

WWU LIFESTYLES PROJECT III:
PATTERNS OF ALCOHOL AND DRUG
CONSUMPTION AND CONSEQUENCES AMONG
WESTERN WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

(Report 1999-01)

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February, 1999

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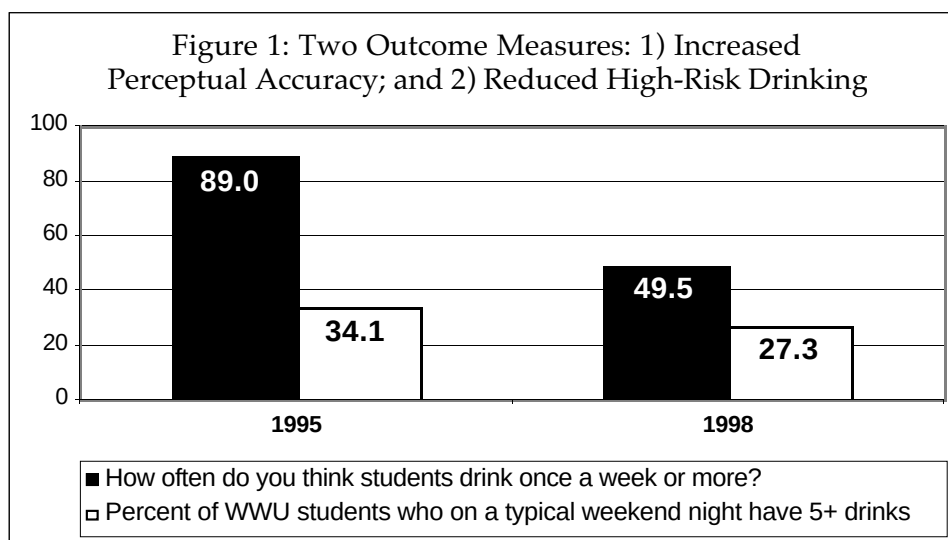
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In response to both internal and national findings and concerns, the first Western Washington University Lifestyles Project Survey of alcohol and drug usage among Western students was conducted in 1992 as part of the University's on-going effort (a) to investigate students' college experience both *in and out* of the classroom; (b) to enhance those experiences which lead to personal and academic success; and (c) to reduce risk factors jeopardizing student success. The 1995 and 1998 Lifestyles Project Surveys have had the same goals as their predecessor, with the additional benefit of providing longitudinal findings. All three surveys were administered to random samples of students across all years in school (freshmen through senior). Demographically, the 1998 survey cohort of 638 respondents mirrored the overall population of 1998 Western students by ethnicity and age, though was overrepresented by males. (For the survey males made up 51.2% and females 48.9%, while the fall, 1997, student body was 44.0% males and 56.0% females). This discrepancy did not bother researchers, as past surveys have indicated that males drink more than females and any positive trends indicated by the findings would be that much more impressive with a nearly equal gender balance.

As presented in Figure 1, the two most important findings from the 1998 Lifestyles Survey were that **A.** the percentage decrease in students who thought other students drank once a week or more was 44.4%, indicating that students' awareness of the drinking patterns of other students *increased* (since the 1998 figure was closer to the actual percent of students who reported drinking once a week or more); and **B.** the percentage decrease in students reporting binge drinking (5 drinks or more) on typical occasions was 20.6%, indicating that students drank less. (See Figure 1.)



Findings from the 1998 Lifestyles Survey indicated that students' perceptions improved and their awareness heightened since the 1995 survey. And while this is a positive finding, other findings point out that students still overestimate (sometimes grossly) the frequency and amount that other students drink. The tendency for students is to assume that others drink more than they do, while the reality is that most students drink modestly, both in frequency and amount. This "perception gap" was found to apply to both alcohol and marijuana use.

Other findings underscore the fact that the heaviest drinkers in the student body are underaged males, nearly two-thirds of whom on peak occasions reported drinking to the point of potential alcohol poisoning, and on typical occasions reported drinking to the point of alcohol poisoning at percentages approaching four-times that of Western students overall. Though not to downplay the potential of alcohol abuse among all ages and genders, wherever heavy drinking is occurring there is at least the potential for alcohol abuse and related negative consequences, not the least of which would include diminished academics, and among young males the drinking is the heaviest. (Alcohol use issues had some variation across student subcohorts, which will be highlighted in the main body of the report.)

Regarding drugs other than alcohol, about a third of Western students indicated they had used marijuana, if only less than once a month. About 16% of Western students indicated they used marijuana 1-3 times a month or more. Few Western students used cocaine (less than 2%) or LSD (less than 2% had used it more often than less than once a month). About 40% indicated they used tobacco—with about 13% of those indicating they used it less than once a month.

Approximately 11% of Western students indicated they had had unwanted sex because alcohol or drugs had influenced their better judgement. Less than 5% indicated they had had unwanted sex because they had been coerced into it while high or drunk. Less than 4% indicated they had been forced into unwanted sex through the threat of physical force.

INTRODUCTION

The April 14, 1995, edition of the Chronicle of Higher Education included a pullout section entitled, "Too Many Colleges Are Still in Denial About Alcohol Abuse." The article pointed out that while some statistics indicated that Americans are generally drinking less, there was also no shortage of evidence indicating that alcohol abuse continues unabated on college campuses. No less than three recent national surveys found that about forty percent of college students binge drink.¹ More recently, the November 6, 1998, edition of the Chronicle included a front page article entitled "When Students Die from Alcohol, Who Is to Blame?" In one instance where a student died from alcohol poisoning, the parents included the college their son was attending in its wrongful death lawsuit; their point being that the school was not doing enough to protect students from the dangers of excess alcohol consumption.

The school in question insisted that it cannot be held legally responsible in this case, but the point was made: the drinking antics of college students are being viewed less as youthful highjinks and more as potentially dangerous behaviors that need to be addressed. Soon, with litigation introduced into the equation, it won't be enough for schools to have anti-alcohol and drug policies, but rather proactive programs intended to reduce the risk of alcohol and drug abuse among their student bodies.

Though the alcohol-related deaths highlighted in the Chronicle article all happened at schools east of the Mississippi, Western enjoys no local immunity from the potential serious problems alcohol and drug abuse engender. Previous figures for binge drinking at Western followed a similar pattern to those found nationally. Moreover, internal studies have suggested that heavy alcohol consumption and its consequences constitute a potential hazard to student success. From reports examining the experiences of students who left Western between 1986 and 1990, findings indicated that among students who did not persist to graduation, 40.8% reported that they had experienced the problem of "drinking and using drugs more than they wanted to."² The corresponding percentage of graduates endorsing this item was 13.6%. These findings from a large institutional survey—although neither conclusive nor causal—suggested that at Western non-persisters are three times more likely than persisters to have unresolved issues regarding alcohol and drug use.³

In response to both internal and national findings and concerns, the first Lifestyles Project Survey of alcohol and drug usage was conducted in 1992 as part of Western's on-going effort (a) to investigate students' experience both in and out of the classroom; (b) to enhance those experiences which lead to personal and academic success; and (c) to reduce risk factors jeopardizing student success. In that report, researchers concluded that three patterns of alcohol use existed among Western students: 1) a sizable number reported no-to-low drinking patterns, with nearly a quarter reporting not drinking at all; 2) among drinkers only, about a third reported typical drinking patterns best described as moderate; and 3) also among drinkers only, patterns emerged that would be considered heavy drinking, with nearly a third of drinkers indicating they binged on typical occasions, and nearly two-thirds indicating they binged on peak occasions.⁴

Findings from 1992 indicated, for the most part, that alcohol use at Western was relatively wide spread and potentially damaging to certain populations of students, including: (a) the substantial numbers of students reporting typical and peak incidence of binge drinking; (b) males reporting drinking to the point of potential alcohol poisoning; (c) women trying to keep pace with their male drinking companions despite reaching higher blood alcohol levels quicker; and (d) respondents whose perceived level of personal risk for negative academic outcomes was two to three times lower than the actual occurrence of these negative academically-related consequences.

In spite of some encouraging trends, drinking patterns changed only slightly between the 1992 and 1995 Lifestyles Surveys. Though students in 1995 did not report drinking any less frequently, they did appear to be drinking in lesser quantities. For instance, the percentage of students who drank seven or more drinks on typical occasions fell 1.7% (from 16.3% in

1992 to 14.6% in 1995), while the percentage of students who drank seven or more drinks on peak occasions fell 6.8% (from 40.6% in 1992 to 33.8% in 1995). Furthermore, the percentage of students who drank five or more drinks on peak occasions fell 2.7%. Meanwhile, the percentage of students who had five or more drinks on typical occasions remained nearly the same (33.8% in 1992 vs. 34.1% in 1995).

Findings from 1998, however, tell a somewhat different story. Six years after the first Lifestyles Survey, hard work and new policies appear to have had some effect on the drinking patterns and attitudes of Western students. Students appear to be drinking less alcohol, especially at the high risk levels. For example, the percentage of students who indicated they drank five drinks or more on a typical weekend night fell from 34.1% in 1995 to 27.3% in 1998.

Furthermore, students appear to have an increased, and more accurate, awareness of the drinking habits of their peers. For example, in 1995 the actual percentage of students who indicated they drank once a week or more was 31.2%, while the percentage of survey respondents who thought other students drank once a week or more was 89.0%. In other words, Western students in 1995 had no clue as to the drinking habits of other students, grossly overestimating how often other students drank. In 1998, the actual percentage of students who indicated they drank once a week or more was 32.7%, while the percentage of survey respondents who thought other students drank once a week or more was 49.5%. Western students in 1998 still overestimated how often other students drank, but were not nearly as far off the mark as they had been in 1995.

This increased awareness is particularly critical to Western's alcohol and drug abuse programs, administered by the Prevention and Wellness Center (PWC). Since 1992, the PWC had campaigned vigorously against the misconstrued drinking patterns of the "imaginary peer." As will be expanded on later in this report, the "imaginary peer" concept is that students do not really know how often or how much other students drink, but extrapolate those patterns from what they witness among their immediate circle of friends, or what they hear anecdotally "around campus." Invariably, as will be seen, they grossly overestimate how often and how much others drinks, and too often feel they must "keep up" in order to conform.

Western's alcohol and drug abuse prevention programs focus on debunking those myths through hard data. Survey findings from previous Lifestyles Surveys point out that the actual drinking patterns among Western students are not at all what students assume them to be. There is much less drinking than many students believe, and these hard facts can be used effectively in convincing moderate to low drinkers that they actually represent the majority, not the minority, attitude.

As has its predecessors, the 1998 Lifestyles Survey will provide invaluable information in Western's continuing proactive alcohol and drug abuse prevention efforts. It will continue to focus discussions about and programs aimed at reducing the amount of alcohol abuse at Western.⁵

DEMOGRAPHICS

As in previous years, the 1998 Lifestyles Surveys utilized a random sample of Western students of all years in school (first year through fourth year). In the spring, 1998, the initial sample of 2500 students was mailed the Lifestyles questionnaire, along with a cover letter and a description of the incentives (a drawing for bookstore gifts). Four weeks later a follow-up survey and letter was mailed to those who had yet to respond. Eventually, 1127 returns were collected. Since significant differences in demographic characteristics existed between the sample and the characteristics of the overall student body population (e.g., ethnicity and age), some of the data was randomly eliminated. To ensure the sample remained unbiased and representative, the discarded data was tested on 35 variables against the retained data. No significant differences were found. With a proportion of 51.2% males and 48.9% females, males were overrepresented (the fall, 1997, student body was 44.0% males and 56.0% females). This discrepancy did not bother researchers, as past surveys have indicated that males drink more than females and any positive trends indicated by the findings would be that much more impressive with a nearly equal gender balance. The final cohort consisted of 638 participants.

As with previous Lifestyles Survey Reports, 1998's presented analyses by gender and year in school (first year, second year, etc.). Also, to reflect Washington State drinking laws, two age categories were utilized for analyses: underage students (less than 21) and legal-aged students (21 and over). The 1998 report also introduced analyses by housing type—off-campus and on-campus, with on-campus also containing breakouts by substance-free housing and other—and a limited analysis by extracurricular activity, including participation in club sports, intercollegiate athletics, and volunteerism. As in previous reports, no inter-ethnic comparisons were made. Even though the ethnic ratios of the survey reflect the overall student body ratios accurately, there were too many Euro-Americans and too few ethnic minorities for any relevant data analysis. (See Table 1.)

Table 1: Lifestyles Survey Demographics
(1992/1995/1998 compared)

Item	WWU: 1997	1992 Survey	1995 Survey	1998 Survey
Gender				
Female	56.0	64.4	57.2	48.9
Male	44.0	35.6	42.8	51.2
Ethnicity				
African-American	1.7	1.5	1.0	1.4
Asian-American	6.9	9.2	7.4	6.9
Euro-American	78.2	84.1	85.2	77.3
Hispanic-American	2.7	2.1	2.5	2.7
American Indian	2.0	1.6	1.8	2.2
Age				
20 or less	-	44.2	43.1	40.8
21 or over	-	55.8	56.6	59.2
Housing*				
Off-campus	66.7	-	-	61.8
On-campus:	33.3	-	-	37.3
<i>Substance-free</i>	20.0	6.0	14.0	20.0
<i>Other</i>	80.0	94.0	86.0	80.0

*Western overall figures estimated

FINDINGS FROM THE 1998 LIFESTYLES SURVEY

REASONS FOR DRINKING

From a list of ten items, respondents were asked to indicate which were a major, minor, or not a reason why they chose to drink. The top three items listed as “major reasons” for drinking were: to get drunk or high (29.4%), to relax (25.8%), and to feel at ease socially (19.5%). Interestingly, a considerable number of students also indicated that getting drunk or high was *not* a reason they drank (42.1%). Yet many students listed to relax (47.5%) or to feel at ease (45.4%) as a “minor reason” they drank. In other words, while drinking to get drunk appeared a specific reason for some students to drink, most students drank to relax or feel at ease socially. (Table 2.)

Table 2: Reasons for Drinking/Getting High
(1998 Only)

Item	Major reason	Minor reason	Not a reason
To get drunk or high	29.4	28.5	42.1
To relax	25.8	47.5	26.6
To feel at ease socially	19.5	45.4	35.1
To relieve boredom	6.4	27.7	65.9
To overcome feelings of depression/anxiety	4.5	20.9	74.5
To sleep	2.9	12.9	84.2
To feel a sense of well-being	2.5	16.6	80.9
Because of peer pressure	1.8	14.2	84.0
To influence sexual behavior	1.6	12.3	86.1
To relieve physical pain	0.4	10.5	89.1

ALCOHOL USE: FREQUENCY OF CONSUMPTION

Frequency: General Findings

Overall, the percentage of 1998 Lifestyles Survey respondents indicating they drank at least once in the past month remained similar to previous survey administrations (77.7% in 1998, compared to 78.5% in 1995 and 76.6% in 1992). The percentage of respondents indicating they drank once a month decreased from previous surveys (12.5% in 1998, compared to 17.8% in 1995 and 16.8% in 1992). The percentage of respondents indicating they drank 2-3 times a month has remained nearly unchanged over all three survey administrations (29.4% in 1998, compared to 29.4% in 1995 and 29.0% in 1992). The percentage of respondents indicating they drank 1-2 times a week increased marginally (24.7% in 1998, compared to 23.1% in 1995 and 22.3% in 1992). The percentage of respondents indicating they drank 3-4 times a week increased slightly (9.1% in 1998, compared to 5.9% in 1995 and 6.3% in 1992). The percentage of respondents indicating they drank more often than 3-4 times a week decreased marginally (1.9% in 1998, compared to 2.2% in 1995 and 2.2% in 1992).

To sum the findings, students reported drinking slightly more often than they did in previous survey years. Slightly fewer drank once a month; slightly more drank 3-4 times a week. Other frequency indicators remained, for practical purposes, unchanged. (See Table 3.)

Table 3: "How often in the last month did you drink alcohol?"
Frequency of Alcohol Consumption
(1992/1995/1998 compared)

Item	Overall		
	'92	'95	'98
not at all	23.4	21.5	22.3
once a month	16.8	17.8	12.5
2-3 times a month	29.0	29.4	29.4
1-2 times a week	22.3	23.1	24.7
3-4 times a week	6.3	5.9	9.1
more often	2.2	2.2	1.9

Findings taken from a national report of alcohol and drug use ("Alcohol and Drugs on American College Campuses, Volume IV: 1992-94") allowed some degree of local/national comparison of drinking frequency, even though the surveys' categories do not match exactly. The Core Alcohol and Drug Survey was developed specifically for use in institutions of higher education under a federal grant from the Department of Education's Fund for the Improvement of Post-Secondary Education (FIPSE). The most recent Core findings were taken from the 1992-94 grant cycle. Of the 130 FIPSE-funded institutions using the Core, 89 "met the criteria for both randomness and representativeness. Data on 45,632 students from these 89 institutions form(ed) the basis for most of the analysis in (the) report."⁶

Compared to Core findings, Western students were somewhat more likely to report they did not drink at all (Core = 16.4%; Western = 22.3%). Unfortunately, the Core included the category "1-6 times a year," of which many (21.2%) respondents belonged, leaving a gap in the analysis. Western students were, however, more likely to report they drank once a month (Core = 7.8%; Western = 12.5%). On the other hand, Western students were more likely to report they drank 2-3 times a month (Core = 14.1% twice a month; Western = 29.4% 2-3 times a month) or 1-2 times a week (Core = 20.9% once a week; Western = 24.7% 1-2 times a week). Yet Western students were also less likely to report drinking 3-4 times a week (Core = 15.3% three times a week; Western = 9.1% 3-4 times a week) or drank "more often" (Core = 4.4%; Western = 1.9%).

To sum the findings, compared to results from the Core survey of students nationally, Western students drank more frequently at the middle frequency ranges of 2-3 times a month to 1-2 times a week, but less at the upper ranges of 3-4 times a week or more often. Conversely, Western students were more likely to report no drinking at all or drinking once a month, though in the percentage of Core respondents in the category 1-6 times a year was substantial. (See Table 4.)

Table 4: Drinking Frequency Comparison, Results from National Core Survey vs. WWU Lifestyles Survey (1994 Core vs. 1992/1995/1998 Lifestyles)

USA	WWU	1994 USA	1992 WWU	1995 WWU	1998 WWU
never	not at all	16.4	23.4	21.5	22.3
1-6 times a year		21.2	-	-	-
once a month	once a month	7.8	16.8	17.8	12.5
twice a month	2-3 times a month	14.1	29.0	29.4	29.4
once a week	1-2 times a week	20.9	22.3	23.1	24.7
3 times a week	3-4 times a week	15.3	6.3	5.9	9.1
"more often"	"more often"	4.4	2.2	2.2	1.9

Frequency: Year in School

Analysis of drinking frequency by year in school reveals, among other items, that first-year students report drinking more often than in previous survey years. The percentage of first-year students reporting they drank "not at all" decreased (from 41.1% in 1992 to 31.0% in 1995 to 25.5% in 1998), as did the percentage reporting they drank once a month (from 26.0% in 1995 to 15.9% in 1998). Conversely, the percentage of first-year students reporting they drank 1-2 times a week increased (from 11.0% in 1995 to 26.4% in 1998), as did the percentage reporting they drank 3-4 times a week (from 3.0% in 1995 to 5.0% in 1998).

Second-year students, too, reporting drinking more often than in previous years. The percentage of second-year students reporting they drank once a month decreased (from 17.6% in 1992 to 13.5% in 1995 to 11.1% in 1998), while the percentage reporting they drank 3-4 times a week increased (from 5.5% in 1992 to 6.8% in 1995 to 11.8% in 1998).

Similar but subtly different patterns were revealed for third- and fourth-year students. For instance, though third- and fourth-year students reporting drinking more often overall, unlike first- and second-year students, the percentage of non-drinkers among third- and fourth-year students remained relatively constant. To sum the findings, across all years in school, Lifestyles Survey respondents reported drinking with more frequency. This was especially true among first- and second-year students. (See Table 5.)

Table 5: "How often in the last month did you drink alcohol?"
Frequency of Alcohol Consumption by Year in School
(1992/1995/1998 compared)

Item	1st Year			2nd Year			3rd Year			4th Year		
	'92	'95	'98	'92	'95	'98	'92	'95	'98	'92	'95	'98
not at all	41.1	31.0	25.5	25.7	29.7	25.0	24.0	22.5	21.6	15.7	14.2	15.6
once a month	15.5	26.0	15.9	17.6	13.5	11.1	17.8	15.8	12.1	15.4	17.5	6.9
2-3 times a month	24.6	29.0	25.9	28.0	25.7	27.1	27.3	28.3	33.2	33.7	28.3	36.7
1-2 times a week	15.2	11.0	26.4	22.0	24.3	22.2	21.8	26.7	25.6	22.3	28.3	22.9
3-4 times a week	2.6	3.0	5.0	5.5	6.8	11.8	6.9	2.5	7.5	7.8	7.5	14.9
more often	1.0	0.0	1.3	1.2	0.0	2.8	2.2	4.1	0.0	5.1	4.2	3.0

Frequency: Gender

Analysis of drinking frequency by gender sharply contrasts male and female trends. While the percentage of males and females reporting they did not drink at all changed little from previous years (males = 22.7% in 1998 vs. 22.9% in 1995; females = 22.1% in 1998 vs. 19.6% in 1995), other categories did indeed change, though mostly for males. For example, the percentage of males reporting they drank once a month decreased (from 14.9% in 1995 to 5.1% in 1998), while the percentages of males reporting they drank 2-3 times a month, 1-2 times a week, and 3-4 times a week all increased (2-3 times a month, from 23.9% in 1995 to 27.5% in 1998; 1-2 times a week, from 25.4% to 30.0%, and 3-4 times a week, from 9.5% to 11.6%).

For females, findings were quite different. The only category in which changes were more than marginal was for 3-4 times a week, with an increase from 3.6% in 1995 to 6.2% in 1998. To sum the findings, with regard to drinking frequency, male drinking patterns had a far stronger effect on the overall outcomes than did female drinking patterns, which remained amazingly consistent with previous survey administration findings. (See table 6.)

Table 6: "How often in the last month did you drink alcohol?"
Frequency of Alcohol Consumption by Gender
(1992/1995/1998 compared)

Item	Overall			Male			Female		
	'92	'95	'98	'92	'95	'98	'92	'95	'98
not at all	23.4	21.5	22.3	22.7	22.9	22.7	24.0	19.6	22.1
once a month	16.8	17.8	12.5	11.6	14.9	5.1	20.9	19.6	19.7
2-3 times a month	29.0	29.4	29.4	26.4	23.9	27.5	31.2	33.9	29.8
1-2 times a week	22.3	23.1	24.7	24.3	25.4	30.0	20.6	21.8	20.7
3-4 times a week	6.3	5.9	9.1	11.1	9.5	11.6	2.6	3.6	6.2
more often	2.2	2.2	1.9	3.9	3.5	3.1	0.8	1.4	1.5

Yet simply because the frequency at which females report drinking has remained stable does not imply that females are less at risk than males, who appear to be drinking slightly more often. Certain national findings indicated that the thirty-day prevalence of alcohol use (any drink within the past thirty days) by full-time college females was 72.4%, while for non-college females was 58.6%.⁷ Among similar cohorts of males no such disparity was found. Full-time college females were also slightly more likely than non-college females to report thirty-day prevalence of daily use of alcohol, with 2.5% of college females and 1.9% of non-college females reporting daily use over the past thirty days. Although neither figure implies that females in college are more at risk for alcohol problems than females who are not in college, it does stand to reason that there is at least the potential for more alcohol-related problems among college-bound females.

Moreover, due to biological differences the relative risk to females may be equal to, if not greater than that of males. The natural differences in fat distribution and hormonal levels, as well as the effects of birth control pills, contribute to the potential for females to reach higher blood alcohol levels than men—all other factors being equal (weight, number of

drinks, rate of consumption). This finding paints an especially risky situation for females if they try to match the drinking rates of their male companions.

Frequency: Legal and Under-aged

Similar to analysis by gender, analysis of drinking frequency by under-aged and legal-aged categories also produced rather distinct differences. Under-aged survey respondents were more likely to report never drinking (under-aged = 27.8% vs. legal-aged = 18.7%), as well as more likely to report drinking only once a month (under-aged = 15.3% vs. legal-aged = 10.0%). Conversely, legal-aged survey respondents were more likely to report drinking 1-2 times a week (legal-aged = 29.8% vs. under-aged = 19.3%) and 3-4 times a week (legal-aged = 10.3% vs. under-aged = 7.0%).

Comparing all three survey years, there was a decrease in the percentage of under-aged students reporting they never drank (from 31.3% in 1995 to 27.8% in 1998), but an increase among legal-aged students reporting they never drank (from 13.7% in 1995 to 18.7% in 1998). For both age categories, the percentage of under-aged students reporting they drank once a month decreased (from 20.4% to 15.3% for under-aged, and from 15.9% to 10.0% for legal-aged). For under-aged students, the percentage reporting they drank 1-2 times a week, 3-4 times a week, and more often all increased, while for legal-aged students there were increases only for reporting they drank 3-4 times a week—other percentages decreased or remained stable.

To sum the findings, under-aged students appear to be drinking more often than they have in previous survey years. Fewer reported never drinking or drinking only once a month, while more reporting drinking 1-2 times a week, 3-4 times a week, and more often. Patterns for legal-aged students were a mixed bag: more reported never drinking, but more also reported drinking 3-4 times a week; fewer reported drinking once a month, but fewer also reported drinking more often than 3-4 times a week. Meanwhile, the middle ground percentages for legal-aged students (2-3 times a month and 1-2 times a week) remained stable. (See Table 7.)

Table 7: "How often in the last month did you drink alcohol?"
Frequency of Alcohol Consumption by Age Category
(1992/1995/1998 compared)

Item	Overall			20 or less			21 or over		
	'92	'95	'98	'92	'95	'98	'92	'95	'98
not at all	23.4	21.5	22.3	32.6	31.3	27.8	17.0	13.7	18.7
once a month	16.8	17.8	12.5	16.8	20.4	15.3	16.9	15.9	10.0
2-3 times a month	29.0	29.4	29.4	27.2	28.0	28.0	29.8	30.7	29.2
1-2 times a week	22.3	23.1	24.7	17.7	15.6	19.3	25.4	28.9	29.8
3-4 times a week	6.3	5.9	9.1	5.2	4.7	7.0	7.3	6.9	10.3
more often	2.2	2.2	1.9	0.5	0.0	2.6	3.6	4.0	2.0

Interestingly, findings for legal/illegal drinking age were very different at Western than they were in the national Core survey. National trends indicated that legal versus illegal drinking age had little, if any, bearing whatsoever on how frequently a student drank. Percentages for all rates of drinking frequency were nearly identical, regardless of whether a student was of drinking age or not, while such was not the case for Western survey respondents. (See Table 8.)

Table 8: Drinking Frequency Comparison, Results from National Core Survey vs. WWU Lifestyles Survey by Legal and Underage Students (1994 Core vs. 1998 Lifestyles)

USA	WWU	USA <21	USA 21+	WWU <21	WWU 21+
never	not at all	17.4	14.6	27.8	18.7
1-6 times a year		22.4	19.8	-	-
once a month	once a month	7.8	7.8	15.3	10.0
twice a month	2-3 times a month	14.2	13.9	28.0	29.2
once a week	1-2 times a week	20.3	21.8	19.3	29.8
3 times a week	3-4 times a week	14.6	16.5	7.0	10.3
"more often"	"more often"	3.3	5.6	2.6	2.0

Frequency: Housing Type

The 1998 Lifestyles Survey included information on housing types, including residence halls, substance-free residence halls, and off campus. As one might expect, survey respondents least likely to report drinking resided in substance-free residence halls. Nearly half of respondents (49.2%) living in substance-free halls reported not drinking at all. Survey respondents living off campus reported the highest frequency of drinking (30.2% drank 1-2 times a week). Frequency trend for respondents living in regular residence halls generally reflected overall frequency trends.

The finding of most interest might be that not all substance-free hall residents were teetotalers. Nearly a quarter (24.4%) of those living in substance-free halls reported drinking 2-3 times a month. However, very few such residents drank more frequently than that (1-2 times a week = 3.8%; 3-4 times a month = 1.9%; and more often = 1.9%). (See Table 9)

Table 9: "How often in the last month did you drink alcohol?"
Frequency of Alcohol Consumption by Housing Type
(1998 only)

Item	Overall			Residence Hall			Substance-free Hall			Off Campus		
	'92	'95	'98	'92	'95	'98	'92	'95	'98	'92	'95	'98
not at all	23.4	21.5	22.3	-	-	21.3	-	-	49.2	-	-	18.6
once a month	16.8	17.8	12.5	-	-	17.9	-	-	18.8	-	-	8.9
2-3 times a month	29.0	29.4	29.4	-	-	30.4	-	-	24.4	-	-	28.5
1-2 times a week	22.3	23.1	24.7	-	-	22.5	-	-	3.8	-	-	30.2
3-4 times a week	6.3	5.9	9.1	-	-	5.2	-	-	1.9	-	-	11.6
more often	2.2	2.2	1.9	-	-	2.7	-	-	1.9	-	-	2.2

Frequency: Activity Involvement

The 1998 Lifestyles Survey also included information on various student activities, including volunteer service, intercollegiate athletics, and club sports. Respondents participating in any one of these three activities were less likely than respondents overall to report they did not drink (overall = 22.3%; volunteers = 15.2%; intercollegiate athletes = 19.4%; and club sports = 18.6%). Respondents who volunteered were the most likely to report drinking 2-3 times a month (volunteers = 34.8% vs. intercollegiate athletes = 26.8%, and club sports = 28.5%). Respondents who played club sports were the most likely to report drinking 1-2 times a week (club sports = 30.2% vs. intercollegiate athletes = 23.5%, and volunteers = 25.0%). (See Table 10.)

Table 10: "How often in the last month did you drink alcohol?"
Frequency of Alcohol Consumption by Activity Involvement
(1998 only)

Item	Overall			Volunteer Service			Intercollegiate Athletics			Club Sports		
	'92	'95	'98	'92	'95	'98	'92	'95	'98	'92	'95	'98
not at all	23.4	21.5	22.3	-	-	15.2	-	-	19.4	-	-	18.6
once a month	16.8	17.8	12.5	-	-	9.8	-	-	13.5	-	-	8.9
2-3 times a month	29.0	29.4	29.4	-	-	34.8	-	-	26.8	-	-	28.5
1-2 times a week	22.3	23.1	24.7	-	-	25.0	-	-	23.5	-	-	30.2
3-4 times a week	6.3	5.9	9.1	-	-	12.6	-	-	13.5	-	-	11.6
more often	2.2	2.2	1.9	-	-	2.8	-	-	3.4	-	-	2.2

ALCOHOL USE: QUANTITIES OF ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION DEFINED

The Lifestyles Survey discusses four measures of quantity of alcohol consumption: typical drinking, peak drinking, binge drinking, and drinking to the point of alcohol poisoning.⁸ A **typical** quantity of alcohol is defined as the amount a student would drink on any given Friday or Saturday night during the month. This measure has been used in a number of research studies and is considered a valid indication of the amount of alcohol students generally drink. A **peak** quantity of alcohol, on the other hand, is defined as the "most" a student has consumed in the past month. This measure yields an indication of the high range amounts of alcohol students consume. Together, the two measures of quantity of consumption—typical and peak—produce a comprehensive profile of the amount of alcohol students drink.

Another measure of consumption frequently cited in the literature is **binge drinking**, which is operationally defined as the consumption of five or more drinks in one sitting.⁹ Binge drinking is of particular concern to colleges and universities because it is frequently associated with residence hall damage, sexual assault, poor academic performance, and missed classes.¹⁰ Although drinking to the point of life-threatening alcohol poisoning differs among individuals based on height, weight, speed of consumption, drinking history, gender, etc., for the purpose of this study the threshold for **alcohol poisoning** will be considered drinking 7-8 drinks at one sitting. Taking into account all the individual variables, drinking 7-8 drinks at one sitting generally will produce an average blood alcohol level of

0.15%-0.20%. Blood alcohol levels in that range begin to put the individual at risk for alcohol poisoning.

For the remaining analyses of **typical quantity** drinking, only those survey respondents who reported *some* frequency of drinking were considered. In other words, approximately one-fifth of the sample, those who reported they did not drink at all, were removed from the analysis. This was done so that the trends of *drinkers* could be assessed, since drinkers are the population that put themselves at potential risk of alcohol-related problems.

ALCOHOL USE: TYPICAL QUANTITY

Typical: General Findings

For those respondents who drank, patterns for typical alcohol consumption changed remarkably between 1998 and previous survey years. The percentage of students reporting they typically had 1-2 drinks increased from 33.8% in 1995 to 49.2% in 1998. Conversely, the percentage reporting they typically had 3-4 drinks decreased from 32.1% to 23.5%, and 5 drinks or more from 34.1% to 27.3%. Unfortunately, this good news is tempered by the fact that the percentage of students reporting they drank to the point of alcohol poisoning decreased only marginally, from 14.6% in 1995 to 14.2% in 1998, though it has remained less than the 1992 figure of 16.3%. (See Table 11.)

Table 11: "On a given weekend night, how much alcohol do you typically consume?"
Typical Alcohol Consumption,
Overall (1992/1995/1998
compared, drinkers only)

Item	Overall		
	'92	'95	'98
1-2 drinks	38.2	33.8	49.2
3-4 drinks	28.0	32.1	23.5
5+ drinks	33.8	34.1	27.3
7+ drinks*	16.3	14.6	14.2

*Potential alcohol poisoning

Typical: Year in School

By year in school, third- and fourth-year students were the most likely to report having 1-2 drinks on typical occasions (third-year = 69.2%; fourth-year = 62.8%). Second-year students were the least likely to report having 1-2 drinks on typical occasions, though the percentage was up from previous surveys (1995 = 18.6%; 1998 = 32.4%). First-year students fell somewhere between, though the percentage was also up from previous surveys (1995 = 30.2%;

1998 = 42.4%). Similar patterns in typical drinking behavior were noted for 3-4 drinks and 5 drinks or more: less consumption across the board, particularly the percentages found for third- and fourth-year students.

Drinking to the point of potential alcohol poisoning was down among third- and fourth-year students, especially for third-year students (from 20.0% in 1992 to 13.8% in 1995 to 3.8% in 1998). Unfortunately, high risk drinking was up among first-year students (17.0% in 1998 compared to 13.2% in 1995). Among second-year students, high risk drinking remained highest, and relatively stable compared to previous survey findings (21.5% in 1992, 20.9% in 1995, 21.3% in 1998). (See Table 12.)

Table 12: "On a given weekend night, how much alcohol do you typically consume?"
Typical Alcohol Consumption by Year in School
(1992/1995/1998 compared, drinkers only)

Item	1st Year			2nd Year			3rd Year			4th Year		
	'92	'95	'98	'92	'95	'98	'92	'95	'98	'92	'95	'98
1-2 drinks	34.5	30.2	42.4	31.9	18.6	32.4	35.6	37.5	69.2	42.5	32.5	62.8
3-4 drinks	33.6	28.3	26.7	28.9	34.9	32.4	25.6	33.8	13.5	30.6	36.3	15.1
5+ drinks	31.8	41.5	30.9	39.3	46.5	35.2	38.9	28.8	17.3	26.9	31.3	22.1
7+ drinks*	14.5	13.2	17.0	21.5	20.9	21.3	20.0	13.8	3.8	11.4	13.8	10.5

*Potential alcohol poisoning

Typical: Gender

While both males and females consumed less alcohol on typical occasions in 1998, the percentage of males having only 1-2 drinks on typical occasions increased 18.3% (from 26.2% in 1995 to 44.5% in 1998), while for females increased 14.5% (from 39.7% to 54.2%). Similarly, the percentage of males having 5 drinks or more on typical occasions decreased 12.2% (from 48.5% in 1995 to 36.3% in 1998), while for females decreased only 5.6% (from 23.5% to 17.9%). Thus changes were seen in the drinking patterns of both genders, although males, who still drank more alcohol than females on typical occasions, have seen the most dramatic changes, including a steady decrease in the percentage reporting drinking to the point of potential alcohol poisoning (from 28.9% in 1992 to 20.9% in 1998). (See Table 13.)

Table 13: "On a given weekend night, how much alcohol do you typically consume?"
Typical Alcohol Consumption by Gender
(1992/1995/1998 compared, drinkers only)

Item	Overall			Males			Females		
	'92	'95	'98	'92	'95	'98	'92	'95	'98
1-2 drinks	38.2	33.8	49.2	33.1	26.2	44.5	41.2	39.7	54.2
3-4 drinks	28.0	32.1	23.5	20.6	25.4	19.2	32.5	36.9	27.8
5+ drinks	33.8	34.1	27.3	46.3	48.5	36.3	26.3	23.5	17.9
7+ drinks*	16.3	14.6	14.2	28.9	21.6	20.9	8.8	9.5	7.3

*Potential alcohol poisoning

Typical: Legal and Under-aged

While drinking on typical occasions overall saw marked improvements since 1995, the group affected least was under-aged students. While the percentage of under-aged students reporting having 1-2 drinks on typical occasions did increase, it was only 8.4%, compared to the 19.4% increase among legal-aged students. And while the percentage of under-aged students reporting having 5 or more drinks decreased, it was only 3.7%, compared to the 8.6% decrease among legal-aged students. Yet what was most alarming was the 5.8% increase in under-aged students reporting drinking to the point on potential alcohol poisoning on typical occasions, compared the 4.1% decrease among legal-aged students. (See Table 14.)

Table 14: "On a given weekend night,
how much alcohol do you typically consume?"
Typical Alcohol Consumption by Age Category
(1992/1995/1998 compared, drinkers only)

Item	Overall			20 or less			21 or over		
	'92	'95	'98	'92	'95	'98	'92	'95	'98
1-2 drinks	38.2	33.8	49.2	31.3	25.9	34.3	43.5	38.7	58.1
3-4 drinks	28.0	32.1	23.5	28.3	33.6	29.0	27.9	31.2	20.2
5+ drinks	33.8	34.1	27.3	40.4	40.5	36.8	28.6	30.2	21.6
7+ drinks*	16.3	14.6	14.2	21.2	17.2	23.0	13.1	13.1	9.0

*Potential alcohol poisoning

Typical: Housing Type

Figures for drinking by housing type must be tempered by the fact that only 27 respondents living in substance-free reported any drinking at all. This compares to 118 respondents living in regular residence halls and 298 living off campus. Nonetheless, by housing type, survey respondents living in substance-free halls reported the least amount of drinking on typical occasions, though the findings for students living off campus looked remarkably similar. For instance, the percentage of substance-free respondents reporting they had 1-2 drinks on typical occasions was 59.3%, compared to 52.3% for off campus respondents. These figures contrast to 39.0% for respondents living in regular residence halls.

Though respondents living off campus were somewhat more likely to have 5 or more drinks, or 7 or more drinks on typical occasions than were respondents living in substance-free halls, the overall figures between the groups were surprising similar. Respondents living off campus, while they might drink more frequently than respondents living in substance-free residence halls, on typical occasions do not drink much more. The idea that not all residents living in substance-free halls are teetotalers might surprise some, but it is being noted that students also choose to live in substance-free halls to cut down on noise and distraction, not simply because they don't drink or have a moral aversion to drinking. (See Table 15.)

Table 15: "On a given weekend night, how much alcohol do you typically consume?"
Typical Alcohol Consumption by Housing Type
(1998 only, drinkers only)

Item	Overall			Residence Hall			Substance-Free Hall			Off Campus		
	'92	'95	'98	'92	'95	'98	'92	'95	'98	'92	'95	'98
1-2 drinks	38.2	33.8	49.2	-	-	39.0	-	-	59.3	-	-	52.3
3-4 drinks	28.0	32.1	23.5	-	-	28.0	-	-	22.2	-	-	21.8
5+ drinks	33.8	34.1	27.3	-	-	33.0	-	-	18.5	-	-	25.8
7+ drinks*	16.3	14.6	14.2	-	-	22.0	-	-	7.4	-	-	11.7

*Potential alcohol poisoning

Typical: Activity Involvement

On typical occasions, respondents participating in club sports were most likely to report binge drinking (5 drinks or more = 33.9% for club sports, 26.1% for intercollegiate athletes, and 21.5% for volunteers). Conversely, respondents participating in volunteer services were the most likely to report having only 1-2 drinks on typical occasions (1-2 drinks = 56.9% for volunteers, 43.5% for intercollegiate athletes, and 37.1% for club sports). Respondents participating in club sports were also the most likely to report drinking to the point of potential alcohol poisoning (7 drinks or more = 19.4% for club sports, 17.4% for intercollegiate athletes, and 10.4% for volunteers). (See Table 16.)

Table 16: "On a given weekend night, how much alcohol do you typically consume?"
Typical Alcohol Consumption by Activity Involvement
(1998 only, drinkers only)

Item	Overall			Volunteer Service			Intercollegiate Athletics			Club Sports		
	'92	'95	'98	'92	'95	'98	'92	'95	'98	'92	'95	'98
1-2 drinks	38.2	33.8	49.2	-	-	56.9	-	-	43.5	-	-	37.1
3-4 drinks	28.0	32.1	23.5	-	-	21.5	-	-	30.4	-	-	29.0
5+ drinks	33.8	34.1	27.3	-	-	21.5	-	-	26.1	-	-	33.9
7+ drinks*	16.3	14.6	14.2	-	-	10.4	-	-	17.4	-	-	19.4

*Potential alcohol poisoning

ALCOHOL USE: PEAK QUANTITIES

For the remaining analyses of **peak quantity** drinking, only those survey respondents who reported *some* frequency of drinking were considered. In other words, approximately one-fifth of the sample, those who reported they did not drink at all, were removed from the analysis. This was done so that the trends of *drinkers* could be assessed, since drinkers are the population that put themselves at potential risk of alcohol-related problems.

Peak: General Findings

For those respondents who drank, patterns for peak alcohol consumption changed only slightly overall—quite different from patterns exhibited for patterns for typical alcohol consumption. Yet there was some change: the percentage of students reporting they had 3-4 drinks on peak occasions increased from 19.6% in 1992 to 20.5% in 1995 to 23.0% in 1998, while the percentage of students reporting they had 5 or more drinks on peak occasions decreased from 57.2% in 1992 to 55.8% in 1995 to 52.2% in 1998. Both categories have seen slow but steady positive change; students appear to be having fewer drinks on peak occasions. Unfortunately, the percentage of students reporting they had seven or more drinks on peak occasions remained virtually unchanged: 35.1% in 1995 compared to 35.3% in 1998. (See Table 17.)

Table 17: "Think of the occasion
you drank the most this month:
how much did you drink?"
Peak Alcohol Consumption,
Overall (1992/1995/1998
compared, drinkers only)

Item	Overall		
	'92	'95	'98
1-2 drinks	21.9	23.7	24.7
3-4 drinks	19.6	20.5	23.0
5+ drinks	57.2	55.8	52.2
7+ drinks*	40.6	35.1	35.3

*Potential alcohol poisoning

Peak: Year in School

By year in school, two peak occasion patterns emerged: third- and fourth-year students—and to a lesser degree, second-year students—reported drinking less on peak occasions, while first-year students reporting drinking somewhat more. The most dramatic change in peak occasion alcohol consumption was among third-year students, where the percentage reporting consuming 1-2 drinks on peak occasions increased from 21.5% in 1995 to 44.0% in 1998 (a change of +22.5%), while the percentage reporting consuming 5 or more drinks decreased from 53.7% in 1995 to 40.0% in 1998 (a change of -13.7%). Similar patterns were seen for fourth-year students, though the changes were less dramatic (an increase of +7.2% for 1-2 drinks and -10.5% for 5 or more drinks).

Among second-year students changes were also positive, though different from those for third- and fourth-year students. For instance, the percentage of second-year students reporting consuming 1-2 drinks on peak occasions decreased from 17.3% in 1995 to 15.5% in 1998. And while second-year students were the most likely to report consuming five or more drinks on peak occasions, that percentage decreased from 73.1% in 1995 to 63.1% in 1998. Conversely, the percentage of second-year students reporting consuming 3-4 drinks

on peak occasions increased from 9.6% to 21.9% in 1998. Thus second-year students, though still the hardest drinking group, appeared to have tempered their peak occasion excesses. Even the percentage of second-year students reporting consuming seven or more drinks decreased, from 51.9% in 1995 to 46.6% in 1998.

It was among first-year students where the findings did not indicate positive changes. Rather the percentage of first-year students reporting consuming 1-2 drinks on peak occasions decreased from 27.5% in 1995 to 20.6% in 1998, while the percentage reporting consuming 5 or more drinks increased from 50.8% in 1995 to 57.6% in 1998. Similarly, the percentage of first-year students reporting consuming seven or more drinks on peak occasions increased from 33.4% in 1995 to 38.8% in 1998. It may be that because they were first-years students, the messages of moderation that reached older students hadn't yet had time to influence them. (See Table 18.)

Table 18: "Think of the occasion you drank the most this month:
how much did you drink?"
Peak Alcohol Consumption by Year in School
(1992/1995/1998 compared, drinkers only)

Item	1st Year			2nd Year			3rd Year			4th Year		
	'92	'95	'98	'92	'95	'98	'92	'95	'98	'92	'95	'98
1-2 drinks	22.8	27.5	20.6	19.8	17.3	15.5	19.0	21.5	44.0	25.0	23.5	31.7
3-4 drinks	19.6	20.3	21.9	18.5	9.6	21.9	18.7	22.6	16.0	19.3	24.5	26.8
5+ drinks	57.6	50.8	57.6	61.6	73.1	63.1	60.7	53.7	40.0	54.3	52.0	41.5
7+ drinks*	39.3	33.4	38.8	47.2	51.9	46.6	45.6	33.3	24.0	36.8	28.5	25.6

*Potential alcohol poisoning

Peak: Gender

By gender, peak occasion drinking diminished proportionally among both males and females. Males, of course, drink more than females generally (as an example, from Core findings, 49.4% of males nationally reported binge drinking on at least one occasion over the previous two weeks, while only 30.7% of females reported binge drinking), and findings from the 1998 Lifestyles Survey did not refute this trend. Nonetheless, peak occasion drinking among Western students did indeed decrease, however slightly, and equally among genders.

For males, the percentage reporting consuming 1-2 drinks on peak occasions increased from 16.9% in 1995 to 19.3% in 1998; for females, the percentage reporting consuming 1-2 drinks on peak occasions increased from 27.6% in 1995 to 30.6% in 1998. Conversely, for males, the percentage reporting consuming five or more drinks on peak occasions decreased from 66.2% in 1995 to 60.6% in 1998; for females, the percentage reporting consuming five or more drinks on peak occasions decreased from 49.7% in 1995 to 43.6% in 1998. (See Table 19.)

Table 19: "Think of the occasion you drank the most this month:
how much did you drink?"

Peak Alcohol Consumption by Gender
(1992/1995/1998 compared, drinkers only)

Item	Overall			Males			Females		
	'92	'95	'98	'92	'95	'98	'92	'95	'98
1-2 drinks	21.9	23.7	24.7	17.5	16.9	19.3	26.2	27.6	30.6
3-4 drinks	19.6	20.5	23.0	13.9	16.9	20.2	24.4	22.7	25.9
5+ drinks	57.2	55.8	52.2	68.7	66.2	60.6	49.4	49.7	43.6
7+ drinks*	40.6	35.1	35.3	54.3	48.0	46.8	30.5	26.6	23.5

*Potential alcohol poisoning

Peak: Legal and Under-aged

As with findings for year in school, there was a distinct difference between peak occasion drinking patterns among under-aged and legal-aged students. For legal-aged students, peak occasion drinking lessened: the percentage reporting consuming 1-2 drinks on peak occasions increased from 24.4% in 1995 to 27.9% on 1998, and conversely, the percentage reporting consuming 5 or more drinks decreased from 54.6% in 1995 to 46.8% in 1998. For under-aged students, the percentage reporting consuming 1-2 drinks on peak occasions decreased from 22.1% in 1995 to 19.6% on 1998, while the percentage reporting consuming 5 or more drinks increased from 58.6% in 1995 to 61.5% in 1998. In other words, while overall peak occasion findings showed modest positive changes, among first-year and under-aged students peak occasion drinking showed no positive signs, but rather appeared to have increased slightly. (See Table 20.)

Table 20: "Think of the occasion you drank the most this month:
how much did you drink?"

Peak Alcohol Consumption by Age Category
(1992/1995/1998 compared, drinkers only)

Item	Overall			20 or less			21 or over		
	'92	'95	'98	'92	'95	'98	'92	'95	'98
1-2 drinks	21.9	23.7	24.7	19.0	22.1	19.6	25.2	24.4	27.9
3-4 drinks	19.6	20.5	23.0	19.3	19.3	19.0	22.1	21.0	25.3
5+ drinks	57.2	55.8	52.2	61.6	58.6	61.5	52.7	54.6	46.8
7+ drinks*	40.6	35.1	35.3	44.8	39.3	45.1	35.1	32.8	29.7

*Potential alcohol poisoning

Peak: Housing Type

Again, figures for drinking by housing type must be tempered by the fact that only 27 respondents living in substance-free reported any drinking at all. This compares to 118 respondents living in regular residence halls and 298 living off campus. Nevertheless, by housing type, survey respondents living in substance-free halls reported the least amount of drinking on peak occasions, with 37.0% reporting drinking 1-2 drinks. Figures for respondents living in regular residence halls and off campus were very similar for 1-2 drinks,

23.9% for regular residence halls and 24.0% for off campus. The percentage of respondents having 5 or more drinks on peak occasions (bingeing) was remarkably similar, regardless of housing circumstance: 51.8% for substance-free hall residents, 51.7% for off campus, and 54.8% for regular residence halls.

Uniquely, respondents living in substance-free housing were likely to drink modestly or binge on peak occasions—very few (11.1%) had only 3-4 drinks. On peak occasions, the drinking patterns of respondents living off campus and in regular residence halls looked very similar to findings overall, while respondents living in substance-free halls drank somewhat less. (See Table 21.)

Table 21: "Think of the occasion you drank the most this month:
how much did you drink?"

Peak Alcohol Consumption by Housing Type
(1998 only, drinkers only)

Item	Overall			Residence Hall			Substance-Free Hall			Off Campus		
	'92	'95	'98	'92	'95	'98	'92	'95	'98	'92	'95	'98
1-2 drinks	21.9	23.7	24.7	-	-	23.9	-	-	37.0	-	-	24.0
3-4 drinks	19.6	20.5	23.0	-	-	21.2	-	-	11.1	-	-	24.7
5+ drinks	57.2	55.8	52.2	-	-	54.8	-	-	51.8	-	-	51.7
7+ drinks*	40.6	35.1	35.3	-	-	38.9	-	-	25.9	-	-	34.8

*Potential alcohol poisoning

Peak: Activity Involvement

Even more so than on typical occasions, respondents participating in club sports or intercollegiate athletics were far more likely to report binge drinking than those volunteering (5 drinks or more = 61.6% for club sports, 63.7% for intercollegiate athletes, and 47.1% for volunteers). Compared to overall findings at Western for peak occasion binge drinking, findings for club sports participants and intercollegiate athletics were also much higher (5 drinks or more = 52.2% overall). Conversely, the percentage of volunteers reporting binge drinking on peak occasions was under the percentage for Western students overall (47.1% for volunteers vs. 52.2% overall). A similar trend was found for drinking to the point of potential alcohol poisoning on peak occasions: higher than the overall average for club sports participants and intercollegiate athletes, and lower than the overall average for volunteers.

To sum the findings for activity involvement: while volunteers might drink with somewhat more frequency than club sport participants and intercollegiate athletes—as well as somewhat more frequently than the overall population of Western students—they drink considerably less amounts of alcohol on both typical and peak occasions than either athletes or Western students in general. (See Table 22.)

Table 22: "Think of the occasion you drank the most this month:
how much did you drink?"

Peak Alcohol Consumption by Activity Involvement
(1998 only, drinkers only)

Item	Overall			Volunteer Service			Intercollegiate Athletics			Club Sports		
	'92	'95	'98	'92	'95	'98	'92	'95	'98	'92	'95	'98
1-2 drinks	21.9	23.7	24.7	-	-	29.7	-	-	22.7	-	-	16.7
3-4 drinks	19.6	20.5	23.0	-	-	23.2	-	-	13.6	-	-	21.7
5+ drinks	57.2	55.8	52.2	-	-	47.1	-	-	63.7	-	-	61.6
7+ drinks*	40.6	35.1	35.3	-	-	31.2	-	-	36.4	-	-	38.3

*Potential alcohol poisoning

TYPICAL AND PEAK BY GENDER AND AGE CATEGORY

When Lifestyle Survey findings are categorized by both gender and age category, the issue of which subgroup drinks the most amount of alcohol is made painfully clear: under-aged males. On typical occasions, 40.6% of under-aged males have 7 drinks or more, compared to 12.9% of legal-aged males, 11.8% of under-aged females, and only 3.5% of legal-aged females. On peak occasions, a staggering 64.4% of under-aged males have 7 drinks or more, compared to 40.3% of legal-aged males, 33.3% of under-aged females, and only 14.5% of legal-aged females. (See Tables 23 and 24.)

Table 23: Typical Alcohol Consumption
by Gender and Age Categories
(1998 only, drinkers only)

Item	Underaged Males	Legal-aged Males	Underaged Females	Legal-aged Females
1-2 drinks	34.4	48.5	34.3	71.9
3-4 drinks	12.5	22.1	39.2	17.5
5-6 drinks	12.5	16.6	14.7	7.0
7+ drinks*	40.6	12.9	11.8	3.5

*Potential alcohol poisoning

Table 24: Peak Alcohol Consumption
by Gender and Age Categories
(1998 only, drinkers only)

Item	Underaged Males	Legal-aged Males	Underaged Females	Legal-aged Females
1-2 drinks	18.6	19.5	20.2	40.0
3-4 drinks	11.9	23.3	23.2	28.2
5-6 drinks	5.1	17.0	23.2	17.3
7+ drinks*	64.4	40.3	33.3	14.5

*Potential alcohol poisoning

NEGATIVE EFFECTS DUE TO ALCOHOL USE

In order to quantify the occurrence of negative effects due to alcohol use, the Lifestyles Project Survey utilized the Rutgers Alcohol Problem Inventory (RAPI). The RAPI contains a number of items measuring the negative effects of alcohol use, ranging from hangovers, missed work or school, arguments with family or friends, driving under the influence, etc. Survey respondents were asked to indicate whether in the last six months they had experienced each incident.

Negative Effects: Occurrence

For 1998 Lifestyles Survey respondents, 49.7% indicated they had experienced at least one negative effect due to alcohol. This figure is considerably less than findings from the 1995 survey (60.9%) and the 1992 survey (63.9%). One reason for this decrease is that 1998 findings indicated somewhat less drinking among Western students than in previous years. Probably more influential, however, is the fact that while RAPI questions saw no change between the 1992 and 1995 administrations, they were heavily amended between those surveys and the 1998 survey administration.

From the seventeen prompts utilized from the RAPI on the Lifestyles Survey, the most common negative occurrence among 1998 respondents was “caused shame or embarrassment to self or someone else,” followed by “neglected responsibilities,” and “not able to do homework or study for a test.” It is important to note that two of the top three most likely negative occurrences due to alcohol use appear to contribute directly to a student’s academics. (See Table 25.)

Table 25: "How many times has each of the following things happened to you during the past six months while you were drinking alcohol or as a result of your alcohol use?"
RAPI Measures of Negative Effects Due to Alcohol Use (1998 only)

Item	Never	1-2 times	3-5 times	6+ times
Caused shame or embarrassment to self or someone else	64.1	28.2	4.5	3.2
Neglected your responsibilities	66.7	25.6	4.7	3.0
Not able to do your homework or study for a test	79.8	17.4	2.0	0.8
Passed out	74.0	17.2	4.3	4.5
Had a fight, argument, or bad feelings w/friend or family member	78.4	16.3	3.1	2.2
Missed a day (or part of a day) of school or work	79.6	15.3	3.3	1.8
Need more alcohol than you used to need to get same effect	75.5	15.1	4.9	4.4
Found yourself in a place that you could not remember getting to	83.8	13.1	2.0	1.0
Missed out on other things because spent too much on alcohol	83.5	12.7	2.7	1.2
Drove shortly after having 4 or more drinks	81.2	12.1	4.1	2.6
Tried to cut down or quit drinking	85.0	12.1	2.1	0.8
Were hurt or injured	89.8	9.0	0.6	0.6
Kept drinking when you promised yourself not to	89.4	8.6	0.8	1.2
Felt that you had a problem with alcohol	90.8	6.9	0.8	1.4
Was told by a friend or neighbor to stop or cut down on drinking	92.9	5.3	0.8	1.0
Formal sanction	94.1	5.3	0.2	0.4
Went to work or school high or drunk	91.6	5.1	1.4	1.8

As is common for large national surveys, questionnaire items are often altered slightly from survey to survey, to fine tune or respond to new issues. Such was particularly true in the latest version of the RAPI. As a result of these amendments, only a few of the responses used over the past administrations of the Lifestyle Survey match closely enough to present accurate longitudinal findings. Nonetheless, for those survey items that can be viewed longitudinally, an interesting trend emerges. For all items, the percentages increased. More students indicated alcohol caused them to: neglect their responsibilities, not complete homework or study for a test, miss a day of school or work, and drive shortly after having four or more drinks. (See Table 26.)

Table 26: "How many times has each of the following things happened to you you during the past six months while you were drinking alcohol or as a result of your alcohol use?"

RAPI Measure of Negative Effects Due to Alcohol Use, Longitudinal Findings
(1992/1995/1998 compared)

Item	1-2 Occurrences		
	1992	1995	1998
Neglected your responsibilities	20.1	20.0	25.6
Not able to do your homework or study for a test	13.2	13.6	17.4
Missed a day (or part of a day) of school or work	14.5	13.4	15.3
Drove shortly after having 4 or more drinks	12.6	8.9	12.1
Tried to cut down or quit drinking	14.1	9.9	12.1

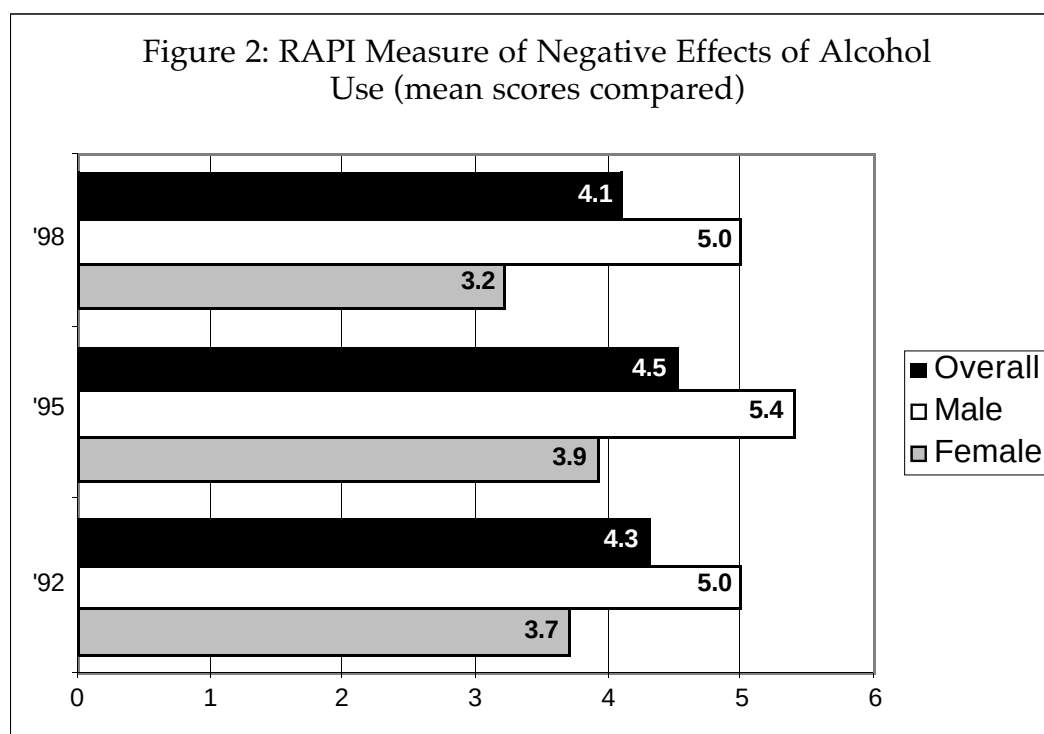
Do the findings presented above mean that Western students are having more alcohol-related problems than in previous years? That may be one possible way to interpret the findings, but it may also be that students are more aware of the influence of alcohol on their lives than they were in previous years. Two trends support this interpretation. One trend already highlighted is that students are consuming less alcohol. Another that will be highlighted shortly is that students indeed have better alcohol awareness than in previous years (see below under the following headings: Negative Effects: Perceived Risks vs. Actual Occurrences; and Perceptions).

Negative Effects: Severity

In order to measure severity of negative effects of alcohol use, each RAPI item asked survey respondents to indicate how often each negative effect has occurred in the past six months: never, 1-2 times, 3-5 times, 6-10 times, and over 10 times. This scale was then assigned a single digit numerical value: never = 0; 1-2 times = 1; 3-5 times = 2; 6-10 times = 3; and over 10 times = 4. Scores for each respondent were then tallied and respondents assigned a number; for example, a respondent might have indicated that one event occurred 2 times (a score of 1), another event five times (a score of 2), and one other event 12 times (a score of 4); thus, their overall score would be $1+2+4 = 7$. Each respondent received a total RAPI score. These scores were tallied and divided by the number of respondents to create a mean, what this report refers to as a RAPI Mean. Please note that this RAPI Mean does not present an exact number of incidents; it is, rather, a synthesized figure used for comparison purposes. If, for instance, the RAPI Mean were to rise or drop dramatically over a given

period of time, one could assume that survey respondents were experiencing an increasing or decreasing amount of negative effects due to alcohol use.

The overall RAPI Mean for 1998 Lifestyles survey respondents was 4.1, down slightly from the 1995 finding of 4.5, and from the 1992 finding of 4.3. For females in 1998 the RAPI Mean was 3.2, down from 3.9 in 1995 and 3.7 in 1992. For males the RAPI Mean was 5.0, down from the 1995 finding of 5.4, and equal to the 1992 finding, also 5.0. That the RAPI Mean decreased from 1995 is encouraging, especially considering that a RAPI Mean of 5.0 or higher is often indicative of more troublesome alcohol problems, as it meets criteria for alcohol abuse as outlined in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders IIIR, American Psychiatric Association, 1987. The 5.0 RAPI Mean for males adds a note of concern, but does at least demonstrate survey consistency, as males have been found to be somewhat heavier drinkers than females. (See Figure 2.)



Negative Effects: Perceived Risks verses Actual Occurrences

In an attempt to understand students' perceptions of alcohol-based problems with actual occurrences of alcohol-based problems, two sets of findings were utilized. One set was based on the Assessment of Perceived Risks of Alcohol (APRA), which measures the personal perception of the likelihood of risks related to alcohol use while in college. The other set was based on the Rutgers Alcohol Problem Inventory (RAPI), which measures the number and severity of alcohol-related problem behaviors. Questions from these independently-developed instruments were included on the Lifestyles Survey. Because they are separately developed and administered instruments, only a few prompts matched up well enough to report in a comparative fashion, but those that do provide important insight.

Here is what the two instruments measure: 1) the APRA score is the percentage of survey respondents indicating any likelihood of experiencing a given negative effect during the ensuing four years at the time of responding to the survey; and 2) the RAPI score is the percentage of respondents indicating even one occurrence of a given effect during the six months prior to taking the survey. As with the RAPI mean score, the percentages utilized offer a comparative tool, but not definitive findings as to the complexity or severity of each effect listed.

As with the RAPI findings covered in detail above, the findings in this comparison raise some interesting questions. Findings from previous years suggested that students' had a blind spot when it came to their perception of the negative consequence of alcohol use. In 1992, very few felt they would have a problem, while in fact many more actually had problems. In 1995, this continued to be the case, with the exception that students became more accurate when it came to judging whether they would miss class due to drinking (or hangovers). In 1998, more students anticipated they would have drinking problems or would miss class due to drinking (or hangovers) than actually reported the problems. This would suggest a heightened awareness by students of the negative effects of alcohol.

On the other hand, students continue to exhibit a blind spot regarding the effects of alcohol on their academics. The percentage indicating they felt they would have a problem "completing assignments due to drinking" was 9.2%, while the percentage of students reporting they were "not able to do homework or study for tests due to drinking" was 20.2%. So while the findings suggest some improved student awareness, they also suggest that in certain areas students remained somewhat deluded as to the negative effect of alcohol use. (See Table 27.)

Table 27: Perceived Risks vs. Actual Occurrences of Negative Alcohol Effects
RAPI and APRA Measures Compared (1992/1995/1998)

		APRA			RAPI		
APRA: % indicating any likelihood of experiencing this effect in the next four years	RAPI: % indicating even one occurrence of effect during the past six months	1992	1995	1998	1992	1995	1998
Develop a drinking problem	Felt you had a drinking problem	3.1	3.7	11.0	10.6	8.4	9.2
Miss class due to hangover	Missed school or work because of drinking	12.0	17.7	24.2	19.6	18.1	20.4
Unable to complete assignments due to drinking	Not able to do homework or study for test due to drinking	4.3	3.1	9.2	16.7	18.1	20.2

DRUG USE

Use of cocaine (or crack), and heroin among Western students is practically nonexistent, with less than 2% indicating they have ever used cocaine (or crack), and less than 1% indicating they have ever used heroin. These figures are similar to previous survey findings in 1995 and 1992. Use of LSD is also minimal at Western, with less than 7% indicating they had ever used LSD, a figure comparable to findings from previous surveys.

The percent of Western students indicating they have ever used marijuana decreased from 31.1% in 1995 to 28.7% in 1998, though it was still higher than the 25.4% in 1992. Figures for the percent of students indicating they used marijuana less than once a month, 1-3 times a month, and more often remained very similar to figures found in the previous Lifestyle Survey administrations. (See Table 28.)

Table 28: "During the past six months, how often have you used each of the following drugs?"
Drug Use at Western (1992/1995/1998 compared)

	never			< once a month			1-3 times/month			more often		
	'92	'95	'98	'92	'95	'98	'92	'95	'98	'92	'95	'98
Marijuana	74.6	68.9	71.3	13.7	14.1	13.1	7.2	10.7	8.7	4.5	6.4	6.9
Cocaine (crack)	97.7	98.3	98.1	2.0	1.4	1.1	-	-	0.7	0.2	-	0.2
LSD	92.2	93.2	92.8	6.1	6.2	5.9	1.5	0.6	1.3	0.2	0.4	-
Tobacco	-	-	59.4	-	-	12.8	-	-	12.5	-	-	15.4
Other	92.0	91.1	88.4	5.6	6.2	4.2	1.2	2.2	3.4	1.3	0.4	4.1

PERCEPTIONS

Of particular importance to the alcohol and drug abuse prevention programs at Western are students' perceptions of the alcohol and drug use of other students. Strategies utilized by such programs as WE CAN 2000 are based on the concept of the "imaginary peer," that mythical group often referred to as "everybody," as in "everybody smokes pot," or "everybody drinks." The problem with the imaginary peer is that he/she often drinks more alcohol and smokes more marijuana than students actually report drinking and smoking. By pointing out that the facts don't support the perceptions, education programs sponsored through the Prevention and Wellness Center debunk the drinking standards set by these imaginary peers. Students, for instance, usually only have 1 or 2 drinks on a typical weekend, not 3 or 4. Such facts can help students make better decisions regarding their own drinking patterns, basing them on facts, not myths.

The findings in this section of the Lifestyles Survey report will point out that while positive strides have been made at Western in reducing the amount of alcohol students consume, and that in many ways students' awareness has been increased, that the power of the imaginary peer is still strong. Students still have a tendency to overestimate, sometimes grossly, how often and how much other students drink or use marijuana.

Students Estimate the Drinking Frequency of Other Students

Lifestyle Survey respondents were asked: "How often do you think students typically consume alcohol?" For Western students overall, most respondents thought other students drank 1-2 times a week (47.3%, compared to 24.7% actually reporting they drank 1-2 times a week), followed by 2-3 times a month (41.9%, compared to 29.4% actual), and once a month (7.9%, compared to 12.5% actual). No respondents thought that other students never drank (0.0%, compared to 22.3% actual). When compared to how often respondents actu-

ally reported drinking, students' estimations of how often other students drink weren't close, but rather grossly overestimated. (See Table 29.)

Table 29: How Often Students Actually Reported Drinking
Contrasted to How Often Respondents Thought Other Students Drank

Actually reported		Estimated by peers	
not at all	22.3	never	0.0
	-	less than once a month	0.6
once a month	12.5	once a month	7.9
2-3 times a month	29.4	2-3 times a month	41.9
1-2 times a week	24.7	1-2 times a week	47.3
more often	11.0	everyday	2.3

Students Estimate the Frequency of Marijuana Use of Other Students

Lifestyle Survey respondents were asked: "How often do you think students typically use marijuana?" For Western students overall, most respondents thought other students used marijuana once a month or less (55.0%, compared to 18.0% actually reporting they used marijuana once a month or less), followed by 2-3 times a month (26.9%, compared to 3.8% actual), and more often than 2-3 times a month (14.0%, compared to 6.9% actual). Few respondents thought that other students never used marijuana (2.6%, compared to 71.3% actual). Similar to drinking estimations, compared to how often respondents actually reported using marijuana, students' estimations of how often other students use marijuana weren't close, but rather grossly overestimated. Especially underestimated was the percent of students who do not use marijuana. (See Table 30.)

Table 30: How Often Students Reported Using Marijuana Contrasted
to How Often Respondents Thought Other Students Used Marijuana

Actually reported		Estimated by peers	
not at all	71.3	not used	2.6
once a month or less	18.0	once a month or less	55.0
2-3 times a month	3.8	2-3 times a month	26.9
more often	6.9	1-2 times a week	14.0
-	-	everyday	1.5

Students Estimate the Amount of Alcohol Used by Other Students

Lifestyle Survey respondents were asked to make their "best estimate (of the) percentage of Western students ... you think consume no alcohol beverages at all." The actual percentage of Western students reporting they did not drink at all was 22.3%. Using this figure as the standard, three groupings were established: 1) those survey respondents who estimated below 20%, thus underestimating the actual figure; 2) those respondents who estimated between 20-25%, thus accurately estimating the actual figure; and 3) those respondents who estimated above 25%, thus overestimating the actual figure.

Overall, most survey respondents underestimated the percentage of other students who consumed no alcohol (42.0%). Conversely, many overestimated the percentage who consumed no alcohol (30.9%). Only just over a quarter of respondents accurately estimated the percentage (27.1%). The subgroup most likely to estimate accurately the percentage of other students who consumed no alcohol were those students living in substance-free housing (43.8% accurately estimated the actual figure). The subgroup least likely to estimate accurately were legal-aged students (only 24.3% accurately estimated the actual figure). (See Table 31 on next page.)

Lifestyle Survey respondents were asked to make their “best estimate (of the) percentage of Western students ... you think consumed 5 or more drinks at a time on at least one occasion in the last two weeks.” The actual percentage of Western students reporting they consumed 5 or more drinks on a weekend night (typical drinking pattern) was 27.3%. Using this figure as the standard, three groupings were established: 1) those survey respondents who estimated below 25%, thus underestimating the actual figure; 2) those respondents who estimated between 25-30%, thus accurately estimating the actual figure; and 3) those respondents who estimated above 30%, thus overestimating the actual figure.

Overall, again, most survey respondents overestimated the percentage of other students who consumed 5 or more drinks on typical occasions (59.5%). Conversely, many underestimated the percentage who consumed 5 or more drinks on typical occasions (26.0%). Very few respondents estimated accurately the percentage (14.5%). The subgroup most likely to estimate accurately the percentage of other students who consumed 5 or more drinks were females (17.3% accurately estimated the actual figure). The subgroup least likely to estimate accurately were males (only 11.7% accurately estimated the actual figure). (See Figure 3 below.)

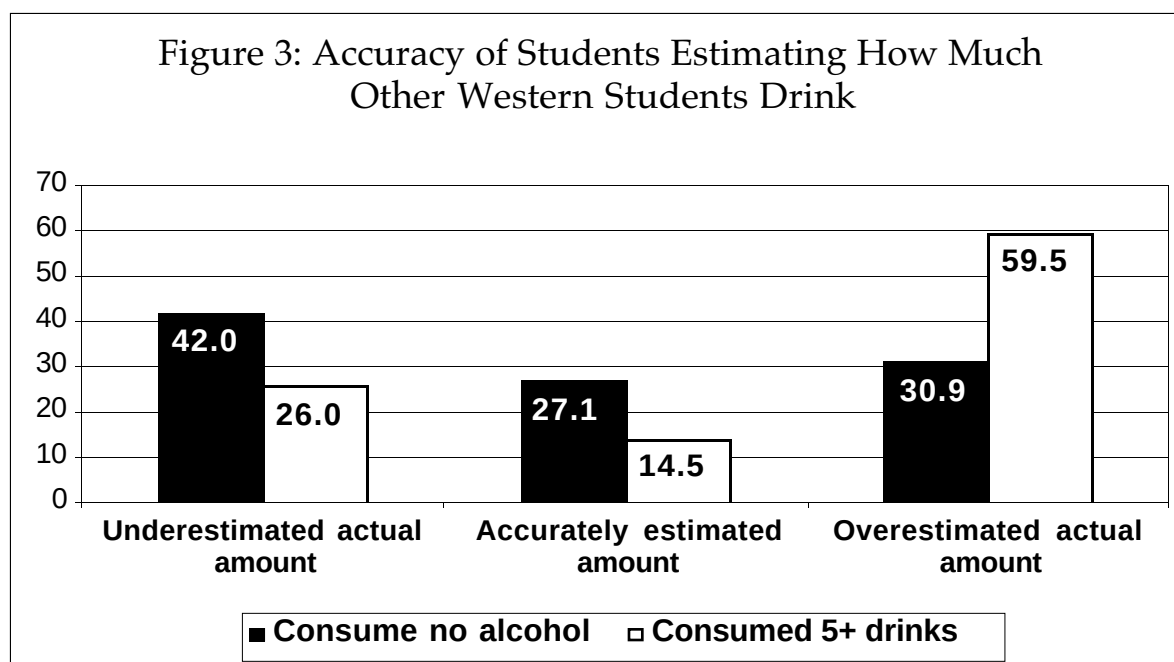


Table 31: Percent of Respondents Underestimating, Accurately Estimating, or Overestimating the Amount of Alcohol Used by Other Students (1998 only)

Item	The percent of other students who consume no alcohol							
	Overall	Male	Female	< 21	21+	Substance Free	Other	Off Campus
Underestimated	42.0	39.4	44.6	39.0	44.1	33.3	36.7	45.9
Accurate	27.1	27.7	26.5	31.1	24.3	43.8	29.9	23.3
Overestimated	30.9	32.9	28.9	29.9	31.6	22.9	33.5	30.9
	The percent of other students who consume 5 drinks or more							
	Overall	Male	Female	< 21	21+	Substance Free	Other	Off Campus
Underestimated	26.0	28.4	23.6	20.1	30.1	19.8	19.1	30.3
Accurate	14.5	11.7	17.3	14.0	14.9	16.7	12.9	14.8
Overestimated	59.5	59.9	59.1	65.9	55.0	63.5	68.0	54.9

Students' Personal Attitudes towards Alcohol Compared to the Attitudes they Perceive other Students Have towards Alcohol

Lifestyle Survey respondents were presented a 5-point scale representing various attitudes one might have towards alcohol and asked which of the statements best represented their personal attitude. A majority of respondents (55.3%) indicated that "occasionally getting drunk is okay as long as it doesn't interfere with academics or other responsibilities." Many respondents (30.7%) indicated that "drinking is all right, but not getting drunk." Additionally, some respondents (8.1%) indicated that "drinking is never a good thing to do."

The above figures are a considerable contrast to the attitudes that respondents thought other students had. Nearly three-quarters of respondents (72.3%) thought other students thought that "occasionally getting drunk is okay as long as it doesn't interfere with academics or other responsibilities." Few respondents (4.8%) thought that other students thought "drinking is all right, but not getting drunk." Conversely, a surprising number of respondents (12.3%) thought that other students thought "occasionally getting drunk is okay even if it does interfere with academics or responsibilities." Moreover, quite a few respondents (10.4%) thought that other students thought "frequently getting drunk is okay."

To summarize these findings, students were likely to report relatively moderate personal attitudes regarding alcohol use, while assuming indulgent attitudes on the part of other students. (See Table 32, below.)

Students' Personal Attitudes towards Marijuana Use Compared to the Attitudes they Perceive other Students Have towards Alcohol

Lifestyle Survey respondents were also presented a 5-point scale representing various attitudes one might have towards marijuana use and asked which of the statements best represented their personal attitude. A majority of respondents (47.0%) indicated that "it is never a good thing to use marijuana." A little more than a quarter of respondents (26.3%) indicated that "occasional use is okay as long as it doesn't interfere with academics or other responsibilities." Additionally, quite a few respondents (18.8%) indicated that "trying it one or two times is okay as long as it doesn't interfere with academics or responsibilities."

As with the alcohol findings presented above, personal attitudes were in sharp contrast to the attitudes respondents thought other students had towards marijuana. Most respondents (56.3%) thought other students thought that “occasional use is okay as long as it doesn’t interfere with academics or other responsibilities.” Over a quarter of respondents (26.8%) felt that other students thought “trying it one or two times is okay as long as it doesn’t interfere with academics or responsibilities.” Most telling, however, was the scant number of respondents (2.6%) that thought other students thought “it is never a good thing to use marijuana.”

To summarize findings regarding marijuana use, students were again likely to report moderate personal attitudes while assuming indulgent attitudes on the part of other students. (See Table 32.)

Table 32: Personal Attitudes ("Which state best represents YOUR attitude?) vs. Perceived Attitudes ("Which statement best represents the most common attitude among WESTERN STUDENTS IN GENERAL?"):

About Alcohol (1998 only)	Personal attitude	Perceived attitude in others
1. Drinking is never a good thing to do	8.1	0.2
2. Drinking is all right but a person should not get drunk	30.7	4.8
3. Occasionally getting drunk is okay as long as it doesn't interfere with academics or other responsibilities	55.3	72.3
4. Occasionally getting drunk is okay even if it does interfere with academics or responsibilities	2.2	12.3
5. Frequently getting drunk is okay if that's what the individual wants to do	3.6	10.4
About Marijuana (1998 only)		
1. It is never a good thing to use marijuana	47.0	2.6
2. Trying it out one or two times is okay as long as it doesn't interfere with academics or other responsibilities	18.8	26.8
3. Occasional use is okay as long as it doesn't interfere with academics or other responsibilities	26.3	56.3
4. Occasional use is okay even if it does interfere with academics or responsibilities	0.3	6.6
5. Frequent use is okay if that's what the individual wants to do	7.6	7.8

SEXUAL ACTIVITY, CONSENT, AND ALCOHOL USE

Lifestyles Survey respondents were asked to respond to a series of four questions pertaining to sexual activity, consent, and the role alcohol may or may not have played in decisions to engage in sexual behavior, with “full sexual activity” defined as “vaginal, oral, or anal intercourse.”

Forced Sex (Physical)

Respondents were asked: “Have you ever engaged in full sexual activity with someone when you didn’t want to because he or she threatened or used some degree of force (twisting your arm, holding you down, etc.) to make you?” Not too many respondents reported having experienced physically-forced sex (3.9%). Nor was there much difference in the percentages as reported by gender or age category: male = 3.5%, female = 4.2%, under-aged = 3.2%, legal-aged = 4.3%.

Forced Sex (Psychological)

Respondents were asked: “Have you ever engaged in full sexual activity with someone when you didn’t want to because you were overwhelmed by his or her continual arguments and pressure?” Slightly more respondents reported having psychologically-forced sex (6.3%), though the figure was still well under ten percent. There was also some slight difference in response by gender and age category, with females and legal-aged students reporting the circumstance more than males or under-aged students: male = 5.4%, female = 7.2%, under-aged = 4.7%, legal-aged = 7.3%.

Sex Under the Influence (Coerced)

Respondents were asked: “Have you ever engaged in full sexual activity with someone when you didn’t want to because he or she got you drunk or high?” Again, not too many respondents reported feeling coerced for sex while drunk or high (4.8%). Nor was there very much difference in the percentages as reported by gender or age category: male = 4.5%, female = 5.2%, under-aged = 4.4%, legal-aged = 5.2%.

Sex Under the Influence (Poor Judgment/Unable to Resist)

Respondents were asked: “Have you ever engaged in full sexual activity with someone when you didn’t want to because you were too drunk or too high to use your better judgment or to resist?” This circumstance was the most likely to be reported by Lifestyle Survey respondents, with 10.6% reporting they had had sex when they didn’t want to because they were too drunk or high. There was little difference in response by gender, but some slight difference in response by age category, with legal-aged students the most likely to report the circumstance: male = 10.4%, female = 10.8%, under-aged = 8.7%, legal-aged = 11.9%. (See Table 34.)

Table 33: Sexual Activity, Consent and Alcohol Use
(Percent reporting they had experienced each item, 1998 only)

Item	overall	male	female	<21	21+
Forced sex (physical)	3.9	3.5	4.2	3.2	4.3
Forced sex (psychological)	6.3	5.4	7.2	4.7	7.3
Sex under the influence (coerced)	4.8	4.5	5.2	4.4	5.2
Sex under the influence (poor judgment)	10.6	10.4	10.8	8.7	11.9

SUMMARY

The findings of most importance, which probably can't be overemphasized, are that: 1) the percentage of students reporting binge drinking (5 drinks or more) on typical occasions fell from 34.1% in 1995 to 27.3% in 1998; and 2) the percentage of students who thought other students drank once a week or more fell from 89.0% in 1995 to 49.5% in 1998. The first finding indicates that students are simply drinking less alcohol on typical occasions. The second finding indicates that students' awareness has increased. Though they still overestimate how often and how much other students drink, perception and reality are not as far apart from each other in 1998 as they were in 1995.

Other findings underscore the fact that the heaviest drinkers in the student body are underaged males, nearly two-thirds of whom on peak occasions reported drinking to the point of potential alcohol poisoning, and on typical occasions reported drinking to the point of alcohol poisoning at percentages approaching four times that of Western students overall. Though not to downplay the potential of alcohol abuse among all ages and genders, wherever heavy drinking is occurring there is at least the potential for alcohol abuse and related negative consequences, not the least of which would include diminished academics, and among young males the drinking is the heaviest.

Findings from the 1998 Lifestyles Survey also indicated that club sport participants and intercollegiate athletes should be counted as heavy drinkers, as the percentages of each group that binge drink on peak occasions are strikingly higher than for Western students in general, and on typical occasions are higher for potential alcohol poisoning than the overall norm.

Of interest, too, may be the finding that students living in substance-free residence halls are not all teetotalers. Findings from the 1998 Lifestyle Survey indicated that just over half of substance-free hall residents drank at least once a month, and that among that group (of drinkers), some binged on typical occasions (though at a lower percentage than Western students overall), while over half binged on peak occasions (about the same percentage as Western students overall).

As mentioned, findings from the 1998 Lifestyles Survey indicated that students' perceptions became more accurate and their awareness heightened since the 1995 survey. And while this is a positive finding, other findings underscored that students continue to over-

estimate (sometimes grossly) the frequency and amount that other students drink. The tendency for students is to assume that others drink more than they do, while the reality is that most students drink modestly, both in frequency and amount. This “perception gap” was found to apply to both alcohol and marijuana use.

Regarding drugs other than alcohol, about a third of Western students indicated they had used marijuana, if only less than once a month. About 16% of Western students indicated they used marijuana 1-3 times a month or more. Few Western students used cocaine (less than 2%) or LSD (less than 2% had used it more often than less than once a month). About 40% indicated they used tobacco—with about 13% of those indicating they used it less than once a month.

Approximately 11% of Western students indicated they had had unwanted sex because alcohol or drugs had influenced their better judgement. Less than 5% indicated they had had unwanted sex because they had been coerced into it while high or drunk. Less than 4% indicated they had been forced into unwanted sex through the threat of physical force.

DISCUSSION

One of the most important aspects of the Lifestyles Survey is also one easy to overlook: that the survey is being done at all. Most higher education alcohol prevention programs are reactive and event-based, responding to vandalism, drunken resident hall fracas, etc., as they happen, often mistaking the messages that such events send. In contrast, Western’s alcohol prevention program is proactive and widely focused. It is data-based and data-driven. From surveys and studies, administrators and prevention specialists form profiles of drinkers and drinking patterns based on the slow, incremental assessment of large populations over time. These profiles are used to “market” accurate campus drinking patterns, patterns that demonstrate the typical student at Western does *not* abuse alcohol. Though an unusual approach, it is also the heart of Western’s program, one that has already begun to produce results (as documented in this report) as well as receive national recognition. In 1995, the Primary Prevention and Wellness Center was chosen by the Harvard School of Public Health (based on a nomination by the U.S. Department of Education) as one of the five best higher education alcohol abuse programs in the nation. In 1997, the program was further acknowledged when it received a \$272,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Education.

There are reasons why the program has received positive attention. For instance: whereas the reactive approach to student alcohol abuse often misconstrues the situation as better or worse than it is—because counselors see only what they see—the proactive approach is based on real facts gathered through proven survey research methodologies. In the reactive system, students in trouble through alcohol may claim that “everybody is drinking.” Prevention specialists at Western, however, can counter this allusion to the *imaginary peer*—the concept that students see in their minds a peer who drinks more than they themselves do. Because Western’s program is based on hard data, a prevention specialist at Western can

indicate with the great confidence that most students at Western, if they drink at all, drink only in moderation.

ENDNOTES

¹The studies cited included: 1) A survey conducted for Harvard University's School of Public Health by Wechsler, Deutsch, and Dowdall, with findings published in the December 7, 1994, issue of the *Journal of the American Medical Association*; 2) a study done in 1993 by the Institute for Social Research of the University of Michigan; and 3) the study conducted from 1990 to 1992 data by the Core Institute at Southern Illinois University.

²Simpson, C., and Trimble, J. E. (1992). Institutional series of student surveys. Bellingham WA: Office of Institutional Assessment and Testing, Western Washington University. Unpublished manuscript.

³Persisters are students who remain in college long enough to complete a degree program; non-persisters are students who stop-out, for whatever reasons, before completing a degree program.

⁴The 1992 Lifestyles Survey was a collaboration between the Office of Institutional Assessment and Testing, the Primary Prevention/Wellness Center, and Dr. G. Alan Marlatt, Director of the Addictive Behaviors Research Center at the University of Washington.

⁵Copies of the first survey report, WWU Lifestyles Project: Patterns of Alcohol and Drug Consumption and Consequences Among Western Washington University Students, is available through the Office of Institutional Assessment and Testing, Old Main 120, MS: 9010, x3080.

⁶Presley, C.A., Meilman, P.W., & Cashin, J.R. (1996). *Alcohol and Drugs on American College Campuses (Use, Consequences, and Perceptions of the Campus Environment) Volume IV: 1992-94*. The Core Institute Student Health Programs, Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, Carbondale, Illinois.

⁷Johnston, L.D., O'Malley, P.M., Bachman, J.G. (1993). National Survey Results on Drug Use from The Monitoring the Future Study, 1975-1992. Rockville, Maryland: National Institute on Drug Abuse, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

⁸Interpretation of findings that report the number of drinks consumed should be tempered by the fact that survey respondents were self-reporting; there was, in other words, no quantitative control over variables such as what individuals considered a "drink", nor any way of knowing if the reportees were keeping any kind of accurate count of the number of drinks they consumed.

⁹Presley, C.H. & Meilman, P.W. (1992). *Alcohol and Drugs on American College Campuses: A Report to College Presidents*. Carbondale, Illinois: Southern Illinois University. Pg. 6.

¹⁰Ibid, Presley & Meilman (1992): pg. 5.