

Pre-Gaming Among Missouri College Students

Partners in Prevention (PIP) is Missouri's higher education substance abuse consortium dedicated to creating healthy and safe college campuses. The coalition is comprised of 21 public and private colleges and universities in the state that work to decrease high-risk behaviors among college students by implementing strategic plans for prevention that include evidence-based strategies. To measure progress and obtain data needed for the implementation of programs, PIP conducts the Missouri Assessment of College Health Behaviors (MACHB) Survey. The MACHB is an annual, online survey implemented each spring to assess the impact that alcohol, drugs (illegal and prescription), tobacco, interpersonal violence, and mental health issues have on student health and wellness. This brief will examine pre-gaming (or pre-partying) among Missouri college students.

Background

Pre-gaming is defined as drinking alcohol before a social event and is a high-risk behavior related to alcohol use.³ Pre-gaming can be particularly dangerous because it extends the amount of time spent drinking and increases total alcohol consumed.² Pre-gaming may also encourage students to drink a significant amount of alcohol in a limited amount of time prior to going to other locations. Research indicates that individuals who consume alcohol at multiple locations typically consume greater amounts of alcohol.² All of these factors contribute to elevated blood alcohol concentrations (BAC) which can have subsequent negative consequences such as alcohol poisoning.¹ Students indicate that they pre-game to save money, to "get a buzz" before going out, and if alcohol may be limited at an event (i.e. they are underage and will not be able to drink at a bar).³

Prevalence

Seventy-five percent of Missouri college students report consuming alcohol in the past year and 62% of students report that they engage in pre-gaming. Of students who pre-game, the most common locations include at social gatherings or friend's houses (47%), current residence (34%), or at bars or restaurants (11%).

Among Missouri college students who pre-game, 52% are over 21, and 48% are under 21. Of students who pre-game, 46% report binge-drinking at least once in

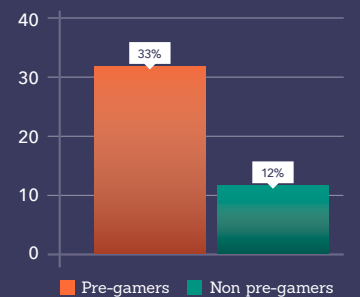
Where do you typically pre-game? [Table 1]

Do not pre-game	38%
Social gathering/friend's house	47%
"Where I live"	34%
Bars/Restaurants	11%
Residence hall	6.4%
Fraternity or sorority house	6.0%
In transit (walking/driving to a location)	5.7%
Sporting events	5.2%
Parking lot	4.6%

the past two weeks compared to 12% of students who do not pre-game. Of all students who report binge-drinking at least once in the past two weeks, 86% report that they pre-game.

Students who engage in pre-gaming reported drinking more than their peers who do not pre-game when asked, "how many drinks did you have last time you consumed alcohol?" Sixty-seven percent (67%) of students who pre-game stayed within the typical 0-4 drinks consumed when going out, while 88% of students who do not pre-game stayed within this range on their last drinking occasion.

Consumed 5+ drinks the last time you drank [Table 2]



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Motivations for Drinking, Protective Factors, and Negative Consequences

Students who pre-game reported their motivations for drinking as to have fun with friends (92%), to get drunk (42%), because they like how it feels (40%), and because their friends are drinking (25%) at higher rates than their peers who do not pre-game (69%, 14%, 36% and 13% respectively).

Students who pre-game were also less likely to use protective factors, which are behaviors associated with a lower likelihood of negative outcomes. Students who pre-game reported usually or always engaging in the following protective factors at lower rates than their peers who do not pre-game: stop drinking at a pre-determined time (35% vs 59%), avoid mixing different types of alcohol (41% vs 61%), had a friend let you know when you have had too much (46% vs 58%), purposefully limited the amount of money spent on alcohol (63% vs 70%) and avoided trying to “out-drink” others (58% vs 70%).

Which of the following have you experienced after or as a result of alcohol consumption? [Table 3]		
	Pre-gamers	Non pre-gamers
Had a hangover	82%	42%
Hurt or injured	18%	3.3%
Drove after consuming alcohol	28%	15%
Vomited	66%	30%
Engaged in risky sexual behavior	24%	6%
Rode with someone who had been drinking	39%	16%
Forced, pressured or coerced to drink more	21%	8.2%
Missed class	30%	7.0%
Experienced a blackout or memory loss	47%	12%
Experienced alcohol poisoning	8.5%	2.2%

Additionally, students who pre-game engaged in other high-risk drinking behaviors such as doing 21 birthday shots (10%), beer bongs/keg stands (31%), drinking games (78%), and drink specials (50%) at higher rates than their peers (2.6%, 8.8%, 31%, and 17% respectively).

Negative consequences of alcohol use among students who pre-game were higher in every category surveyed than their peers who do not pre-game. The most striking differences are outlined in table 3.

Conclusion

MACHB data reinforces that pre-gaming is a particularly high-risk behavior of alcohol use. Students who pre-game are experiencing negative consequences at higher rates than their peers and are less likely to engage in behaviors that may help keep them safe. Education about pre-gaming and talking with students about utilizing more protective factors could help mitigate these consequences and promote more responsible alcohol use.

Contact Partners in Prevention at (573) 884-7551.

Report prepared by Margo Leitschuh, communications coordinator. Data prepared by Dan Reilly, research coordinator, Dong Ding, graduate research assistant, Erica Braham, graduate research assistant, and Alex Swanson, graduate research assistant.

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