

## **Texas College Survey of Substance Use - 2015 Executive Summary**

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### **Overview**

The *Texas College Survey of Substance Use* is a biennial collection of self-reported data related to alcohol and drug use, mental health status, risk behaviors, and perceived attitudes and beliefs among college students in Texas. The survey is conducted by the Public Policy Research Institute with the Texas Health and Human Services Commission.

The 2015 survey included 20,110 undergraduate students ages 18-26 from 49 colleges and community college districts from across Texas. Students were invited to participate via email and completed the survey online.

### **Primary Findings**

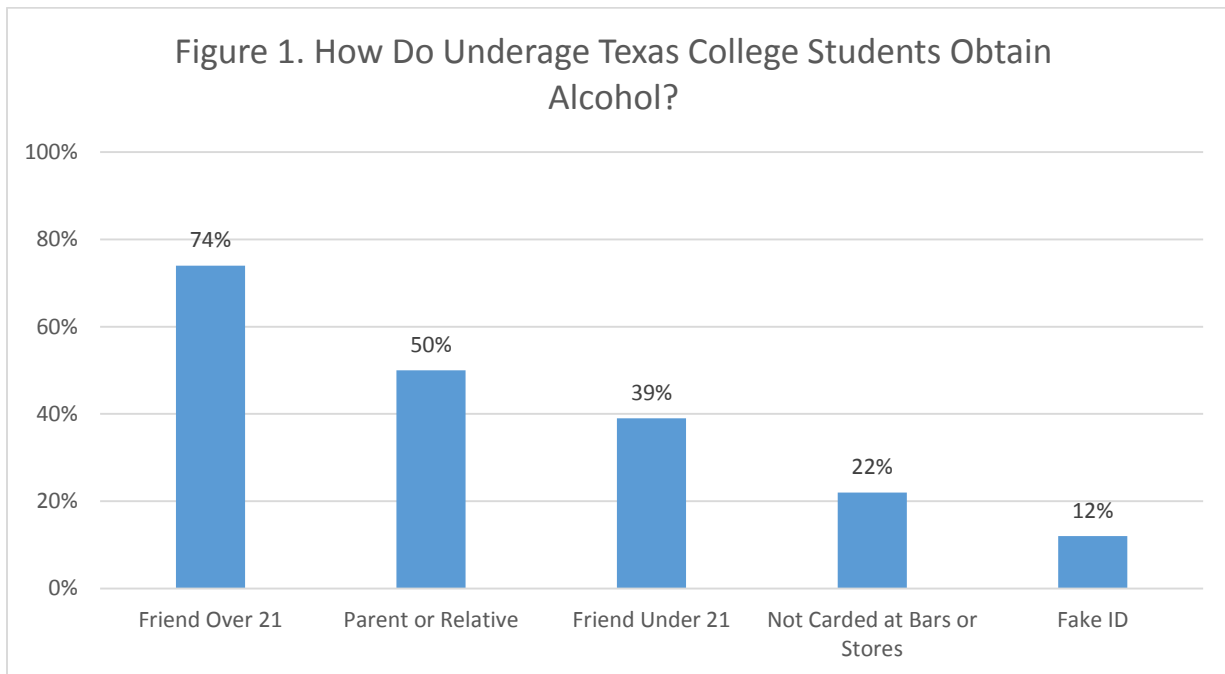
- Alcohol remains the most commonly used substance on campus; almost 80% of Texas college students drank alcohol in the past year and nearly 40% binge drank at least once in the past month
- About one in three Texas college students used marijuana at least once in the past year
- One in ten Texas college students seriously thought about suicide in the past year

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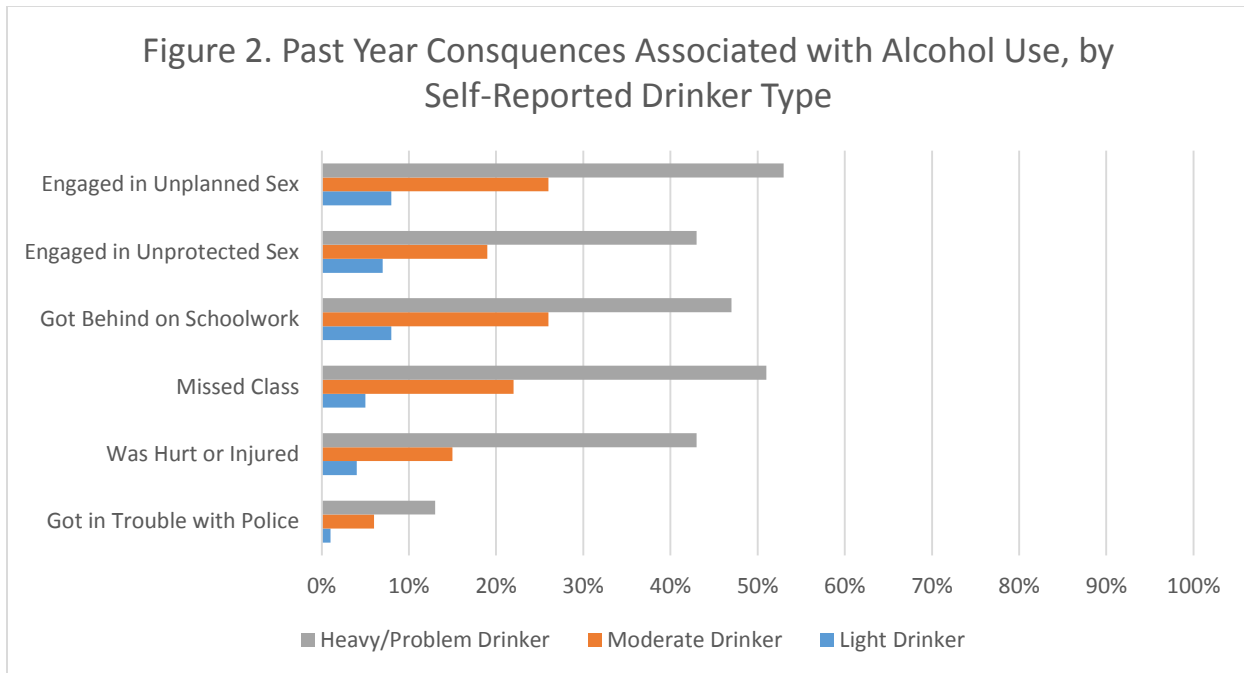
## Substance Use Findings

### Alcohol

Four out of five Texas college students reported having at least one alcoholic drink in the past year and about 60% reported drinking alcohol in the past month. Binge drinking, defined as five or more drinks in a sitting for males and four or more drinks in a sitting for females, was more prevalent among males (41%) than females (35%). College males were twice as likely as college females to report binge drinking at least six times in the past 30 days (10% vs. 5%). On average, respondents said they had had enough alcohol to feel drunk 2.4 times in the preceding 30 days. Most underage Texas college students obtain alcohol from others (Figure 1).



College students who self-report as moderate or heavy/problem drinkers have significantly more consequences associated with their drinking compared with students who self-report as light drinkers (Figure 2). For example, over half of students who identify as heavy or problem drinkers missed a class at least once in the past year due to their drinking, compared with 22% of moderate drinkers and 5% of light drinkers.



### Illicit Drug Use

Marijuana was the most commonly used illicit drug among Texas college students in 2015, with one in three reporting past year use. Past year use of synthetic marijuana declined from 3% in 2013 to 1% in 2015, while past year use of cocaine increased from 3% to 5% in the same two year period. Male college students were more likely to have used illicit drugs in the past year compared with female college students (Figure 3). There were also significant differences in past year illicit drug use between racial/ethnic groups; Asian students had the lowest overall levels of past year illicit drug (Figure 4). Self-reported grade point average was associated with illicit drug use, such that students with more frequent use had lower grades (Figure 5).

### Prescription Drug Misuse

While almost one in five Texas college students reported misusing prescription drugs at least one in their lifetime, past year use was relatively low. About 8% had used pain killers (e.g., Vicodin, OxyContin, Codeine) in the past year for the experience or feeling it caused (Figures 3 and 4). A similar percentage of college students misused prescription stimulants in the past year (9%). The most common ways to obtain prescription drugs was from someone with a prescription (53%), followed by a doctor's prescription (about 38%), someone without a prescription (29%), home medicine cabinet (20%), stealing it (10%), and finally from an on-line outlet (2%).

A little more than 52% of respondents believed that drug abuse is either a minor, moderate, or major problem on their campus, while 30% said it is not a problem at all (18% said they were not sure; Figure 6). More than 60% of students said that underage drinking is a problem on campus, and about 56% said that heavy alcohol use is a problem on their campus.

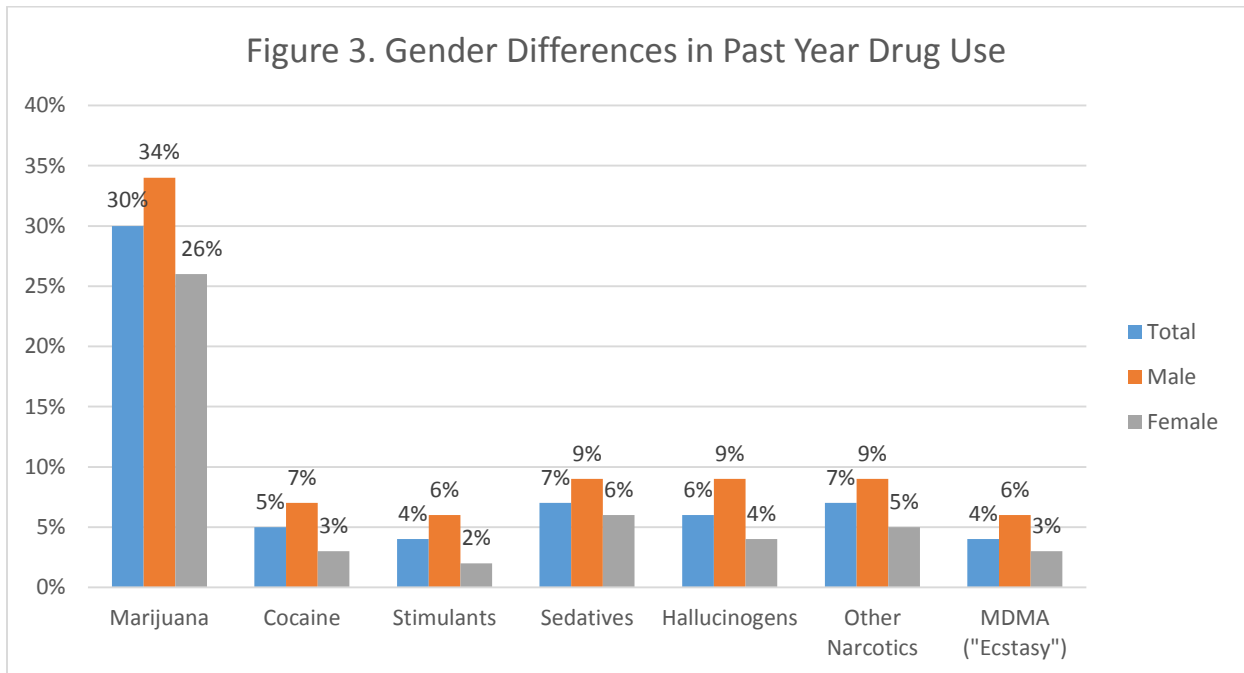


Figure 4. Racial/Ethnic Differences in Past Year Drug Use

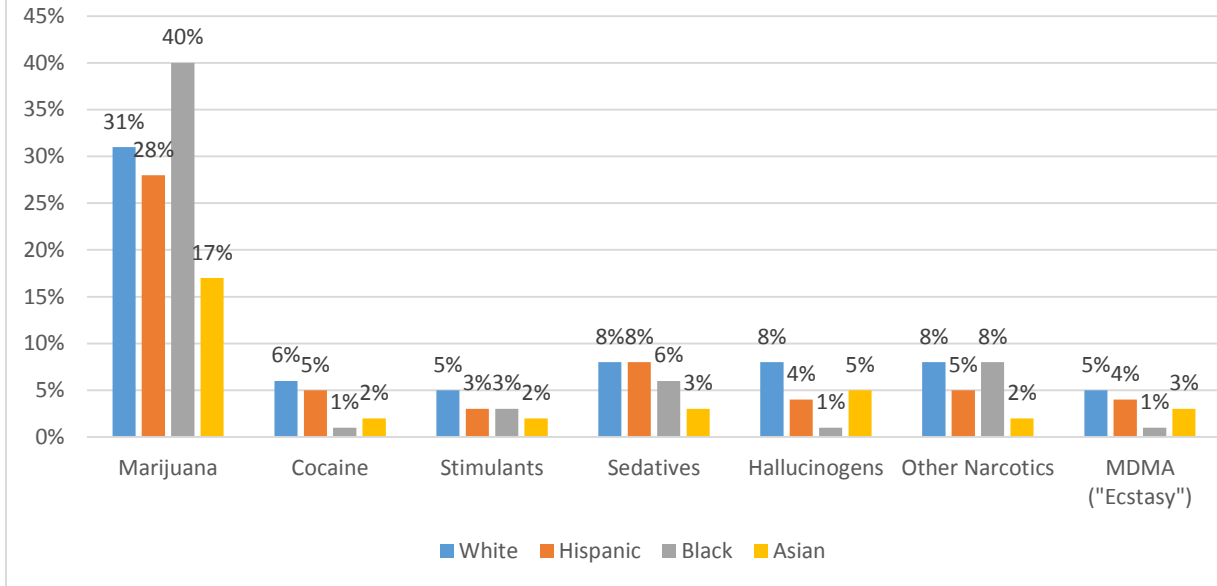


Figure 5. Association between Illicit Drug Use and Grade Point Average (GPA)

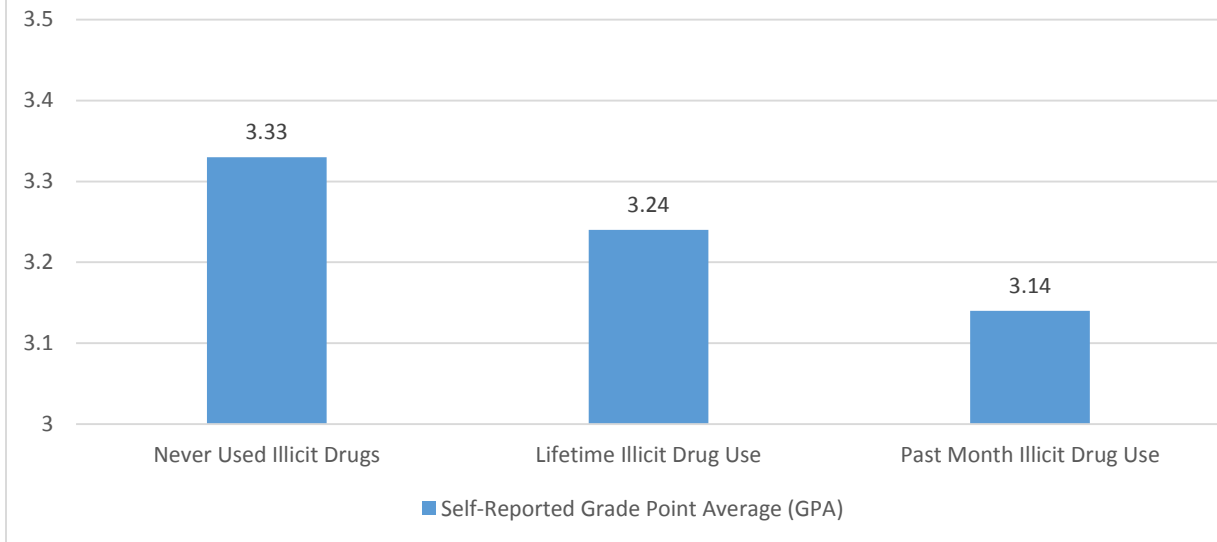
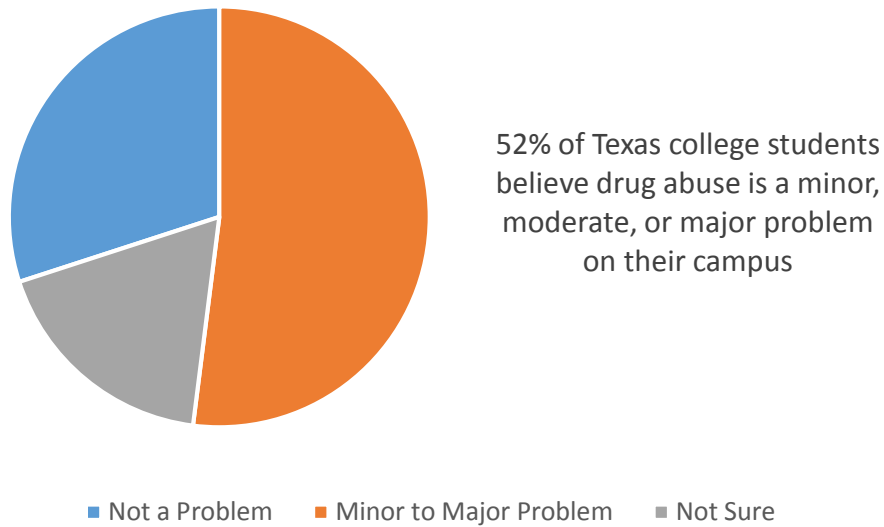


Figure 6. Is Drug Abuse a Problem on Your Campus?



## Mental Health

Four out of five Texas college students experienced at least one symptom of anxiety at least a little of the time in the past 30 days (Figure 7a, 7b). The most common symptom was feeling restless or fidgety. About 12% of students had ever received medication to treat their anxiety and 10% had received medication at least once in their lifetime to treat symptoms of ADHD/ADD.

Almost 70% of Texas college students experienced at least one depressive symptom at least a little of the time in the past 30 days (Figure 7c-7f). The most common symptom was feeling that everything was an effort. Approximately 13% of students had ever received medication to treat their depression. In 2015, one in ten Texas college students had seriously considered attempting suicide in the past year.

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Figure 7a-f. Self-Reported Anxiety and Depressive Symptoms in the Past 30 Days

