

Coed college housing connected to frequent binge drinking

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A new study in the *Journal of American College Health* finds that students placed by their universities in coed housing are 2.5 times more likely to binge drink each week than students placed in all-male or all-female housing.

More than 500 [students](#) from five college campuses around the country participated in the study:

- 42 percent of students in coed housing reported [binge drinking](#) on a weekly basis.
- 18 percent of students in gender-specific housing reported binge drinking weekly.

While that doesn't put coed housing on par with fraternity and sorority houses, the researchers note that binge drinking isn't exclusively a "Greek problem."

"In a time when college administrators and counselors pay a lot of attention to alcohol-related problems on their campuses, this is a call to more fully examine the influence of housing environment on student behavior," said Jason Carroll, a study coauthor and professor of family life at Brigham Young University. BYU was not one of the participating campuses.

Carroll's former student Brian Willoughby is the lead author of the study, which will be published Nov. 17. Willoughby recently earned a Ph.D. from the University of Minnesota and returned to BYU as a visiting professor.

In light of the finding, the natural question is whether a selection effect is in play. For example, do partiers and teetotalers sort themselves out in the housing application process?

That doesn't appear to be the case, the researchers say. College housing offices generally

assume students prefer coed housing and give them the option to "opt out" if single-gender housing is available. Very few exercise that option.

"Most of the students who live in gender-specific housing did not request to be there; they were placed there by the university," Willoughby said.

A wealth of information on the study participants allowed the researchers to examine other factors that predict binge drinking. Their [statistical analysis](#) took into account the effects of age, gender, religiosity, personality and relationship status.

"When we first identified these differences with binge drinking, we felt certain that they would be explained by selection effects," Willoughby said. "But as we examined the data further we found that the differences remained."

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the study found students in coed dorms were significantly more likely to have had multiple sexual partners in the past year. Pornography use was also higher among students in coed dorms.

The participating campuses included two public universities in the Midwest and another on the West Coast, as well as a liberal arts college and a religious university on the East Coast.

Earlier this year, Willoughby and Carroll published work showing that more than 90 percent of college housing in the United States is coed.

Source: Brigham Young University ([news](#) : [web](#))

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