

1.4 million American college students drink alcohol every day and 1 in 12 get stoned, new health study finds

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On any given day in America, roughly 1.4 million college students between the ages of 18 and 22 – or more than 1 out of every 8 American undergrads – will drink alcohol, according to new data from the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

Those who partake will consume an average of about four drinks each – just below the five-drink threshold that defines binge drinking. Of course, many of them will drink more than that. Many will drink less.

Other young people will opt to alter their consciousness with different substances. Roughly 900,000 college students, or 1 in 12, will get stoned. About 15,000 will do cocaine, 13,000 will do hallucinogens of some kind (magic mushrooms, LSD), and more than 7,200 will do heroin.

The very next day, the exact same scenario will play out again. Some of those who drink and do drugs tomorrow will be the same ones who drank and did drugs today. Others will take a break from the partying, perhaps waiting a day, a week or a month before doing it again.

It all adds up to paint a vivid picture of the prevalence of substance use among college kids in America today. This isn't necessarily a problem – statistically speaking, most of this drinking and drug-taking is normal behavior. Most college drinkers and drug users graduate on to their next phase of life without suffering any adverse consequences

from all those nights at the bar.

But if it's normal behavior, it also isn't without risk. On-campus drinking and drug use is associated with higher dropout rates. According to the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, each year college-age drinking directly leads to:

- 1,825 deaths
- 690,000 assaults
- 97,000 sexual assaults
- 599,000 other injuries
- 150,000 alcohol-related health problems

College students aren't alone when it comes to a propensity to overdo it. People between the ages of 18 and 25 are generally the heaviest users of substances legal and illegal, regardless of whether they're in college. But the overall trends in drug and alcohol use among this group are generally moving in a positive direction.

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Since 2002, for instance, America's 18-to-25-year-olds have become less likely to use illicit drugs other than marijuana. They've become significantly less likely to use tobacco. And while their overall use of alcohol is about the same, their rates of problematic drinking – bingeing and heavy alcohol use – are down sharply, especially among young men.

So while the top-line numbers of millions of college drinkers may seem alarming, consider the flip side of the coin as well: If 1 out of every 8 college kids is drinking on any given night, that means the other seven kids are doing something else – like going to the library, playing games or just hanging out with friends.