



For immediate release

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WMJ: Is there an association with student drinking and alcohol outlets near college campuses?

MADISON— Excessive alcohol consumption by students on college campuses is a growing concern across the United States, and a [study](#) in the current issue of *WMJ* reports that the proximity and/or the density of alcohol outlets to students at the University of Wisconsin-Madison is significantly related to their drinking behaviors.

This sub-study, which explored self-reported drinking and binge drinking among 166 full-time students at UW-Madison, found that 76 percent (126) were drinkers, and among drinkers, 63 percent (80) were binge drinkers. The participants were enrolled in a broader multi-site study across the United States designed to assess a variety of health behaviors among college students.

To understand the association between drinking and proximity to alcohol, the authors used a geographic information system. On average, nondrinkers lived nearly a half-mile further from the nearest alcohol outlet than drinkers, and within defined distance parameters up to a half-mile, more than double the number of alcohol outlets were available to drinkers compared to nondrinkers.

The authors note that while cause and effect cannot be implied, the associations observed in their study may have important considerations for those who are invested in preventing drinking and binge drinking on college campuses.

“The results presented here equally suggest that close proximity may promote consumption or that alcohol consumers choose to live close to the points of sale,” the authors wrote. “The former scenario identifies factors potentially amenable to prevention strategies at the policy level, and the latter scenario identifies a characteristic of a population at high risk of excessive drinking, which could lend itself to public health strategies to curb drinking.”

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