

ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION AMONG FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS AT VALDOSTA STATE UNIVERSITY

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Research Question

Do first-year students at Valdosta State University consume alcohol more, the same amount, or less than the national average?

Abstract

The purpose of this research is to examine the amount of alcohol students at Valdosta State University consume in comparison to nationwide statistics. Alcohol consumption has been a constant issue across universities, increasing drop-out rates, unhealthy habits, and other negative outcomes. While approximately 70% of students report drinking alcohol, prevalence is highest among first-year students. This research addresses the prominent reasons for excessive alcohol consumption as well as the preventative measures students and the university can take to limit consumption. In order to determine if Valdosta State University students consume as much alcohol as the reported national average, I created a survey and analyzed the results. In my results, I found that a majority of students at Valdosta State University reported as much drinking as other students among national universities, with a prominence in first-year students.

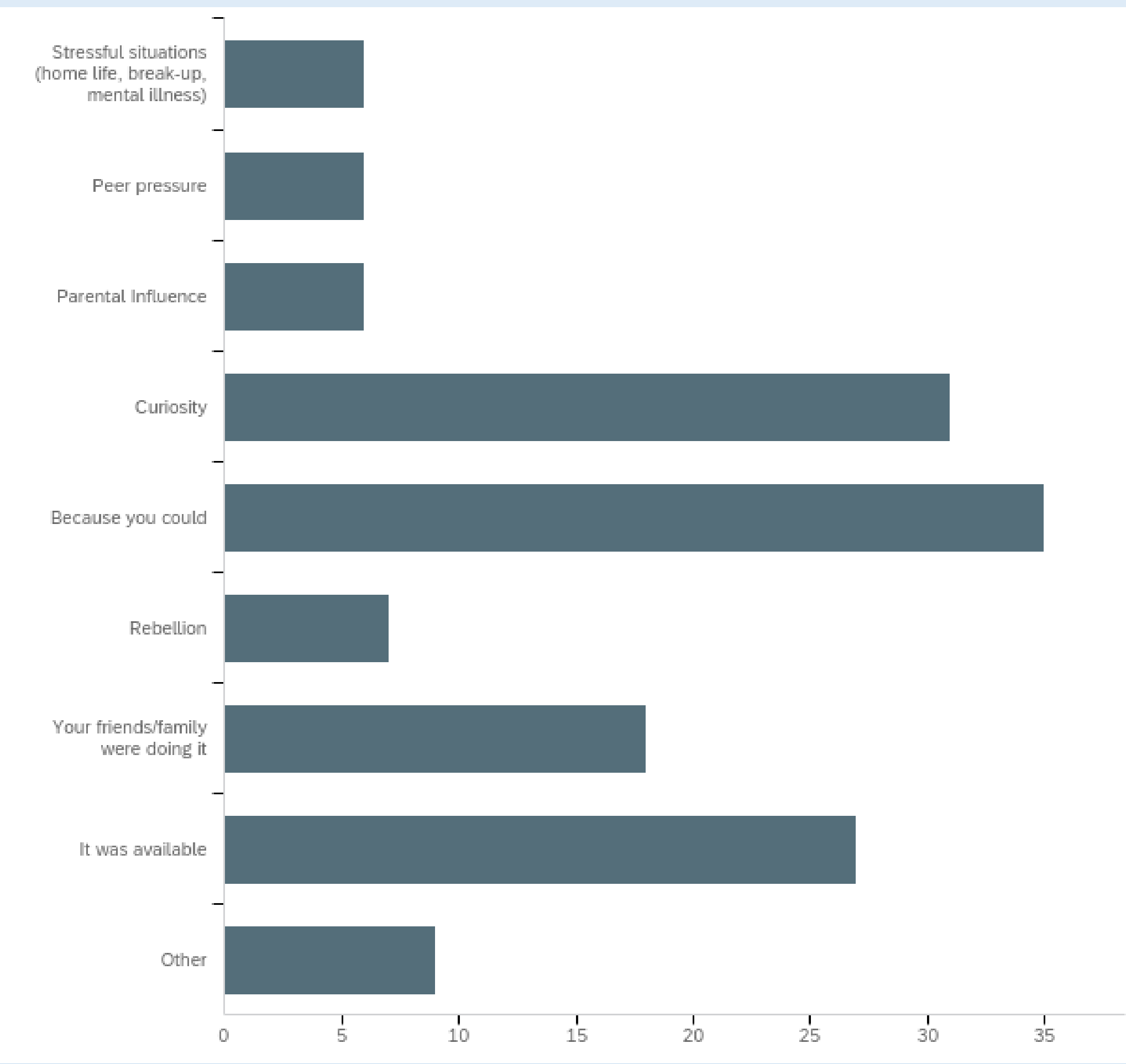
Methodology

In studying the factors, prevalence, and consequences of alcohol consumption among first-year college students, the base research was a qualitative and quantitative approach. In order to understand the background of alcohol consumption among college students, journal articles, databases, prevention organizations, and statistical charts were analyzed. Data was gathered from Valdosta State University students via an electronic survey created through Qualtrics. A survey was created in order to determine the statistics among students at Valdosta State University to keep track of what they drank, how much they drank, and the year/age in which they drank the most. The survey was distributed through university groups in order to keep the data within VSU students. Students were asked if they wanted to participate in the survey, and if not, they were thanked for their time. My final sample consisted of 100 students, all of whom recorded their demographics and drinking habits.

Hypotheses

- H₁: Valdosta State University students will at least be on par if not more than the national average in terms of drinking habits
H₂: Many students will claim to have started drinking alcohol due to the stigma within college
H₃: Students will be on par if not more than the national average in terms of heavy episodic drinking (HED)

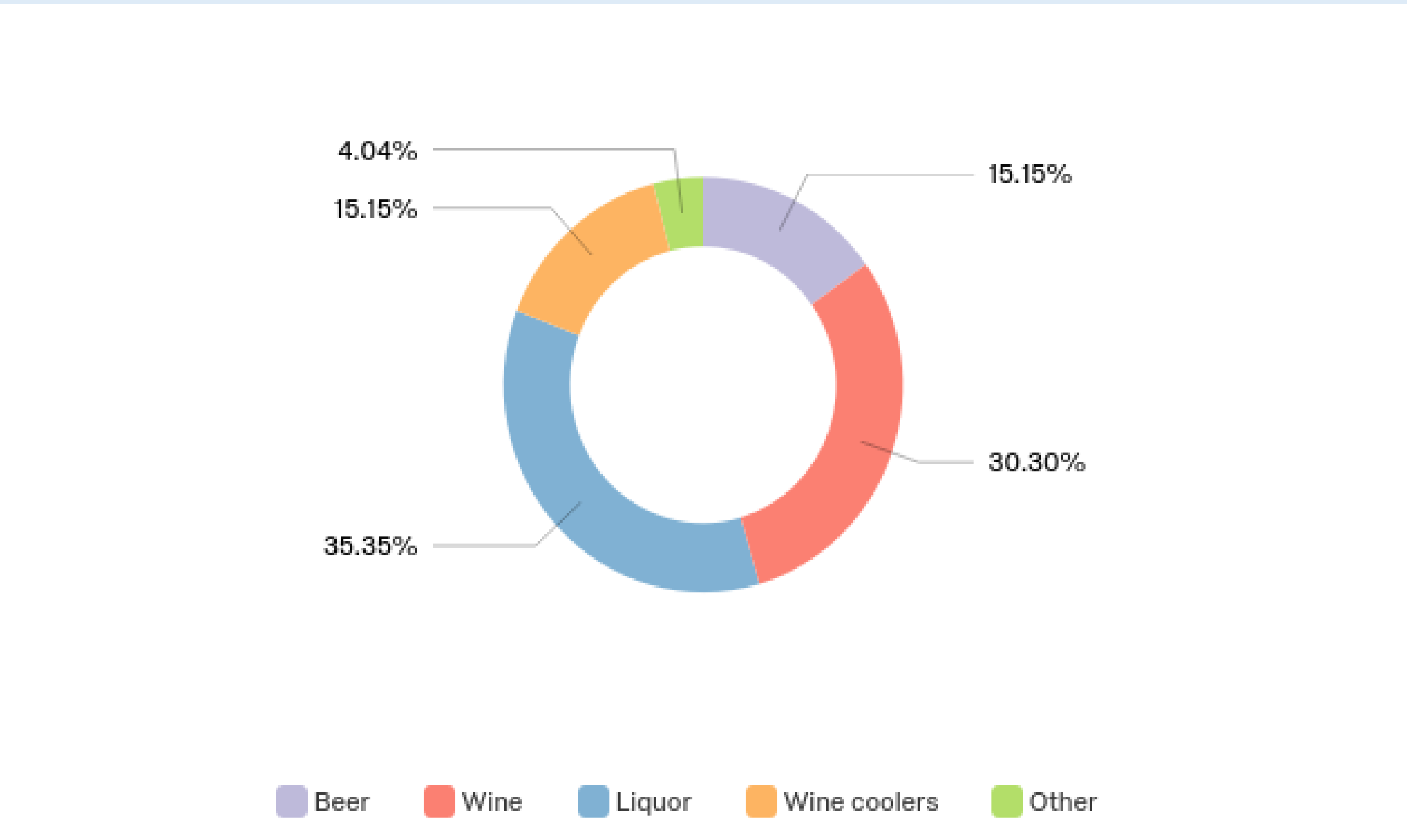
Table 1: The reasons students who still drink started consuming alcohol



Literature Review

- Compared to other non-college peers in their age group, college students aged 18-22 consume heavier amounts of alcohol
- National surveys provide evidence there is an alcohol consumption problem among all years of college students, but the prevalence is largest among first-year students
- 54% of full-time college students have reported drinking alcohol in the last 30 days while approximately 48% of non-college peers in the same age group report drinking in the last 30 days. Approximately 35-37% of full-time college students partake in binge drinking (4 drinks for females and 5 drinks for males in a two-hour span) while approximately 33% of non-college peers in the same age group reported binge drinking
- First-year students are at a particularly larger risk due to transitioning from high school to college, preexisting alcohol beliefs assumptions, peer influence, Greek life association, a lack of parental supervision, and mental illness.
- In most studies, males 21 and under reported the highest percentage of drinking as well as having the highest percentage of heavy episodic drinking (HED). However, in the age group over 21, females reported higher drinking levels and higher HED than their male counterparts
- Those who suffer from higher depressive symptoms are more likely to engage in high-risk drinking behaviors than those who are not depressed
- Significant evidence displays the prominence of alcohol-related tendencies which can in turn cause negative outcomes, including decreased academic retention, academic difficulties, injuries, at-risk and impulsive behavior, social problems, or psychological and mental difficulties

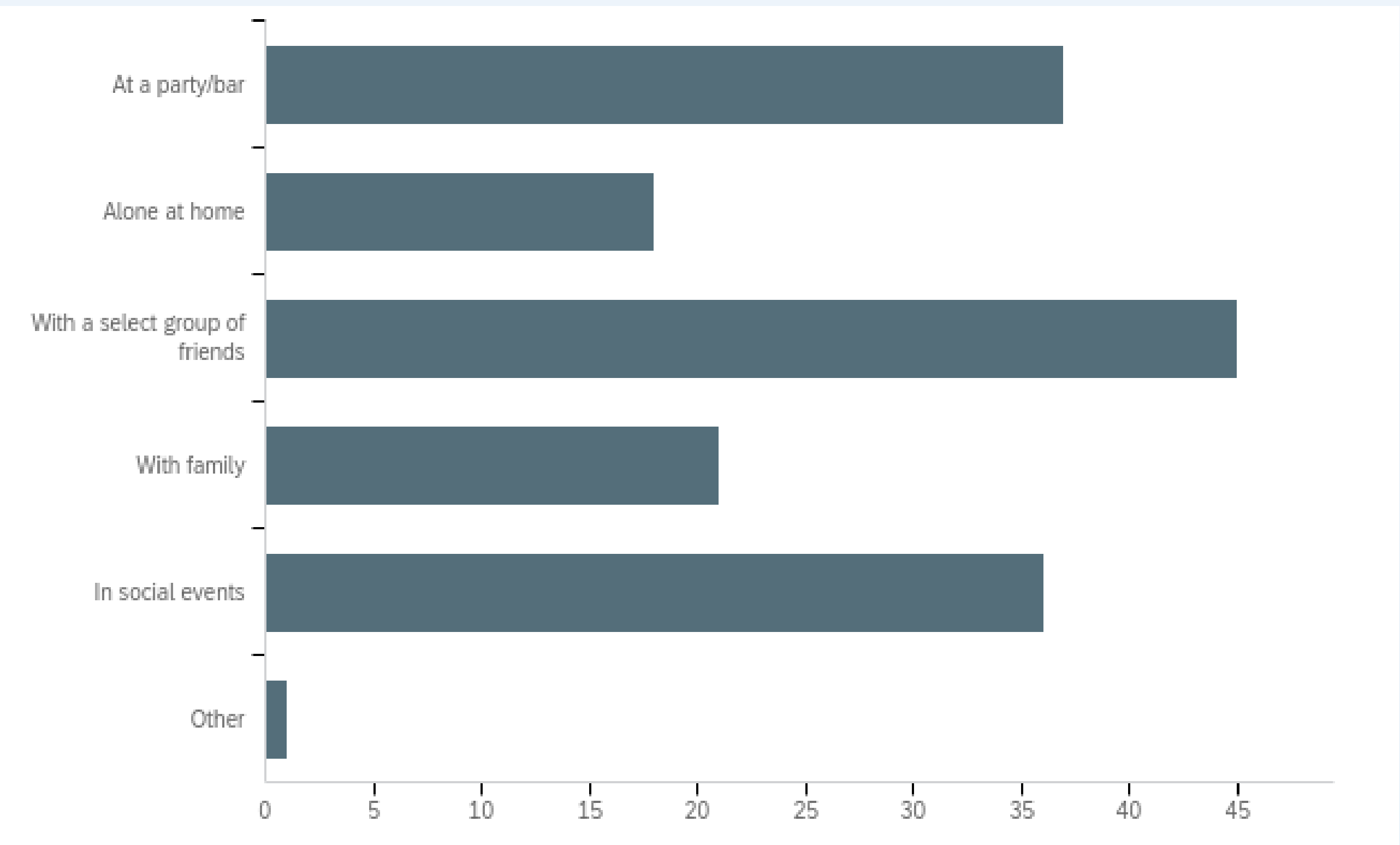
Table 2: Percentages for what the participants reported drinking the most



Data

- 72% of participants reported they do or have consumed alcohol while 28% reported they never have
- 81.69% still consume alcohol and 18.31% do not
- 67.16% of the sample who still consume alcohol reported they started drinking prior to college and 32.84% reported they started drinking after arriving to college
- Those who reported they no longer drink alcohol, 58.33% selected freshman year was the year they drank they most
- 25% reported high school was the time they consumed the most alcohol
- Among the most common reasons participants started drinking were curiosity (26.09%), because you could or friends and family were doing it (tied for 17.39%), stressful situations (8.7%), peer pressure (13.04%), rebellion (13.04%), and it was available (4.35%) (Table 1)
- There was an overall low reporting of HED

Figure 3: Settings students reported they would most likely drink in



Conclusion

- With 72% reporting they consume or have consumed alcohol, Valdosta State University students align with the national average
- There were lower amounts of HED among Valdosta State University students than nationally reported (Tables 4 and 5)
- More students among the “no longer drink” group reported drinking more during their freshman year, being on par with the national average
- Valdosta State University students reported similar drinking settings to those in the national average

Figure 5: Percentages for how many drinks participants who no longer drink consumed in one sitting for each drink type

#	Field	0	1-2	3-4	5+	Total
1	Beer	41.67% 5	50.00% 6	0.00% 0	8.33% 1	12
2	Wine	80.00% 8	20.00% 2	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	10
3	Liquor	36.36% 4	54.55% 6	9.09% 1	0.00% 0	11
4	Wine coolers	55.56% 5	33.33% 3	11.11% 1	0.00% 0	9
5	Other	83.33% 5	16.67% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	6

Showing rows 1 - 5 of 5

Figure 6: percentages for how many drinks participants who still drink consume in one sitting for each drink type

#	Field	0	1-2	3-4	5+	Total
1	Beer	58.49% 31	28.30% 15	13.21% 7	0.00% 0	53
2	Wine	18.87% 10	67.92% 36	7.55% 4	5.66% 3	53
3	Liquor	12.73% 7	47.27% 26	32.73% 18	7.27% 4	55
4	Wine coolers	54.55% 30	30.91% 17	12.73% 7	1.82% 1	55
5	Other	79.55% 35	13.64% 6	2.27% 1	4.55% 2	44

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