

## **Results of the 2019 Whitman College Social Trends Survey**

Neal Christopherson, Office of Institutional Research

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### **Introduction**

The Social Trends survey was designed to gain insight on certain health and lifestyle behaviors of Whitman students, particularly the campus drinking culture. This includes not only self-reported behaviors but also perceptions of others' actions. A portion of the survey was guided by Social Norms theory, which argues that perceptions of others' behavior are the most important factor when a student tries to evaluate their own actions, or a friend's actions, against everyone else in a particular group, or everyone else on campus.

Our goals in conducting the survey include the following:

- To learn about student perceptions of campus drinking
- To learn about student perceptions of their sleeping and eating habits
- To learn about student perceptions of their mental health
- To uncover the realities of campus drinking and drug use
- To note any changes in drinking behavior from previous surveys
- To educate students about the realities of campus drinking and drug use

This final goal does not involve education students about drinking in general, but rather is about informing the students about the realities of what is happening on campus, as a way to clear up any misperceptions held by the campus in general. This goal aims to allow students to make more informed decisions about drinking, and to alleviate any unnecessary peer pressure that may come from holding misperceptions of others' actions and attitudes.

### **Methodology**

The 2019 version was the 7<sup>th</sup> administration of the Social Trends Survey. The initial 2002 survey was developed by adapting questions from successful alcohol surveys done at other colleges and universities. Some questions were altered slightly to fit the Whitman environment. Subsequent surveys have eliminated some questions related to alcohol use, made minor changes about others, and added new questions about aspects of both alcohol and drug use, and other aspects of student life.

The 2019 survey was conducted on-line through Qualtrics, set up to both allow for reminder e-mails to those who had not responded and simultaneously ensure respondent anonymity. This process allowed the ability to track response rates, prevent people from taking the survey more than once, and follow-up with non-responders to boost response rates, all while keeping the survey anonymous.

All students on campus during the 2019 spring semester who had also been on campus during the 2018 fall semester were invited to participate in the survey (N=1,308). Students who studied abroad or were on leave of absence during the fall or spring were ineligible due to the nature of the

survey questions. 633 students completed all or some of the survey<sup>1</sup>, a 48% response rate. This was a lower response rate than previous versions of the survey.

A glance at the demographics of the population and those of the respondents reveals that the sample is fairly representative of the population, although women, independent students, and first-year students were slightly more likely to participate in the survey. The following table shows the percentage of various groups in the population vs. the respondents.

### Population vs. Respondents

Population (N=1,308)	Respondents (N=633)
56% Female	58% Female
44% Male	38% Male
27% Seniors	22% Seniors
16% Juniors	14% Juniors
28% Sophomores	27% Sophomores
29% FY Students	37% FY Students
41% Greek System	31% Greek System

### Results

In the following tables, the numbers given are the percent of respondents answering in each category. Missing responses are not included.

#### *Sleeping and Eating*

Research suggests people between the ages of 18 and 25 need between 8 and 9 hours of sleep per night to function optimally. Using these criteria, most Whitman students would benefit from additional sleep on weeknights. The most common response for weeknight sleep was 7 hours, with about 29% averaging less and 32% averaging more. On average, students sleep much more on weekends, as is to be expected.

On average, how much sleep do you get on a...?	Weeknight	Weekend Night
5 hours or less	7%	3%
6 hours	22%	7%
7 hours	39%	20%
8 hours	28%	41%
9 hours or more	4%	28%

About half the survey classified their eating habits as a “Balanced, Healthy Diet,” while nearly 20% admitted to struggling with eating choices or having an eating disorder. Students in the “other”

<sup>1</sup> One response was deemed to be a false or “joke” response and was removed. This responses indicated the respondent used cocaine, hallucinogens, opiates, and all other drugs on the survey every day, and consumed over 70 alcoholic drinks per week.

category who elaborated on their response tended to write about having trouble fitting into just one of the response choices, or how their diet was very inconsistent (varied with stress levels, e.g.).

<b>How would you classify your eating habits?</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Balanced Healthy Diet	48%
Unbalanced Diet	29%
Struggling with eating choices	15%
Eating Disorder	3%
Other	4%

In addition, response to the question about eating habits varied by gender. Female students were less likely to say they ate a balanced healthy diet, and much more likely to say they were struggling with eating choices or had an eating disorder.

<b>How would you classify your eating habits?</b>	<b>Trans / Genderqueer/ Other Gender</b>		
	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	
Balanced Healthy Diet	54%	44%	48%
Unbalanced Diet	32%	28%	30%
Struggling with eating choices	9%	19%	19%
Eating Disorder	1%	4%	4%
Other	4%	4%	0%
Total N	218	332	27

### *Mental Health and Counseling*

The 2019 Social Trends survey added questions related to mental health and the use of the counseling center. Results show that the majority of students experience stress and anxiety from a variety of sources “sometimes” or “often/very often,” with stress related to academics much more common than from relationships, and much more common than anxiety that affects academic performance and social life. Most students also say they engage in regular physical activity.

<b>How often do you experience the following?</b>	<b>Very Often or Often</b>			<b>Rarely or Never</b>
		<b>Sometimes</b>		
Stress related to academics	69%	25%	6%	
Stress related to relationships	35%	40%	26%	
Anxiety that affects your academic performance	38%	34%	28%	
Anxiety that affects your social life	36%	35%	29%	
Engage in regular physical activity	60%	25%	15%	
Feel like you get enough sleep	39%	34%	27%	

There are some differences by gender on the above questions. In particular, women are much more likely to feel stress related to academics, and men are more likely to engage in regular physical activity. The following table shows the percentage answering “often” or “very often” on each item for each gender category.

<b>How often do you experience the following “often” or “very often”?</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Trans / Genderqueer/ Other Gender</b>
Stress related to academics	56%	79%	70%
Stress related to relationships	34%	34%	30%
Anxiety that affects your academic performance	31%	40%	48%
Anxiety that affects your social life	30%	37%	44%
Engage in regular physical activity	69%	56%	41%
Feel like you get enough sleep	40%	38%	37%

About half the students who responded to the survey have used the counseling center, and another 17% say they intend to use its services.

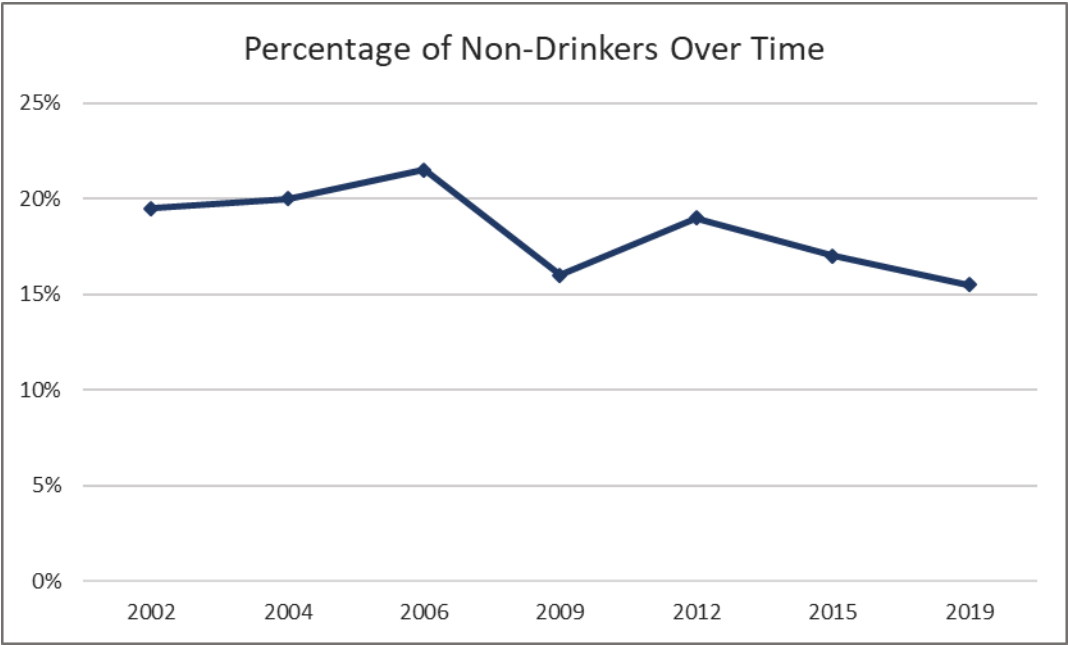
<b>Have you ever visited the Whitman Counseling Center?</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Yes	44%
No, but I intend to use the services of the Counseling Center	17%
No, and I do not have plans to use the services of the Counseling Center	38%

Students said they used, or intended to use, the counseling center to deal with stress, anxiety, and depression, in that order or frequency. Common elaborations on the “other” category include issues related to eating disorders, relationship issues, and PTSD.

<b>Please indicate reasons why you utilize (or intend to utilize) the Whitman Counseling Center</b>	<b>% of Students Using / Intending to Use the Counseling Center</b>	<b>% of All Students</b>
Stress	62%	38%
Anxiety	70%	43%
Depression	54%	33%
Other	24%	15%

### *Number of Non-Drinkers*

About 15.5% of students said they did not drink alcohol during the fall semester. As shown in the following graph, over time our trend data shows a slight decrease in the proportion of students who did not drink during the fall semester.



*Frequency of Alcohol Consumption*

We asked a variety of questions about the amount of drinking students do. First, we asked about the number of occasions students consumed alcohol. The table below shows that over half of Whitman students consumed alcohol on fewer than 10 occasions during the semester (less than 1 per week), while about a quarter consumed alcohol on 20 or more occasions.

<b>Approximately on how many occasions (different days) did you consume alcohol during the fall semester?</b>	<b>Percent</b>
None	16%
1-5 separate occasions	18%
6-10 separate occasions	17%
11-20 separate occasions	21%
20 or more separate occasions	27%

One measure of alcohol consumption asked respondents how many drinks they had per day during a typical week during the fall semester. These results are not making any claims that this is what happens every week on campus, they are simply reporting what students say happens during a typical week.

After Friday and Saturday, weeknight drinking appears to slowly increase through the week. Thursday shows the most weeknight drinking. Slightly more alcohol is consumed on Wednesday than on Tuesday (a slight deviation from previous surveys), and least amount of drinking happens on Mondays. Complete results are as follows (note percentages include non-drinkers in the 0 category).

**For a typical week during the fall semester, indicate how many drinks you had on each day. (A drink is 12 oz. of beer or wine cooler, a 5 oz. of wine, or 1 oz. of liquor).**

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10+
Sunday	90%	5.5%	1.5%	1%	1%	1%	0.2%	0%	0%	0%	0.2%
Monday	92%	5%	2%	1%	0.4%	0%	0%	0%	0.2%	0%	0%
Tuesday	88%	4%	3.5%	0.6%	2%	1%	1%	0.2%	0%	0%	0%
Wednesday	84%	7%	5%	2%	1%	0.6%	0.2%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Thursday	82%	7%	5%	3%	3%	0.6%	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%	0%	0%
Friday	28%	8.5%	10%	14%	12%	9%	6%	4%	5%	2%	3%
Saturday	28%	8%	12%	12%	12%	9.5%	6%	4%	5%	2%	2.5%

Here are some interesting factoids from this set of results:

- About 28% of Whitman students do not drink on a typical Friday or Saturday. About 73% of those who drink on Friday or Saturday have 4 or fewer drinks (including those who do not drink).
- Around 90-92% do not drink on a typical Sunday or Monday. The majority of those who drink on Sunday or Monday have 1 drink.
- The majority of students who drink on Tuesday – Thursday have 1 or 2 drinks. Of those who drink on Wednesday or Thursday, about 85% have 3 or fewer drinks. Interestingly, while fewer students drink on Tuesday, of those who drink only 68% have 3 or fewer drinks.
- Around 3% of Whitman students say they have 10 or more drinks on a typical Friday or Saturday night.

### *Drinks per week*

The above data allows for the computation of the number of drinks Whitman students have over the course of a typical week. Most students (about 71%) say they have fewer than 10 drinks per week, and about 6% say they have 20 or more drinks per week.

Drinks per week	%
0 drinks	27%
1-9 drinks	42%
10-19 drinks	23%
20+ drinks	8%

### *Consequences of Alcohol Use*

Nationally, 25% of college students report academic consequences of their drinking, including missing class, doing poorly on exams or papers, and receiving lower grades<sup>2</sup>. Whitman does

<sup>2</sup> All national statistics are from this source: [http://www.collegedrinkingprevention.gov/niaacollegematerials/Reports/TaskForce/Intro\\_03.aspx](http://www.collegedrinkingprevention.gov/niaacollegematerials/Reports/TaskForce/Intro_03.aspx)

comparatively well on this measure, as about 14% of Whitman students reported that alcohol has affected academic performance<sup>3</sup>. This is roughly the same as the number from the 2015 survey (15%). Note that in 2012 this number was 10%, and in surveys prior to 2012 6-8% of students reported that alcohol affected academic performance.

<b>During the fall semester, how did your consumption of alcohol affect your academic performance? (Mark all that apply)</b>	<b>Percent</b>
My academic performance has not been affected	86%
Missed a day (or part of a day) or school	8%
Received a lower grade on an exam or important paper/project	4%
Received a lower grade in a course	2%
Dropped a course	1%
Performed poorly on a test or important project	2%
Received an academic warning or probation	0%

Further analysis reveals the obvious: those who drink more per week are more likely to report that their academic performance was affected by alcohol. The following table shows the percentage of students who said their academics were affected by alcohol, broken out by the number of drinks they had during a typical week in the fall semester.

<b>Drinks per week</b>	<b>% Academics Affected</b>
1-9 drinks	9%
10-19 drinks	20%
20+ drinks	32%

### *Binge Drinking*

When asked about binge drinking, 38% had not had four or more drinks in one sitting in the previous two weeks<sup>4</sup>, and 24% of students had consumed four or more drinks in a row one time during the last two weeks.

<b>During the last two weeks, how often did you have four or more drinks in a row?</b>	<b>Percent</b>
None	38%
Once	24%
Twice	18%
3-5 times	16%
6-9 times	3%
10 or more times	1%

<sup>3</sup> About 84% of survey respondents marked the “not been affected” response, 12% marked one or more of the “negative consequences” options, and 4% left all responses blank. Non-drinkers were included in the “academics not affected” count. The numbers in the above table were modified to reflect the number of survey respondents who skipped this question.

<sup>4</sup> These numbers include non-drinkers.

Those who had more than four drinks in a row in the last two weeks were asked to give the exact number of drinks they had and how many hours it took them to consume them. Of note, among students who had four or more drinks in a row, about half had 5 or fewer, and about 20% had 8 or more. In addition, the majority of students took 2 to 3 hours regardless of amount, with the exception of the 3 students who said they had 15 or more drinks. In the following table, row percentages add to 100%. In other words, of students who had 4 drinks, 16% consumed them in 1 hour or less, 69% in 2-3 hours, etc.

<b>N of Drinks</b>	<b>1 hour or less</b>	<b>2-3 hours</b>	<b>4-5 hours</b>	<b>6 or more hours</b>	<b>N</b>
4 drinks	16%	69%	13%	3%	119
5 drinks	8%	73%	19%	0%	108
6 drinks	9%	70%	22%	0%	92
7 drinks	5%	79%	14%	2%	43
8 drinks	10%	71%	19%	0%	42
9 drinks	15%	55%	30%	0%	20
10-14 drinks	16%	56%	20%	8%	25
15 or more drinks	0%	33%	33%	33%	3

### *Healthy Drinking Behaviors*

Researchers and other professionals who work on college campuses have identified certain behaviors as “healthy” drinking behaviors, which minimize the risk of negative behaviors or consequences of drinking alcohol (such as throwing up, blacking out, damaging property, or injuring yourself or another person). These healthy behaviors include setting a drink limit, spacing alcoholic drinks to one per hour, and designating a sober driver prior to drinking.

<b>Indicate how often you do the following when drinking:</b>	<b>Always or Usually</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Rarely or Never</b>
Set a drink limit	48%	25%	27%
Keep track of how much I drink	85%	9%	5%
Space my alcoholic drinks to one or fewer per hour	25%	29%	46%
Alternate alcoholic drinks with non-alcoholic drinks	41%	35%	24%
Drink for quality, not quantity	48%	29%	24%
Eat before I begin drinking	87%	11%	2%
Avoid drinking games	30%	25%	45%
Refuse to drink anything whose contents are unknown to me	85%	8%	7%
Keep my drink with me at all times	88%	9%	3%
Designate a sober driver (if in a situation where driving)	95%	2%	3%
Encourage my friends to drink safely	90%	6%	4%
Watch out for my friends when we’re drinking	98%	1%	1%
Have a friend let me know when I’ve had enough	60%	20%	20%
Drink juice, water, or other non-alcoholic beverage instead of alcohol	28%	43%	29%



About 85% of Whitman students “always” or “usually” keep track of how much they drink and 87% “always” or “usually” eat before they begin drinking. In addition, over 90% “always” or “usually” encourage friends to drink safely and 98% “always” or “usually” watch out for their friends when they are drinking.

### *Self-Described Drinking Tendencies*

When asked to self-describe their drinking habits, about 60% of students see themselves as abstainers to light drinkers, and 37% as moderate drinkers.

#### **How would you describe yourself in terms of your current alcohol use?**

<b>How would you describe yourself in terms of your current alcohol use?</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Abstainer	13%
Abstainer, former problem drinker	0.7%
Infrequent drinker	26%
Light drinker	19%
Moderate drinker	37%
Heavy drinker	4%
Problem drinker	0.5%

### *Drinks when Partying*

Another question related to the amount of drinking asked for estimates of how many drinks a person in different categories (yourself, men, women, seniors, etc.) had “when they party.” This question was designed to ask about alcohol consumption on occasions where people intend to drink (and perhaps intend to drink more than usual). It is important to note that respondents were not expected to give accurate answers for any group except in reporting their own drinking. This question was meant to do three things: 1) Provide perceptions of campus drinking, 2) Provide a comparable picture of the realities of campus drinking, and 3) Uncover misperceptions.

Social Norms theory argues that perceptions of others’ drinking will usually be greater than the actual amount that others drink, and that misperceptions can have a strong influence on an individual’s drinking behavior. Comparing perceptions to realities for various groups is an important part of this research.

The table below shows the number of drinks students report having when they party (the “Yourself”) line, and the number of drinks they perceive various groups of students on campus to have when they party.

**How many alcoholic drinks, on average, do you think any of the following students typically consumes when they party? (A drink is 12 oz. of beer or wine cooler, a 5 oz. of wine, or 1 oz. of liquor).**

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10+
Yourself	17%	5%	10%	16%	17%	13%	9%	4%	5%	1%	3%
<b>Perceptions</b>											
Your friends	3%	2%	10%	17%	19%	19%	12%	7%	8%	1%	4%
Whitman students in general	0.2%	0.4%	11%	22%	26%	25%	9%	4%	2%	0.5%	0.7%
Seniors	0.7%	2%	12%	21%	24%	19%	11%	5%	4%	0.7%	1%
First Year students	0.5%	0.7%	5%	11%	19%	21%	17%	11%	8%	4%	3%
Fraternity members	0.2%	0.2%	2%	6%	9%	17%	19%	17%	14%	6%	10%
Sorority members	0.2%	0.4%	5%	12%	19%	23%	17%	11%	8%	2%	3%
Independent Men	0.2%	1%	7%	17%	19%	20%	16%	11%	5%	1%	1%
Independent Women	0.4%	1%	12%	23%	24%	23%	9%	5%	2%	0.7%	0.4%

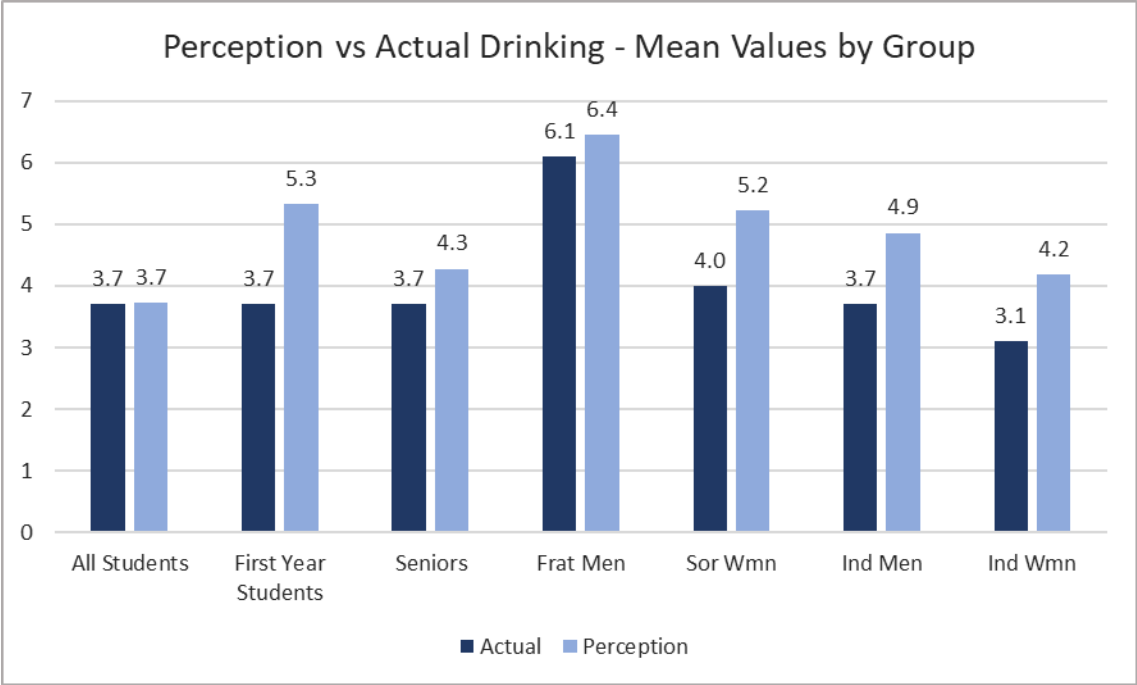
About 65% of respondents say they have 0-4 drinks when they party, although this number varies greatly by gender and Greek affiliation. In general, Greek membership is the most important factor when assessing drinking among various campus groups. For example, about 14% of independent men say they have 7 or more drinks when they party, compared to 44% of fraternity men. Similarly, about 21% of independent women have 5 or more drinks when they party, compared to nearly 57% of sorority women. Comparing drinking based on other campus groups, such as athletic teams, has proven virtually meaningless because the effect of belonging to a fraternity or sorority significantly outweighs all else. The reported number of drinks when partying for each group are as follows.

### Drinks When Partying by Group

Group	0 drinks	1-2	3-4	5-6	7-9	10 or more	Mean*
All Students	17%	15%	22%	22%	10%	3%	3.7
Seniors	11%	17%	40%	21%	10%	1%	3.7
FY Students	19%	14%	30%	21%	11%	4%	3.7
Frat Men	3%	2%	20%	31%	34%	9%	6.1
Sor Women	6%	17%	39%	29%	9%	0%	4.0
Ind Men	22%	11%	29%	24%	11%	4%	3.7
Ind Women	18%	22%	39%	15%	4%	2%	3.1

\* Because the top category is "10+" this not a true mean.

The chart on the following page shows the mean scores for the perceptions and realities of drinking for various campus groups. One of the most important findings of this survey is this: *perceptions about campus drinking are higher than the realities for every group on campus.*



*Tobacco, Marijuana, and Other Drugs*

While 20% of the student body say they smoke tobacco cigarettes, virtually no are daily smokers. Nearly two-thirds of students use marijuana at least once per year, and about 14% say they use it once a week or more.

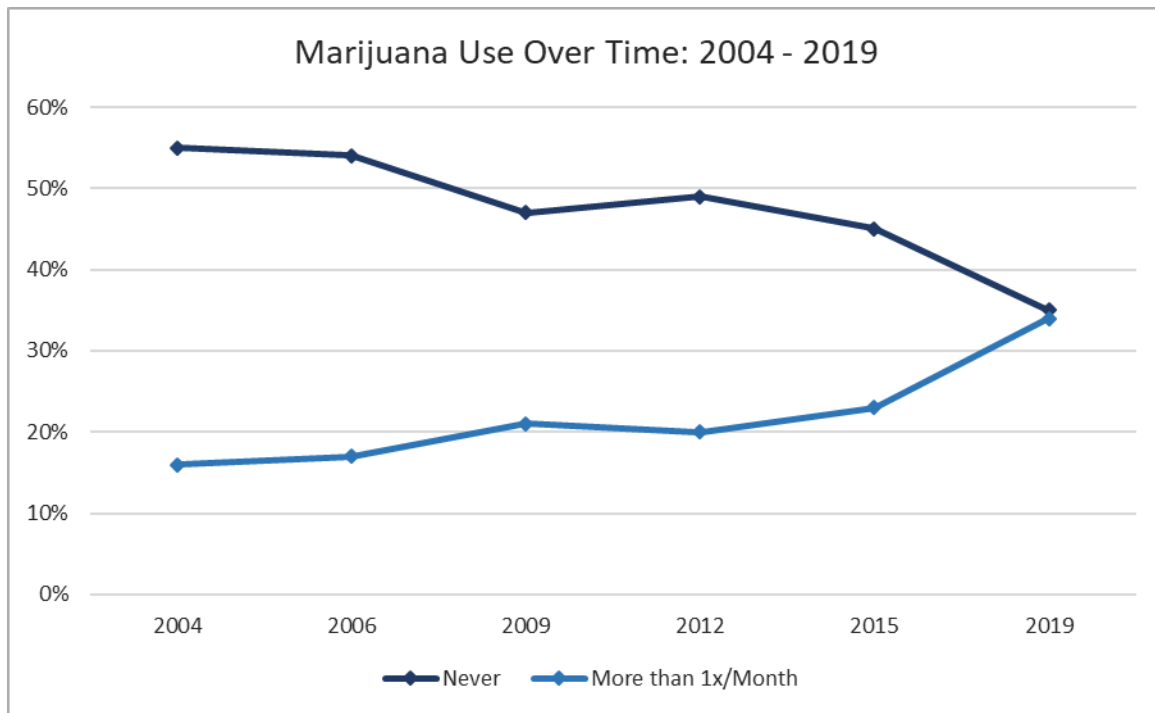
How often, if at all, do you use:	Never	1-2 times a year	6 times a year	Once a month	Twice a month	Once a week	3 times a week	5 times a week	Every day
Tobacco Cigarettes	80%	7%	4%	4%	2%	2%	0.7%	0.5%	0.2%
Chewing Tobacco	96%	2%	0.5%	0.3%	0.7%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Vaping / E-Cigarettes	72%	6%	3%	3%	2%	2%	2%	3%	7%
Marijuana	35%	15%	9%	7%	7%	10%	6%	5%	6%

Here are some factoids related to campus marijuana use:

- 35% of students never use marijuana.
- About 42% of students use marijuana more than once a month.
- Similar to alcohol, gender and Greek membership have the strongest effect on frequency of marijuana use. About 36% of independent men say they use marijuana more than once per month, compared to 72% of fraternity men. The difference is less pronounced for women: 33% of independent women say they use marijuana more than once per month, compared to 46% of sorority women.

We first started asking about marijuana use in 2004, and the number of students saying they never use marijuana has declined over time, while the number of students saying they use marijuana more than once per month has increased. The legalization of marijuana in Washington state

occurred between our 2015 and 2019 surveys, and our numbers likely reflect this change in the availability of the drug.



As shown in the table below, about 90% of students say their academic performance has not been affected by their marijuana use, while a small number of students report significant consequences.

<b>During the fall semester, how did your use of marijuana affect your academic performance? (Mark all that apply)</b>	<b>Percent</b>
My academic performance has not been affected	90%
Missed a day (or part of a day) or school	4%
Received a lower grade on an exam or important paper/project	4%
Received a lower grade in a course	3%
Dropped a course	1%
Performed poorly on a test or important project	2%
Received an academic warning or probation	1%

The 2019 Social Trends survey asked about the usage of a large number of illegal drugs. Most are used not at all or by only a very small number of students. Fraternity members are much more likely than other groups to say they use cocaine, LSD, and hallucinogenic mushrooms. About 25% of fraternity members indicated they use cocaine at least once per year, over 40% say they use LSD at least once per year, and over half say they use hallucinogenic mushrooms at least once per year.

<b>How often, if at all, do you use:</b>	<b>Never</b>	<b>1-2 times a year</b>	<b>6 times a year</b>	<b>Once a month</b>	<b>Twice a month</b>	<b>Once a week</b>	<b>3 times a week</b>	<b>5 times a week</b>	<b>Every day</b>
Cocaine (crack)	89%	6%	4%	0.5%	0.3%	0.2%	0%	0%	0%
Crystal meth / Speed	99.7%	0.3%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
LSD	85%	12%	2%	0.5%	0.3%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Hallucinogenic mushrooms	79%	19%	2%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Peyote	99%	0.3%	0%	0%	0%	0.2%	0%	0%	0.2%
Heroin	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Opium	99.7%	0.2%	0%	0%	0.2%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Oxycontin (not prescribed or more than prescribed)	97.7%	2%	0.3%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Inhalants (glue, solvents, gas, nitrous oxide)	98%	1%	0.3%	0.2%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Ecstasy	98%	2%	0.2%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Molly	96%	3.5%	0.3%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
MDMA	97%	3%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Ketamine	99%	1%	0.2%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Very few students abuse prescription drugs. A very small number of students take extra Adderall, and very few do so more than twice per month.

<b>How often, if at all, do you use:</b>	<b>Never</b>	<b>1-2 times a year</b>	<b>6 times a year</b>	<b>Once a month</b>	<b>Twice a month</b>	<b>Once a week</b>	<b>3 times a week</b>	<b>5 times a week</b>	<b>Every day</b>
Sedatives (not prescribed or more than prescribed)	97%	2%	0.7%	0.5%	0%	0.2%	0%	0%	0%
Steroids (not prescribed or more than prescribed)	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Adderall (not prescribed or more than prescribed)	88%	6%	2%	1%	2%	0.2%	0.3%	0%	0.3%
Other Prescription Drugs not prescribed for you	98%	0.9%	0.5%	0.2%	0%	0%	0.4%	0%	0%

### *Concluding Remark*

Thank you to all students who participated in this research. If you have any questions or comments, please contact Neal Christopherson at christnj@whitman.edu.