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## Results of surveys show high-risk drinkers are few in Wellesley's quiet alcohol scene

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*Editor-in-Chief*

Contrary to the focus of last year's Dyke Ball media attention and recent on-campus implications of a high-risk drinking problem, the majority of Wellesley students do not drink regularly. At least, that is what the results of two alcohol surveys conducted in 2004 indicate.

The Harvard School of Public Health's College Health Risk Behaviors Survey (CHB) and the American College Health Association's National Health Risk Survey (NCHA) collected data on how often students drink, where they are likely to do it, the consequences they experience because of it, their perception of the alcohol policy's enforcement, their knowledge of alcohol education resources available, and how many students engage in "high risk drinking"—which is defined by what type and how much alcohol a student consumes in a short period of time.

Sixty percent of the 378 students questioned in the CHB survey described themselves as either abstainers (22%) or infrequent drinkers (38%). An additional 22 percent and 16 percent said they were light or moderate drinkers, respectively, and only one percent said they were heavy drinkers. 15 percent of Wellesley students said they had never had a drink, but the majority said they'd had a drink within the last week (40%) or within the past 30 days (26%).

Of the 26 percent of students who had consumed alcohol in the past 30 days, 34 percent said they had enough to get drunk (defined as "feeling unsteady, dizzy, or sick to your stomach") on one to two occasions, while the majority (55%) said they had not been drunk at all. Twenty-seven percent of these students reported that they had four or more drinks on one occasion and an additional 13 percent said they drank four or more drinks on two or more occasions, both of which the survey defined as high-risk drinking.

As for college enforcement of alcohol use, the majority of Wellesley students said they thought alcohol policy was strongly enforced (18%) or enforced (55%).

According to this data, though most students drink rarely or not at all, high-risk drinkers do form a certain minority of Wellesley students. Though the report that Wellesley's Health Services and Office of Institutional Research prepared to accompany the survey data admits that "comparatively speaking, [Wellesley does] not have a huge number of students reporting high-risk drinking or chronic alcohol problems," it also cites campus statistics about alcohol-related transports, which show that while in 2002-2003, 26 students received medical care for intoxication, the number doubled to 51 in 2004-2005 as cause for concern. The CHB survey also confirms the perception that the majority (61%) of Wellesley students drink off-campus.

Despite some high-risk drinking, the survey reveals of Wellesley students, compared with the 78 percent national norm for college women, use a designated driver when drinking; 48 percent, compared with 30 percent of college women, alternate with non-alcoholic drinks when drinking and 37 percent, compared with 30 percent of college women, have a friend let them know when they've had too much.

Even though the surveys indicate that most Wellesley students demonstrate positive party behaviors and do not drink regularly, the Health Services report said there is a need to address the "negative consequences of high-risk drinking with education, awareness, and intervention efforts," noting that "if we can prevent even one tragedy, it is worth the effort."