

# Undergraduate Students' Knowledge about Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder and Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Prevention

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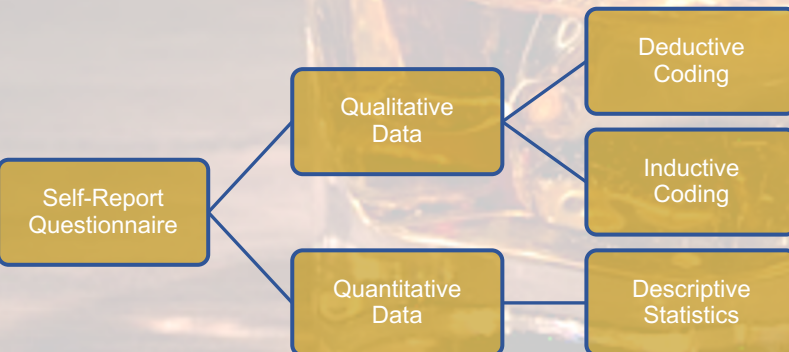
## Introduction

Previous research indicates that postsecondary students tend to **lack knowledge about Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD)** and have varying perceptions on what a **"safe" amount** of alcohol is during pregnancy.

As minimal research has explored students' knowledge of **FASD and FASD prevention initiatives**, it was crucial to investigate undergraduate students' knowledge pertaining to these topics, given that students represent a potential high-risk vulnerable population for **alcohol-exposed pregnancies**. To date, research on postsecondary student populations has focused primarily on students' knowledge of the broader impacts of alcohol use (e.g., impaired driving), as opposed to FASD, specifically.

## Methods

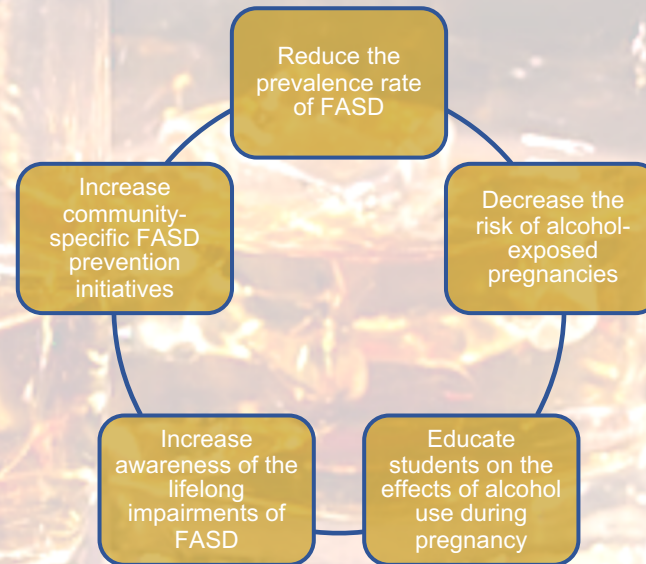
**Laurentian University undergraduate students** were recruited to complete an online questionnaire, adapted from previous Canadian surveys developed by the Environics Research Group (2000, 2006) for the Public Health Agency of Canada. **136 undergraduate students** ranging between the ages of **19 to 50 years of age ( $M = 24.6$ ,  $SD = 6.57$ )** participated in this study from varying programs, ethnicities, and cultural backgrounds.



## Research Question

**What Knowledge do Laurentian University Undergraduate Students' have about FASD and FASD prevention?**

## Implications



## Results

**"A fetus develops a predisposition for alcohol consumption"**

❖ 17% of undergraduate students had **not heard of FASD**

❖ Participants demonstrated **basic knowledge of the spectrum of FASD**

❖ Majority of participants attributed FASD by its cause (*i.e.*, **maternal alcohol consumption**)

**"Not sure, but possibly the condition that babies are in when they are born"**

❖ Students **lacked understanding** of the lifelong impairments of FASD

❖ 28% of participants stated that a small amount of **alcohol during pregnancy can usually be considered safe**

**"I guess the child is born with a disorder like not being able to talk or physical appearance is not normal"**

❖ Unanimous recognition that alcohol during pregnancy can cause **adverse impacts on fetal development**

❖ Participants demonstrated confusion regarding what a **"safe" amount** of alcohol is **when planning to become pregnant**

**"The range of abnormalities that can harm an infant's life because the mother over indulged in the consumption of alcohol"**

❖ 32% of participants stated that there are **resources easily accessible throughout the community** concerning the effects of gestational alcohol consumption

## Conclusion

- ❖ Similar to the results of previous studies regarding students' and professionals' knowledge of FASD and FASD prevention, undergraduate students in this sample also **lacked knowledge concerning the adverse effects of FASD and prenatal alcohol consumption**
- ❖ Further work is needed to enhance students' knowledge of FASD to help students make **informed decisions about their drinking behaviours and to reduce the prevalence of FASD** among vulnerable demographics, including students of childbearing age who may be at risk for alcohol-exposed pregnancies
- ❖ Sampling this population provides an opportunity to **increase students' knowledge of FASD**, while in turn relaying the **importance of abstaining from alcohol consumption during and while planning to become pregnant**