



**An exploratory study of the impact of  
UW-Madison's alcohol culture on students of color**

**Conducted by:**

Reonda Washington, MPH, CHES  
Agustina Marconi, MD, MPH  
Marlo Reeves, MA, PhD candidate  
Emma Jardas, BS candidate



**UHS** | University  
Health Services  
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON



## The Color of Drinking

### Study Description

The Color of Drinking examined the impact that undergraduate students of color experience from UW–Madison’s alcohol culture.

### Purpose

The purpose of this study is to understand how students—particularly marginalized and underrepresented students of color—perceive and experience alcohol culture at a predominately-white university.

### Deployment Dates

The survey deployed November 20, 2017 and closed January 1, 2018.

### Target Populations

The survey was deployed to a census of undergraduate students of color (4,736) and a sampling of white students (2,000). For the purposes of this study, a student of color was defined as someone who did not identify solely as white.

### Methods

Two surveys were developed and administered in Qualtrics to the target populations. All participants who completed the surveys received a \$5 Amazon gift card.

### Completion Rates

1,195 (25.2%) undergraduate students of color and 333 (16.7%) white undergraduate students responded to the survey.

### Microaggressions

For this study, microaggressions were defined as “brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults toward people of color (Sue et al, 2007).”

### IRB

The research study was approved by the UW–Madison Institutional Review Board.

### Summary Findings

- Students of color reported higher rates of abstaining and nondrinking than white students.
- Students in both groups reported avoiding places on-and-off campus due to concerns about the alcohol use of others (students of color at 42%, white students at 31%).
  - Both groups named fraternity and sorority housing and Langdon Street as the top two places they avoid.
- African American/Black students consider leaving UW–Madison at three times the rate of white students.
  - Students of color cited the racial climate as the number one reason, and white students cited academic reasons.
- Students of color are more likely to report being “financial struggling” or “having enough to get by but not much left over.”
- White problematic drinkers scored higher on the Diener Flourishing Scale than students of color in any drinker category and white students in other drinker categories.
- Alcohol has greater impacts on the overall health and wellbeing of white students than on students of color (self-report).
- Approximately 62% of students of color experience microaggressions at UW–Madison, consistent with 2015 Color of Drinking results.
- Students of color report witnessing microaggressions and intervening in microaggressions at higher rates than white students.
- Both groups report having to find alternative study spaces because of the alcohol culture (average 46%), and schedule group meetings around alcohol consumption (average 40%).

\*Unanswered questions were removed for the analysis.

Variable	Overall (1,288)	Students of color (1,017)	White Students (271)
<b>Gender identity (N,%)</b>			
Male	434 (33.7%)	334 (32.8%)	100 (36.9%)
Female	822 (63.8%)	655 (64.4%)	167 (61.6%)
Genderqueer/androgynous/ different identity	19 (1.5%)	16 (1.6%)	3 (1.1%)
Transsexual/female to male/ male to female	7 (0.5%)	7(0.7%)	0 (0%)
Prefer not to share	6 (0.5%)	1 (0.4%)	5 (0.5%)
<b>Drinking rate (N,%)</b>			
I don't drink	175 (13.6)	153 (15%)	22 (8.1%)
No in the last 30 days	216 (16.8%)	188 (18.5%)	28 (10.3%)
Yes in the last 30 days	897 (69.6%)	676 (66.5%)	221 (81.6%)
<b>Citizenship (N,%)</b>			
Yes	1,278 (99.5%)	1,010 (99.5%)	268 (99.3%)
No	7 (0.5%)	5 (0.5%)	2 (0.7%)
<b>Race/ethnicity (N,%)</b>			
White	271 (21%)	0 (0%)	271 (100%)
Black	136 (10.6%)	136 (13.4%)	0 (0%)
Asian	335 (26%)	335 (32.9%)	0 (0%)
Middle Eastern/North African	8 (0.6%)	8 (0.8%)	0 (0%)
Pacific islander/Native American	8 (0.6%)	8 (0.8%)	0 (0%)
Different	37 (2.9%)	37 (3.6%)	0 (0%)
Biracial	189 (14.7%)	189 (18.6%)	0 (0%)
Multiracial	23 (1.8%)	23 (2.3%)	0 (0%)
Latino	145 (11.3%)	145 (14.3%)	0 (0%)
<b>Academic level (N,%)</b>			
Freshman	307 (23.8%)	246 (24.2%)	61 (22.5%)
Sophomore	295 (22.9%)	243 (23.9%)	52 (19.2%)
Junior	278 (21.6%)	210 (20.7%)	68 (25.1%)
Senior	264 (20.5%)	211 (20.8%)	53 (19.6%)
Graduating senior	134 (10.4%)	99 (9.7%)	35 (12.9%)
Other	10 (0.8%)	8 (0.8%)	2 (0.7%)
<b>Current financial situation (N,%)</b>			
Financial struggle	166 (12.9%)	147 (14.5%)	19 (7%)
Tight but doing fine	683(53%)	548 (53.9%)	135 (49.8%)
Finances not a problem	419 (31.3%)	306 (30.1%)	113 (41.7%)
Other	20 (1.55%)	16 (1.6%)	4 (1.5%)

(continued on next page)

Variable	Overall (1,288)	Students of color (1,017)	White Students (271)
<b>Household financial situation (N,%)</b>			
Comfortable	573 (44.5%)	427 (42%)	146 (43.9%)
Well-to-do	198 (15.4%)	138 (13.6%)	60 (22.1%)
Enough to get by, but not much left over	439 (34.1%)	384 (37.8%)	55 (20.3%)
Struggle, not enough to get by	66 (5.1%)	59 (5.8%)	7 (2.6%)
Other?	12 (0.9%)	9 (0.9%)	3 (1.1%)
<b>Where do you live (N,%)</b>			
On Campus	557 (43.3%)	460 (45.2%)	97 (35.8%)
Off Campus	726 (56.4%)	552 (54.3%)	174 (64.2%)
<b>Avoid (N,%)</b>			
No	635 (49.3%)	469 (46.1%)	166 (61.3%)
Unsure	142 (11%)	122 (12%)	20 (7.4%)
Yes	511 (39.7%)	426 (41.9%)	85 (31.4%)
<b>Impacted by others alcohol (N,%)</b>			
No	529 (41.1%)	416 (40.9%)	113 (41.7%)
Unsure	172 (13.4%)	130 (12.8%)	42 (15.5%)
Yes	587 (45.6%)	471 (46.3%)	116 (42.8%)
<b>Alcohol impacted your health (N,%)</b>			
No	885 (68.7%)	712 (70%)	173 (63.8%)
Unsure	190 (14.8%)	138 (13.6%)	52 (19.2%)
Yes	213 (16.5%)	167 (16.4%)	46 (17%)
<b>Belonging (N,%)</b>			
No	739 (57.4%)	586 (57.6%)	153 (56.5%)
Unsure	176 (13.7%)	148 (14.6%)	28 (10.3%)
Yes	373 (29%)	283 (27.8%)	90 (33.2%)

**Q: Describe the alcohol culture at UW–Madison.**

**Themes and quotes**

Students of Color	White Students
<p><b>The alcohol culture is prevalent.</b></p> <p><i>“I think that it’s a pretty prevalent part of campus culture — I’ve met a handful of students who have cited UW’s ‘party scene’ as one of their deciding factors when they considered attending the university. Whether you want to avoid alcohol or not people will have it, which is unfortunate for those who choose not to drink.”</i></p> <p><i>“It’s strong, everywhere, encouraged, supported, expected, ridiculed, and accepted all at once. ‘Everyone does it,’ is a saying that applies here. Alcohol consumption is rampant across UW by students of all ages. For better or for worse, it is a cornerstone of UW.”</i></p> <p><b>The alcohol culture is how UW–Madison students socialize.</b></p> <p><i>“The alcohol culture at UW–Madison is extremely active. Drinking is a form of recreation to both take the edge off of the stresses of being in college and as a way to socialize and enjoy time with friends. It is the go-to option for most activities. Social engagements are assumed to have alcohol.”</i></p> <p><i>“Alcohol is something that is ‘required to have a good time’ in the eyes of many students at UW–Madison. It’s viewed as essential at parties, essential to wind down, essential to any socialization.”</i></p> <p><b>The pressure to participate in the drinking culture is high.</b></p> <p><i>“The drinking culture at UW–Madison is also very IN YOUR FACE and annoying. Everyone pressures people to drink, even if they say they don’t. There is no escape. Even if you are not a drinker, you are constantly hearing your neighbors come home drunk or listening to songs that promote drinking. I wish it would stop.”</i></p> <p><i>“People drink basically every day at UW–Madison and if you don’t, then you are basically forced to drink at different events when going out. My freshman year, I was forced to drink alcohol as about ten people stood around me until I drank (one of which was forcing the bottle into my mouth). This past year I went out and this guy says to me, ‘I would love to see you take this shot’ as he and his friends stood around me staring me down like I was an animal and being an African American woman, I am sure you can imagine how that made me feel. I ended up not taking the shot but I did leave the bar and no person should be forced out of a bar just because they don’t want to do what everyone else is doing. Every time I go out, there has never been a time where someone did not force me to drink or take a shot of something.”</i></p>	<p><b>The alcohol culture is how UW–Madison students socialize.</b></p> <p><i>“Alcohol is used commonly by UW–Madison students, but in varying degrees with different social circles. I have noticed that certain friends drink more, and I am more likely to drink more when around them than when I am with friends who don’t drink as heavily.”</i></p> <p><i>“Alcohol is a permanent and predominant part of Madison’s culture. It’s what a lot of people do on the weekend and activity that brings people together for a variety of social events.”</i></p> <p><b>The UW–Madison alcohol culture encourages drinking heavily.</b></p> <p><i>“Practically every person I’ve met over the past two years drinks heavily and encourages the people around them to drink and party. I didn’t drink before coming to UW and now I feel pressure to drink every weekend.”</i></p> <p><i>“People drink very frequently, even those who you wouldn’t have expected to. One of my friends from high school now drinks and parties on some weekends—he was a totally quiet kid before. It’s terrible on the weekends; I live in an apartment and there are parties on every floor from Thursday night to sometimes even Sunday night, starting anywhere from early evening to 3 or 4 in the morning. Seeing drunk college kids on the streets on a Saturday afternoon on football game days is not an uncommon sight. In short, it seems like everyone here is an alcoholic.”</i></p> <p><b>Participation in the alcohol culture is dependent on with whom you socialize.</b></p> <p><i>“Alcohol is used commonly by UW–Madison students, but in varying degrees with different social circles. I have noticed that certain friends drink more, and I am more likely to drink more when around them than when I am with friends who don’t drink as heavily.”</i></p> <p><i>“The alcohol culture at UW–Madison involves a lot of binge-drinking both in the house party setting and at local college bars. The younger undergraduate students drink illegals at house parties, in dorms, or with fake I.D.s. I’m not sure about the amounts of students that partake in illegal activity, but I know from my experience many do. Over 21, many students go out to drink and average of 2 times a week, but consume alcohol more often than that.”</i></p>

**Q: Within the last 30 days have you used alcohol?**

	Students of Color	White Students	Color of Drinking (2015) **
Yes*	67.7%	81.9%	71.7%
No*	17.6%	10.3%	14.5%
I Don't Drink*	14.6%	7.9%	13.8%

	Black/African American Student	Asian/Asian American	Middle Eastern/North African	Different Identity
Yes and No*	86.4%	79.4%	50.0%	78.9%
I Don't Drink*	13.6%	20.6%	50.0%	21.1%

\*Denotes that data differences between white students and students of color were statistically significant.

\*\*Color of Drinking (2015) respondents were all undergraduate students of color.

**Drinker Categories**

**Abstainer:** a student who consumed no alcohol in the past year.

**Nondrinker:** a student who consumed no alcohol in the past two weeks, but may have consumed in the past year.

**Moderate Drinker:** a student who, on the day of highest alcohol use in the past two weeks, had 1–4 drinks (male) or 1–3 drinks (female).

**Heavy Episodic Drinker:** on the day of highest alcohol use in the past two weeks, the student had 5–9 drinks (male) or 4–7 drinks (female).

**Problematic Drinker:** on highest day of use in the past two weeks, the student had more than 10 drinks (male) or more than 8 drinks (female).

**Nondrinker Rate:** a combination of students (abstainer and nondrinker) who reported consuming no alcohol in one year and in the past two weeks.

**Low-Risk Drinking Rate:** male students who report drinking 4 or fewer drinks, female students who report drinking 3 or fewer.

**High-Risk Drinking Rate:** students who report consuming 4 or more on their highest day of alcohol use in two weeks.

	Students of Color	White Students
Abstainer	15.3%	8.4%
Nondrinker	18.8%	10.9%
Moderate Drinker	27.6%	23.6%
Heavy Episodic Drinker	29.2%	35.6%
Problematic Drinker	9.6%	21.4%
Nondrinker Rate	34.1%	19.3%
Low-Risk Drinker	61.7%	42.9%
High-Risk Drinker	38.8%	57.0%



**Diener Flourishing Scale**

Students were asked how much they agreed, on a scale of 1–7, with the following statements:

- I lead a purposeful life.
- My social relationships are supportive
- I am interested in my daily activities.
- I actively contribute to the wellbeing of others.
- I am competent in the activities that are important to me.
- I have a good life.
- I am optimistic about my future.
- People respect me.

**Students with the highest possible score (56) on the Diener Scale:**

	Students of Color	White Students
Abstainer	19.0%	4.5%
Nondrinker	27.2%	4.5%
Moderate Drinker	27.8%	15.9%
Heavy Episodic Drinker	15.6%	47.7%
Problematic Drinker	10.2%	27.3%
Nondrinker Rate	46.2%	9.0%
Low-Risk Drinker	74.0%	24.9%
High-Risk Drinker	25.8%	75.0%

**Q: Do you avoid specific areas on-or off-campus due to concerns about alcohol use of others?**

	Students of Color	White Students	Color of Drinking (2015)
<b>Yes*</b>	41.6%	31.3%	40.2%
<b>No*</b>	46.2%	61.5%	59.8%
<b>Unsure*</b>	12.2%	7.2%	N/A

	Black/African American Student	Asian/Asian American	Latinx, Hispanic, Spanish	Biracial	Multiracial	Different Identity
<b>Yes and Unsure*</b>	66.9%	54.0%	56.6%	52.3%	60.9%	38.4%
<b>No*</b>	33.1%	46.0%	43.5%	47.7%	39.1%	61.6%
<b>Odds Ratio</b>	3.26	1.89	2.10	1.77	2.51	2.65

**Places avoided by group**

Students of Color	White Students
82.7% Fraternity and Sorority housing	85.6% Fraternity and Sorority housing
66.8% Langdon Street	73.1% Langdon Street
47.8% House parties	53.6% State Street and bars
46.7% State Street and bars	48.5% House parties
41.9% Tailgates	38.1% Tailgates
27.1% Lakeshore Path	27.8% Southeast Residence Halls
22.5% Camp Randall	22.6% Lakeshore Path
20.5% Southeast Residence Halls	20.6% Camp Randall
14.8% Regent Street	14.4% Regent Street
5.0% Other locations	4.1% Lakeshore Residence Halls
3.6% Lakeshore Residence Halls	3.1% Other locations

**Q: Have you considered leaving the University?**

	Students of Color	White Students
<b>Yes</b>	24.1%	19.9%
<b>Unsure*</b>	4.7%	1.0%
<b>No</b>	71.1%	79.1%

	Black/African American Student	Latinx, Hispanic, Spanish	Biracial
<b>Yes and Unsure*</b>	43.6%	33.1%	33.1%
<b>No</b>	56.4%	66.9%	66.9%
<b>Odds Ratio</b>	2.97	1.90	1.91

\*Unanswered questions were removed for the analysis.

**Reasons for considering leaving**

Students of Color	White Students
54.5% Racial climate	39.7% Academic reasons
44.5% Mental health reasons	37.9% Mental Health reasons
39.5% Academic reasons	32.7% Interpersonal relationships
25.4% Financial reasons	29.3% Alcohol climate
23.4% Interpersonal reasons	24.1% Other reasons
20.4% Alcohol climate	18.9% Financial reasons
15.7% Family issues	6.9% Racial climate
14.0% Temporary leave	6.9% Temporary leave
9.3% Other reasons	5.2% Family issues
2.7% Medical reasons	3.4% Medical reasons
1.7% Disciplinary reasons	1.7% Disciplinary reasons

**Q: Has alcohol use impacted your health (physical, mental, overall well-being) in the time you have attended UW–Madison?**

	Students of Color	White Students
<b>Yes*</b>	13.7%	19.1%
<b>No</b>	70.0%	64.4%
<b>Unsure*</b>	16.4%	16.6%

**Top themes and selected quotes for impact on health**

Students of Color	White Students
<p><b>Alcohol use impacted my mental health.</b></p> <p><i>“I was diagnosed with depression before I came to campus and as a result I used alcohol to deal with it. It progressively got worse as I started to drink more. It was to the point I was contemplating suicide again, the drinking culture here isn’t good for a person who doesn’t know how to deal with depression and is looking for an outlet such as myself.”</i></p> <p><i>“I often use alcohol as a way to forget about my problems, which just makes it that much harder to face my problems when I sober up. So I feel like my mental health has been affected because I defer my problems, which makes me sadder in the long run.”</i></p> <p><b>Alcohol use caused me to be concerned for my safety.</b></p> <p>“IT’S SAD TO SEE MY PEERS KILLING THEMSELVES AND MAKES ME VERY ANXIOUS TO BE AROUND OR INTERACT WITH MUCH OF THE STUDENT BODY. CONSTANT PARANOIA THAT I WILL BE RAPED OR SEXUALLY ASSULTED. I WOULD LIKE TO HEALTHILY CONSUME BUT AM AFRAID SOMEONE WILL TAKE ADVANTAGE OF ME. VOMIT MAKES ME SAD AND INDUCES ANXIETY.”</p> <p><b>Alcohol use impacted my social life.</b></p> <p><i>“Drinking beer with new friends is kind of like having coffee with new friends. It’s a socializing event. It’s a way to make friends and be with old friends.”</i></p> <p><b>Alcohol use impacted me physically.</b></p> <p><i>“It’s negatively impacted my health; has made me struggle with me weight. I also feel so pressured to drink heavily which affects my social circles.”</i></p>	<p><b>Alcohol use impacted me physically.</b></p> <p><i>“Alcohol sometimes makes you feel sluggish the next day and unable to function, it can also make me say/do things I may regret in the morning.”</i></p> <p><i>“Torn meniscus and broken fibula due to drinking-related injuries.”</i></p> <p><i>“I gained weight due to my drinking.”</i></p> <p><i>“I know I don’t get over colds as quickly if I drink frequently.”</i></p> <p><b>Alcohol use impacted my social life.</b></p> <p><i>“I feel very anxious in situations when there are drunk people. For example, I leave parties early before people start getting drunk, and I was pressured to drink at a field trip I went on.”</i></p> <p><b>Alcohol use impacted my mental health.</b> <i>“I felt encouraged to drink for stress relief instead of seeking help for mental health, or for pursuing health stress-relieving activities.”</i></p> <p><i>“It has lead me to partake in things I wouldn’t have sober. Then when I am sober I feel regret and self-conscious about my decisions I made while drunk.”</i></p> <p><b>Alcohol use has impacted my academics.</b></p> <p><i>“1st year did not know limits and got sick twice due to overconsumption of alcohol, which in turn took away from studying.”</i></p> <p><i>“Major disruption to study and sleep habits.”</i></p>

**Q: Has your personal alcohol use or the alcohol use of others impacted your overall sense of belonging at UW–Madison?**

	Students of Color	White Students
<b>Yes</b>	28.0%	33.0%
<b>No</b>	57.4%	56.5%
<b>Unsure</b>	14.6%	10.5%

**Top themes and selected quotes for impacts on sense of belonging**

Students of Color	White Students
<p><b>If you don't drink you don't fit in at UW–Madison.</b></p> <p><i>"If you don't drink then you're almost excluded from most of the university culture, since there's so much drinking involved, and people use parties to bond and socialize."</i></p> <p><i>"A lot of people associate drinking culture with being a UW–Madison student, and since I do not drink on campus, I doubted if I really belonged here during my first year"</i></p> <p><i>"The privileged culture around drinking and the idea that it is the normal thing to do and how people have fun in college makes me feel like I am not experiencing college the way I am supposed to and that I don't relate to my peers?"</i></p> <p><b>Alcohol use by others makes me feel isolated.</b></p> <p><i>"I tend to feel isolated if I have a backpack on and am going to study while drink people are hooting and hollering as I walk by."</i></p> <p><b>Alcohol use amplifies racial issues.</b></p> <p><i>"I fell that my type of drinking isn't the type others want to do. I prefer drinking a glass of wine/beer while sitting at home doing daily home things. The tailgate culture can be fun, and I love it sometimes, but the huge masses of drunk white people all around me always make me feel very hyperaware. Once there were only a few people of color at a tailgate, and somehow we all ended up helping another out when racial tensions arose with white tailgate goes. When I walk around State St or anywhere near bars/Langdon I am always aware of who is around me and if I am alone. I tend to feel isolated if I have a backpack on and am going to study while drink people are hooting and hollering as I walk by."</i></p>	<p><b>Alcohol helps you fit in and belong.</b></p> <p><i>"It's part of the culture to drink. You fit in if you drink"</i></p> <p><b>If you don't drink, you don't belong.</b></p> <p><i>"I feel like you're most definitely looked down upon/considered an 'outsider' if you do not partake in drinking at UW."</i></p> <p><i>"I really don't drink much, and especially before I turned 21 (because I chose not to underage drink), I felt like I didn't belong at UW because I would decline going to parties or drinking together. I felt like an outsider."</i></p> <p><b>Alcohol helps you meet new people.</b></p> <p><i>"So I think drinking or just 'going out' in general has been a positive thing because I have gotten to know more people that I don't typically chat with during the week."</i></p> <p><b>Drinking alcohol helps me feel like I belong at UW–Madison.</b></p> <p><i>"I think that enjoying getting drunk helps me feel like I belong here."</i></p> <p><i>"participating in the alcohol culture here brings a feeling of belonging"</i></p> <p><b>Alcohol helps you bond with people socially.</b></p> <p><i>"Going out is a way to see all of your friends in a fun environment. A lot of my friends go to the same bars so I'm guaranteed to see friends out on most weekends"</i></p>

**Q: Have you been impacted by others' alcohol use during your time at UW–Madison?**

	Students of Color	White Students
<b>Yes</b>	46.4%	43.0%
<b>No</b>	40.6%	41.9%
<b>Unsure</b>	13.0%	15.2%

Students of Color	White Students
71.2% Taking care of an intoxicated person	68.3% Taking Care of an intoxicated person
65.5% Noise issues	68.3% Noise issues
53.7% Increased trash such as bottles and cans on property	62.1% Vomit of others
52.9% Vomit of others	60.2% Increased trash such as bottles and cans on property
47.4% Disruption to study	46.6% Disruption to study
45.8% Pressure to drink even after declining	44.7% Pressure to drink even after declining
27.5% Disruption in other ways	26.1% Sexual harassment
25.7% Racial harassment	25.5% Disruption in other ways
23.3% Sexual harassment	23.6% Calling for help for an intoxicated person
23.1% Accepted into new or different social circles	23.0% Vandalism/property damage
18.6% Harassment based on appearance	19.9% Accepted into new or different social circles
16.1% Vandalism/property damage	19.3% Harassment based on gender/gender identity.
14.5% Verbal threats	17.4% Harassment based on your appearance
13.7% Harassment based on gender/gender identity	11.8% Personal monetary consequences
13.3% Harassment about political climate/assumed political affiliation.	11.8% Items thrown at you
11.7% Harassment about where you're from	9.3% Harassment about political climate/assumed political affiliation
10.9% Items thrown at you	9.3% Verbal threats
10.7% Personal monetary consequences	8.7% Event being cancelled because of disruptive behavior linked to drinking.
9.6% Physical threats	6.8% Physical threats
9.6% Event being cancelled because of disruptive behavior linked to drinking.	5.0% Other reasons
4.8% Harassment based on your speech or accent	4.4% Fundraising opportunities
3.9% Harassment based on your religion or assumed religion	3.1% Harassment based on sexual orientation
3.6% Harassment based on sexual orientation	2.5% Racial harassment
2.9% Other reasons	1.9% Harassment about where you're from
	0.6% Harassment based on religion/assumed religion

**Q: Have you experienced any microaggressions at UW–Madison?**

	Students of Color	Color of Drinking (2015)
Yes	61.7%	62.0%
No	38.3%	38.0%

	Black/African American Student	Asian/Asian American	Latinx, Hispanic, Spanish	Middle Eastern/ North African	Biracial	Multiracial	Different Identity
Yes	79.1%	55.3%	63.5%	62.5%	52.3%	60.9%	38.4%
No	20.9%	44.7%	36.5%	37.5%	47.7%	39.1%	61.6%

**Q: Detail your experiences with microaggressions at this university in the box below.**

*Examples can include, but are not limited to: alcohol-related experiences, classroom interactions, on/off campus living, etc.*

**Selected quotes and themes:**

**Harassment based on student’s race, ethnicity, or assumed race and ethnicity**

*“Students who ask to touch my hair, students who touch/pull my hair without asking, probing questions about how my hair works and if it’s real, constant comments at every small change in my hair, ‘your hair isn’t cool/pretty anymore’ after removing weave, casual use of racial slurs from friends and acquaintances, ‘you’re very articulate,’ ‘you’re pretty cool!’ in comparison to other black people, ‘you all are so amazing’ referring to groups of black women in stem, multiple people referring to me by the name of the other black woman in my dorm (who looks nothing like me), ‘it was tough for black women, but it was hard for ALL WOMEN back then,’ and more I’m sure aren’t coming to mind.”*

**Classroom interactions**

*“Professors mostly; one has commented on how articulate I am. Another professor accused me of plagiarism (when I didn’t) because she didn’t think I had the capabilities to write well.”*

*“I sometimes find in my classrooms that people often chose to ignore me or turn to a different person when given time to discuss certain topics. I have to go out of my way to talk to others, but even then I can sense some individuals do not feel comfortable talking to me.”*

**Stereotypes about race ethnicity or assumed race and ethnicity**

*“Always asked about where I’m from, get remarks and threats made at me because of being Mexican, had people make fun of me right in front of me because I’m Mexican, been asked if I’m an illegal immigrant or if anyone in my family is, have been told that I’m going to be deported.”*

### Alcohol-related microaggressions

*“I have been frequently confused with other south Asian students who do not look like me by intoxicated people. One time a very drunk white guy (college student) told me he rules Saudi Arabia (where I am not from) and used the ‘N word.’ I’ve heard lots of white students use the ‘N word.’ I’ve frequently heard people complain about their TA’s accents. I’ve been harassed by presumable straight white men because I am queer.”*

*“Touching my hair, describing how I smell (coconut oil smell=Pina coladas apparently to drunk people), making remarks about who I am with based on their race, judging my opinions on an issue due to my race, list goes on to be honest.”*

### Harassment around language or assumed language spoken

*“What kind of Asian are you,’ ‘do you speak English,’ classroom interactions (people asking me to represent my identity, microaggressions by instructors, racist readings), random microaggressions in public (people saying ‘chink’ or assuming I don’t speak English)”*

**Q: Have you witnessed a microaggression during your time at UW–Madison?  
Have you intervened in a situation where you witnessed a microaggression at UW–Madison?**

	Students of Color		White Students	
	Witnessed	Intervened	Witnessed	Intervened
<b>Yes and Unsure*</b>	84.1%	50.0%	60.1%	45.0%
<b>No</b>	15.9%	50.0%	39.9%	55.0%

	Black/African American Student		Asian/Asian American		Latinx, Hispanic, Spanish	
	Witnessed	Intervened	Witnessed	Intervened	Witnessed	Intervened
<b>Yes and Unsure*</b>	91.2%	61.87%	79.1%	43.0%	86.2%	49.0%
<b>No</b>	8.8%	38.13%	20.9%	57.0%	13.8%	51.0%



**Q: Have you experienced the following?**

	Students of Color	White Students
I have to find alternative study spaces because of the alcohol culture.	46.6%	43.7%
When assigned group work, group meetings are scheduled around alcohol consumption.	37.4%	41.8%
My professors or TAs discuss alcohol in the classroom.*	49.3%	57.0%

**Q: In the past year, because of your alcohol use, have you experienced the following?**

	Students of Color	White Students
I have been too hungover to attend class.*	17.9%	29.1%
I chose to drink instead of study.*	39.2%	47.9%
I received a poor final grade because I chose to drink instead of study.	12.4%	13.0%
I missed a class because of alcohol use.	16.1%	19.5%
I performed poorly on an assignment because of alcohol use.*	15.7%	25.3%

**Q: How would you characterize your and/or your family's financial status before coming to college?**

	Students of Color	White Students
Struggle, not enough to get by*	5.7%	2.6%
Enough to get by, but not much left over*	37.8%	20.6%
Comfortable	42.1%	53.7%
Well to do	13.5%	22.1%
Other	0.9%	1.1%

## Color of Drinking Survey Comments

Color key: *red = white students, black = students of color*

### Q: Describe the alcohol culture at UW–Madison

“Felt the alcohol culture for freshman is what get people to feel isolated, first-years are told about this ‘**amazing Wisconsin experience**’ that will have you drunk on Friday nights, and Saturday mornings (for football), but this perceived idea of what it **means to be a badger** is off and very unhealthy.”

“There is a huge alcohol culture in UW–Madison. It is such a **norm to go out a party and drink**; you start to become numb to the idea of not going out every weekend. I didn't realize how much **access we have to alcohol** and opportunities to drink until I talked to my twin sister who told me that she could count on her hand the amount of times she drank her first year of college.”

“People drink basically every day at UW–Madison and if you don't, then you are basically **forced to drink** at different events when going out. My freshman year, I was forced to drink alcohol as about ten people stood around me until I drank (one of which was forcing the bottle into my mouth). This past year I went out and this guy says to me, ‘I would love to see you take this shot’ as he and his friends stood around me **staring me down like I was an animal** and being an **African American woman**, I am sure you can imagine how that made me feel. I ended up not taking the shot but I did leave the bar and no person should be forced out of a bar just because they don't want to do what everyone else is doing. Every time I go out, there has never been a time where someone did not force me to drink or take a shot of something.”

“Obviously, we already know that there is a well-established drinking culture here at UW–Madison. It can be easy to be sucked into it in an effort to ‘**fit in**’ but you certainly don't have to do it to still have friends. I would say most people here on campus partake in the occasional drink or two as a way to relax and have fun with friends.”

“It's toxic literally, and as a person of color it's frightening. White people on campus will call you **disgusting names** and use **racially charged language** when **under the influence**.”

“Lit AF (As F\*\*k)”

“Oftentimes the **people that are targeted** by violent or angry drunk students are **students of color** or those in **minority groups**.”

“**Alcohol is a large part** of the **culture** here in Madison. One who does not drink may feel **left out**.”

“The alcohol culture is very **white driven**. People of color do not feel safe on this campus when alcohol is involved because people's true thoughts about people of color come out. I have had many friends that have been **harassed by drunk white males**. They have been called the ‘**N word**’ or have been told **they don't belong** on this campus. As a student of color, I **no longer attend parties due to the constant feeling of being harassed**. However, it is something that is **impossible to escape on this campus**.”

“At the UW alcohol is obviously a big part of the culture, however I feel like with it being such a big part, students here are **smarter** about it and **when they drink it is healthier** than students from other schools. For example, when friends visit from other schools where drinking and parties are less common, they drink a ton and put themselves in dangerous situations because they think that they must make the most of their weekend here. Whereas **students here have more accessibility** to it and so make better decisions when exposed to it.”

“P.S... **police officers and adults also react VERY differently to drunk students depending on their demographics. Fix that.**”

“There are many subsets, but the most publicized and dangerous is heavy drinking at frats, sororities, and some apartments. Underage and of age people will get drunk before going out to either bars or parties where they drink more. **The expectation at this school is that you drink**. The university does a terrible job at handling this. Their alcohol awareness material is outdated and mis-targeted. **Their punishment policies and restrictions lead to more dangerous consumption and more students getting hurt.**”

"I try to avoid alcohol when I lived in Sellery Hall my freshman year and in an apartment two blocks away from State Street my sophomore year. But it's everywhere. However, I try to limit my interactions by trying to **avoiding State Street and Langdon**, especially since those places tend to be pretty white. I have attended a few parties as an underclassman. In these parties, it's mainly people of color. Alcohol culture is prominent in those spaces as well. Because I didn't like the culture, I rarely attend those parties now."

"I think that there is a strong Party culture here. When people are drinking, there's always that **encouragement to excessively drink**. I've encountered too many people that make **blacking out seem like a normal acceptable** repeated behavior and it makes me concerned about how many other students on campus participate in the culture like this."

"**Toxic, unmediated, unsafe** for both the young students who enter the school and are thrown into a culture of overdrinking, and for the **students of color whose safety and position on campus become collateral to it**. It makes me **mistrust my peers** in the classroom and **resent the administration for turning a blind eye**, especially in the **wake of rising sexual assault and racially based aggressions**."

"Most undergraduates binge drink at **minimum every other week**. They often **come to class hungover**. This is **viewed as normal** and **just what you do during college as an undergrad**."

"Obscene. While there are spaces for those who aren't interested in drinking to do as they wish, the impact and spillover of **horribly drunk, entitled, and pervasively white students** has followed me since my first day at this university. It is **encouraged by students with inherent societal power, ignored by those with the authority** to influence it, and systemic oppression within our society and this university itself silences those who would like to change it. Most of all, it is a vehicle by which immature and insecure white males are able to **silence and take advantage of women and encourages women to perceive this abuse as a status symbol in the name of state pride**."

"It is very **normative**. I would say it is described as '**normal**' to drink and to drink a lot. A lot of what makes the alcohol culture here is the idea that drinking a lot to get really drunk and party is 'cool.' People **take pride** in being named the #1 Party School in the country. Alcohol is associated with the social scene as well. I wouldn't say it is bad though, it is just the culture, especially being in Wisconsin where alcohol is such a big part of life."

"There's also a certain amount of general privileged behavior that accompanies the alcohol culture. Students will binge drink and **drunkenly lack regard for other people/property/etc**."

"For context, I am a fifth-year senior Caucasian male writing this. I also do occasionally enjoy an alcoholic drink. While trying to avoid hyperbole, I really do believe that alcohol is a focal point at UW–Madison. I believe this for a couple reasons. First, as a student comes to UW–Madison, it really is largely assumed by most friends and family of that student (and their peers at UW) that they will engage in drinking upon their arrival. I encountered this before I came to UW–Madison, as parents would give me a particular 'look' when I told them which school I was headed to. With a smile and their tongue firmly in their cheek, they would always say '**oh boy, you're going to have fun there!**' — Where I knew what they were getting at. Second, I see alcohol being a **focal point in the way that alumni oftentimes act when returning to UW–Madison's campus** for events. Especially when it comes to football gamedays, it seems like it is **parents or other, older alumni** that get the most out of hand during tailgating or while out at the bars following a game. I have encountered more **drunken, stumbling dads and moms** than I can count on football Saturdays, while their younger UW student counterparts go walking by. It seems like the legend and lore of 'the good old days' that older alumni had cause them to drink much more than they can handle upon their return to campus. All in all, while I am not by any means directly opposed to alcohol, it seems that **alcohol is quite celebrated on UW–Madison's campus**, to the point of **promoting unhealthy habits in young people that they will carry into their later adult lives**.

"And when mixed with the **social climate** of the campus, it's almost unbearable. **Alcohol and racism** don't mix."

**Q: Has your personal alcohol use or the alcohol use of others impacted your overall sense of belonging at UW–Madison?**

“It seems that drinking is part of the **‘Wisconsin experience,’** we even have shirts sold by the **University bookstore** that say so. Because I don't drink due to religious reasons, I feel like **I do not belong in this culture.**”

“**Drinking alcohol is an activity** I partake in with my friends, however I would still be friends with them if I didn't drink too. It is **just an activity that we do other.**”

“Before coming to college, I **rarely drank alcohol.** I **started drinking alcohol** when I got to UW-Madison, mainly because it's what **everyone was doing at social events.** When I am at said events, **I feel more connected** to everyone when I am **drinking alongside them.**”

“I think in a positive way, a lot of people are **really studious and buckled down during the week** so they are **more social on the weekend.** So I think drinking or just ‘going out’ in general has been a positive thing because **I have gotten to know more people** that I don't **typically chat with during the week.**”

“**Choosing not to drink makes me feel isolated in social gatherings.** I end up **leaving early** because I'm the **only one still sober,** which is not ideal. **Conversation** with others typically **revolves around the last time someone got drunk, got wasted, or was hung over.** I have nothing to contribute.”

“**Going out** is a way to **see all of your friends in a fun environment.** A lot of my friends go to the same bars so **I'm guaranteed to see friends out on most weekends.**”

“The privileged culture around drinking and the idea that it is the normal thing to do and how people have fun in college makes **me feel like I am not experiencing college the way I am supposed to** and that I **don't relate to my peers.**”

“**I feel like an outcast** sometimes because, while I like to go out and drink, **I am very focused on school** and sometimes would prefer to stay in to study; **a lot of people don't understand that.**”

“I personally don't like to drink because I have an **addictive personality,** and I tend to enjoy drinking but do not like the effects that it can leave me with. This means that **the entire campus can sometimes feel like a trap that is trying to get me to give in, and eventually lose myself.**”

“I feel as though **I fit in and belong.**”

“It's hard to **feel as if you belong** when you don't want to **participate in the one thing that defines this institution.**”

“I'm not always about drinking, and see through it as ‘lame’ sometimes. It **disconnects me from certain situations.**”

“As a minority, many **alcohol related events are attended my white people in majority.** It is often disheartening to look around and **be the only person of color.**”

“The **mainstream publicized culture is a party culture.** If you do not take part you are an **outsider.**”

“When **people drink, they're true views come out.** One day I and a group of friends were told to ‘Go back to Africa.’ One day someone told me they wanted to play basketball with me because I'm black. **I feel little microaggressions** like that constantly and it makes me not want to be around the white community of this campus at all.”

“Like I am so **different** because **I don't drink heavy.**”

“Because **I don't drink** that often, I am **not included** in as much. I'm also **not allowed to some houses** because I **am Muslim.**”

**Q: Has alcohol use impacted your health (physical, mental, overall well-being) in the time you have attended UW–Madison?**

“I was **diagnosed with depression** before I came to campus and as a result I **used alcohol to deal with it**. It **progressively got worse** as I started to drink more. It was to **the point I was contemplating suicide again**, the **drinking culture here isn't good for a person who doesn't know how to deal with depression** and is looking for an **outlet such as myself**.”

“I felt **encouraged to drink for stress relief** instead of **seeking help for mental health**, or for pursuing health stress-relieving activities.”

“It can be **overwhelming** when I am **walking home at night** and there are large **groups of drunk students walking past me**. As someone who lives **with Generalized Anxiety Disorder**, this can be extremely stressful, and I **often won't leave my house on game days because I fear something bad happening**. I have been **verbally assaulted and called a nigger and bitch** before, so I try to **avoid** this happening again by **simply not leaving my home**.”

“I have **general anxiety disorder** and drinking makes that a **lot worse**.”

“It's like I have to **put on a performance in order to fit in**, and **that takes a toll on me**.”

“**Torn meniscus and broken fibula** due to drinking-related injuries.”

“The **temptation to use alcohol as an escape from difficult life** situations instead of **processing and coping soberly**.”

“Some (minor) **weight gain** could probably be attributed to alcohol. Consumption has led to **emotional episodes**, on rare occasion.”

“I feel **unsafe in game days** leaving my house to go to the library or study space. Due to that I end up **staying home unable to concentrate and effectively study**.”

“Alcohol sometimes makes you feel **sluggish the next day** and unable to function, it can also make me say/do things I may **regret** in the morning.”

“I was **sexually abused**.”

“The area I live has lots of **noise so I can't sleep** as well. Also I have to worry about if my roommate comes home after drinking.”

“The **connection between alcohol consumption, mental health, and sexual health all intersect** for me. I realize that due to my **depression**, it is not a good idea to binge drink, **so I avoid it to keep my inner peace**. I know that if I am wanting to have sex with a partner, I will not consume alcohol out of respect for myself and my partner due & in order to obtain consent.”

“It has **lead me to partake** in things I **wouldn't have sober**. Then when I am sober I feel **regret and self-conscious about my decisions I made while drunk**.”

“My **mental health and overall well-being** has been impacted as many places of **alcohol consumption rarely integrate an inclusive environment**.”

“It has **negatively impacted my overall well-being**. It has caused more **mental stress from bad decision making due to consumption** as well as **injury**. It also causes me **financial stress**.”

**Q: *Detail your experiences with microaggressions at this University in the box below. Examples can include, but are not limited to: alcohol-related experiences, classroom interactions, on/off campus living, etc.***

"People always think I'm stealing. It's hard to be accepted when it comes to group projects because people think you are lazy. I've had some White people purposely stare at me to start fights."

"During Halloween, many people will put on Mexican costumes which I find offensive and while intoxicated will make lots of jokes about the culture."

"A kid was drunk and told my friends and I to 'go back to Africa.' Teachers have dismissed or invalidated opinions because race was brought up. I have gotten dirty looks just moving in spaces as a black person. I have gotten dirty looks for wearing a wave cap to go get food. I have been in spaces where non-black people have said the 'N word' and tried to justify their use for it. The entire alcohol culture is rooted in the privilege to not have to worry or even acknowledge race, sexual orientation, or gender when moving in spaces."

"Living in the dorms I had many incidents of microaggressions. Freshman year my roommate said he thought that I would sell drugs out of the room because I was black. I have also heard the 'N word' being said by white people more times than I can count."

There was a headdress painted on Ingraham Hall. I found it just as I came from a horrible test. It really was a bad start to my day. My friends and Native community members were mocked at a healing ceremony. Some sent an email, questioning my native ness after speaking about the indent at Dejepe. I have overheard so many conversation speaking of Natives as dead, or as stupid/ not worthy to attend the UW. The only reason they are here is because of scholarships. Also that we complain too much, even though all we ever asking for is to be heard. Due to the Native population being so small, we get ignored or worse, forgotten about."

"I have been frequently confused with other south Asian students who do not look like me by intoxicated people. One time a very drunk white guy (college student) told me he rules Saudi Arabia (where I am not from) and used the n word. I've heard lots of white students use the n word. I've frequently heard people complain about their TA's accents. I've been harassed by presumable straight white men because I am queer."

"I feel like people stare at me as if there was something on my face. People have also asked me where my family is from in a sneaky way suggesting that they would like to know what my racial background is."

"Folks asking where I am from or asking if I am a specific Asian ethnicity. Becoming the token POC in a classroom or social space and being expected to be able to speak for all POC."

"A lot people in Wisconsin stare sometimes I feel like just because I am black. They say things related to our culture (hair, clothes, music) forms of cultural appropriation that make me uncomfortable at times. I think a lot of people say things, and don't mean it in a mean way they are just no culturally aware because they never had to experience being a minority."

"Always asked about where I'm from, get remarks and threats made at me because of being Mexican, had people make fun of me right in front of me because I'm Mexican, been asked if I'm an illegal immigrant or if anyone in my family is, have been told that I'm going to be deported."

"In group settings, people avoid talking to you, making eye contact, or blatantly ignore you when talking about an activity or assignment related to class. Instructors that help other students more than they help you. Give longer more in depth evaluations to students they favor. Pass over you when having open class discussions."

"Being interrogated about my ethnicity and that my views are skewed because of my culture"



“Where are you from?’ ‘I’m from NYC.’ ‘No, but where are you really from’ This gets really annoying. Also, being in a study room with multiple friends and having a drunk ‘friend’ on the floor come in and yell the ‘N word’. Being in a classroom and having people make it sound like my grade is normal for people like me. ‘There should be more churches than mosques.’ etc.”

“Even from my closest friends there is often jokes or comments made about my religion and race. Most off all I find that people refer to me as ‘one of the good ones’ since I was born in the US. Moreover, I notice that people also have been mistaken for Latino on multiple occasions and had people say some racial epithets and derogatory comments people have very little hesitation when it comes to prejudices against Asians or other minority groups than Hispanic or African-American/African. I am not trying to minimize the plight of those groups, but I think in our current political climate people don't feel the need to censor their prejudice.”

“I've been told to remove my turban at sporting events (by other attendees). At house parties and bars people will often touch my turban without permission. I've been called a terrorist, towel head, Arab, and other slurs before.”

“Being Indian, I'm often associated with the actions of other Indians. This doesn't happen to white folks as they are judged as individuals and not as a race. For instance, when Ajit Pai repealed net neutrality, I found racist comments directed at me for him being Indian. Comments like, ‘shouldn't you be ashamed of this dude?’ and comments on this line.”

“People asking me ‘where are you REALLY from’; people telling me I look exotic, have a little flavor, etc. People saying I'm not really Latina. People treating me like I'm dumb in physics class. The list goes on and on!”

“In several of my engineering classes, other students would greet me by speaking African American Vernacular English or with Madea (Tyler Perry Madea) references. I gave them no indication whatsoever that is how I wanted to be greeted other persons have touched my hair without my permission.”

“Being told that it's not fair I get a scholarship for being Asian while middle class white people get nothing. Being told I'm attractive unlike other Asian girls. My white friend commenting on how she found our other friends (who are black) more attractive than other black people because they sound educated.”

“Most often happens when people are under the influence. Drunk white people always say the n word at parties not directly to me but to their friends or to sing with songs. Also guys that approach me at parties that are not the same racial identity as me always mention something about my race.”

“White teachers don't take me seriously even when I understand the content better than them. I hear people complaining about policies for inclusion and about the presence of students of color on campus near/in the common areas of my residence hall.”

“Professors mostly; one has commented on how articulate I am. Another professor accused me of plagiarism (when I didn't) because she didn't think I had the capabilities to write well.”

“In my Calc. 3 class, I was the only black girl that was part of WES. We were split up into groups to work together. My group decided to start a group chat and they passed the phone to everyone but me.

“In group settings, people avoid talking to you, making eye contact, or blatantly ignore you when talking about an activity or assignment related to class. Instructors that help other students more than they help you. Give longer more in depth evaluations to students they favor. Pass over you when having open class discussions.”

“Being told I have only been accepted to UW because I am a person of color. I have had a class where the TA asks us to stand in front of the class and has the class guess our heritage. People will not sit next to me on a bus. People assume I speak Spanish. Often in class I am asked to speak for my whole race.”

“A girl had put chop sticks under my pillow because she thought it was funny.”

**| Questions? Email: [colorofdrinking@uhs.wisc.edu](mailto:colorofdrinking@uhs.wisc.edu) |**