

# ALCOHOL USE BEHAVIOR AMONG UNDERGRADUATES: A CROSS-CULTURAL COMPARISON BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND SRI LANKA

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**Abstract.** In this study, the alcohol use behaviors and associated factors of US and Sri Lankan undergraduates were compared. A sample of 515 US (63% female) and 583 Sri Lankan (54% female) undergraduates were surveyed using a self-administered, anonymous questionnaire. Significant variations by gender and country existed. In the US sample, 89.5% of males and 76.5% of females were current alcohol users; in the Sri Lankan sample, 30.5% of males and 3.5% of females were current alcohol users. For both sexes, the reported mean monthly consumption rate (units/month) was higher in the US sample (male=25.6, female=16.4) compared to that of the Sri Lankan sample (male=8.1, female=8.4). In the US sample, the mean alcohol consumption rates reported were higher in first-year undergraduates compared to undergraduates in subsequent years of study. In contrast, mean alcohol consumption was lower in junior undergraduates compared to senior undergraduates in the Sri Lankan sample. Living arrangements (on-campus *vs* off-campus) seemed to be unrelated to alcohol use in the US undergraduates, but living in off-campus residences seems to be a protective factor of alcohol use for the Sri Lankan undergraduates. Those implementing prevention strategies should seriously consider these culture-specific drinking habits and motives, and other factors, such as gender, when formulating undergraduate alcohol-control interventions.

**Keywords:** undergraduate drinking, alcohol use behavior, Sri Lanka, United States

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