

PROJECT FAN

Fraternity Assessment of Norms

Hazing and Bystander Intervention

Summary Report

Center for the Study of Health and Risk Behaviors

University of Washington School of Medicine

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Brief Overview of Project FAN

In partnership with the [North American Interfraternity Conference \(NIC\)](#), researchers at the University of Washington's Center for the Study of Health and Risk Behaviors collected survey data from NIC-affiliated chapters across the United States and Canada. **The overarching goal of this research was to gain a better understanding of social norms pertaining to hazing-related behaviors and bystander behavior.**

Background on Social Norms

Social norms are the unwritten rules of a group, culture, or society that define what is acceptable or unacceptable behavior. Perceptions of social norms are separated into **descriptive norms**, which are one's estimates of how many people engage in a behavior (e.g., "everyone drinks") or how much of a certain behavior others engage in ("I think the typical person drinks 7 when they drink"), and **injunctive norms**, which are one's estimates of how accepting or approving others are of a certain behavior ("this whole thing feels uncomfortable, but I'm sure everyone's ok with it").

Young adults are highly susceptible to social norms, and, importantly, perceptions of social norms are not always accurate, especially as media influences and longstanding stereotypes are often misleading. Decades of research show that young adults tend to overestimate peers' risky behaviors and attitudes. These misperceptions can lead individuals to engage in more risky behavior, often as subconscious means of 'fitting in', and subsequently result in greater harms.

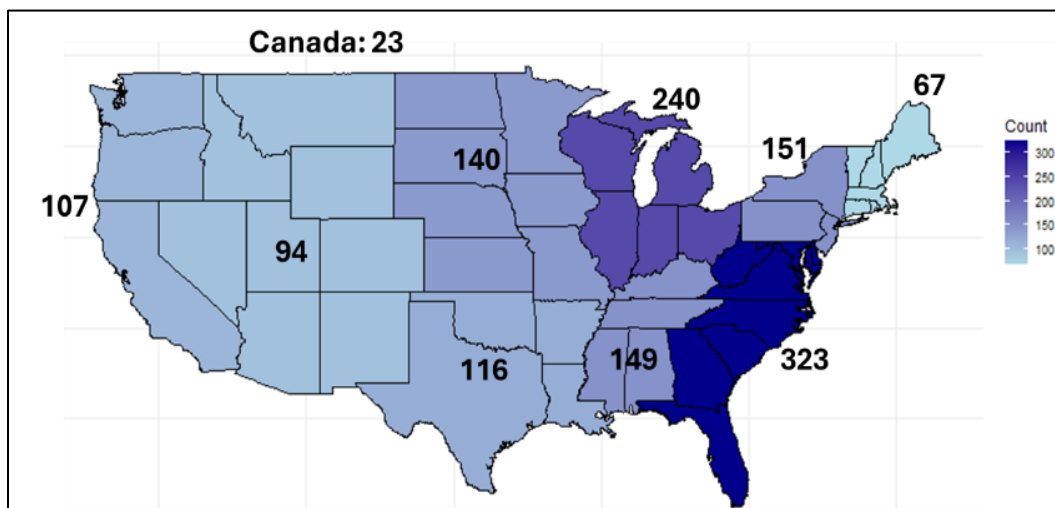
How to Interpret the Findings in this Report

Survey participation was voluntary, which means this is a 'convenience sample' and is likely not fully representative of *all* fraternity members. Although the sample is large and diverse, the total response rate of all invited members is very low. Given these limitations, it is important to be thoughtful in how we interpret and use these results. When framing the findings, we recommend using language such as "Among participating fraternity members..." or "Of fraternity members who took the Project FAN Survey..." to clearly note that findings only represent the fraternity members who chose to complete the survey. That said, the sample was large enough to provide some very useful data to inform possible prevention and intervention efforts.

What Does the Fraternity Sample Look Like?

In March and April 2024, active members of **9** organizations were emailed with an invitation to complete the 10-minute online survey. Participation was incentivized by a random drawing of ten \$100 gift cards. All responses and data are de-identified and confidential, helping to ensure honest self-reporting.

In total, **1583** fraternity members participated in the online survey, with representation from **639** unique chapters. We retained only responses from those who consented to us using their data, who were active members, and who completed at least 10% of the survey. **The final sample was 1461 fraternity members.**



Participant and Chapter Characteristics

COLLEGE TYPE	
Large public university	52.3%
Large private university	8.9%
Small public college/university	13.7%
Small private college/university	24.8%
Historically Black college	0.1%
Community college	0.1%
Other	0.1%
CHAPTER SIZE	
Small (<50 members)	34.6%
Medium (50-100 members)	48.0%
Large (101-200 members)	15.7%
Very Large (>200 members)	1.8%
HAS A DEDICATED CHAPTER HOUSE	
Yes	20.1%
No	79.9%
PLEDGE CLASS	
2020	5.2%
2021	16.8%
2022	27.6%
2023	38.8%
2024	10.7%
LEADERSHIP POSITION IN CHAPTER	
Yes	50.1%
No	49.9%
YEAR IN SCHOOL	
1 st Year	23.7%
2 nd Year	31.8%
3 rd Year	26.7%
4 th Year	15.8%
5 th Year or more	2.0%

LIVING ARRANGEMENTS	
Residence halls on campus	29.5%
Chapter House	27.1%
With parents or family	3.3%
Another on-campus apartment or residence	7.3%
An off-campus residence (not chapter house)	32.5%
Other	0.2%
AGE	
18	10.4%
19	25.7%
20	27.5%
21	23.6%
22	9.9%
23	1.9%
24 or older	<1%
SEXUAL ORIENTATION	
Straight/Heterosexual	91.6%
Bisexual	3.8%
Gay/Lesbian	2.3%
Another orientation, or prefer not to say	2.2%
RACE	
American Indian/Alaska Native	0.8%
Asian	5.7%
Black or African American	1.2%
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	0.1%
White	83.2%
Two or more races	6.5%
Another race, or prefer not say	2.5%
ETHNICITY	
Hispanic, Latino(a), or Spanish Origin	9.7%
Not Hispanic, unknown, or prefer not to say	90.3%

Hazing Norms

The following section presents data about participants' experiences with and attitudes toward eight hazing activities/behaviors. Although this is not meant to be a comprehensive list of all possible hazing activities, we chose these items in order to capture a wide range of activity/behavior types commonly associated with hazing.

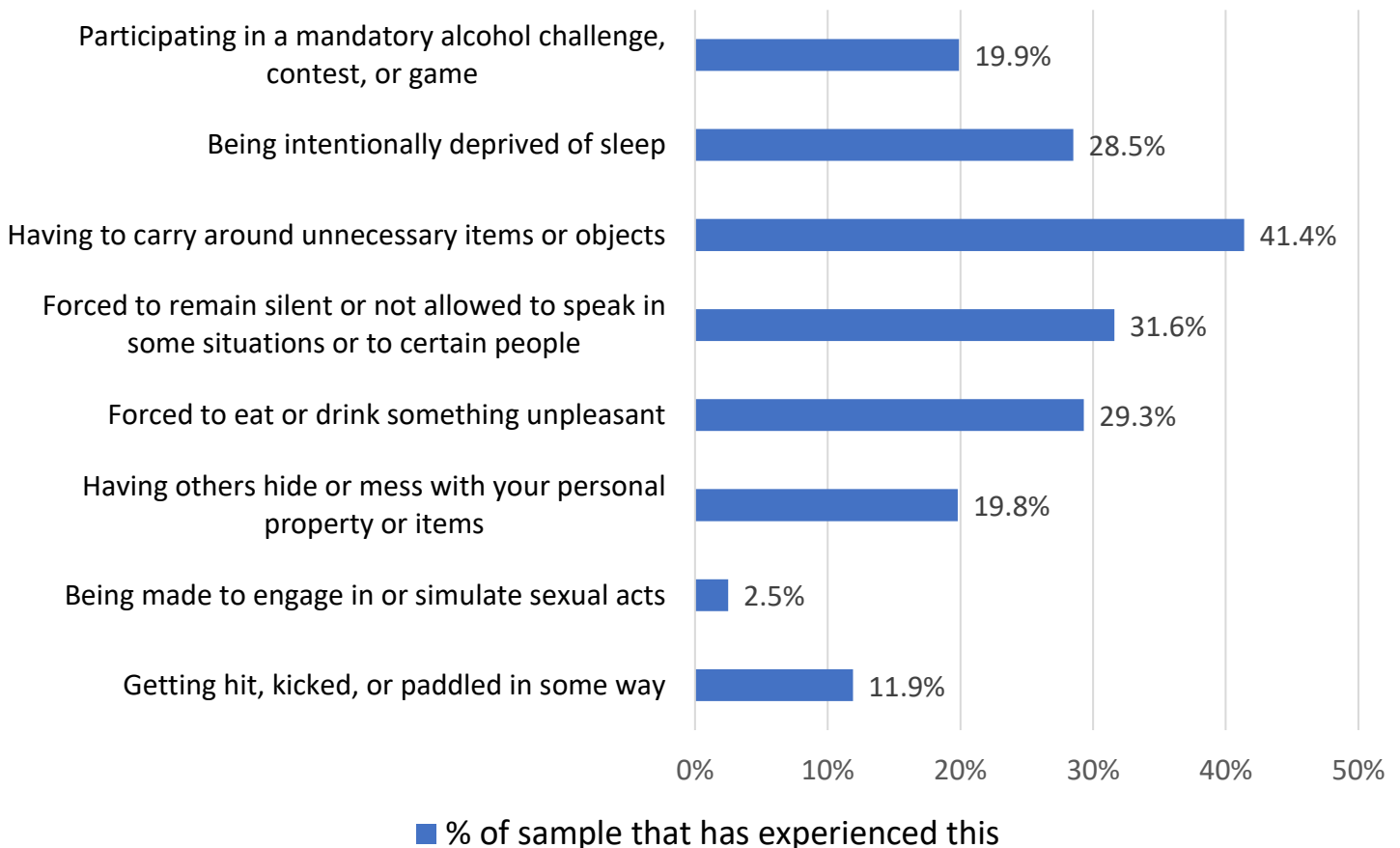
Participants were asked about eight hazing activities/behaviors.

1. *Participating in a mandatory alcohol challenge, contest, or game*
2. *Being intentionally deprived of sleep*
3. *Having to carry around unnecessary items or objects*
4. *Forced to remain silent or not allowed to speak in some situations or to certain people*
5. *Forced to eat or drink something unpleasant*
6. *Having others hide or mess with your personal property or items*
7. *Being made to engage in or simulate sexual acts*
8. *Getting hit, kicked, or paddled in some way*

For each activity, they were asked:

- "Have you experienced this at any point in your affiliation with your chapter?" (yes/no response options)

Sample Prevalence of Experiencing Hazing Activities



Hazing Attitudes and Norms

In addition to whether or not participants had experienced these eight hazing behaviors, we assessed fraternity members' perceptions of how often this happens to others (i.e., descriptive norms).

To assess these perceptions, we asked the following for each hazing item:

- What percent of members in your chapter do you think have *EXPERIENCED* this? (sliding scale from 0-100%)
- What percent of fraternity members across the US do you think *EXPERIENCED* this? (sliding scale from 0-100%)

We also assessed fraternity members' approval of these hazing activities, as well as their perceptions of how approving other fraternity members are of these activities (i.e., injunctive norms).

To assess these attitudes and perceptions, we asked the following for each hazing item (*answered using a sliding scale from 'Not at all approving' to 'Strongly Approving'*):

- Even if your chapter does not do this, what are YOUR attitudes towards this?
- How *APPROVING* do you think members of your chapter are of this?
- How *APPROVING* do you think fraternity members across the US are of this?

Interpreting the following figures:

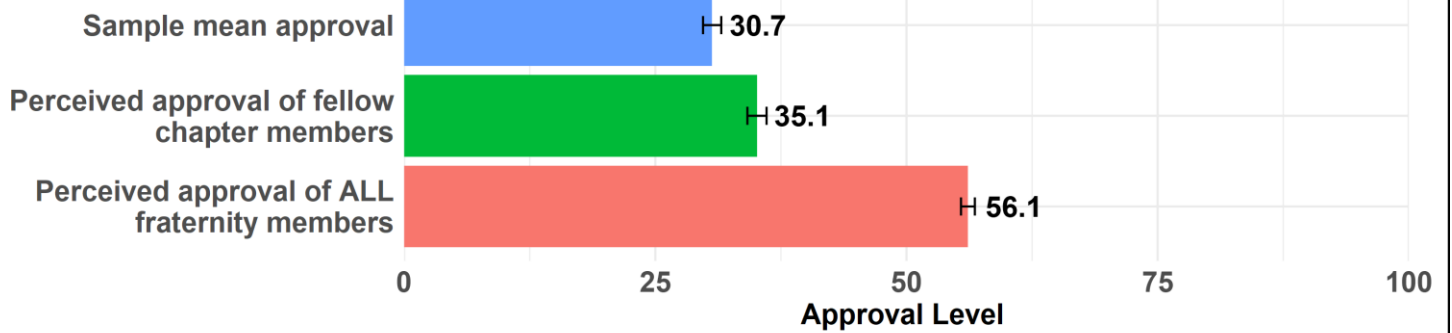
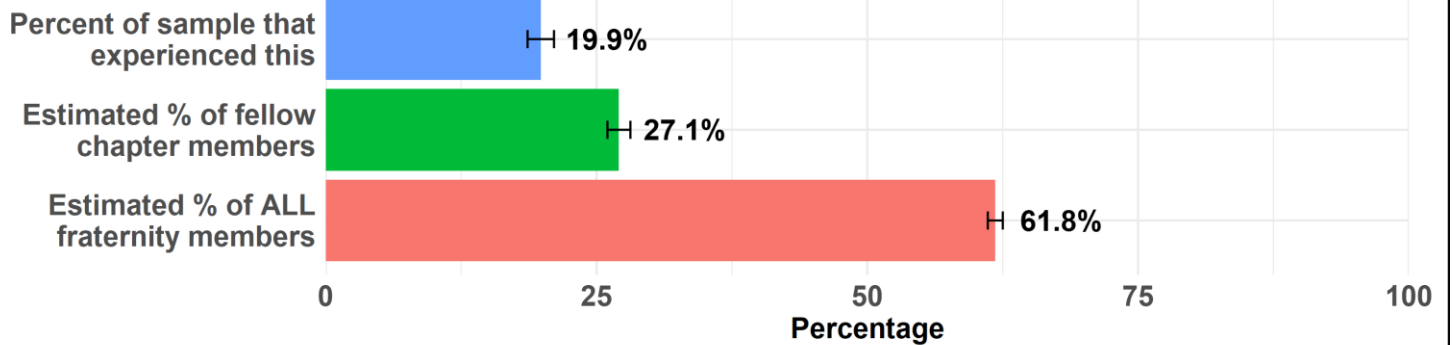
The following figures enable direct comparisons between how prevalent these hazing activities actually are as reported by the current sample, contrasted against perceptions of how prevalent respondents think these activities are among respondents' own chapter members and fraternity members across the US.

On each page in the subsequent section, we show two figures regarding the same hazing activity. The top figure shows the percent of the sample that endorsed experiencing this activity contrasted against their perceived descriptive norms for how prevalent this activity is among other fraternity members. The second figure is similar, but shows participants' approval of this activity taking place, contrasted against perceived injunctive norms for how approving they think other fraternity members are of this activity.

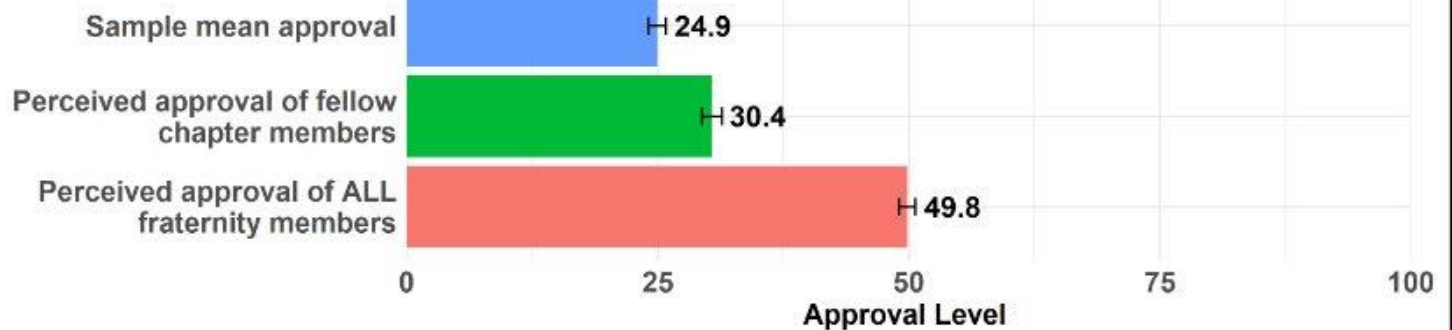
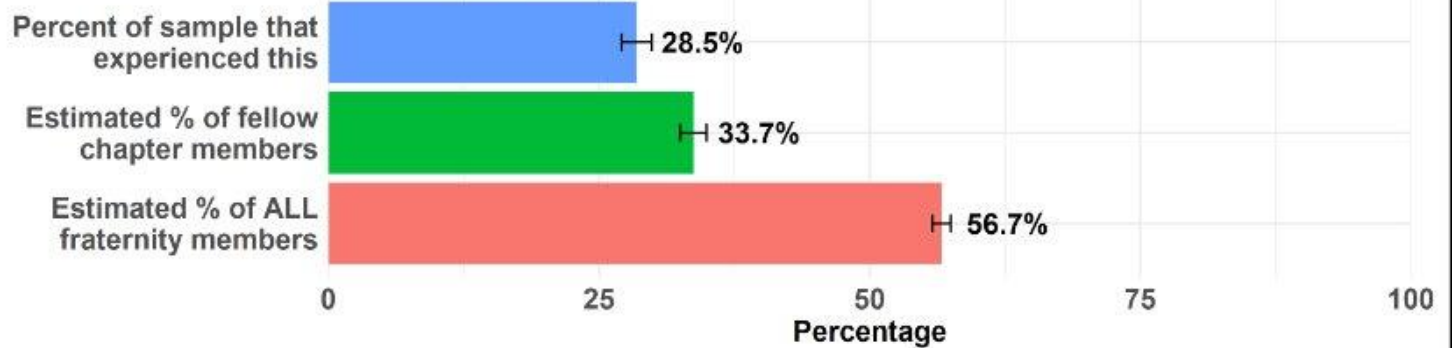
Most participants did not report experiencing each of the eight hazing-related behaviors. However, a consistent trend emerged, particularly related to what is perceived as the "norm" in fraternities nationwide. Although most did not experience the behavior personally, for six of the eight hazing-related behaviors, participants perceived that over 50% of fraternity men experienced the behavior (i.e., they perceived hazing to be the norm). In other words, they perceived that "most" fraternity men experienced hazing when, very clearly, that was not the case among respondents. Additionally, for four of the 8 hazing-related behaviors, despite there not being personal approval for the behavior, respondents perceived the typical fraternity member nationwide to approve of the behavior.

Hazing Attitudes and Norms

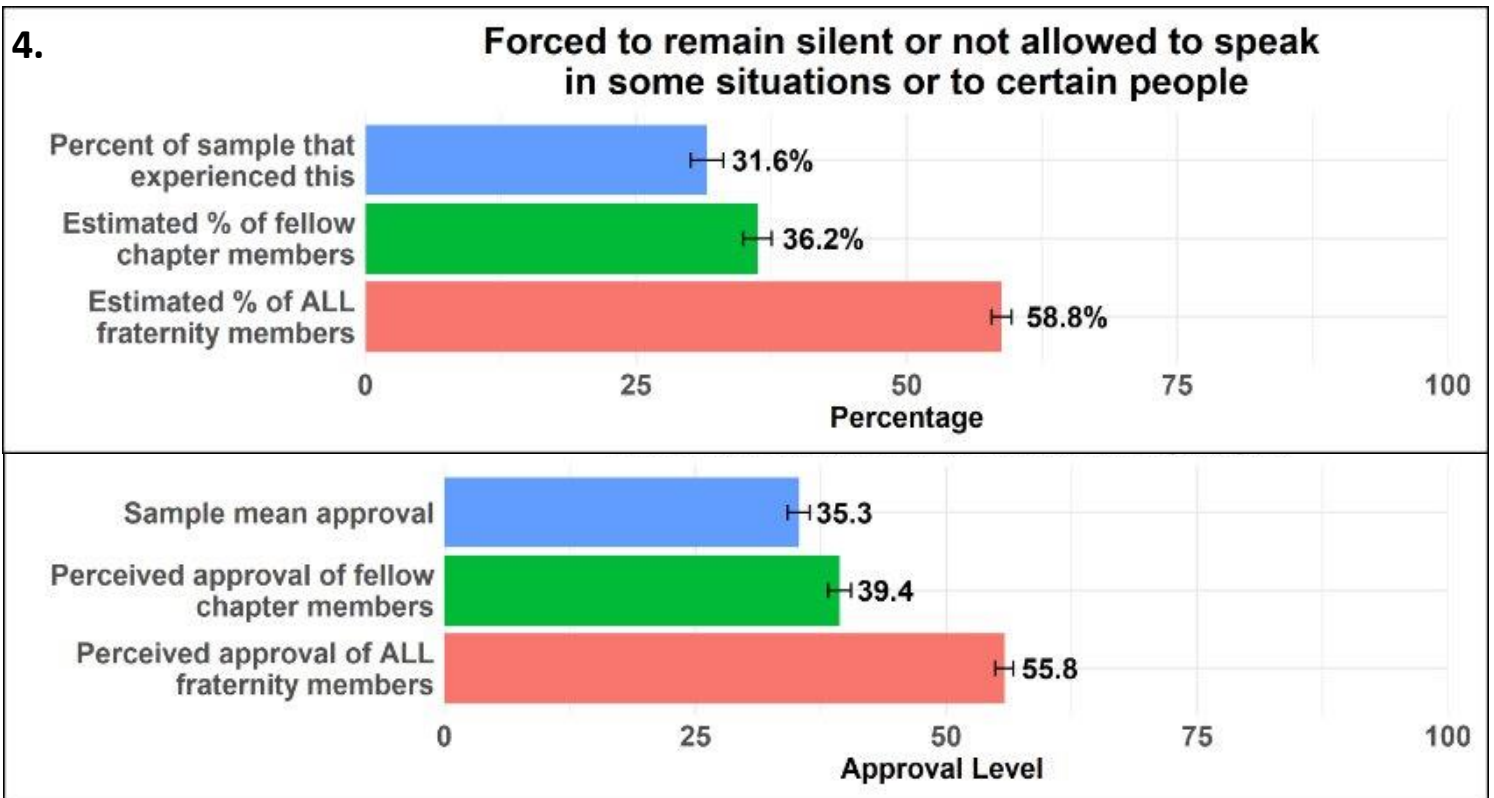
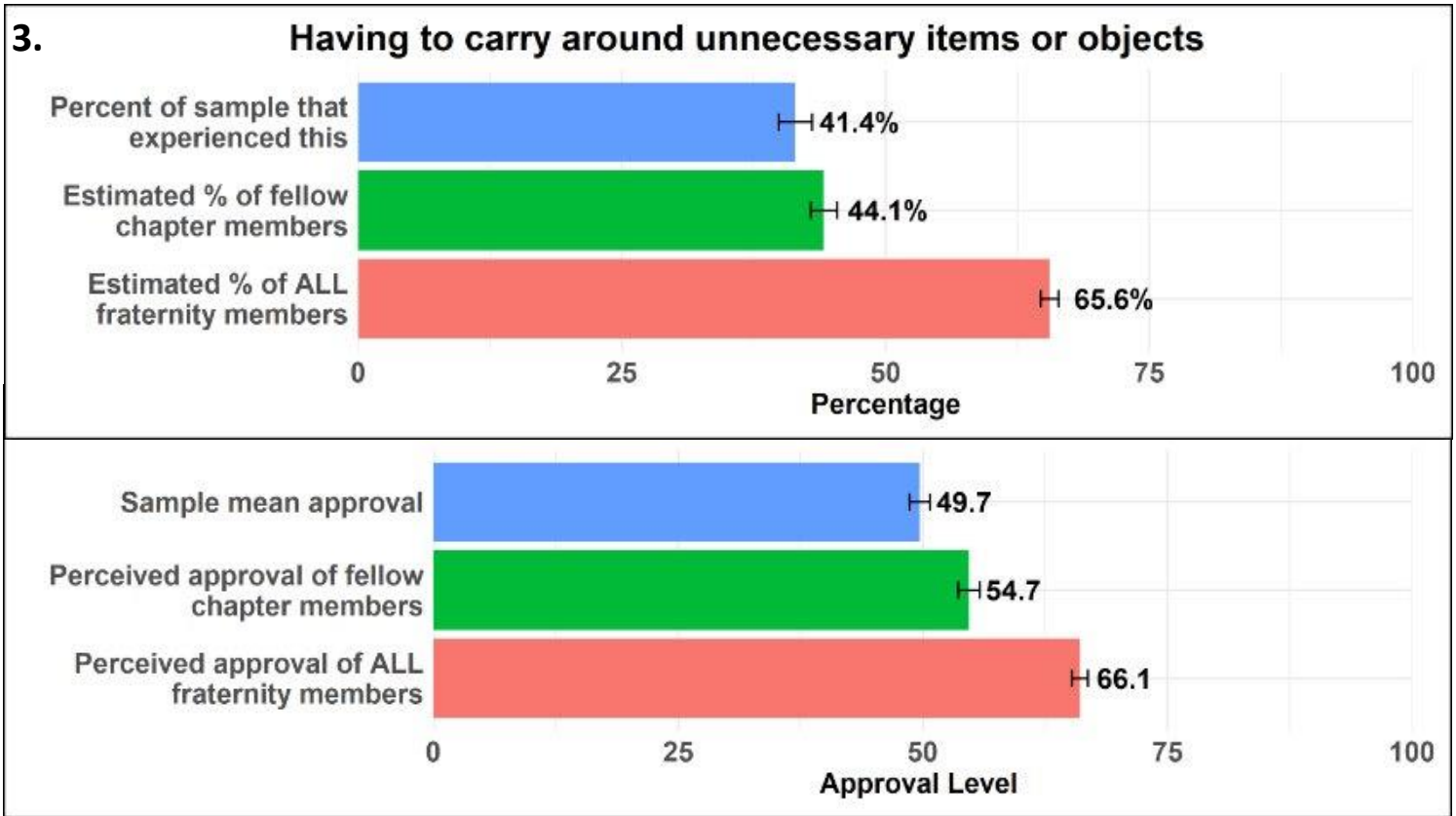
1. Participating in a mandatory alcohol challenge, contest, or game



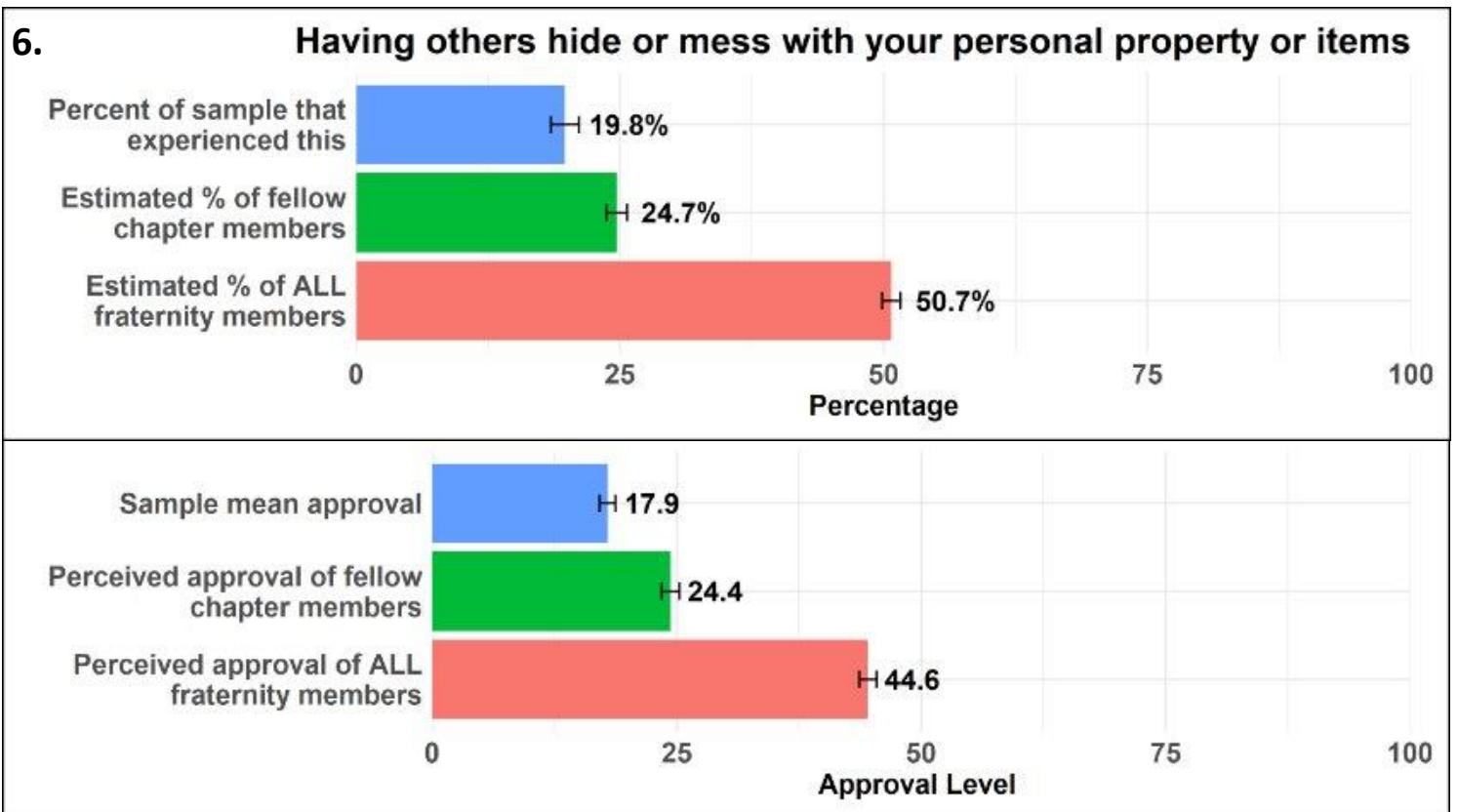
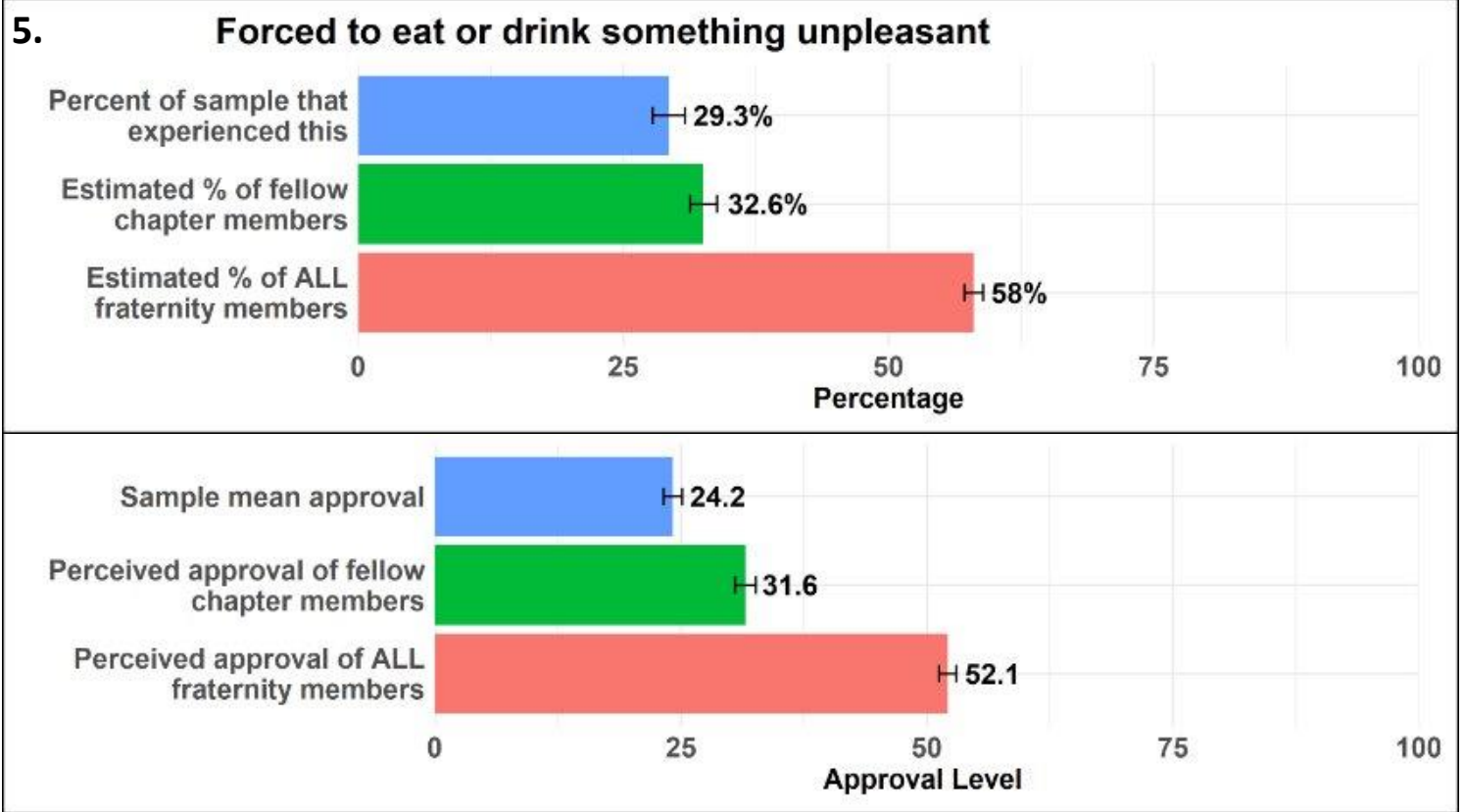
2. Being intentionally deprived of sleep



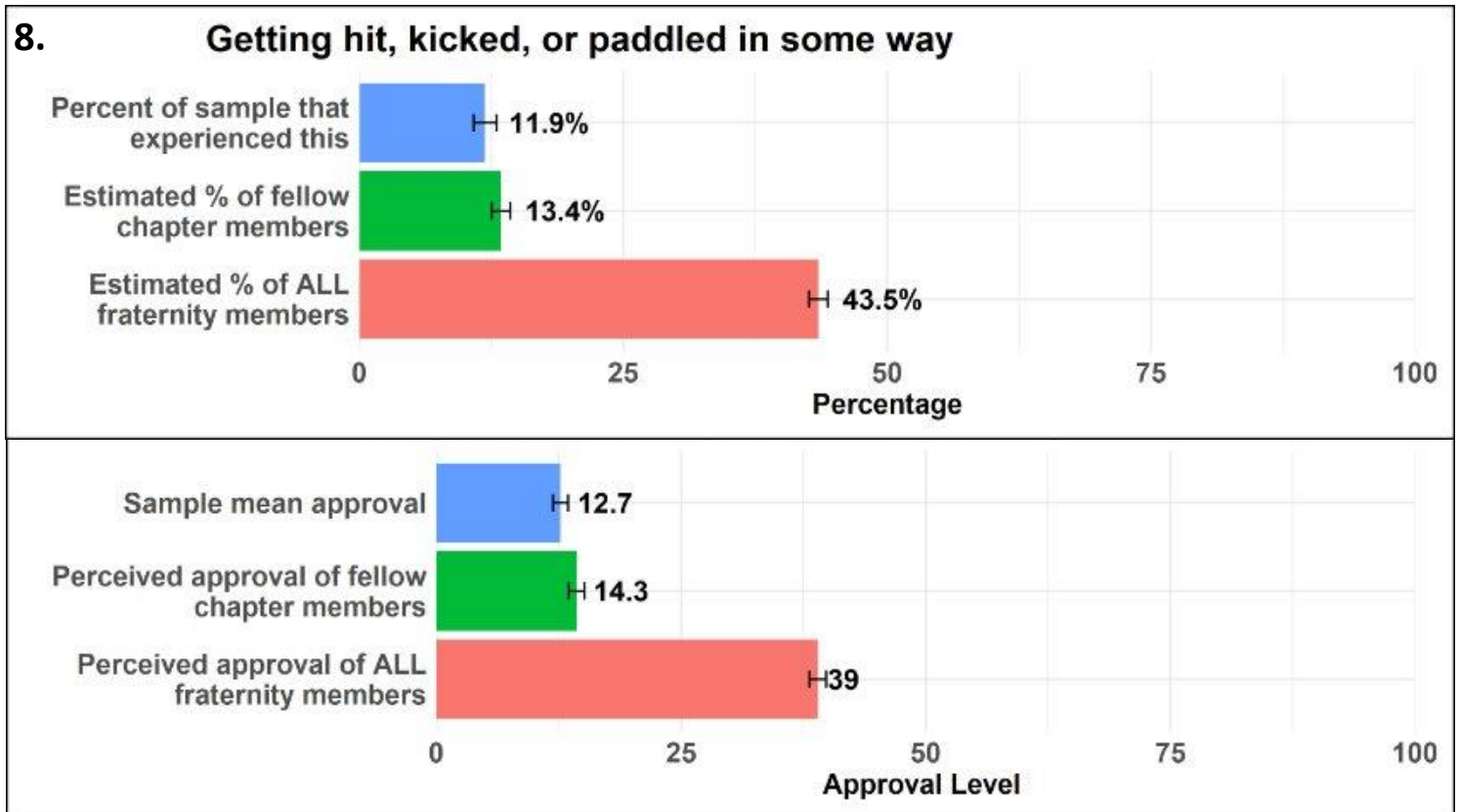
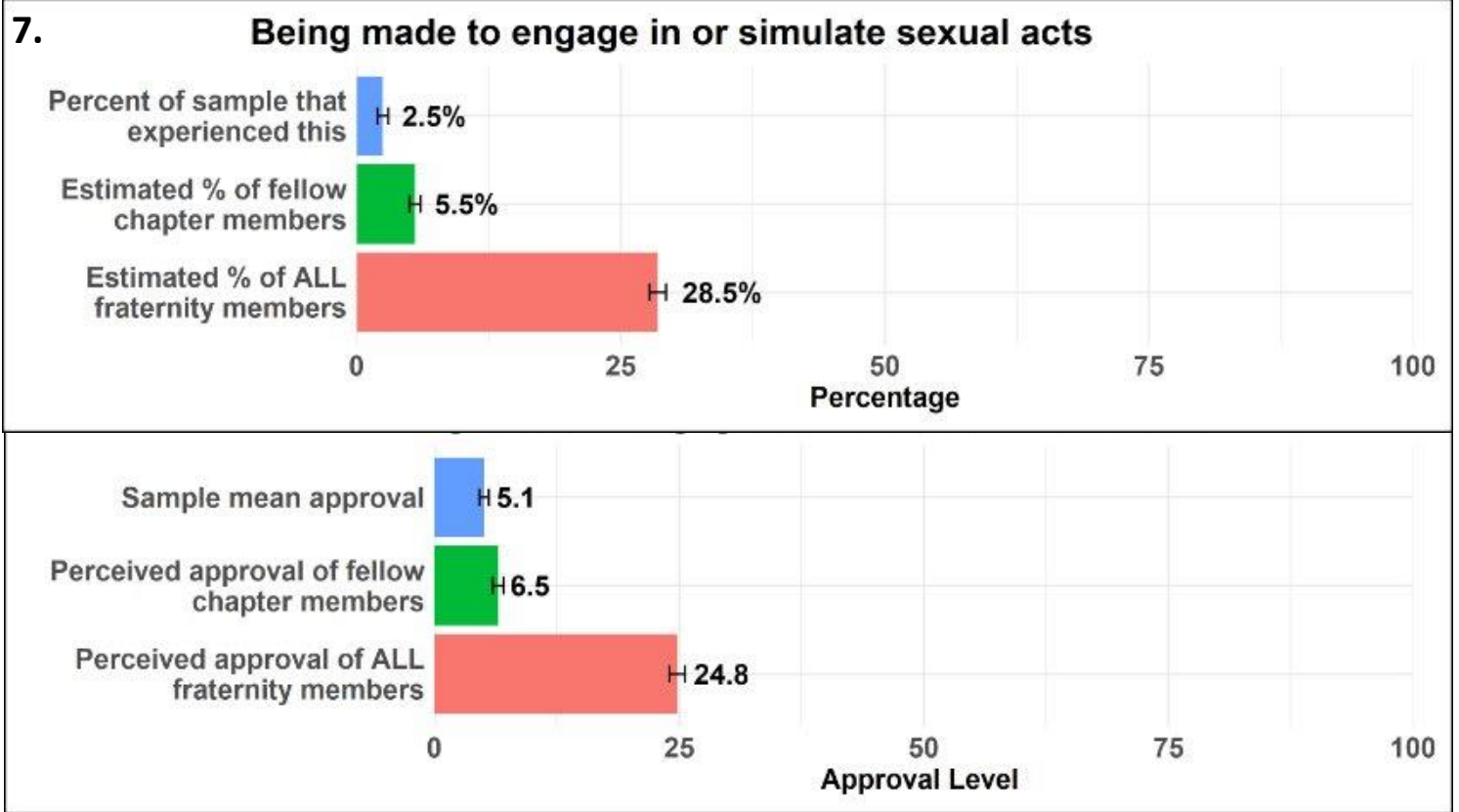
Hazing Attitudes and Norms



Hazing Attitudes and Norms



Hazing Attitudes and Norms



Bystander Behavior

Bystander behavior (also referred to as bystander intervention) is when one takes action to prevent, de-escalate, or resolve problematic or harmful situations and behaviors on behalf of others. Many colleges and universities train students in bystander behavior as part of broader prevention programs aimed at reducing hazing, sexual assault, and harassment. However, intervening in these situations takes courage, and students may fear social repercussions from inserting themselves into risky situations. In particular, fraternity members may feel that intervening is not socially accepted by their peers and therefore hesitate to take action.

The following section presents data assessing bystander behaviors, attitudes, and perceived norms. Participants were presented with five different scenarios:

1. *If you heard that someone else was planning to drink to a level that concerned you (e.g., talking about getting drunk, wasted, or black out)*
2. *If you saw someone showing signs that they drank too much during a drinking event (e.g., slurring, stumbling, aggressive, dilated pupils, or did not know where they were).*
3. *If someone was clearly intoxicated and heading into a risky sexual situation (either for them or the other person).*
4. *If someone was using risky substances other than alcohol, or mixing other substance use with alcohol.*
5. *If someone was experiencing or engaging in hazing, bullying, or other similar treatment.*

They were then asked:

- How do YOU feel about others stepping in to help in the following situations?
- How likely is it that YOU would step-in and try to help reduce risk or danger in the following situations?
- How likely is it that someone in your chapter would step-in and try to help reduce risk or danger in the following situations?
- How likely is it that a typical fraternity member would try to step-in and help reduce risk or danger in the following situations?

Response options for question 1 ranged from 0 = Strongly disapprove, to 4 = Strongly approve.

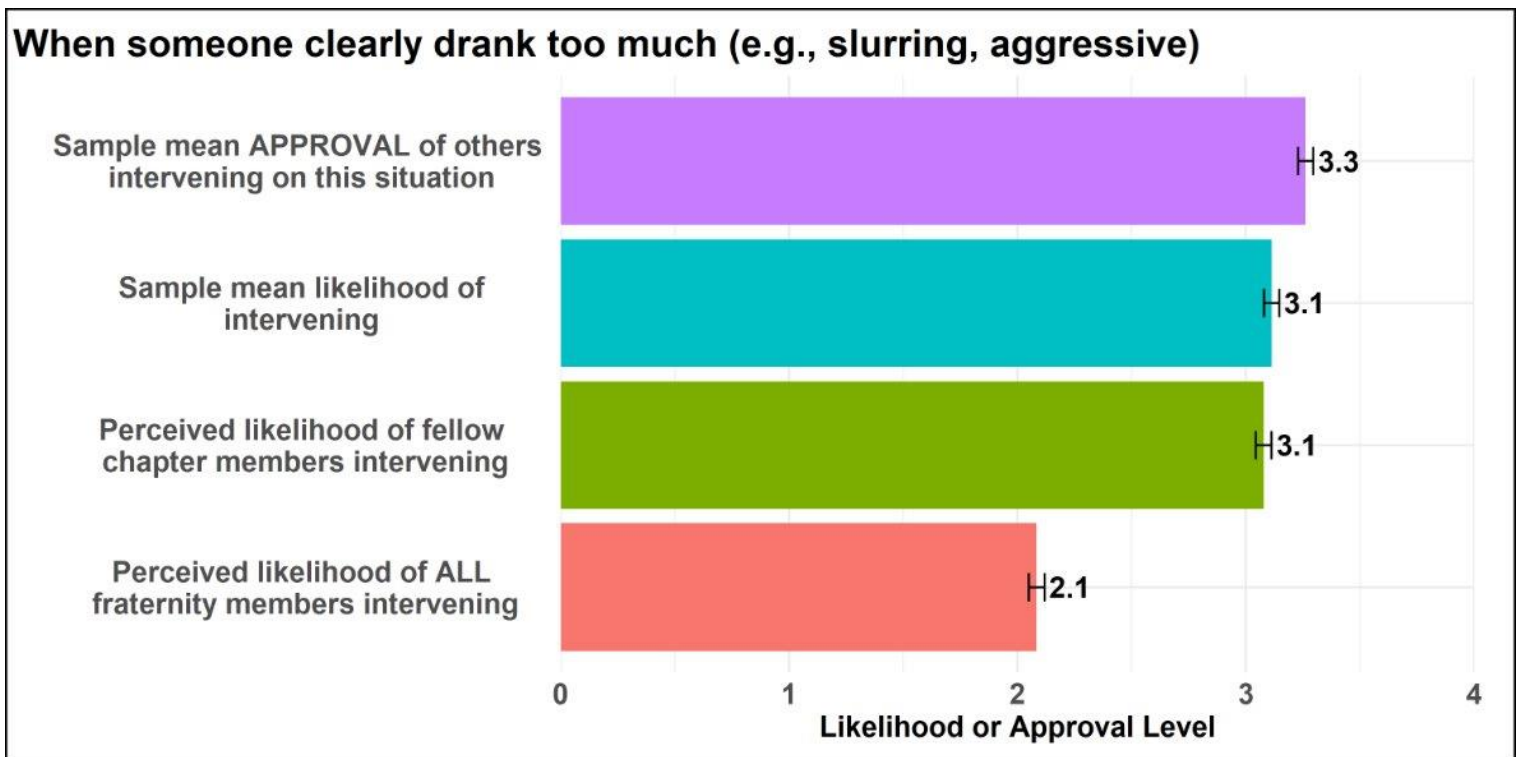
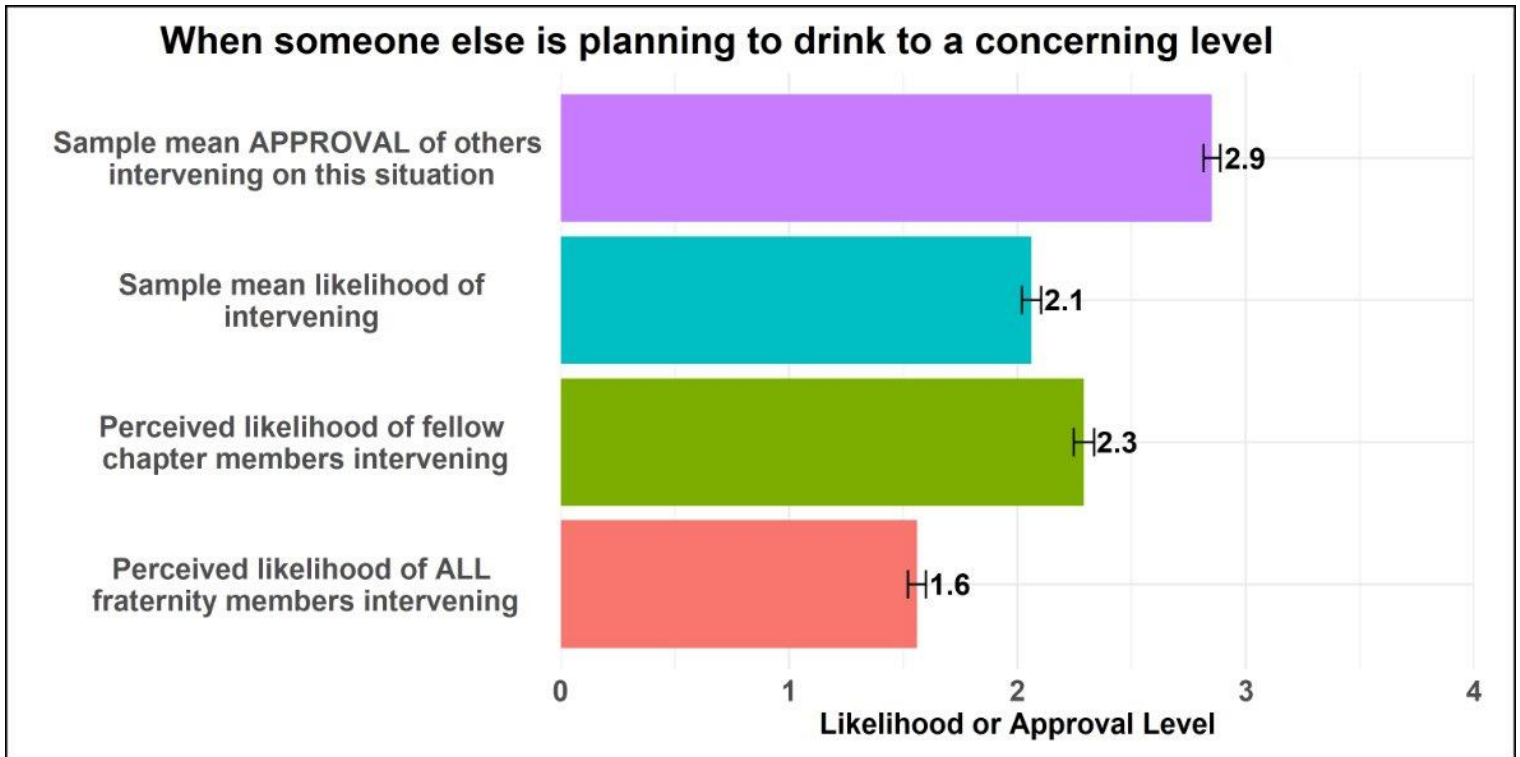
Response options for questions 2-4 ranged from 0 = Not at all likely, to 4 = Extremely likely.

Interpreting the following figures:

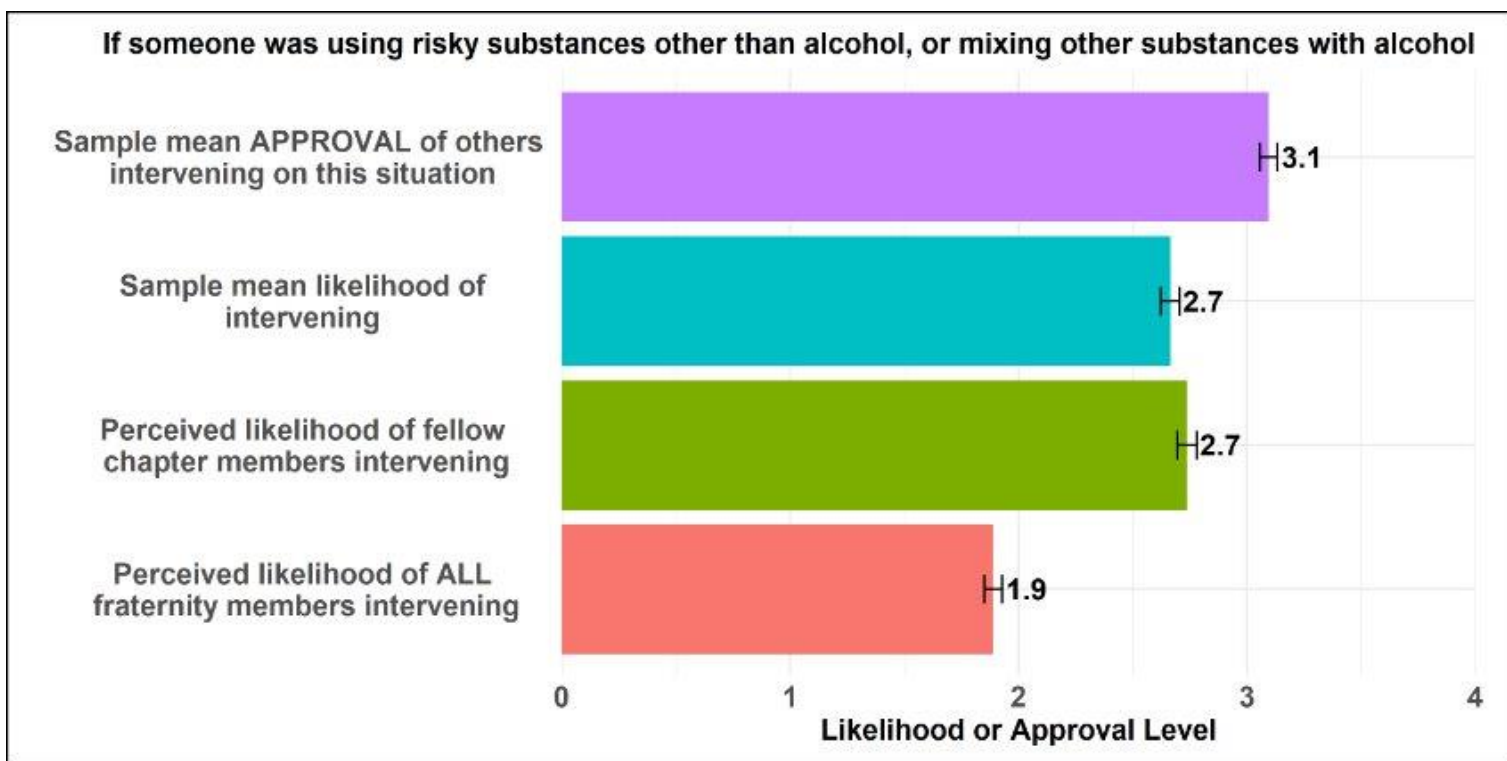
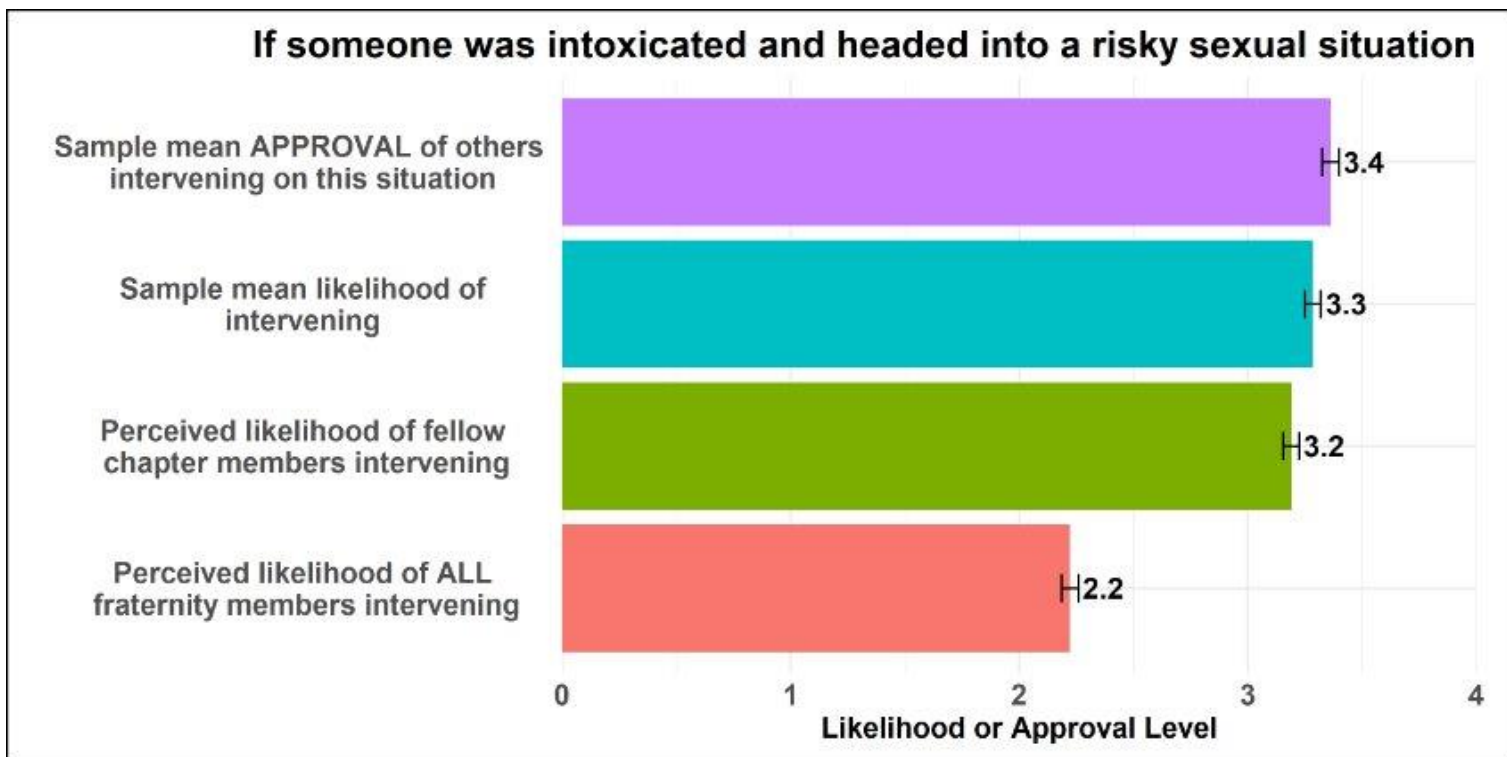
Consistently, approval for bystander behavior was higher than estimated likelihood of stepping in and intervening, both for the respondent, for other members of their chapter, and for fraternity men in general. In prevention efforts to strengthen the likelihood of a bystander stepping up (or stepping in), correcting misperceived norms can be important to dispelling the misperception that others wouldn't approve of or actively intervene. Additionally, while respondents generally saw their own likelihood of stepping in to be similar to that of other members in their chapter, for all 5 scenarios they did not perceive that a typical fraternity member would try to step-in.

That sense that others might not intervene could be a barrier to an individual's own likelihood of intervening (i.e., if the perception is that stepping in isn't a very likely behavior, they might decide not to step in either).

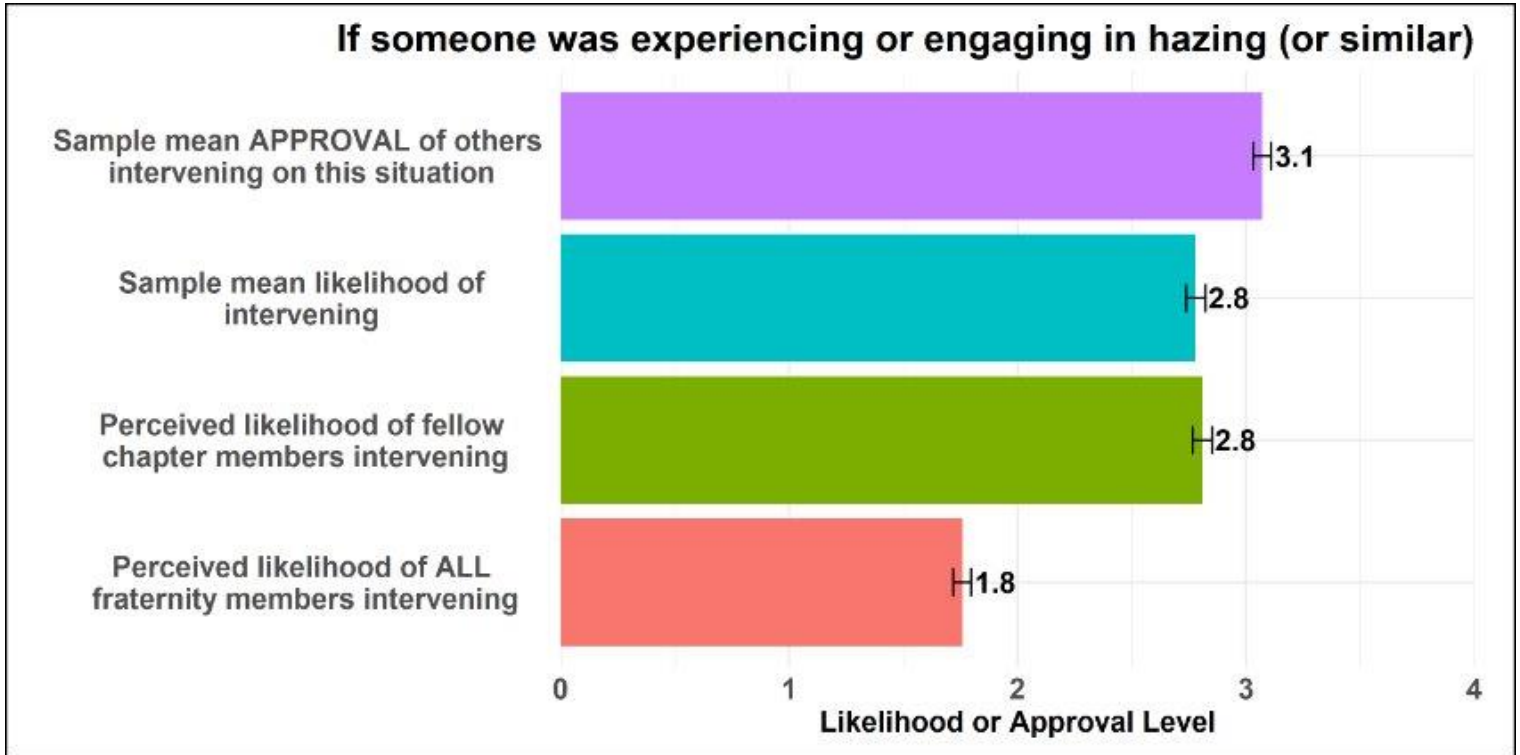
Bystander Behavior



Bystander Behavior



Bystander Behavior

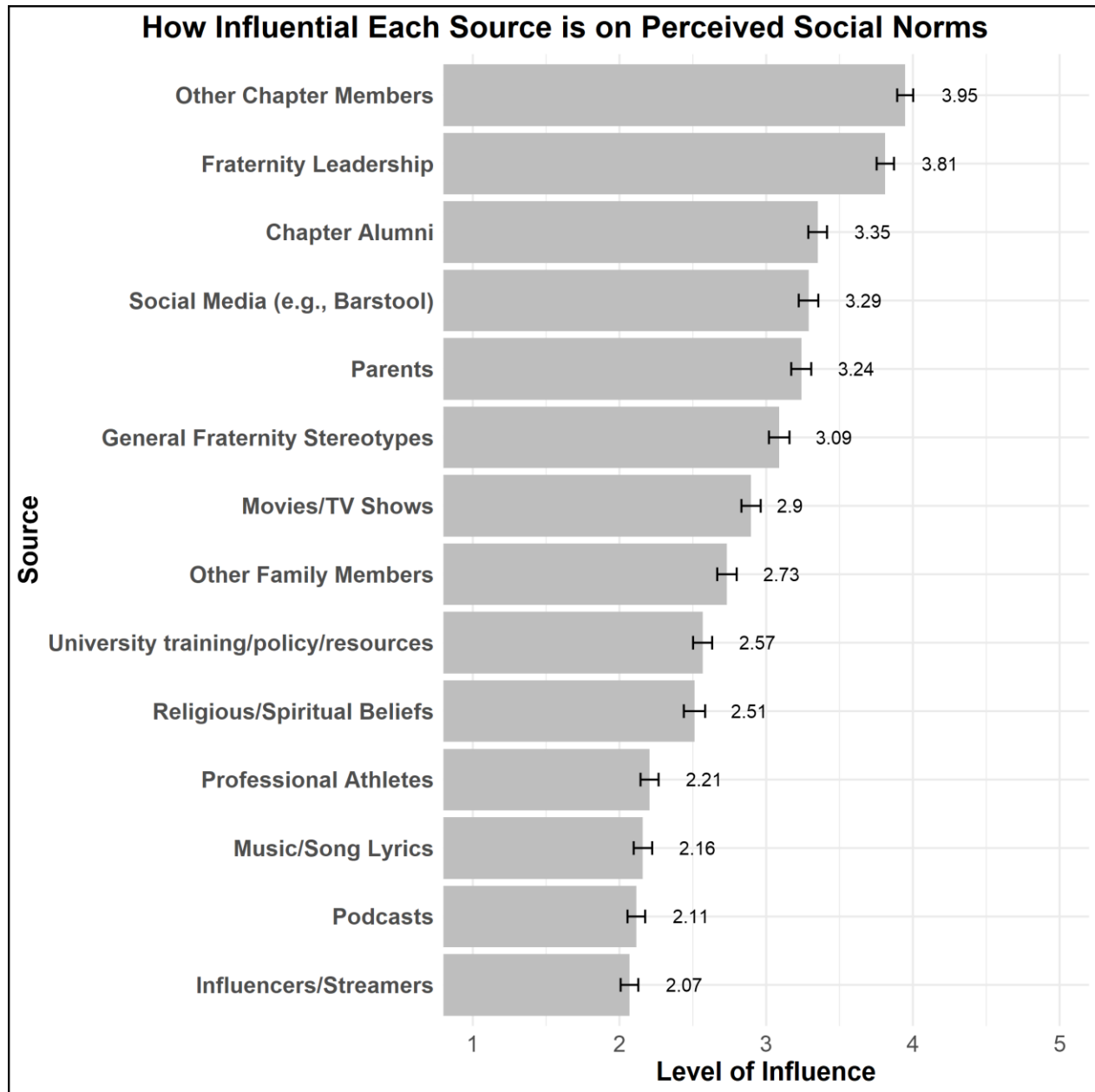


Sources of Social Influence

To better understand the degree to which various sources influence perceptions of fraternity norms, we asked participants:

“When you think about what typically happens in fraternities in the U.S., how much do the following sources INFLUENCE your ideas and perceptions about what is acceptable or unacceptable behavior?”

We then presented fourteen different items. *Response options ranged from 1=Not at all influential to 5=Extremely influential.*



Key Takeaways:

The five highest rated sources of influence were other members of their chapter, fraternity leadership, chapter alumni, social media, and parents. Of note is that effective parent-delivered interventions exist, particularly for alcohol, and further integrating parents could be a part of a chapter’s overall prevention plan pertaining to hazing and bystander behaviors. Additionally, chapter members (past and present) occupying the top 3 slots, putting a spotlight on data showing *actual* attitudes and behaviors could positively change the culture.

Other Health Behaviors: Social Identity, Depression, and Anxiety

The following sections present data on other health-related behaviors, including social identity, depression, anxiety, and alcohol use.

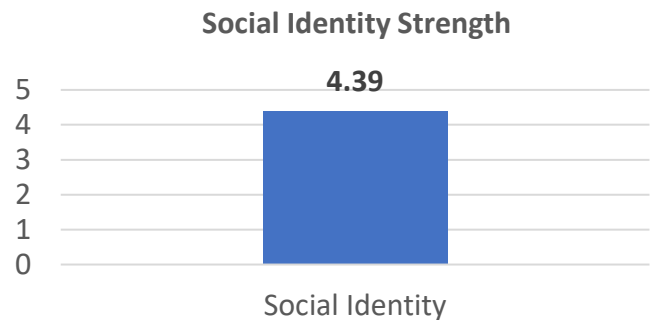
Social Identity: One of the key motives for joining a fraternity is experiencing a sense of belonging and social identity with one's chapter. Those who have stronger social identity with their 'in-group' experience a range of positive benefits, including connectedness, purpose, self-worth, and support when going through tough times.

It is a common misperception that hazing activities can serve as a bonding exercise that builds loyalty to the group and creates better group cohesion. Using these data, we sought to challenge this misperception by empirically examining the association between experienced hazing activities and members' identification strength with their chapter.

Participants were asked to reflect how they feel about being a part of their chapter and indicate their agreement with the following statements using a 5-point liker scale where 1=strongly disagree, 3=neither agree nor disagree, and 5=strongly agree.

- *I feel strong ties to other members of my chapter*
- *I find it easy to form a bond with other members of my chapter*
- *I feel a sense of being "connected" with others in my chapter*

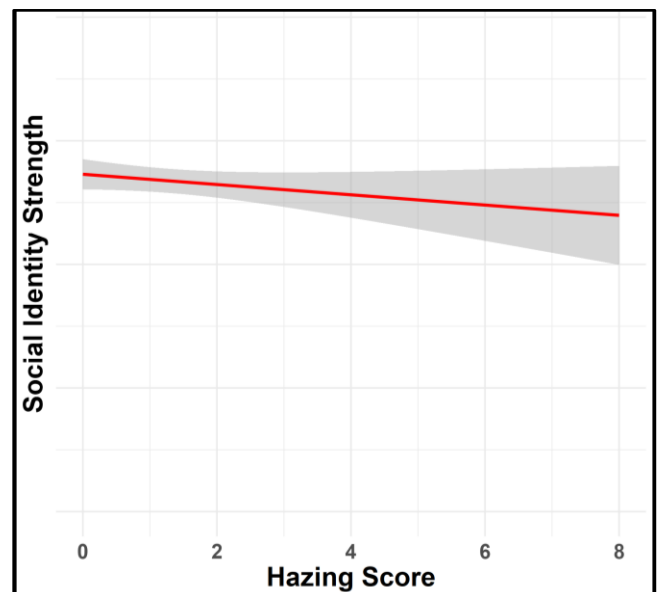
Social identity strength was high, on average, in this sample, with a mean score of 4.39 out of a possible range of 1-5. This suggests most fraternity members reported very strong ties and connections to fellow chapter members.



However, these data revealed that **social identity strength was inversely related to hazing experiences.**

➤ **This negative correlation means those who reported experiencing more hazing had significantly lower social identity strength with their chapter.**

Although the correlation was relatively small (shown on the right), this evidence *directly refutes* the misperception that hazing rituals increase one's bond and/or connections with fellow chapter members.



Other Health Behaviors: Social Identity, Depression, and Anxiety

Depression and Anxiety: Mental health struggles are common among college students and two of the most salient mental health concerns are symptoms of depression and anxiety. While being a part of a group like a fraternity can be a strong protective factor for these mental health concerns, being engaged in hazing-related activities can present a very serious mental health risk for students.

To address these questions, we sought to examine associations between social identity strength and mental health, as well as hazing experiences and mental health.

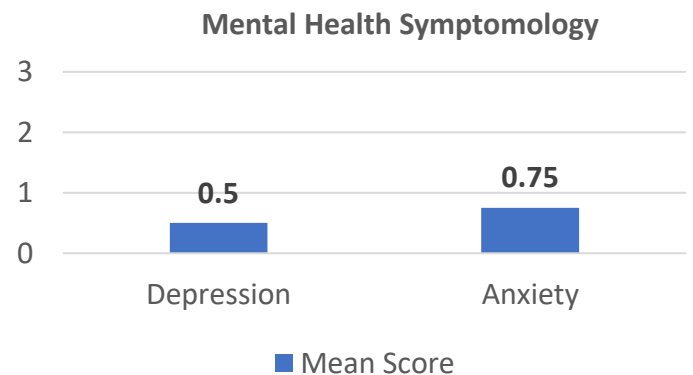
Participants were asked to rate how often they had been bothered by the following problems over the last two weeks using a scale where 1=not at all, 2=several days, 3=more than half the days, and 4=nearly every day:

- *Feeling nervous, anxious, or on edge*
- *Not being able to stop or control worrying*
- *Feeling down, depressed, or hopeless*
- *Little interest or pleasure in doing things*

Both depression and anxiety symptoms were very low on average, with a mean score of 0.5 and 0.75 respectively, on a possible range from 0-3.

Social identity strength with one’s chapter was strongly related to fewer symptoms of depression and anxiety.

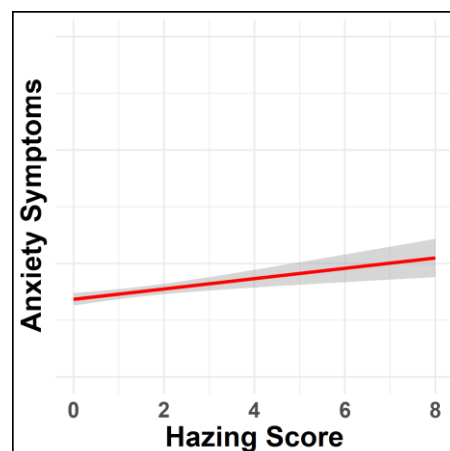
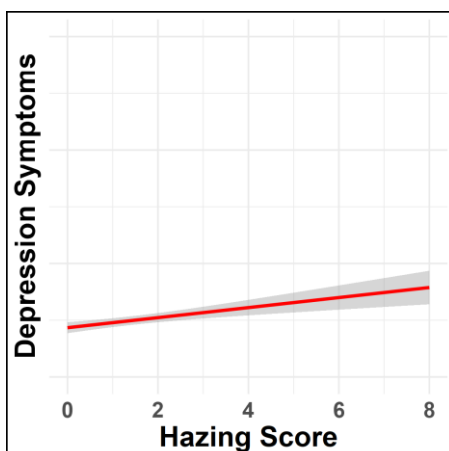
➤ **Fraternity members who feel closer ties to their chapter have better mental health, on average.**



However, these data revealed that **hazing experiences are related to elevated depression and anxiety symptoms.**

➤ **Those who reported experiencing more hazing had significantly greater symptoms of depression and anxiety.**

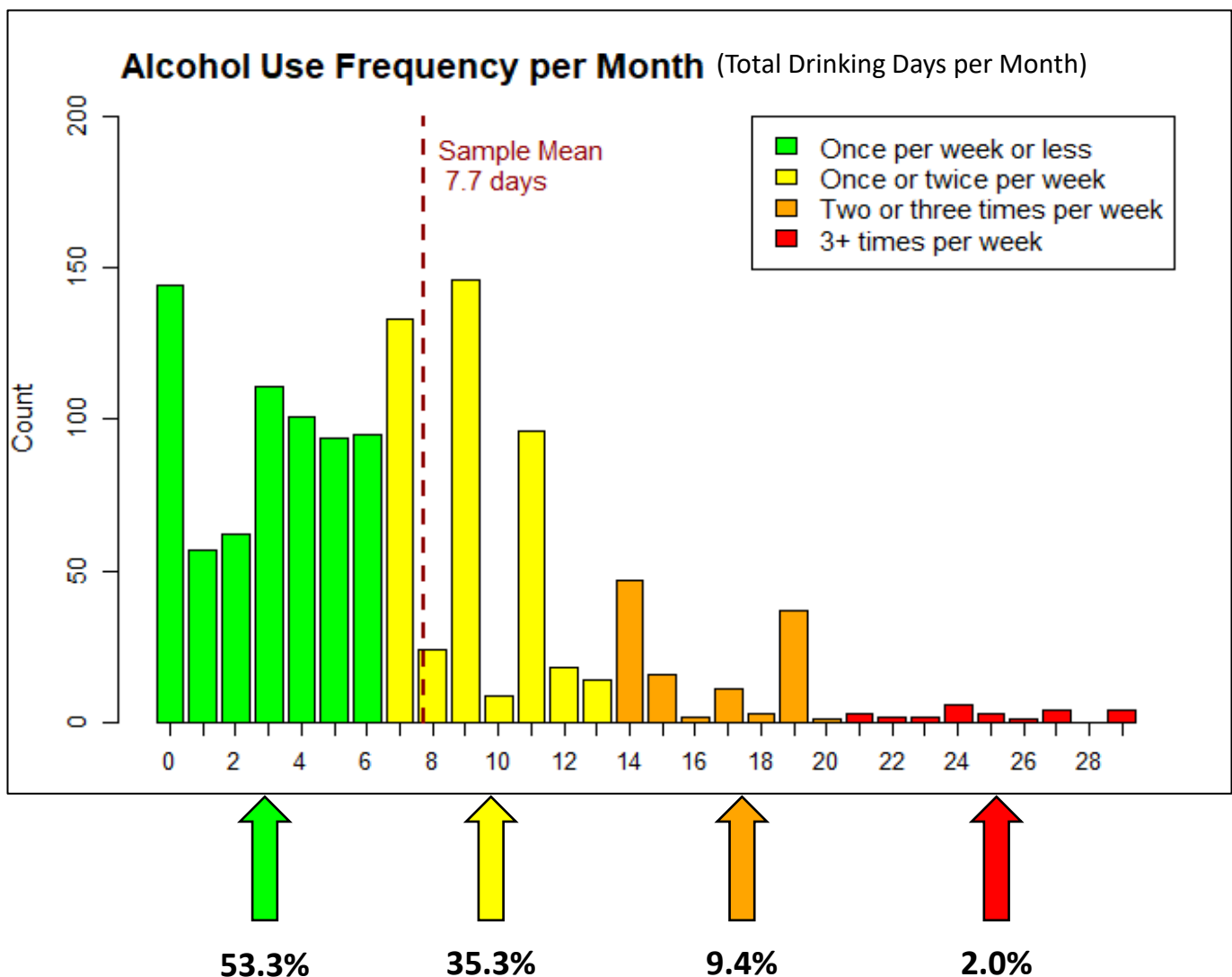
This evidence highlights some of the psychological harms associated with hazing (correlations plotted below).



Other Health Behaviors: Alcohol Use

This section presents data about participants' alcohol use and norms. The following items were asked:

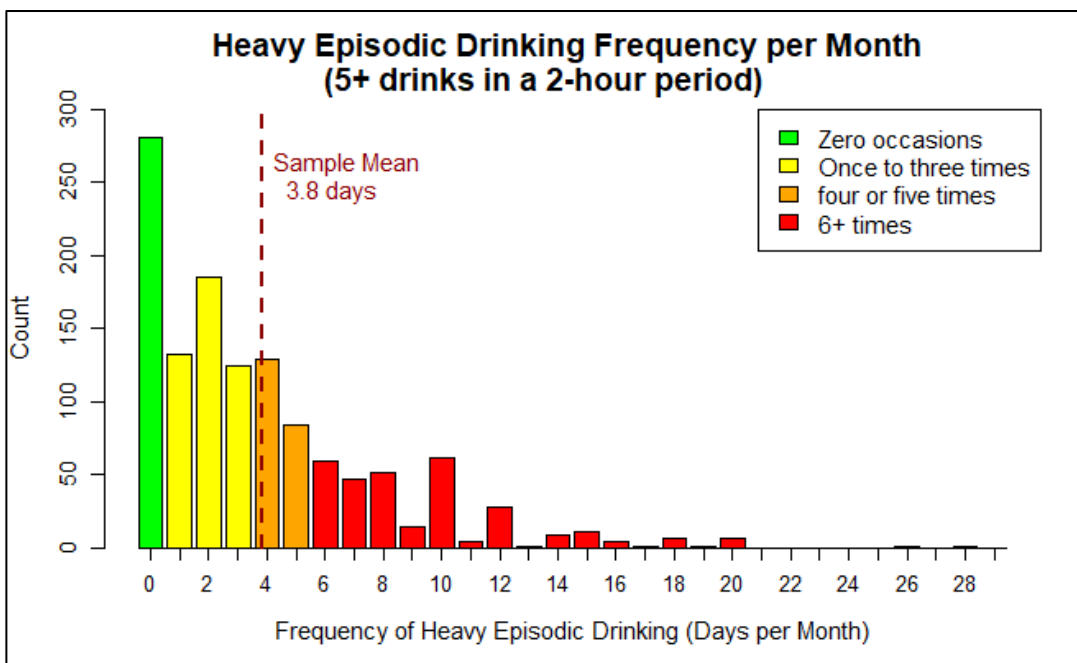
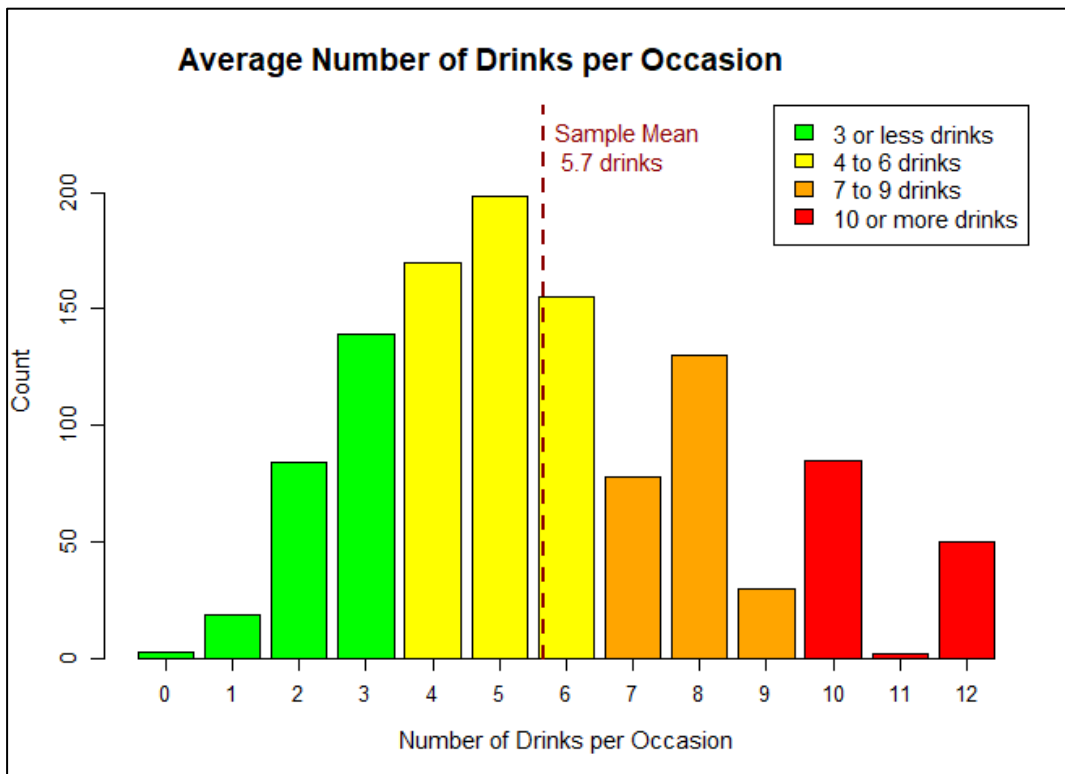
- **Alcohol Use Frequency per Month:** About how many days do you drink alcohol during a typical month?
- **Average Number of Drinks per Occasion:** During a typical month, on the days when you drank, about how many drinks did you have on average?
- **Heavy Episodic Drinking (HED) Frequency per Month:** During a typical month, on how many days did you have 5 or more drinks of alcohol within a two-hour period? *Note that HED is defined as 5 or more drinks in a 2-hour period for males.*



Key Takeaway: More than half of the sample reported drinking once per week or less, on average. Very few reported drinking with extreme frequency; just over 10% report drinking >2 times per week.

Other Health Behaviors: Alcohol Use

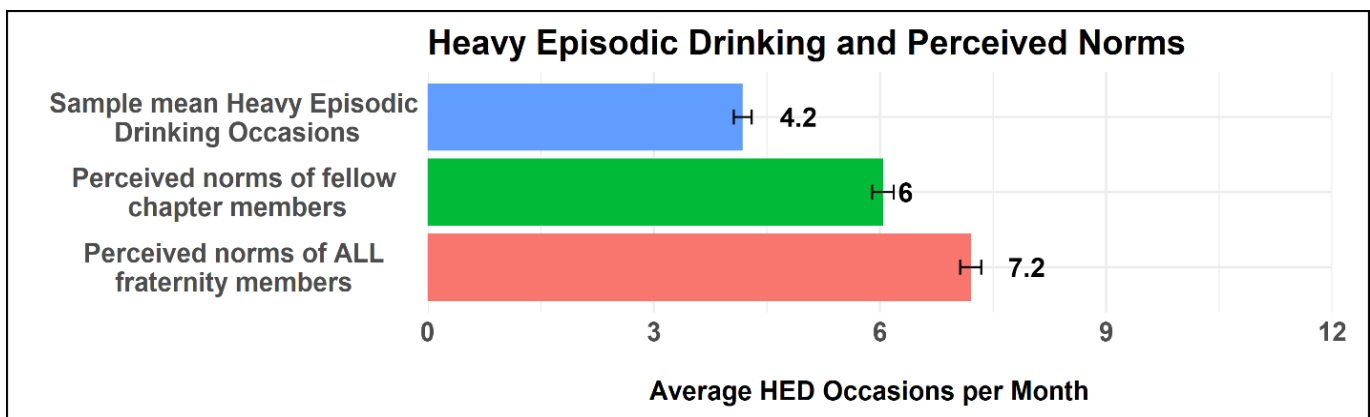
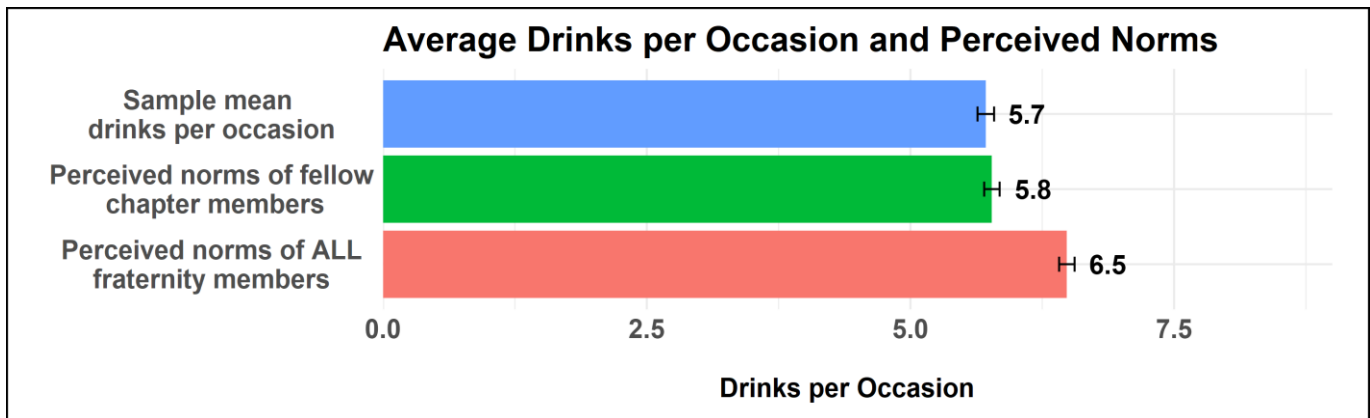
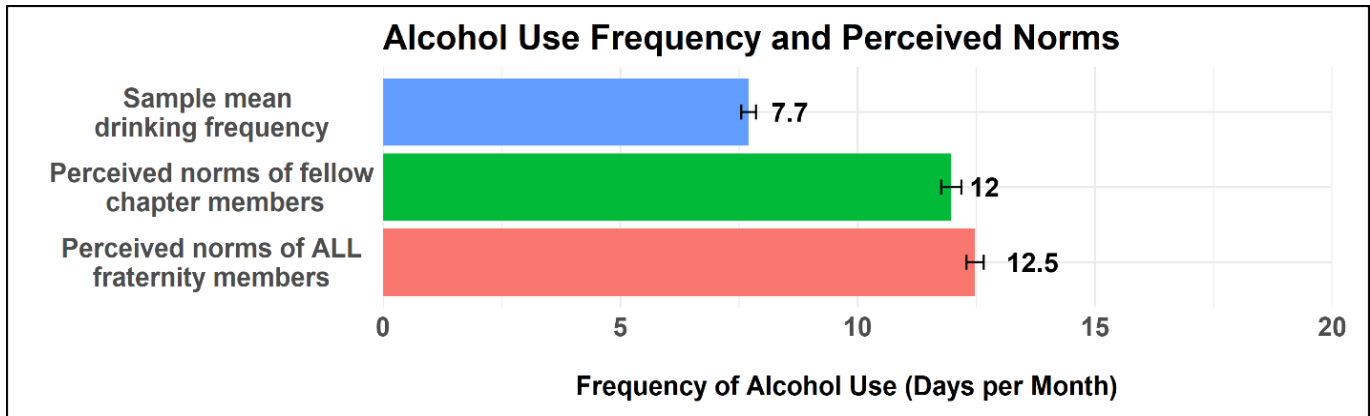
Note: This top figure shows only participants who indicated that they drank at least once in the past month.



Key Takeaway: On days participants did drink, they did so in relatively high quantity (mean number of drinks was 5.7 per occasion). However, **most** participants did not engage in frequent HED, if at all.

Perceived Drinking Norms vs Actual Reported Use

Next, we show a contrast between participants' alcohol use behaviors with perceptions of fellow fraternity members' alcohol use behaviors on a chapter and national level.



Key Takeaway: Participants tended to think other fraternity members, especially nationwide, drank more heavily than themselves. These misperceived norms serve as important modifiable cognitions that can be directly corrected through brief interventions.

Additional Findings on Alcohol Use

This section provides an overview of some of the additional findings regarding alcohol use in relation to one’s hazing experiences, as well as how perceived social norms may influence one’s use.

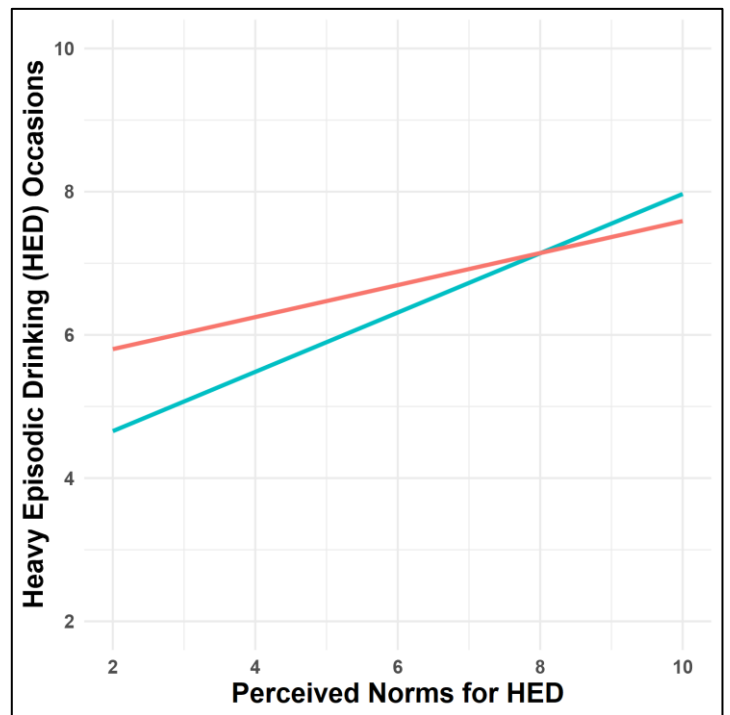
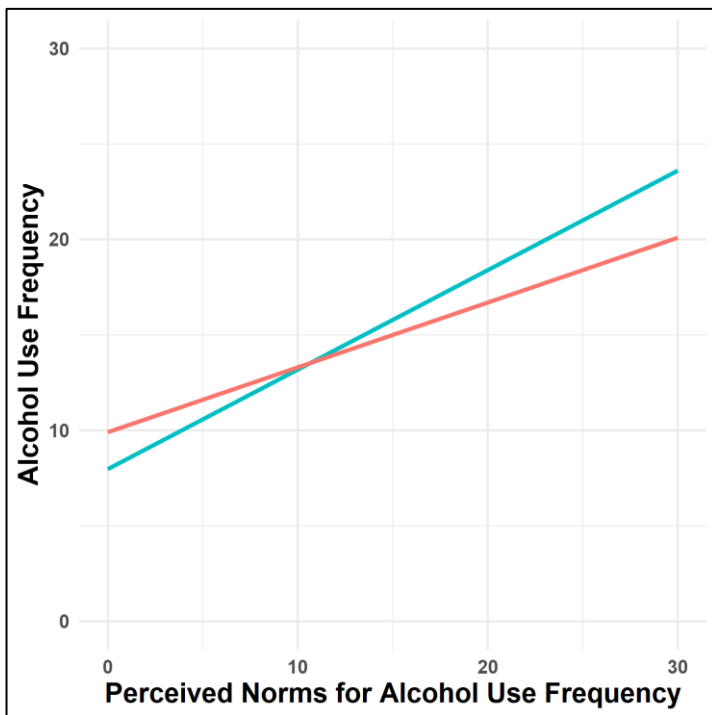
Experiencing hazing was a significant predictor of fraternity members’ alcohol use.

Those who had experienced more hazing reported significantly more frequent alcohol use, higher quantity in terms of drinks per occasion, and more frequent heavy episodic (binge) drinking occasions.

This evidence provides insight into how one’s initiation experiences can set them on a riskier path as it pertains to alcohol use. It may also indicate that hazing activities are reflective on the overall culture within one’s fraternity, where hazing and higher-risk alcohol use go hand-in-hand.

➤ **Perceived drinking norms are strong predictors of one’s own alcohol use, especially the norms within one’s chapter, relative to the norms for all fraternity members across the US.**

These example figures show the relative strength of these correlations, with stronger correlations for with perceived norms for one’s chapter than with all fraternity members in the US.



- All Fraternity Members in the US
- Fellow Chapter Members

Summary and Key Takeaways from Project FAN

- 1 Most students aren't experiencing hazing, though for most hazing behaviors, they perceive hazing to be the norm.**
 - Correcting that misperception is important as fraternities seek to strengthen a culture that doesn't support (nor promote) hazing.
 - Personalized normative feedback is one approach that can correct misperceived norms within and/or across chapters.
- 2 Both depression and anxiety symptoms were associated with hazing experiences – those who had reported experiencing more hazing had significantly more mental health symptoms.**
 - As campuses and chapters within campus communities emphasize mental health, this evidence highlights some of the psychological harms associated with hazing and affirms it as a high-priority prevention focus.
 - What chapters do to reduce and address hazing will, therefore, also have impacts on mental health.
- 3 Those who had reported experiencing more hazing had significantly lower social identity strength with their chapter.**
 - Chapters seeking to strengthen brotherhood would want to move away from hazing behaviors, since this evidence directly refutes the misperception that hazing activities increase one's bond and/or connections with fellow chapter members.
 - Vocal alumni who talk about what they went through could contribute to a misperceived norm – informing alumni of current norms and perceptions are can be part of strategic plan for prevention.
- 4 Most fraternity members are highly approving of bystander behavior.**
 - Despite misperceived concerns that others will not approve of intervening on high-risk situations, the actual norm suggests *most* fraternity members do indeed approve.
 - However, the general perception was that most US fraternity members would *not* intervene.
 - Skills training for how to be an effective bystander can be provided, and correcting misperceived norms can increase the likelihood that someone steps up and steps in
- 5 There are many influential sources related to perceived attitudes.**
 - Parents, chapter leadership, and alumni can be part of discussing what's ok, what's not ok, and what it means to step in and step up.
 - Parent-based interventions can also be a part of an overall approach to prevention, including greater parental involvement in orientation (e.g., teaching effective parent communication strategies).



Fraternity Assessment of Norms: Hazing and Bystander Intervention

North American Interfraternity Conference (NIC)
11722 Allisonville Road, Ste 103, Box 352 | Fishers IN 46038

Prepared by:

Scott Graupensperger, PhD.
Jason Kilmer, PhD.
Annelise Smith, M.A.

Center for the Study of Health and Risk Behaviors
Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences
University of Washington School of Medicine
Seattle, WA 98105

Contact: Scott Graupensperger at Graups@uw.edu

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