

Alcohol, Sex and Statistics:

The Reality of an Actual Survey

Hamilton College

Taylor King, Rachel Shay, Sam Weisenthal, and
Kathryn Tooker

Introduction

- Background Information
 - Why was the survey conducted?
 - What did administrators hope to learn?
- Limitations to presentation
 - Confidentiality

Sampling Issues

- Voluntary Response
 - 1291 students responded out of 1772 students on campus (72.9%)
 - More females responded than males
- Juniors who were abroad were excluded from the survey

Inconsistency

Do you drink alcohol?

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Rarely
- ☐ Occasionally
- ☐ Often

During the past 30 days, how often did you drink alcohol?

- ☐ Never
- ☐ A few times
- ☐ Once a week
- ☐ A few times a week
- ☐ Every day
- ☐ More than once a day

- Although the questions are similar, the results are inconsistent

Inconsistency

During the current academic year, how many times have you experienced or engaged in the following due to your alcohol use?

	Never	1 to 2 times	3 to 5 times	6 to 9 times	10 to 15 times	16 to 20 times	More than 20 times	Not applicable (I don't drink)
Damaged property	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

- Experiencing and engaging in a behavior can be interpreted in two different ways

Nonresponse

- Not responding/completing the survey
- Skipping sensitive questions
 - Unwanted sexual experiences
 - Effects on academic performance
 - Hard drug use
 - Drinking behavior

Sensitive Questions

During the current academic year, how many times have you experienced or engaged in the following due to your alcohol use?

[illegible]

Illegal Behaviors

During the past 30 days, on how many OCCASIONS did you use the following substances?

	Never	A few times	Once a week	A few times a week	Every day	More than once a day
Tobacco	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Alcohol	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Marijuana	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ecstasy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Psychedelic drugs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cocaine/crack	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Heroin	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Prescription drugs prescribed to someone else	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My own prescription drugs, but a larger dose than recommended	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

The last time you drank at college, how did you obtain the alcohol? Please check all that apply.

- ☐ I got it from a student of legal age
- ☐ I purchased it myself and have a fake id or didn't get carded

Mismeasuring Quantity of Consumption

Throughout this survey, a drink is defined as a bottle of beer (12 ounces), 8 ounces of malt liquor, a glass of wine (5 ounces), a wine cooler (12 ounces), or a shot of liquor (1.5 ounces of 80 proof) served straight or in a mixed drink.

For the next two questions, think about the last two weeks at college.

What was the greatest number of drinks you consumed in one drinking period?

For how many hours
did you drink on this
occasion?

0 1 3 5 6 8 10 11 13 15 16 18 20 21 23 25 26 28 30

During the current academic year, when you partied or socialized, how often did you:

Keep track of how many drinks you were having

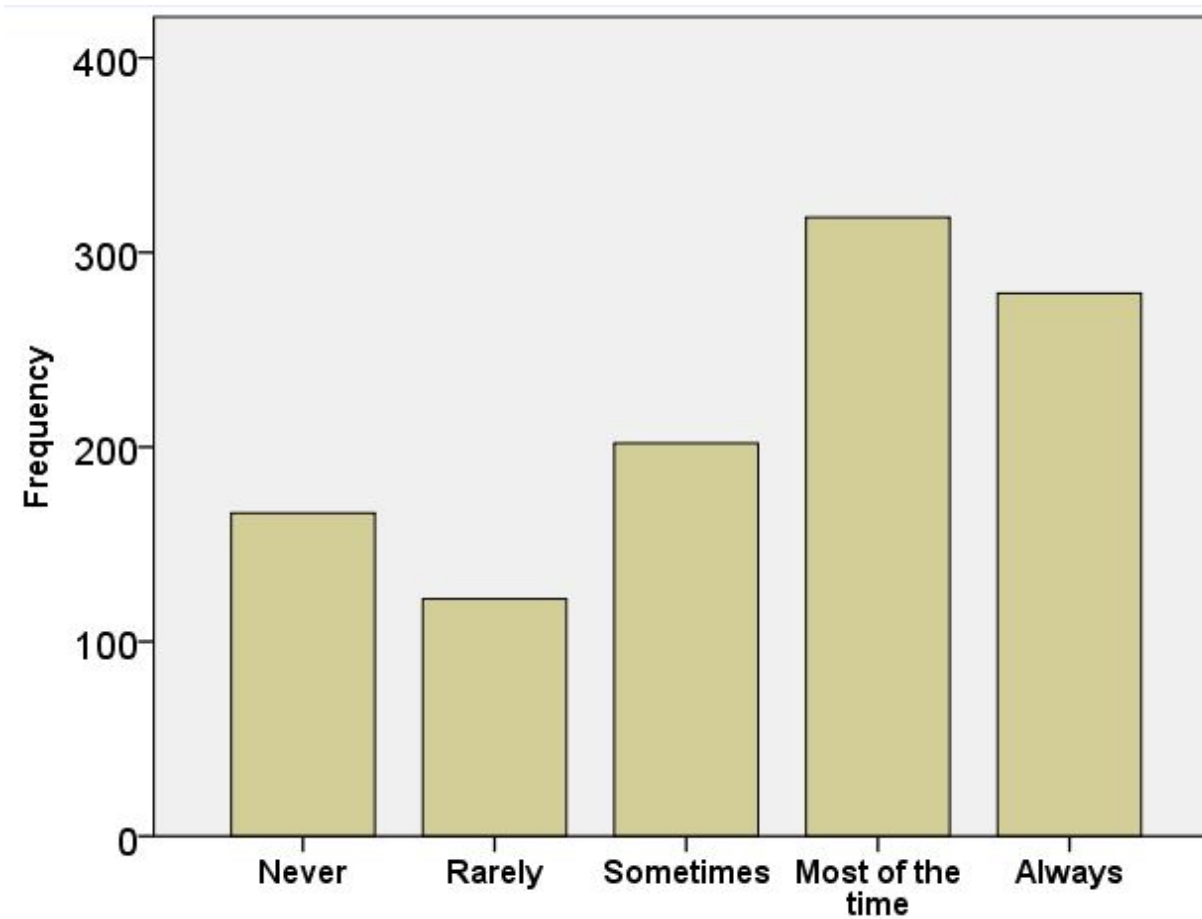
Never

Rarely

Sometimes

Most of the
time

Always



204 skipped (23, 182 ex)
N=1291 or 1109 (182 ex)

Suggestions for Improvement: Sampling Method

- Include juniors who were off campus in the sample
- 10% of the Hamilton's student population \approx 177 students
 - Too small to look at subgroups
- Consider the population to be all students who would respond to the survey over a certain period of time

Suggestions for Improvement: Question Choice

- Omit redundant questions in order to streamline survey and obtain more precise results

Omit:

Do you drink alcohol?

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Rarely
- ☐ Occasionally
- ☐ Often

Use:

During the past 30 days, how often did you drink alcohol?

- ☐ Never
- ☐ A few times
- ☐ Once a week
- ☐ A few times a week
- ☐ Every day
- ☐ More than once a day

**For athletes in season, the question would read “During a typical 30-day period when you are not in season...”

Suggestions for Improvement:

Question Choice

- Allow administrators to choose questions, personalizing the survey to address concerns at individuals institutions
- Potentially irrelevant questions provide inconclusive information and discourage respondents by adding unnecessary length to the survey

Suggestions for Improvement: Question Wording

During the current academic year, how many times have you experienced or engaged in the following due to your alcohol use?

	Never	1 to 2 times	3 to 5 times	6 to 9 times	10 to 15 times	16 to 20 times	More than 20 times	Not applicable (I don't drink)
Physically injured yourself	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Physically injured someone else	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Damaged property	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

- Ask separate questions for “experienced” and “engaged in” to better understand certain behaviors

Suggestions for Improvement: Question Wording

- Quantifying time
 - Provide more precise time measurements, such as times per week
 - Ask respondents to consider shorter spans of time, such as during the last week or two
 - The “current academic year” is a very long span of time to consider

Suggestions for Improvement: Question Wording

- Quantifying Alcohol Consumption
 - Ask a question about unmeasured mixed drinks
 - Provide a reasonable scale for number of drinks
 - Create ranges such as 1-3, 3-6, etc., with a maximum of 25 drinks
 - Addresses problems of dishonesty and exaggeration

What was the greatest number of drinks you consumed in one drinking period?

0 1 3 5 6 8 10 11 13 15 16 18 20 21 23 25 26 28 30

Limitations

- Sampling
 - Nonresponse bias is inevitable
- Sensitivity of Content
 - It is difficult to trust responses to questions about alcohol consumption, drug uses, and unwanted sexual experiences
 - In particular, this survey demonstrates the true difficulty of obtaining an accurate depiction of alcohol use and other harmful behaviors on college campuses