NCAA National Study on Substance Use Habits of College Student-Athletes

Executive Summary

June 2018
Alcohol Use

- Overall, 77% of student-athletes reported drinking alcohol in the last year. This number is down slightly from previous years and mirrors the percentage of non-athletes that drink (81%, Core study; 79%, MTF study). 36% of student-athletes reported drinking on a weekly basis and nearly 2% reported drinking daily.

- 42% of all student-athletes said they engage in binge drinking (4 or more drinks for women, 5 or more drinks for men in one sitting). However, binge drinking has decreased since 2009.

- The highest rates of reported binge drinking by sport were in lacrosse (69% among men, 57% for women), hockey (men 64%, women 56%) and swimming (men 55%, women 49%).

![Binge Drinking Chart]

- 2009: 15% binge drinking
- 2013: 12% binge drinking
- 2017: 8% binge drinking

Bar chart showing binge drinking rates from 2009 to 2017.

4+ drinks for women/ 5+ drinks for men in one sitting
10 or more drinks in one sitting (subset of binge drinkers)
Tobacco/Nicotine Use

• The most frequently used smoked tobacco products were cigars (17% of student-athletes smoked at least once in the last year), followed by cigarettes (11%) and hookah (10%). Cigarette use is lower among student-athletes than non-athletes (19%, MTF). 8% of student-athletes reported using e-cigarettes.

• In the past year, 13% of student-athletes reported using spit tobacco at least once. 5% of all student-athletes reported using spit tobacco daily.

• Although spit tobacco use has decreased slightly, 46% of players in men’s ice hockey and 44% in baseball reported using the product in the last year. Nearly 20% from each sport reported that they use it daily. Among women’s sports, ice hockey players used spit tobacco at the highest rate (13%).
Marijuana Use

• Self-reported marijuana use is lower among student-athletes (25% use by inhaling or ingesting) than the non-athlete college population (33%, Core; 39%, MTF).

• 24% of student-athletes reported inhaling marijuana in the last year (compared with 22% reporting marijuana use in 2013).

• 11% of student-athletes reported using edible forms of marijuana.

• 77% of marijuana users reported doing so for social reasons. 19% said they use it for pain management.

• Marijuana use was higher among student-athletes who identified living in a state where it is legal for recreational or medical use (39% vs. 26% in states where it is not legal).

• At the sport level, marijuana use was highest among men (50%) and women (34%) lacrosse players.

• Division III student-athletes continue to be the highest reported users of marijuana.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Division I</th>
<th>Division II</th>
<th>Division III</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Other Illicit Drug Use

- Reported use of amphetamines among student-athletes (2%) is lower than among non-athletes (5%, CORE; 10%, MTF). Student-athlete amphetamine use has dropped since 2013.

- Reported cocaine use among student-athletes is similar to that of non-athletes (4% use in the last year). Lacrosse athletes have the highest rates of cocaine usage in both men’s (22% reported using at least once in the last year) and women’s sports (6%).
Prescription Drug Use

- 11% of student-athletes reported using narcotic pain medication with a prescription, down from 18% in 2013. Three percent of student-athletes reported using narcotic pain medication without a prescription, also down from the previous survey (6% in 2013). 2% of student-athletes reported misusing narcotic pain medication.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Narcotic Pain Medication</th>
<th>Used in the Last Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WITH a prescription</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WITHOUT a prescription</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ADHD Stimulants</th>
<th>Used in the Last Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WITH a prescription</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WITHOUT a prescription</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Women’s gymnastics student-athletes (18%) were the highest users of narcotic pain medication.

- Reported ADHD stimulant use without a prescription (8%) was higher than use with a prescription (7%). Use with a prescription has increased slightly and use without a prescription has decreased slightly. 6% of student-athletes reported misusing ADHD stimulants.
STUDY BACKGROUND

• Findings based on a 2017 NCAA-administered survey of approximately 23,000 student-athletes.

• The NCAA has conducted a national substance use survey on a quadrennial basis since 1985. However, due to changes in the survey methodology, comparisons with current results are limited primarily to data from the 2013 and 2009 studies.

• One to three teams were invited to participate at each NCAA school. It is estimated that more than 60% of NCAA schools took part in the study. Surveys were administered at each college with the assistance of the Faculty Athletics Representative. Data were collected anonymously. Results cannot be tied to a particular student-athlete or school.

• The lead investigator for the study was Markie Cook from the NCAA Research staff.

• References for non-athlete comparison data: