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Alcohol Abuse: Is Binge Drinking Impacted By Romantic Relationships?



The Huffington Post : [Jessica Pearce Rotondi](#)

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Who you date could influence how you drink, according to a new study from Dalhousie University in Halifax, Canada.

The study followed the drinking habits of 208 unmarried, heterosexual couples in their 20s (at least one partner in each relationship was in college) over a 28-day period. In all cases, the couples had been dating for at least three months and saw each other a minimum of five days a week. Researchers found they could [predict a partner's binge drinking based on the binge drinking patterns of their partner](#).

Unlike previous studies, this one found that it wasn't just men influencing women to drink more: "Binge drinking in university students occurs in both young men and women. Studies with married couples show that men have more of an influence on women, but in our study, we found [both young women and young men influence their partner's binge drinking](#)," wrote researcher Aislin Mushquash in a press release.

This study is part of a growing body of research showing that more women are drinking to excess. According to a new study by Shelly Greenfield, a professor of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School, there were five males dependent on alcohol for every female alcoholic in the 1980s, though by 2002 the gap had been drastically [reduced to 2.5 men for every woman](#).

One problem with women closing the binge drinking gender gap is that their [bodies don't process alcohol like a man's](#). Another study published earlier this year found that while alcohol puts both men and woman at risk for diseases like cirrhosis, alcohol poisoning and cancer, "Women become intoxicated after drinking half as much, metabolize alcohol differently, develop cirrhosis of the liver more rapidly, and have a [greater risk of dying from alcohol-related accidents](#)," according to "Women And Alcohol Use Disorders," an article in the July-August 2002 issue of the *Harvard Review of Psychiatry*.

[Alcohol abuse also damages women's brains more quickly than it does men's](#). A study to be published in January 2012 found that women who had been drinking to excess for four years had patterns of reduced serotonin activity in their brains similar to the patterns exhibited in men who had been abusing alcohol for 14 years.

To top off the grim statistics, women who binge drink are at a [higher risk of being the victims of violence](#): Alcohol consumption is involved in two out of three incidents of intimate partner violence, according to the centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Gawker's Lauri Apple points out that the binge drinking study from Dalhousie University [leaves out large portions of the population](#), studying only unmarried college students, and binge drinking is often seen as more [normalized college behavior](#).

The study also does not take into account the influence of friends on drinking habits -- if a couple is going to the same weekend parties, for example, who is to say that it's the partner, and not the larger social circle, behind the binge drinking?

Do you think your partner influences how much you drink? Share your thoughts in the comments below.

