



## **Findings from the Alcohol and Drug Survey of Kent State University Undergraduates, June 2004**

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## A Nine-Point Executive Summary

- 1) Compared to college students nationwide, KSU students are somewhat more likely to be involved in high-risk drinking (see Figure 1).
- 2) A majority of KSU students initiated alcohol use prior to the end of high school (see Table 1). About 16% of the 2003-2004 freshmen class reported that they began drinking after arriving at KSU.
- 3) Over the past five years, there appears to be a trend showing a decline in the alcohol abstention rate among KSU freshmen, i.e., there is a decrease in non-drinking (see Table 1).
- 4) Hangovers, missing class, and blackouts are relatively prevalent at KSU. Over the past four years, rates of alcohol problems have been relatively stable (see Table 2).
- 5) About 12% of KSU undergraduates engage in drinking and driving on at least a monthly basis and about one in five rides with an alcohol-impaired driver monthly as well (see Table 3).
- 6) About 44% of non-drinking and infrequent drinking KSU students report having their studying or sleep interrupted by an intoxicated student at least once during the 2003-2004 academic year (see Table 4).
- 7) In balancing academics, work, and socializing with friends, 41% of full-time freshmen report spending the greatest portion of their time socializing (see Table 5). A relatively small proportion of the student body (full-time) spend the largest portion of their time on academic work (outside the classroom).
- 8) The “Thinking About Your Drinking?” Campaign, a social norms marketing initiative at KSU, has produced a significant reduction in the overestimation rate of peer’s drinking. This misperception is a risk factor for alcohol abuse. However, there is no evidence that the campaign has reduced high-risk drinking during the past five years (see Figure 2).
- 9) About 18% of KSU students are daily smokers (see Table 6). Marijuana is the most commonly used illicit drug, e.g., 17% report use in the past 30 days (see Table 7).

## **Data Collection Method**

In April of 2004, 673 Kent State University (KSU) students responded to an anonymous questionnaire that was administered in a random sample of undergraduate classes on the main campus (the project was approved by the KSU Institutional Review Board). The KSU Office of Research, Planning and Institutional Effectiveness selected the sample. It was stratified by course level. The sample of classes appears in Appendix A.

Members of KSU's University Advisory Committee on Alcohol Issues contacted the instructors of these classes, and administered the survey. Access could not be obtained from 23 of the 42 selected classes (or 54.7%). The total number of students enrolled in the surveyed classes was 1,364. There was a high level of student cooperation with the project. Only 13 declined to participate, and some of these students may have already completed the survey in another class. Thus, near the end of the Spring Semester, survey data were collected from 49% of the students on the final rosters of the selected classes (i.e., 673/1,364). Twelve graduate students were eliminated from the data analyses which left the final sample size at 657.

Student participation was voluntary and there was no penalty for refusing to participate. Steps were taken to assure students that they could not be linked to their responses. For example, before beginning the survey, students were asked to place their own answer sheet, when it was complete, in a large envelope at the front of the classroom.

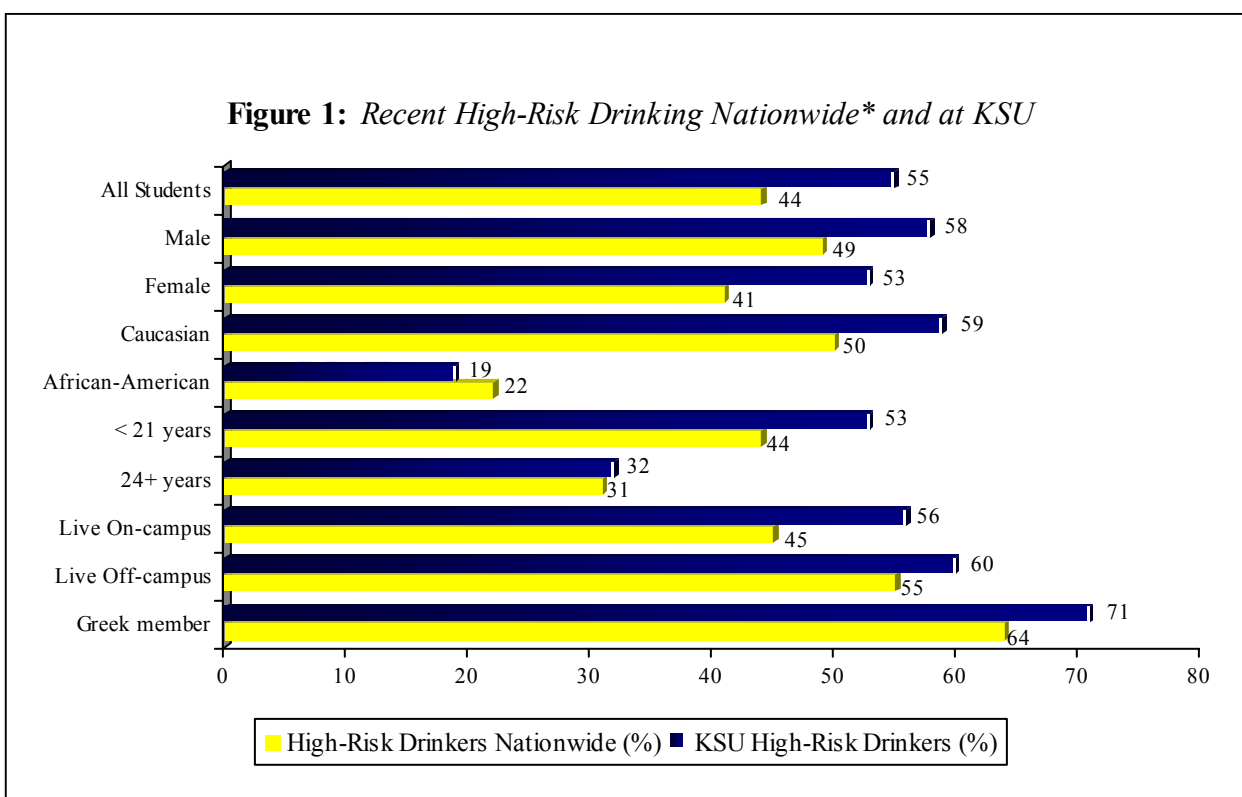
Before the surveys were optically scanned, they were reviewed for stray marks, use of felt tip pen, and frivolous responses. None of the KSU answer sheets were withheld from scanning due to obviously frivolous responses.

## **About the Harvard School of Public Health College Alcohol Study**

Dr. Henry Wechsler at the Harvard School of Public Health conducts the most widely cited national survey of alcohol use among American college students. This is an ongoing surveillance project, which collects data annually from nationally representative samples of college students. In 2001, more than 10,000 students attending 119 colleges and universities from 38 states and the District of Columbia participated in the study (Wechsler et al., 2002). The KSU survey included a number of questionnaire items from the Harvard School of Public Health College Alcohol Study, making it possible to compare KSU students to college students nationwide.

## Recent High-Risk Drinking

Wechsler et al. (2002) define recent high-risk drinking among men as consuming five or more drinks on at least one occasion in the previous 2 weeks. Among women, high-risk drinking is defined as consuming four or more drinks during the same period. Though there are a number of problems with this simple definition, the measure is useful for making comparisons across samples, groups and over time.



\* Source: Wechsler et al. (2002).

As can be seen in Figure 1, across a number of groups, KSU students have higher rates of recent high-risk drinking than college students nationwide. At KSU, only among African-American students is recent high-risk drinking lower than the comparable nationwide rate.

## Caution Needed in Comparing KSU and Nationwide Rates

There are two reasons to use caution in comparing the KSU and nationwide rates. First, the two surveys used different methods and collected data at different points in time. The KSU data were collected from a random sample of classes 2-3 weeks before the end of Spring Semester (2004), whereas the data for the Harvard College Alcohol Study were collected by mail (52% average response rate)

during Spring Semester of 2001. Second, the nationwide sample was selected to be representative of U.S. colleges and universities, including small, private institutions, small and large residential campuses, and community colleges from all regions of the country. Thus, it is important to keep in mind that the observed differences in alcohol rates are probably attributable to dissimilar demographic characteristics of the two samples.

As can be seen in Table 1 below, the rates of recent high-risk drinking range from 45%-59% across class rank in 2004. The data in Table 1 also reveal that most KSU students began using alcohol prior to attending college. In addition, across all classes, the KSU rate of abstention from alcohol is relatively low. For example, among freshmen nationwide in 2001, the rate of abstention from alcohol was 19%, whereas at KSU the same rate in 2004 was 9%, suggesting that KSU is a relatively “wet” campus.

**Table 1:**  
*Drinking Practices at KSU During a Five-Year Period by Class Rank*

<b>Measure</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>
<b><u>Freshmen</u></b>					
<b>Recent high-risk drinking</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>51%</b>	<b>57%</b>	<b>45%</b>
<i>Initiated drinking:</i>					
in middle school	15%	13%	13%	18%	11%
in high school	61%	61%	67%	59%	62%
1st year of college	8%	14%	10%	16%	16%
2nd year of college	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Abstain at Time of Survey*	17%	13%	10%	7%	9%
<b><u>Sophomores</u></b>					
<b>Recent high-risk drinking</b>	<b>49%</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>51%</b>	<b>52%</b>	<b>51%</b>
<i>Initiated drinking:</i>					
in middle school	14%	8%	9%	12%	10%
in high school	47%	54%	64%	60%	54%
1st year of college	20%	21%	16%	16%	20%
2nd year of college	2%	7%	4%	3%	4%
Abstain at Time of Survey	18%	10%	6%	7%	8%
<b><u>Juniors</u></b>					
<b>Recent high-risk drinking</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>51%</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>59%</b>	<b>48%</b>
<i>Initiated drinking:</i>					
in middle school	6%	9%	19%	12%	8%
in high school	52%	51%	53%	62%	62%
1st year of college	22%	20%	17%	15%	18%
2nd year of college or later	12%	12%	9%	6%	10%
Abstain at Time of Survey	6%	9%	2%	5%	2%
<b><u>Seniors</u></b>					
<b>Recent high-risk drinking</b>	<b>46%</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>59%</b>
<i>Initiated drinking:</i>					
in middle school	10%	8%	14%	13%	11%
in high school	51%	55%	53%	57%	55%
1st year of college	20%	22%	19%	15%	19%
2nd year of college or later	6%	11%	10%	14%	11%
Abstain at Time of Survey	14%	4%	3%	1%	2%

\* Nationwide abstention rate for freshmen in 2001 = 19%. Source: Wechsler et al. (2002). Some columns may not equal 100% due to missing cases.

### **Other Alcohol Indicators**

The data in Table 2 below summarize the rates of alcohol-related problems that KSU students experienced during each of the past four academic years.

**Table 2:** *Alcohol-Related Problems Since the Beginning of the Academic Year: KSU Student Body – 2001, 2002, 2003 and 2004*

Measure	2001	2002	2003	2004
Had two or more hangovers	NA	NA	44%	42%
Missed one or more classes due to drinking	34%	31%	39%	37%
On at least one occasion, was unable to focus on a class lecture or activity due to drinking	29%	27%	32%	32%
Had at least one blackout	28%	27%	28%	28%
On at least one occasion, got hurt or injured due to drinking	18%	17%	16%	16%
On at least one occasion, had sexual intercourse with someone they would have avoided if sober	12%	11%	12%	15%

Note: Sample size (n) is 625 for 2001; 947 for 2002; 681 for 2003; and 657 for 2004.

The data in Table 2 indicate that there was little change from 2003 to 2004 in the rate of alcohol-related problems. It is important to note that the majority of KSU students avoid alcohol-related harm. However, the prevalence of alcohol-related problems is a concern. About 37% reported missing one or more classes due to drinking during the 2003-2004 academic year, and more than one-quarter reported experiencing a blackout in each of the four academic years.

Table 3 below reports the prevalence of drinking and driving and riding with alcohol-impaired drivers among KSU students. In the previous 12-month period, 39% of KSU students reported that on at least one occasion they had driven a motor vehicle after consuming alcohol on at least one occasion and 55% indicated that on at least one occasion they had ridden in a motor vehicle driven by a driver who had consumed alcohol.

**Table 3: Prevalence of Drinking and Driving and Riding With Impaired Drivers Among KSU Students, April 2004 (in percentages)**

<i>How often do you...</i>	Never	1-2 times a year	3-5 times a year	6-10 times a year	Once a month	Twice a month	Once a week	2-3 times a week	4 or more times a week	Missing Cases
<b>drive a motor vehicle after consuming alcohol?</b>	55	19	6	2	3	4	4	1	0	6
<b>ride in a motor vehicle that is driven by someone who has consumed alcohol?</b>	43	24	9	3	5	6	6	2	0	2

Note: Sample size (n) = 657. Cell entries are percentages.

Secondhand effects of drinking are negative events caused by other students' intoxicated behavior. Table 4 reports the secondhand effects experienced by KSU students who were nondrinkers and infrequent drinkers during the 2003-2004 academic year. These data show that the most common secondhand effect was having one's studying or sleeping interrupted, followed by having to "babysit" a student who drank too much.

**Table 4: Secondhand Effects of Other Students' Drinking Among Non-Drinkers and Infrequent Drinkers (consumed alcohol once a month or less often), April 2004**

<i>Since the beginning of the school year, how many times have you experienced any of the following because of other students' drinking?</i>	None	Once	2-3 times	4+ times
<b>Been insulted or humiliated?</b>	78	11	8	3
<b>Had a serious argument or quarrel?</b>	81	13	4	2
<b>Had your studying or sleep interrupted?</b>	56	13	16	16
<b>Had to "baby sit" or take care of a student who drank too much?</b>	67	19	9	4
<b>Found vomit in the halls or bathroom of your residence?</b>	79	11	7	3
<b>Had to seek emergency assistance to help a student with alcohol poisoning?</b>	98	2	0	0

Note: Sample size (n) varied from 235-238. Cell entries are percentages.

## Academics, Work and Socializing Among Full-Time KSU Students

Table 5 shows how full-time students, as a group, balance their time. Full-time status was defined as being enrolled for 12+ credit hours at the time of the survey.

**Table 5:** *Time Spent on Academics, Work, and Socializing Among Full-Time Students by Class Rank Over a Four-Year Period*

	2001		2002		2003		2004	
	%	(N)	%	(N)	%	(N)	%	(N)
<b><u>Freshmen</u></b>								
Academic Emphasis	12	(15)	18	(36)	22	(29)	19	(22)
Work Emphasis	15	(19)	21	(42)	13	(17)	28	(33)
Socializing Emphasis	62	(79)	52	(103)	51	(68)	41	(48)
Other	11	(14)	8	(16)	14	(19)	11	(13)
<b><u>Sophomore</u></b>								
Academic Emphasis	27	(49)	21	(54)	10	(20)	23	(34)
Work Emphasis	31	(56)	31	(81)	33	(67)	24	(36)
Socializing Emphasis	33	(59)	36	(92)	45	(92)	36	(54)
Other	9	(17)	12	(32)	12	(24)	17	(26)
<b><u>Juniors</u></b>								
Academic Emphasis	24	(33)	16	(23)	13	(18)	24	(36)
Work Emphasis	36	(49)	41	(60)	52	(75)	38	(58)
Socializing Emphasis	30	(40)	35	(51)	25	(36)	30	(45)
Other	10	(13)	8	(12)	10	(14)	8	(13)
<b><u>Seniors</u></b>								
Academic Emphasis	14	(16)	14	(33)	18	(28)	17	(32)
Work Emphasis	61	(71)	55	(130)	48	(76)	52	(97)
Socializing Emphasis	19	(22)	20	(48)	22	(35)	19	(36)
Other	6	(7)	11	(27)	12	(18)	11	(23)

### Classification Criteria of Full-Time Students

*Academic Emphasis* - In a typical week during the semester, student reported spending more hours on academic tasks (outside of class) than at work or “hanging out” with friends.

*Work Emphasis* - In a typical week during the semester, student reported spending more hours at a job than on academic tasks (outside of class) or “hanging out” with friends.

*Socializing Emphasis* - In a typical week during the semester, student reported spending more hours “hanging out” with friends than on academic tasks (outside of class) or at work.

*Other* - Not classified by the above criteria.

The data in Table 5 show that during the past three academic years, the proportions of students spending most of their time socializing with friends and most of their time at a job changes dramatically from the freshmen to senior year. In contrast, the proportion of students who devote most of their time to academic work (outside of class) appears to be more stable, and involves a smaller proportion of the student body (17%-24%). Among full-time freshmen in 2004, 41% reported that socializing occupies the greatest portion of their time. Among full-time seniors in 2004, over one-half (52%) reported that working occupies the greatest portion of their time.

## The Misperceived Norms Model

Research has shown that many college students rely on their perceptions of peer's alcohol use to make decisions about their own drinking behavior. Students who overestimate the prevalence of drinking on their campus are themselves most at-risk to be heavy drinkers (Thombs et al., 1997). Furthermore, many students seem to change their drinking behavior to bring it in line with this exaggerated or "false" norm. Thus, overestimation of peer's drinking practices is a significant risk factor for alcohol abuse.

The "false" norm concept is distinct from the conventional notion of peer pressure. This later concept (peer pressure) suggests that socially vulnerable students "cave in" to external pressure placed upon them by coercive friends. In contrast, the "false" norm model emphasizes the role of distorted perceptions within the college student (not external social pressure).

## KSU's "Thinking About Your Drinking?" Campaign

As a result of the 1998 needs assessment, KSU launched a social norm's marketing campaign dubbed – "Thinking About Your Drinking?" Funded in part by the Ohio Department of Alcohol and Drug Addiction Services, the campaign is designed to correct misperceptions of the drinking norm that exist among undergraduates attending Kent State University. Since September of 1999, the campaign has used messages that accurately cite statistics from the campus-wide surveys (e.g., "65% of KSU students have 4 or fewer drinks when they party"). Vehicles that have been used to disseminate these messages include: Kent State display ads, campus bus signage, athletic department promotional materials, class/small group presentations, mass mailings, poster displays in high-traffic areas, a website (<http://dept.kent.edu/alcohol>), and other venues.

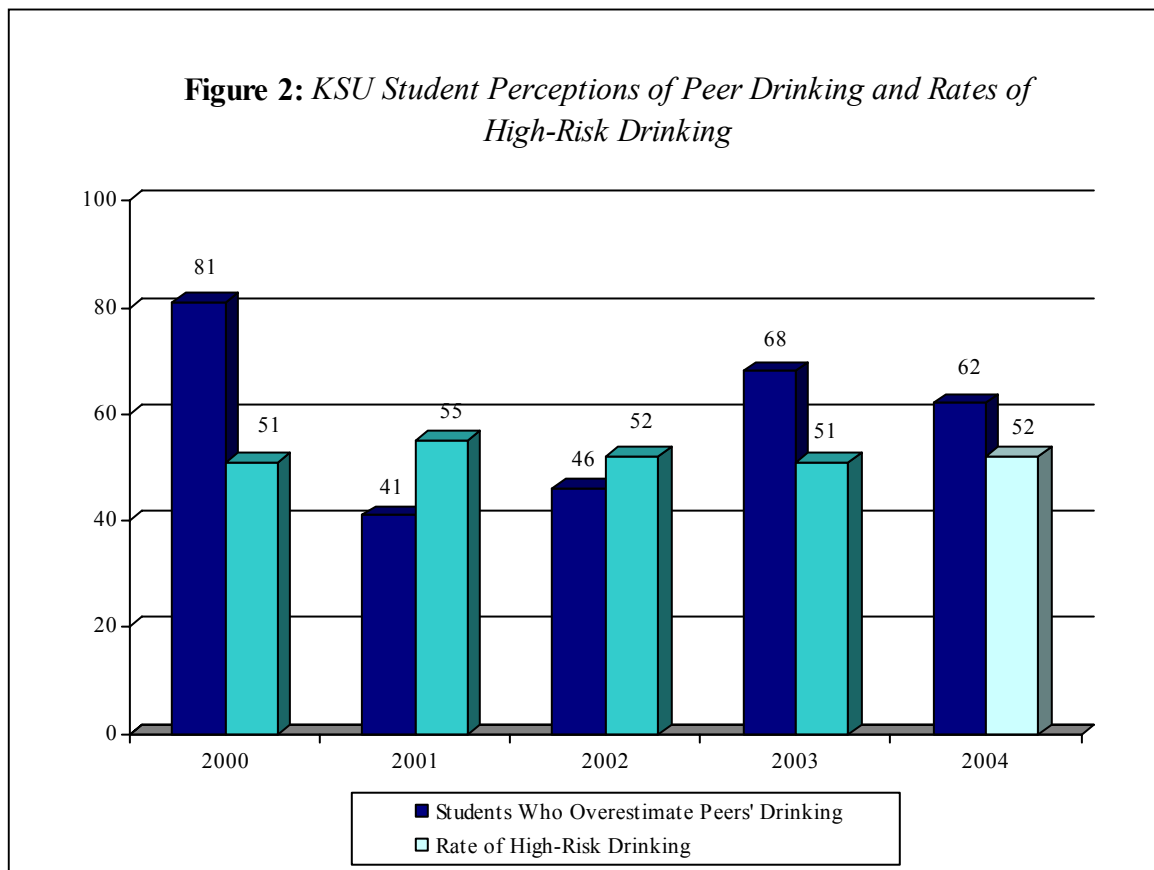
The method most commonly used to determine rates of biased perceptions relies on two survey measures: *quantity/frequency of alcohol consumption for self* and *quantity/frequency of alcohol consumption for typical student on campus* (see Perkins et al., 1999). In this procedure, the sample median for *consumption for self* is designated the "campus norm" for alcohol use. The percentage of students who reported that the *consumption for typical student* exceeded this "campus norm" are identified as "overestimating" consumption among the student body (can be seen in Figure 2).

## The Campaign's Impact on Normative Misperceptions

As can be seen in Figure 2, after ten semesters of the "Thinking About Your Drinking?" Campaign, there was a substantial decline in the rate of exaggerated perception among the overall KSU student body. In April, 2000, the rate of overestimating peer's drinking was 81%, compared to a baseline rate of 94% in

December, 1998 (not shown). By April 2001, the student perception of peer drinking rate dropped dramatically - from 81% to 41%. In April, 2002, the rate rose a bit to 46%. In April, 2003, the student perception of peer drinking rate increased significantly to 68%. This increase was probably the result of the introduction of new social norm messages during the 2002-2003 academic year which provided drinking norm feedback based on BAC data rather than on a measure of consumed alcoholic drinks. In 2004, the overestimation rate dropped to 62%.

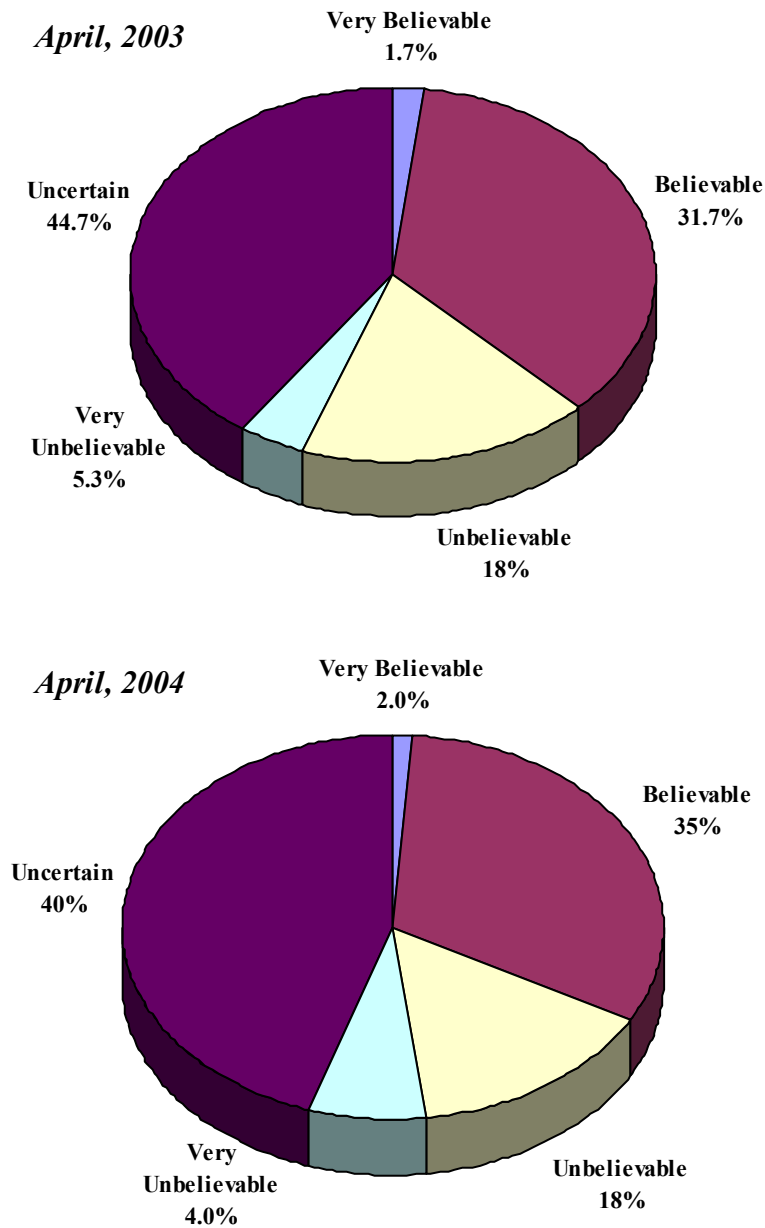
In contrast, the lighter vertical bars indicate that the rate of high-risk drinking has changed little during the five-year period. The findings in Figure 2 suggest that the "Thinking About Your Drinking?" Campaign has been somewhat successful in changing students' perceptions of peers' drinking, but it has had no impact on heavy alcohol consumption.



## Campaign Believability

Figure 3 below compares the extent to which the statistics cited in the “Thinking About Your Drinking?” Campaign were judged to be credible by students in April, 2003 (N = 566 students who reported seeing the campaign or 78% of the total sample) and April, 2004 (N = 557 students who reported seeing the campaign or 83% of the total sample).

**Figure 3: Credibility of the Campaign Messages**



In both academic years, there has been considerable variability in the credibility

of the data-based messages used in the “Thinking About Your Drinking?” Campaign. In April, 2003, 37% of the students rated it “believable” or “very believable,” with 40% “uncertain” and 22% indicating it was “unbelievable” or “very unbelievable. In April, 2004, 37% of the students rated it “believable” or “very believable,” with 40% “uncertain” and 22% indicating it was “unbelievable” or “very unbelievable.” A comparison of 2003 and 2004 data indicate somewhat fewer students are uncertain about the statistics cited in the campaign.

### Other Drug Use Among KSU Students

A majority of KSU students do not smoke cigarettes (see Table 6 below). About 11% can be described as occasional smokers. A total of 18% are daily smokers that are most likely to be nicotine dependent. One-half of the daily smokers report that they are trying to quit smoking.

**Table 6:** *Prevalence of Cigarette Use Among KSU Students, April 2004*

Pattern of Cigarette Use	Frequency	Percent
Non-smoker	392	61
Experimenter (smoked less than 100 cigarettes in lifetime and none in past 30 days)	48	7
Former smoker (smoked at least 100 cigarettes in lifetime, but none in past 30 days)	22	3
Occasional smoker (smoked at least 100 cigarettes in lifetime, and at least one in the past 30 days)	69	11
Daily smoker – not trying to quit	62	9
Daily smoker – trying to quit	55	9

Note: Sample size (n) = 648.

**Table 7: Prevalence of Drug Use Among KSU Students, April 2004 (in percentages)**

Drug Usage	Never Used	Used, but not in past 12 months	Used, but not in past 30 days	Used in past 30 days	Missing Cases
Smokeless Tobacco	79	10	5	6	1
Marijuana	43	25	14	17	1
LSD "acid"	86	10	2	0	1
Rohypnol "roofies"	98	1	0	0	1
GHB	95	3	0	0	2
MDMA "ecstasy"	87	9	2	1	1
Cocaine or Crack Cocaine	88	6	5	0	1
Hallucinogenic mushrooms "shrooms"	84	10	4	1	1
Ketamine "Special K"	95	4	0	0	1
Heroin	97	2	0	0	1
Methamphetamine	94	3	1	1	1
Oxycontin	92	5	1	1	1
Vicodin	75	11	10	3	1
Prescription tranquilizers to get high	93	4	2	0	1
Other prescription drugs to get high	87	6	4	2	1
Alcohol in combination with another drug	72	11	6	10	1

Note: Sample size (n) = 657. Cell entries are percentages.

Table 7 shows the prevalence of drug use among KSU students. Marijuana has the greatest lifetime and 30-day prevalence rates. The prevalence rates of other drug use are relatively low, especially compared to alcohol use.

### Perceived Risk of Experiencing Negative Consequences

Table 8 below reports students' perceptions of their risk for experiencing a negative consequence related to drinking or drug use. A majority of students perceive that they have no risk for experiencing the six potential consequences.

**Table 8:** *Perceived Risk of Experiencing Negative Consequences as a Result of Alcohol or Drug Use, April 2004 (in percentages)*

<b>Negative Consequences</b>	<b>No Risk</b>	<b>Minimal Risk</b>	<b>Moderate Risk</b>	<b>Great Risk</b>
Lose driver's license	74	15	7	4
Lose financial aid	87	9	2	2
Blocked from pursuing a particular academic major	85	8	4	3
Dismissed from the university	85	9	4	2
Subjected to monetary fines	74	17	6	3
Need to seek legal assistance	79	12	6	3

Note: Sample size ranges from (n) = 634-647. Cell entries are percentages.

## References

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## Appendix – KSU Classes Surveyed in April, 2004

<u>Class</u>	<u>Number of Students Who Declined Participation*</u>
1. Introduction to Geography (10160) .....	2
2. Personal Health (11570) .....	0
3. General Chemistry I (10060) .....	0
4. Fundamentals of Chemistry (10050) .....	0
5. Literature in English II (25002) .....	7
6. Physiological Chemistry (20284) .....	0
7. Music as World Phenomenon (22121) .....	0
8. Human Resource Management (34180) .....	0
9. Marketing Research (35050) .....	0
10. Children's Literature (32001) .....	0
11. Service Marketing (35015) .....	0
12. Introduction to Public Administration (30301) .....	0
13. Political Thought (30002) .....	0
14. Conflict Theory (31010) .....	1
15. Psychology of Language (40461) .....	0
16. Retailing and Web-Based Merchandising (45082) .....	2
17. Constitutional Law: Civil Rights & Liberties (40183) .....	0
18. Senior Seminar (46091) .....	0
19. Fashion Marketing and Consumer Motivation (40213) .....	1

Total Students Declined = 13

\* Some of these students may have completed the survey in another course.