

56 percent of female university students get drunk in record time

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on purpose – quicker than their male counterparts, and live a more sedentary life than they do, according to a study by the University of Vigo. Results show that 56.1% of female students are considered binge drinkers, as opposed to 41.3% of males.

Researchers from the HealthyFit group at the University of Vigo have studied university students' lifestyles; their analysis, which includes alcohol and illegal drug [consumption habits](#), sport and food, concludes that most students indulge in unhealthy behaviour. One of the main results of the study is the high consumption of alcohol.

"The amount drunk per unit of time is higher among women. In other words, even though [male students](#) drink more often, females do so more intensively in shorter periods of time, which is known as [binge drinking](#)", explained to SINC José M^a Cancela Carral, co-author of the study published by the *Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*.

Researchers randomly selected 985 students from different degree courses and in different years at the University of Vigo.

Of the females interviewed, 51.2% lead a [sedentary lifestyle](#), while the percentage in males is 41.7%. When analysing students who maintain an appropriate level of physical activity, 38.6% of males do [physical exercise](#), as opposed to only 20.9% of women.

"We were also surprised by the high consumption of [illegal drugs](#) among

university students – 44.9% of men and 30.9% of women – which we understand could lead to significant [future health](#) problems, mainly related to the nervous system", underlined the researcher.

Anomalous attitudes to food were more evident among women (16.6%), although also present among men (8.8%). "However, the [statistical analysis](#) showed that this parameter depended on the degree the student was studying for", added Cancela. Such attitudes were much more common among those studying degrees related to education (19.2%) than among those studying courses related to health (6.3%).

Health network

Spanish universities set up a Healthy University Network in 2008, a project for healthy living for universities from all over Spain, the Spanish University Rectors' Association, the Ministry of Health, Social Services and Equality, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport and some regional public health entities.

In the researcher's opinion, at many universities this network was nothing more than "a simple first step to get on the list and nothing else"; hence transversal content should be implemented in study plans related to food, physical exercise and healthy habits.

"In the light of the results, training and information courses are required in these areas, together with healthy leisure – not just sports facilities – to set up university guidance services for a healthy student lifestyle", concludes Cancela.

Genetic predisposition

A recent study published in the *PNAS* journal argues that the gene called

RASGRF2 could be related to a predisposition to getting drunk.

According to scientists, this gene regulates the predisposition to drink excessive amounts of alcohol as it influences mesolimbic dopamine neuron activity, which is one of the ways dopamine is taken from one region of the brain to another.

Gunter Schumann, one of the main authors of the study, explained that even though we should not consider said gene to be the main cause – as there are many environmental factors and other genes involved – the study thereof helps to explain why some people are more vulnerable to alcohol than others.

More information: Verónica Varela-Mato, José M. Cancela, Carlos Ayan, Vicente Martín y Antonio Molina. "Lifestyle and Health among Spanish University Students: Differences by Gender and Academic Discipline", International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health 9: 2728-2741, 2012. [doi:10.3390/ijerph9082728](https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph9082728).

David Stacey et al. "RASGRF2 regulates alcohol-induced reinforcement by influencing mesolimbic dopamine neuron activity and dopamine release", PNAS 109 (51), 5 de diciembre. [doi: 10.1073/pnas.1211844110](https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1211844110).

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