

Perceived Isolation and Substance Usage at UCSD: Impact on the Black Undergraduate Population

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Introduction

- Research shows that “those who engaged with **self-isolation** were found to use **20%** more cannabis during the pandemic than those that did not”²
- Studies found **44%** of college students use cannabis once over the past year while **25%** used the drug each month of 2020¹
- In general, **E-cigarette usage** is on the rise and associated with stress and anxiety among college students.⁴
- **Black students** at predominantly White Institutions (PWI's) have unique challenges.
- **1 in 5** Black students report cannabis use as a result of “academic challenges, mental health, and interpersonal factors”³

Objectives

Our research question explores whether perceived isolation affects substance use of alcohol, marijuana, and nicotine products among the Black undergraduate population of UC San Diego.

Methodology

Recruitment:

- Outreach to the Women's Center & Black Resource Center on campus
 - Send out link with a flyer promoting the survey through their newsletters
 - QR codes across
 - Clubs, friends, post link on google surveys

Data Collection

- We distributed an online Google survey between April and May of 2022 via various social media platforms and received 62 responses

Data Analysis:

- We analyzed our data using Excel Spreadsheets as well as Google Survey response data.
- We also ran a chi squared test on the sample between the exposure and outcome investigated.

Results

Table 1. Demographics (n=62)	Percentage
Race	
Black Diaspora/ African American	31%
White	12.1%
Hispanic or Latino/a/x	22.4%
Asian	31%
Other	3.4%
Gender	
Female	72.9%
Male	18.6%
Non-Binary	5.1%
Other	3.4%
Living Arrangement	
On-campus (living by myself)	10.2%
On-campus (living with roommates)	28.8%
Off-campus (living by myself)	5.1%
Off-campus (living with roommates)	40.7%
Off-campus (living with family)	15.3%

Figure 1. Percentage of respondents who agree with the statement “Feelings of Isolation on the UCSD campus increases the usage of marijuana, nicotine, and/or alcohol usage among students.”

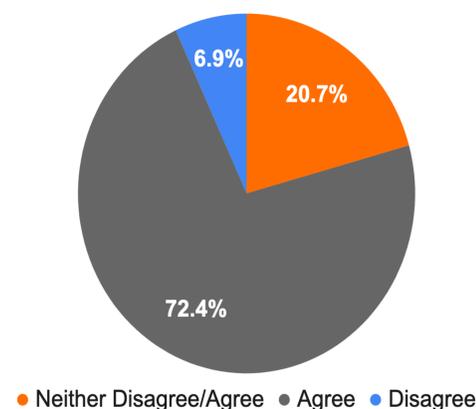


Figure 2. Student agreement with whether UCSD students experience more feelings of isolation post-pandemic than pre-pandemic by Race / Ethnicity

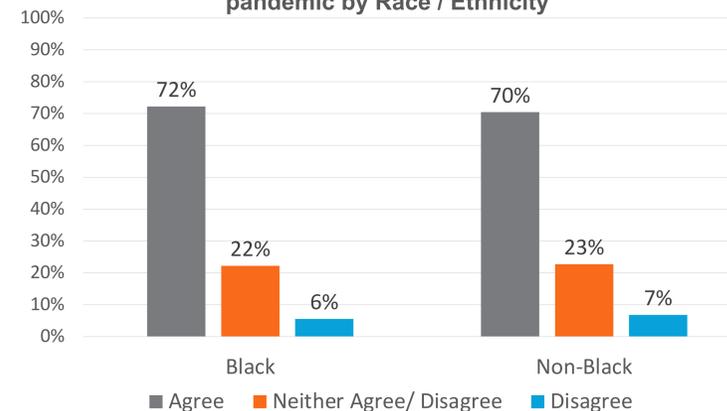


Figure 3. Student Agreement with whether feelings of isolation increase substance usage by Race/ Ethnicity

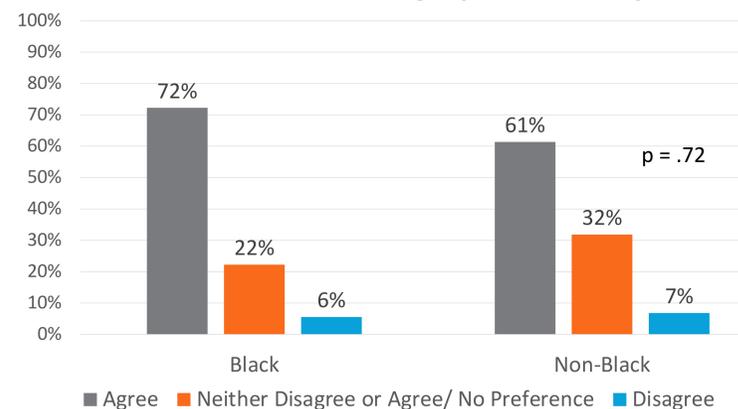
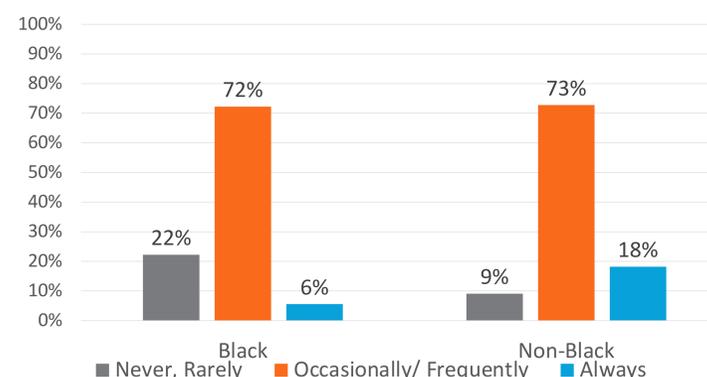


Figure 4. Perceptions of marijuana use in the past 30 days among UCSD students by Race/ Ethnicity



Policy Implications

Policy interventions include tailored health care services that adequately address feelings of isolation and are more inclusive spaces for BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and people of color) students of color.

More implementation of programs is needed to address substance usage among UCSD students such as: peer to peer guidance, counselors trained in substance usage, and workshops on how to prevent substance usage among students.

Conclusions

We found that students do believe that feelings or perceptions of isolation do lead to an increased usage of alcohol, marijuana, and nicotine products.

No statistically significant differences were observed by race/ethnicity.

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