



Survey Finds College Students Studying Abroad are Engaging in Excessive Drinking and Drug Use

Half of college students who consume alcohol admitted to drinking more abroad than in the U.S., as well as engaging in many other risky behaviors, according to a new national survey from On Call International

SALEM, NH – January 20, 2016 – American students studying abroad are engaging in dangerous and potentially illegal behaviors, according to a new national survey by [On Call International](#), a leading travel risk management company. According to the survey of college and recent college students who have studied abroad within the past two years, risk-filled pastimes are rampant: half of respondents (50 percent) who drink said they consume more alcohol while abroad and one in nine (11 percent) said they “blacked out” from drinking more frequently when in a foreign country than when in the U.S.

“Blacking out” – binge drinking to the point of memory impairment – is a potentially lethal mistake, especially dangerous to those who are under the age of 21: according to the [CDC](#), “excessive alcohol consumption contributes to more than 4,300 deaths among underage youth” each year in the U.S. alone. Abroad, binge drinking is even easier to partake in, as many countries have a lower drinking age of 18. Young students who can purchase and consume alcohol freely can binge drink legally, and the consequences of this freedom can be dire: again, the [CDC](#) reports binge drinking can lead to a list of safety and health problems including unintentional injuries (car accidents, falls, burns and drowning), as well as vulnerability to threats like sexual assault, alcohol poisoning, sexually transmitted diseases and unintended pregnancy.

Along with this shockingly high level of alcohol abuse is students’ admitted drug use: one in nine students (11 percent) tried a controlled substance for the first time, while 29 percent used controlled substances abroad. As students engage in drug and alcohol pastimes that limit their cognitive and decision-making capabilities, they also often seek casual hookups: 32 percent of students reported they engaged in romantic encounters with strangers abroad.

Yet dangerous behaviors abroad don’t stop there: one out of every five students has accepted a car ride from a local stranger who wasn’t a professional taxi or Uber driver, allowing a stranger to have total control over their whereabouts and safety. Furthermore, 11 percent of students have been detained by law enforcement while studying abroad.

While study abroad students are playing Russian roulette with their well-being and academic success, they’re keeping it to themselves: more than 30 percent of students have admitted to lying to their parents about their activities when studying abroad. This lack of transparency can place students and potentially others, at great risk.

With these worrisome activities taking place outside of university grounds, Duty of Care (the legal standard that requires organizations to avoid foreseeable risk to their constituents) responsibilities must be at the forefront of study abroad planning for all American colleges and universities.

“Students may feel invincible, but there are many real dangers when they venture out on their own,” said Jim Hutton, Chief Security Officer, On Call International. “In unfamiliar situations, risky behaviors like drinking, drug use and going home with a stranger take on a new level of risk. Students who don’t understand their limits could find themselves injuring themselves or others, or being arrested by law enforcement for their actions and removed from their study abroad programs. In addition, young college students can be an easy target for theft or other crimes, and are especially vulnerable when under the influence of alcohol or drugs. To mitigate these risks, universities should institute mandatory pre-travel training sessions for any students who are heading overseas, as it is the institutions’ responsibility to ensure student safety.”

In light of these findings, colleges and universities should ensure their international safety policies and guidelines are closely aligned with their travel risk management initiatives. These proactive measures are not only necessary in helping to protect students – but the colleges and universities they attend as well.

Survey Methodology

The findings are based on a Google Consumer Survey of more than 1,000 current and recent students who have studied abroad in the past two years. Google Consumer Surveys automatically field a validated, representative sample of respondents and allocate users according to the demographic spread of U.S. Census data of Internet users.

About On Call International

When traveling, every problem is unique—a medical crisis, a political threat, even a common accident such as a missed flight. But every solution starts with customized care that ensures travelers are safe and protected. That’s why for over 20 years, On Call International has provided fully-customized travel risk management services protecting millions of travelers, their families, and their organizations. For more information visit: www.oncallinternational.com; follow us on [Twitter](#) and [LinkedIn](#); like us on [Facebook](#) and visit the [On Call blog](#).

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