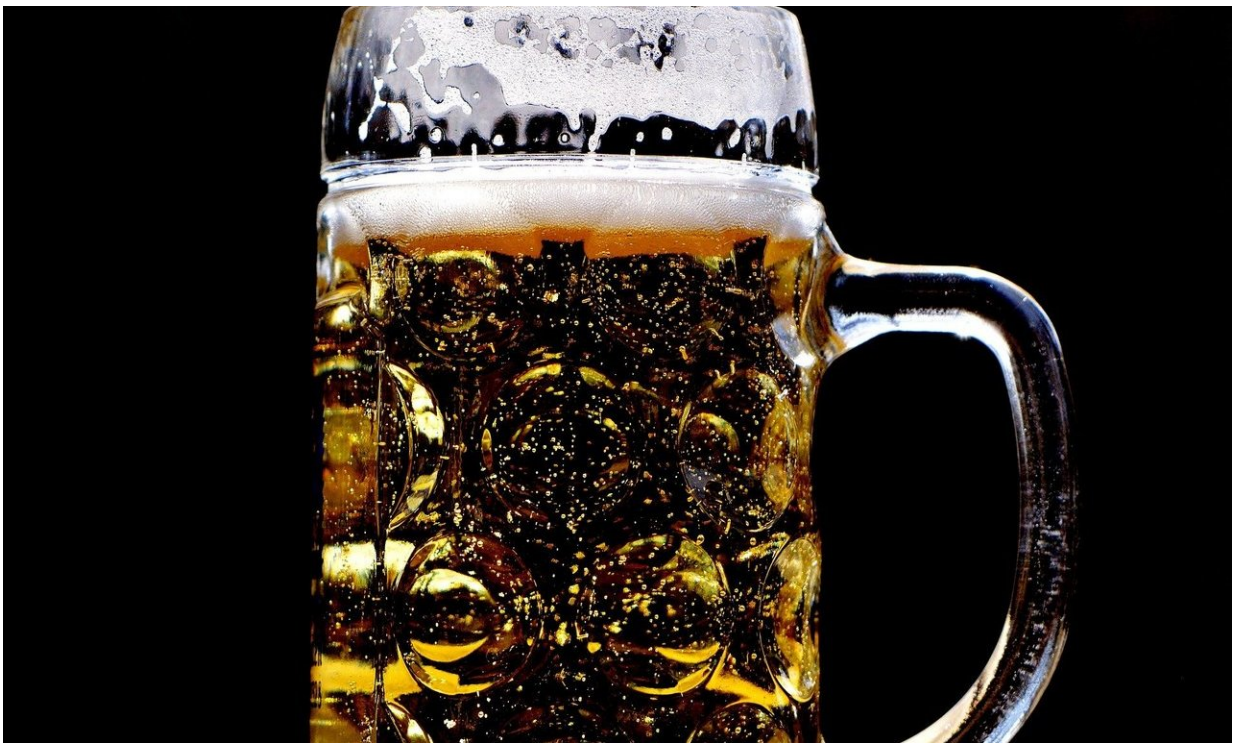


Where and with whom college students drank during pandemic was associated with different types of consequences

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During the COVID-19 pandemic, college students drinking outside the home or at home alone experienced a wider range of drinking consequences compared to those more frequently drinking at home with

others, either in-person or virtually, according to a new study. Drinking at home also carried considerable risk. The findings, published in *Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research*, suggest that intervention and prevention efforts may be more effectively tailored by considering the contexts in which students are drinking.

The study analyzed responses to an [online survey](#) of sixteen hundred students from the University of Washington who reported drinking in the prior month. Data were collected from spring 2020 through summer 2021 when classes were being conducted virtually due to COVID-19 restrictions.

Participants answered questions about drinking behaviors, including how much and how often they typically drank and how often they drank in four contexts: outside the home, home with others in person, home with others virtually, home alone. Students also reported [negative consequences](#) experienced in the past month across seven domains, including personal (e.g., not studying), social (e.g., getting into fights), [alcohol abuse](#) or dependence symptoms, driving after drinking, hangover, drunk texting/dialing, and regrettable social media posting.

Drinking outside the home was associated with more [alcohol consumption](#) and more frequent consequences across the broadest range of domains—six of the seven. However, drinking at home was not without risks. Drinking alone at home was not linked to increased alcohol consumption but was associated with consequences in all but two of the seven domains.

Drinking at home with others present, virtually or in-person, was associated with fewer types of consequences. Drinking at home with others in person was associated with increased alcohol consumption and drunk texting/dialing. Drinking at home virtually with others was not linked to increased alcohol consumption but was associated with abuse

or dependence symptoms (e.g., tolerance) and social consequences such as embarrassing someone else. Driving after drinking was the only consequence not related to a specific context.

The proportion of students drinking outside the home sharply increased from spring 2020 to summer 2021, from 41% to 87%, while drinking in virtual gatherings sharply decreased from 53% to 11%. Roughly one-quarter of students reported drinking at home alone and four-fifths reported drinking at home with others throughout the study, proportions that remained relatively consistent over time.

While the COVID-19 pandemic presented unique circumstances, this study provides insight into the role of drinking context and college risk behaviors which may help tailor prevention and intervention strategies.

More information: B. Hultgren et al, College students' virtual and in-person drinking contexts during the COVID-19 pandemic, *Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research* (2022). doi.org/10.1111/acer.14947

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