based on self-report, 13.8%, approximately 2000 undergraduates, had tried to reduce or stop alcohol and/or drug use in the past year. Attempts to reduce substance use were significant in individuals who had drunk at least 5 drinks on one occasion within 30 days of the survey and in those who reported smoking marijuana in their lifetime. This sub group also reported erratic sleep patterns, regular tobacco use, and encounters of verbal pressure for sexual activities. Negative consequences associated with reduction attempts were memory loss, nausea and vomiting, thinking about the next drink, and prior unsuccessful attempts to stop, all of which are hallmarks of dependence. Doing poorly on a test and missing a class also correlated.

Discussion: These findings will be used to guide prevention strategies and to identify students who may benefit from early intervention strategies focusing on identified patterns and triggers of substance abuse. Ultimately, this will improve student retention, graduation rates, and future rates of dependence