

# **Binge Drinking among College Students**

## **2008**

### **Final Report**

#### **May 2009**

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Prepared by the University of Delaware  
Center for Drug & Alcohol Studies

# **Key Staff for the 2008 College Risk Behaviors Study**

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## College Risk Behaviors Study

### Key Findings

- 83% of UD students report drinking alcohol within the past month, including 3 out of 4 freshmen; 2 out of 3 UD students report they are binge drinkers (5 or more drinks in one sitting within the past month)
- The more frequently students report binge drinking, the more likely they are to report a low GPA
- 1 in 5 UD students drove under the influence of alcohol or other drugs in the past year
- Binge drinkers are more likely to have unprotected sex, and to be victims of robbery, assault and sexual assault – female binge drinkers are almost 4 times more likely to report having been sexually assaulted in the past month
- There has been a program at UD for the past 2 years targeting students cited for alcohol-related violations of the Student Code of Conduct, which has shown promise in reducing rates of binge drinking, especially among female students
- Rates of binge drinking had declined at UD in the late 1990s, but have now returned to their former high levels

# College Risk Behaviors Study

## Introduction

The College Risk Behaviors Study (CRBS) was administered during the 2008 spring semester to a random sample of 2,000 full-time, undergraduate, University of Delaware students. Each was asked via email to follow an enclosed link and complete the online survey. These students were offered \$5 in flex credit as compensation for their time. By the end of the semester, 864 students chose to participate, corresponding to a 43% response rate, a rate equivalent to similar online surveys. Given the chance to specifically opt out of the survey, only 24 students (1%) chose to do so.

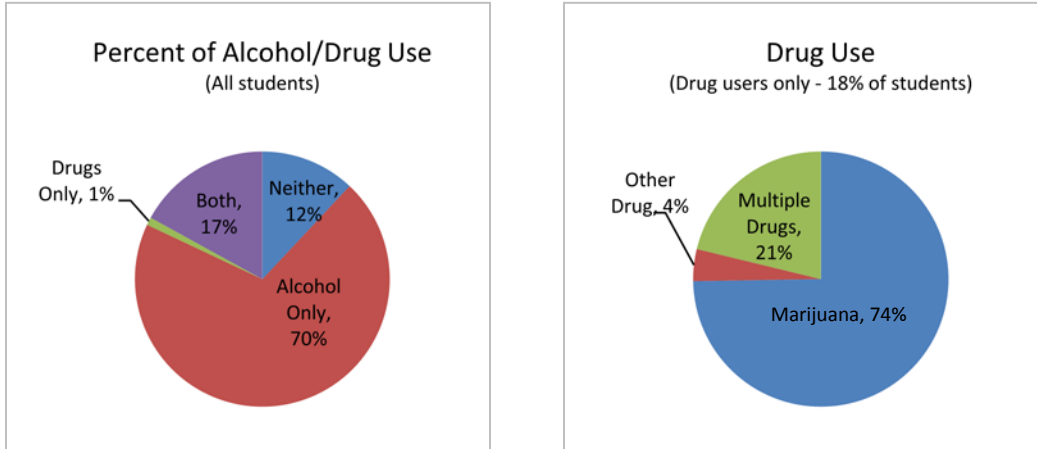
The sample is similar to the overall student body in distribution of gender and race/ethnicity, with slightly higher percentages of females and white students in the sample than in the total UD student population. It also includes a slightly greater percentage of students living on-campus (56%) than does the population (50%).

This report will address several issues relating to substance consumption using data from these participants. First, consumption prevalence rates will be presented for varying levels of alcohol consumption, with gender and race/ethnicity differences and similarities highlighted. Second, an in-depth analysis of the potential consequences of alcohol use and abuse will illustrate the negative impact of these behaviors. Finally, data from past studies will be presented to indicate trends trends over the past 15 years at University of Delaware.

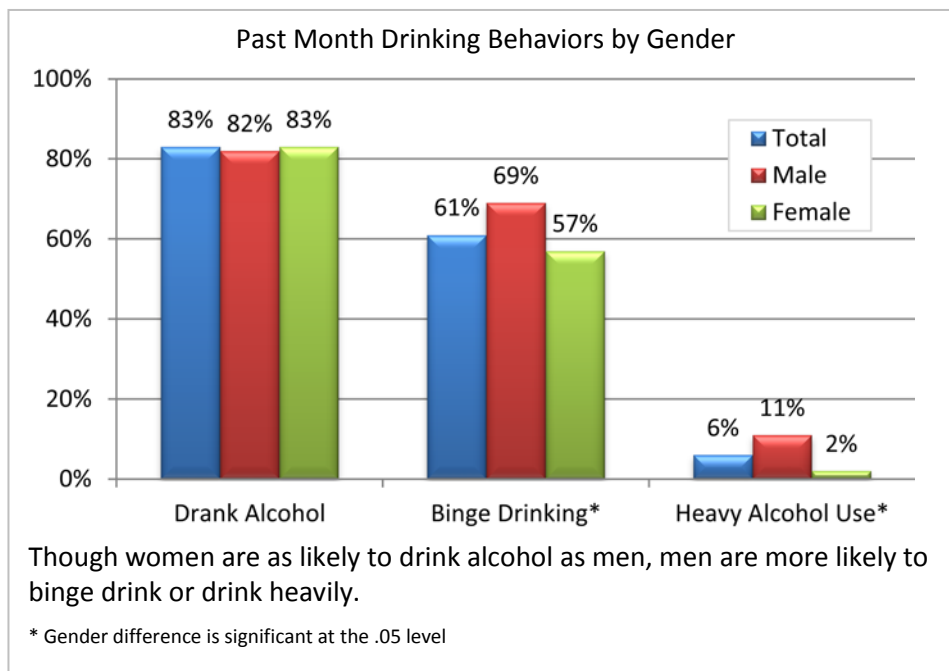
Characteristics of the Sample		
	Sample	UD
Gender		
Male	37%	42%
Female	63%	58%
Race		
White	85%	81%
Black	4%	6%
Hispanic	4%	5%
Asian	4%	4%
Other	4%	4%
Residence		
On-Campus	56%	50%
Off-Campus	44%	50%
Class Year		
Freshmen	24%	
Sophomore	21%	
Junior	26%	
Senior	29%	
Age		
18	14%	
19	27%	
20	24%	
21	22%	
22	11%	
23 or Older	3%	

### Alcohol Consumption Prevalence Rates

In general, the substance use of choice among students was alcohol. Though approximately 18% of students reported using illegal drugs, the vast majority were also using alcohol, with only 1% of students using just illegal drugs. Of students using drugs, most (74%) were using only marijuana.



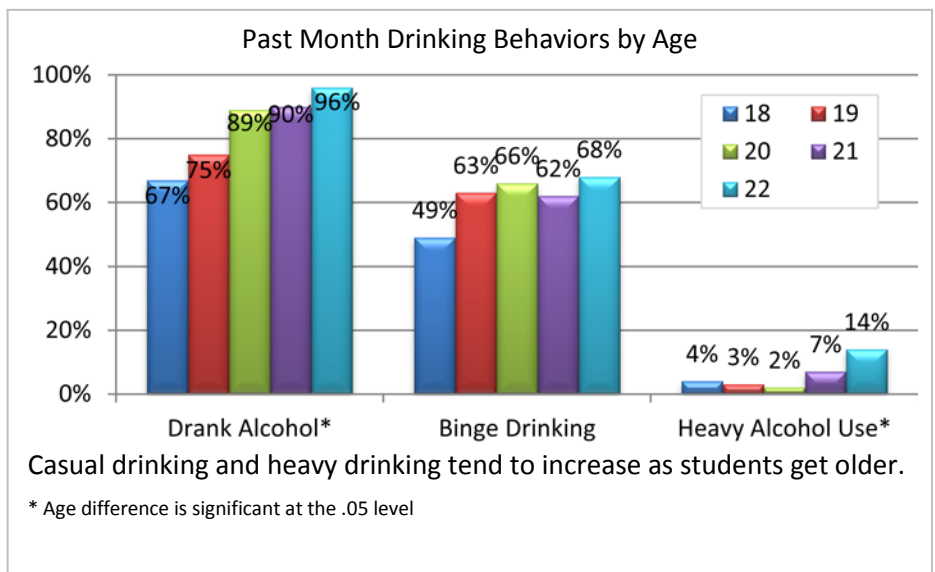
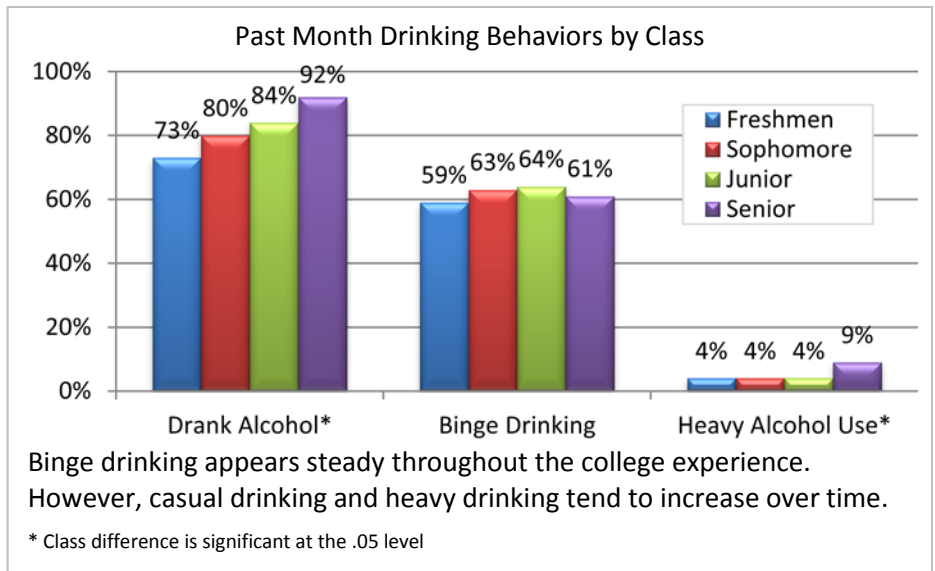
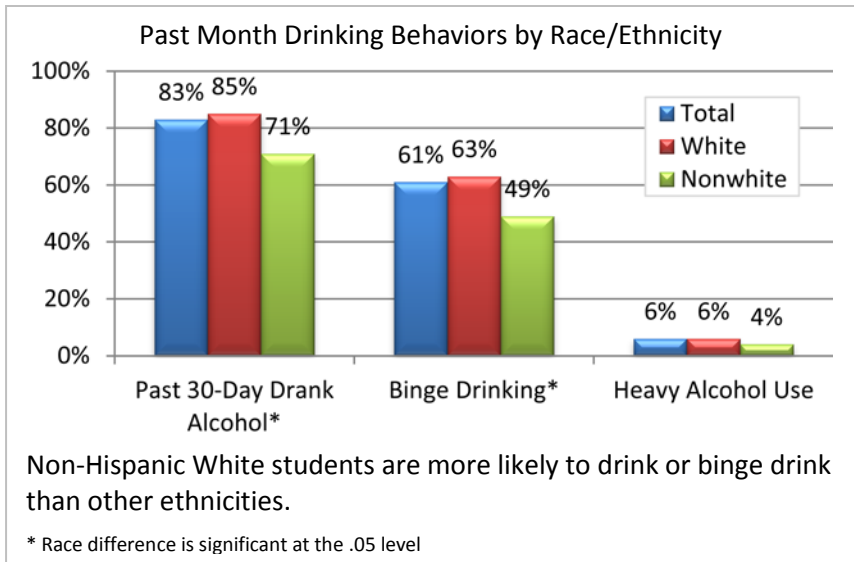
Alcohol was the most used substance, with 83% of students reporting drinking alcohol in the past month. The majority of students (61%) binge drank five or more drinks in a single sitting during the past month. Males (69%) were significantly more likely to engage in binge drinking than were females (57%). Heavy alcohol use (drinking on at least two-thirds of the past 30 days) is much lower, with 6% of students reporting heavy drinking habits. Men (11%) were more than five times as likely to report heavy drinking than women (2%).



Additional differences emerge when alcohol use is examined by race/ethnicity. Past month alcohol consumption was much more common among non-Hispanic Whites (85%) than it was for minority students (71%). This is also true of binge drinking behaviors, with approximately two-thirds (63%) of White students reported binge drinking, and slightly more than half (49%) of students identifying with other races reported similar drinking. Race/ethnicity does not appear to be a factor related to heavy alcohol use.

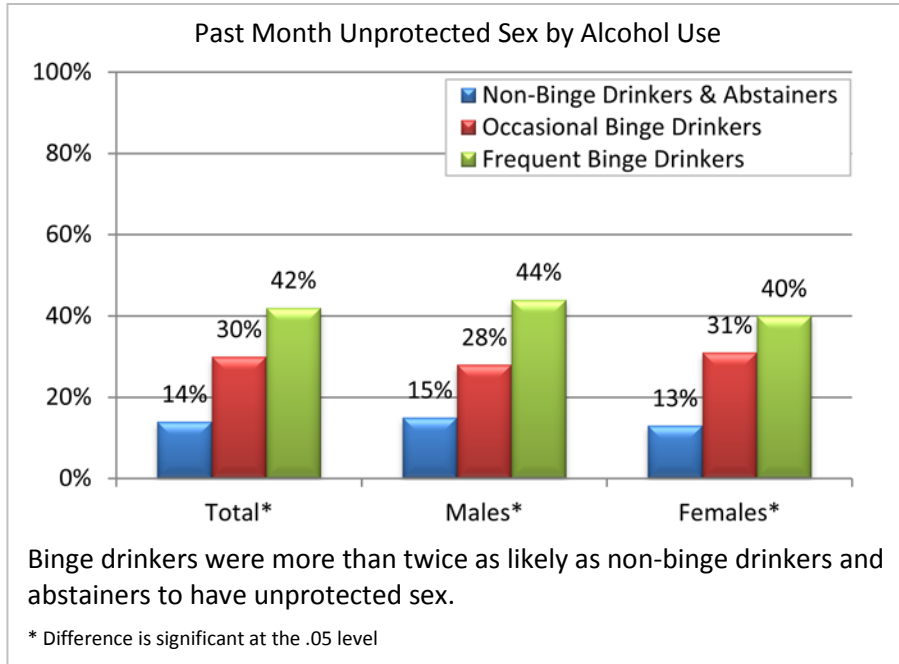
When broken down by class year, a steady increase in alcohol consumption in general can be seen over time. Heavy alcohol use also seems to increase, but only for seniors. Binge drinking, conversely, does not appear to change over time.

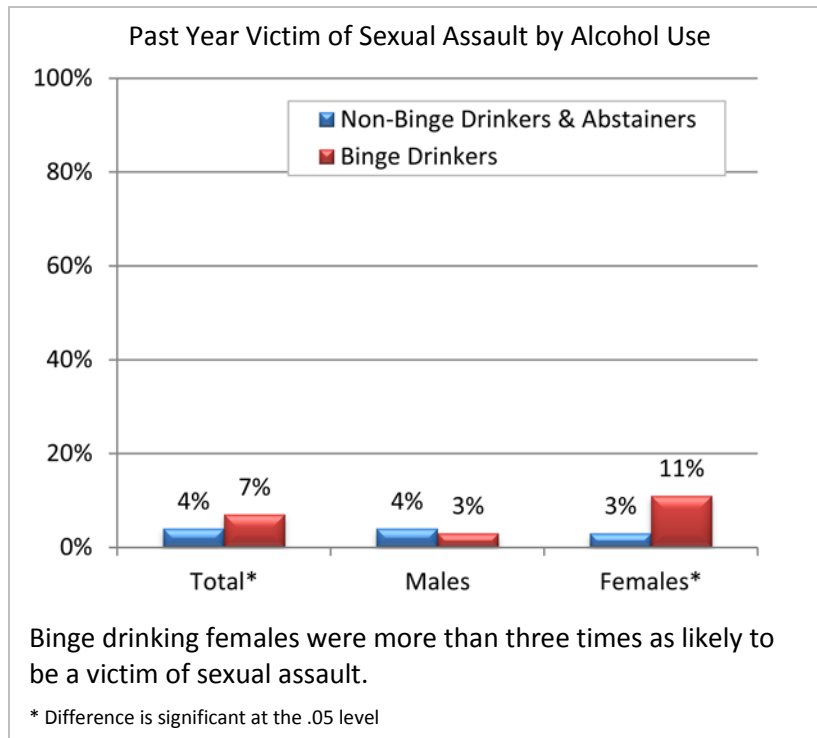
Looking at drinking habits by age rather than class shows similar trends, with casual alcohol consumption and heavy alcohol consumption again increasing as students get older. Though a rise in binge drinking is more noticeable, it is not significant.



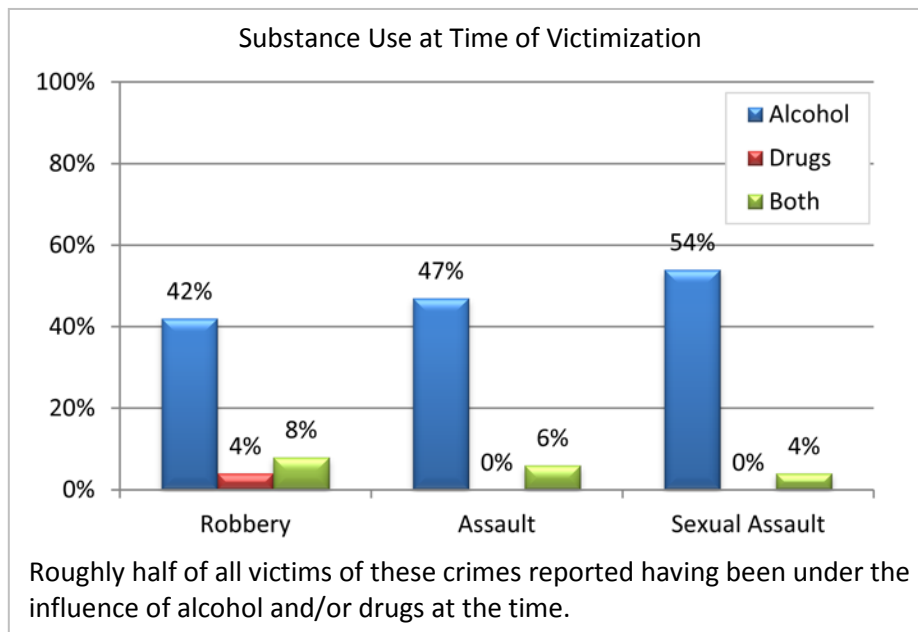
## Consequences of Alcohol Consumption

The College Risk Behaviors Study also measured several potential consequences of alcohol consumption and binge drinking. The data below present a comparison between binge drinkers and non-binge drinkers for the likelihood of experiencing these consequences. Binge drinking was defined as drinking five or more drinks in a single sitting. Occasional binge drinkers include students who binge drank one to nine times in the past month, while students who binge drank more often were considered frequent binge drinkers.



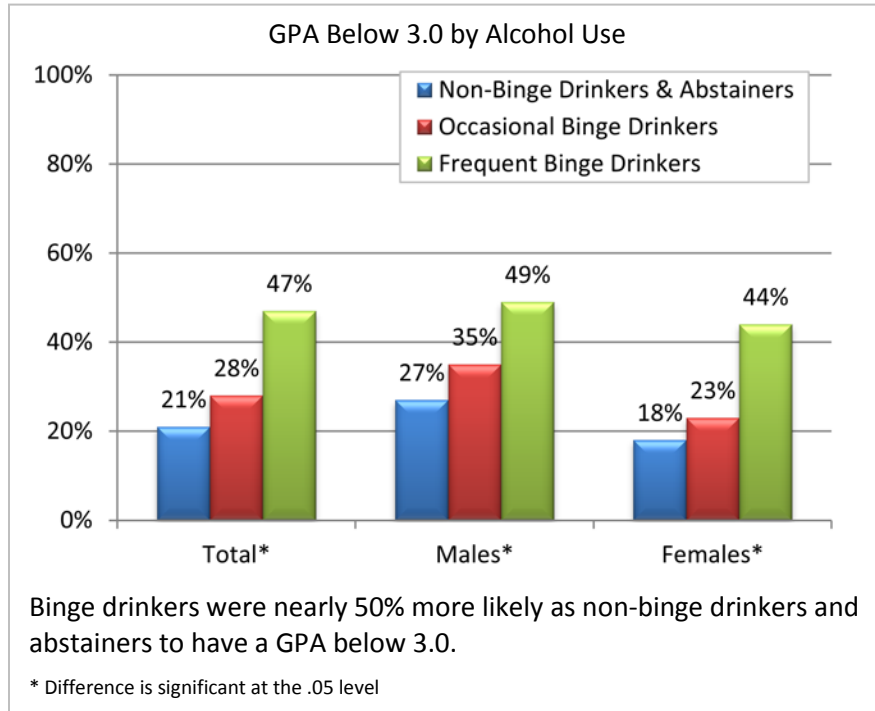


For robbery, assault, and sexual assault,\* at least half of victims report having been intoxicated with alcohol and/or drugs at the time. Some of these students also reported having used illegal drugs in addition to alcohol just prior to the victimization, though a small number of alcohol-using victims reported additional substances. Cases in which the victim had been using illegal drugs but not alcohol were rare for robbery (4%) and did not occur for the other offenses.

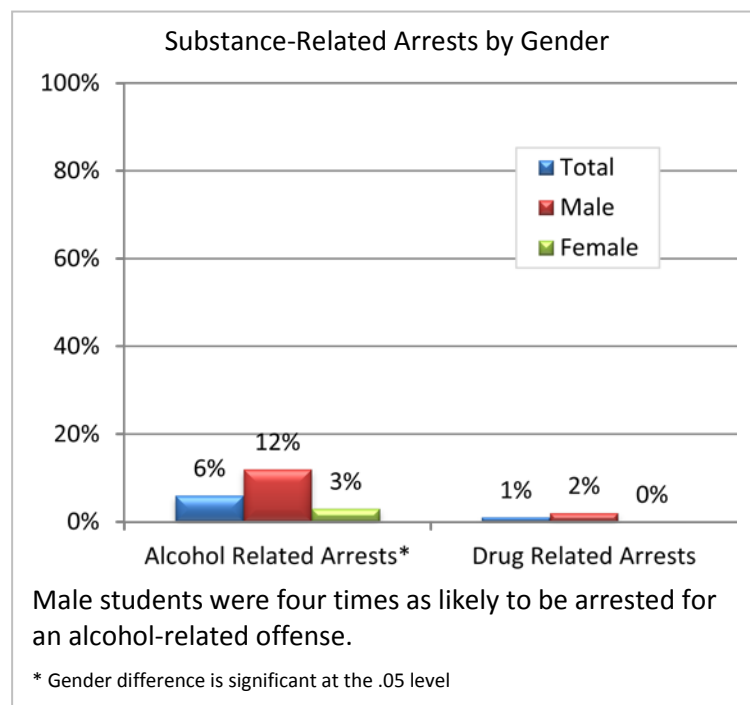


\* Victimization questions were defined as the following – Robbery: Having anything taken from you by force or the threat of force (6%) – Assault: Being attacked or someone threatening to attack you (23%) – Sexual Assault: Having been forced or coerced to engage in unwanted sexual intercourse of any kind including vaginal, anal, or oral sex (6%). All were limited to incidents that occurred in the past year.

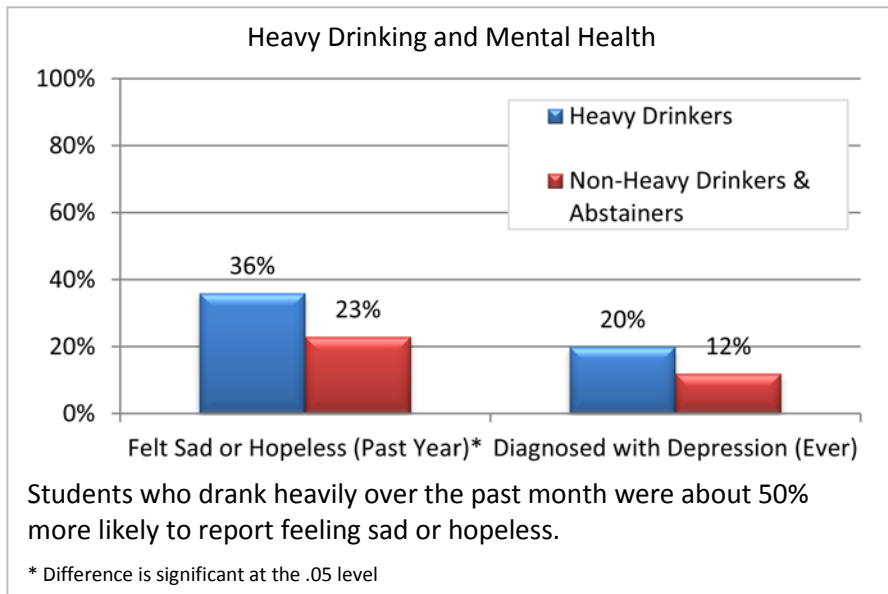
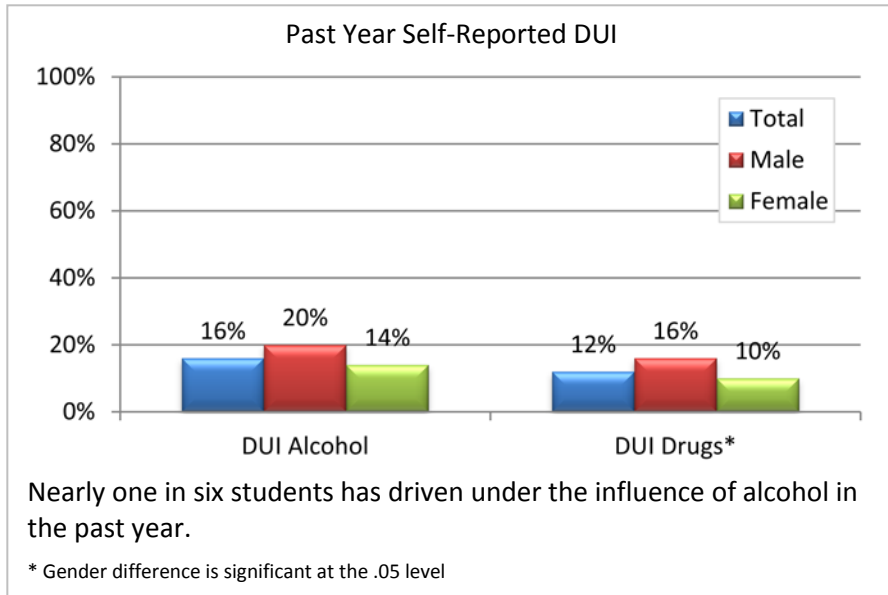




Drug arrests are not frequently reported by participants, with only 1% of University of Delaware students reporting such a record. Alcohol arrests, however, were reported by 6% of students. There is also a significant gender gap in the likelihood of having been arrested for an alcohol-related offense. Males (12%) are four times as likely to have reported an arrest as females (3%).

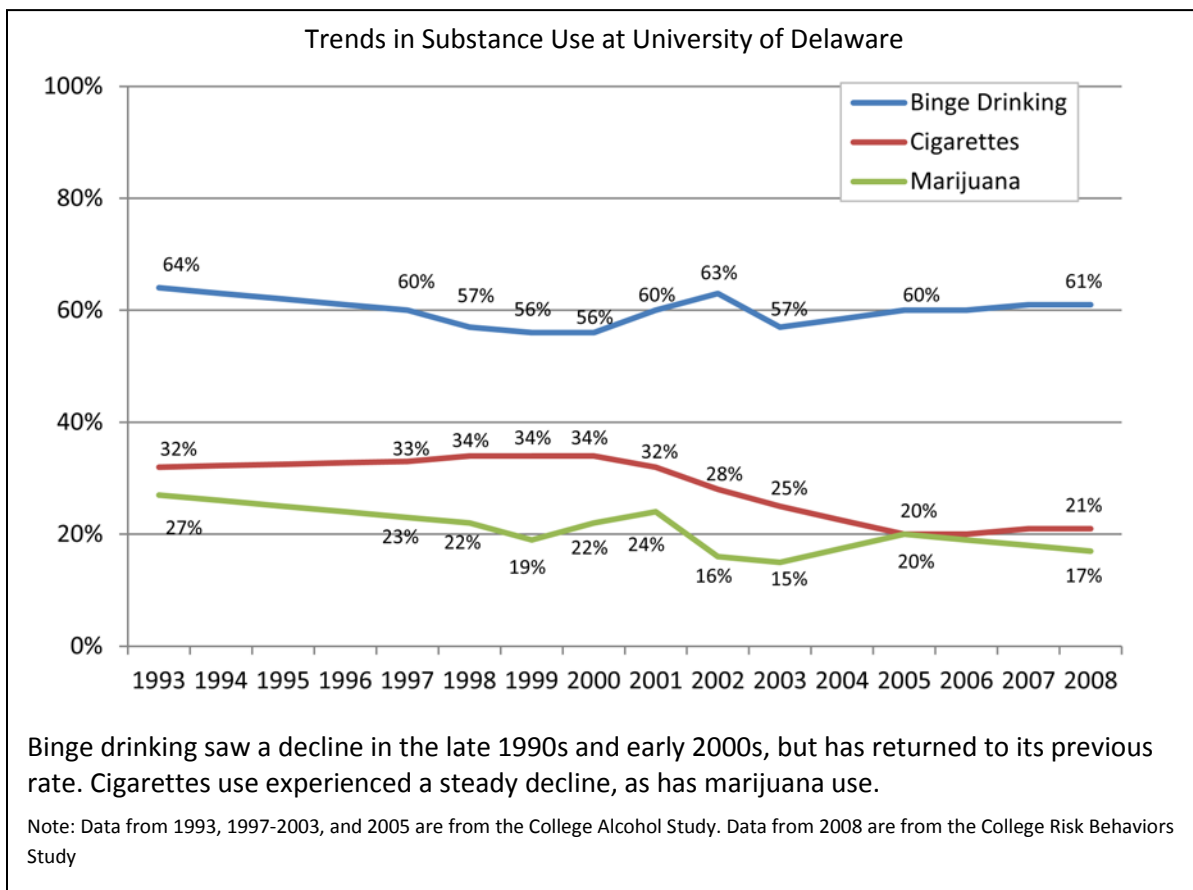


Among UD students, 16% report having driven while under the influence of alcohol during the past year. Moreover, 12% report driving under the influence of other substances. Combining these two types of DUIs, 22% of students (not shown) reported having driven while under the influence of some substance in the past year. Though males reported higher rates of driving under both categories of DUI, the gender difference was only significant for drug DUIs. Note that neither of these indicators differentiates between legal and illegal blood alcohol content levels for driving.



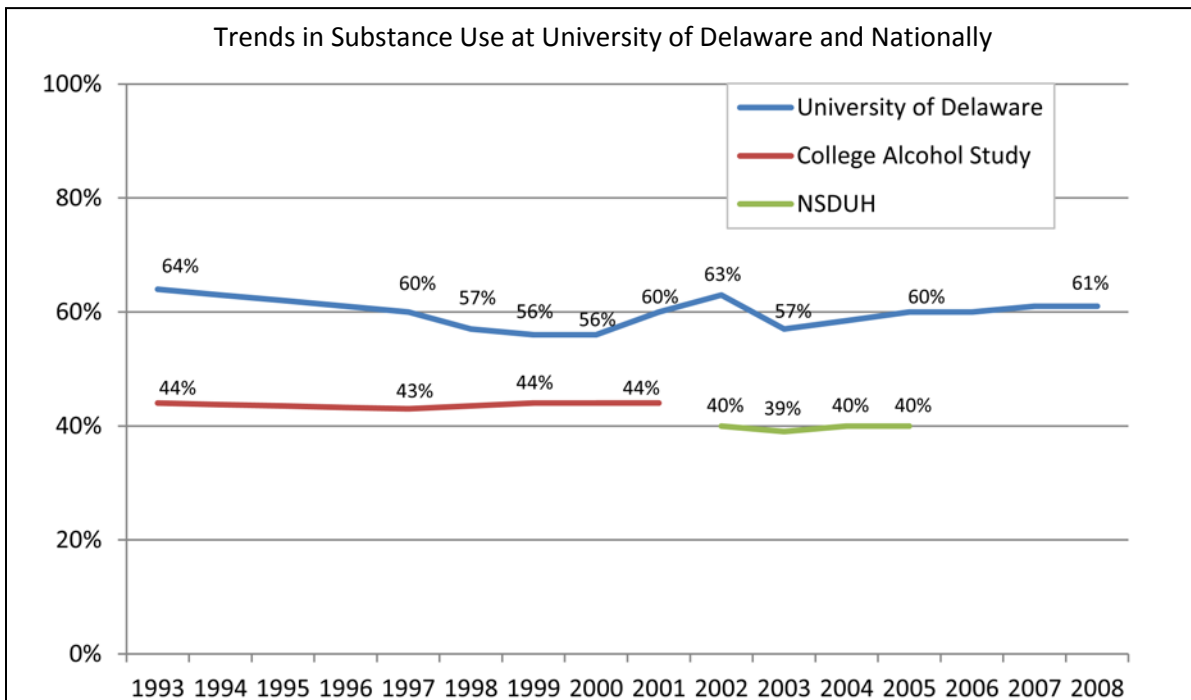
## Alcohol Consumption Trends

The College Risk Behaviors Study was not the first survey of University of Delaware students. In 1993, from 1997 to 2003, and again in 2005, University of Delaware participated in the College Alcohol Study. As the trends below indicate, binge drinking rates declined throughout the 1990s, but have since risen. Cigarette use has steadily declined over time. Marijuana use has also declined somewhat, despite a brief increase in 2005.



A previous draft of this report indicated different estimates for cigarette use, alcohol, use and binge drinking in 2008. Using data from new questions added to the 2011 survey for testing validity and reliability, these estimates have since been adjusted to more adequately address missing data. We believe that these new estimates more accurately represent the true population percentages.

Compared to national trend data, University of Delaware binge drinking rates are consistently higher than the national average. Even during the decline in the late 1990s, UD's rate was significantly higher than rates calculated nationally. The exact reason for this is not clear and it may be a combination of several factors. It is possible, for example, that other institutions in the north-east area with a high proportion of students living on-campus are also above the national average to some extent. Unfortunately, data that separate out institutions similar to University of Delaware are not currently publicly available.



The changes in binge drinking rates at University of Delaware appear to be a local phenomenon and not something occurring nationally.

Note: National data from the College Alcohol Study (CAS) and from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH), 2002-2005.

The timeframe for binge drinking is defined differently between studies. The UD (1993-2005) and CAS surveys used a timeframe of past two weeks, while the UD (2008) and NSDUH surveys used past month. Though the timeframe varies, there does not appear to be any increase for using past month rather than past two weeks based on similar numbers from the CAS and NSDUH.

The University of Delaware participated in the College Alcohol Survey in 1994, and reported a binge drinking rate of 64%, almost 50% above the national average. In 1995, President Roselle initiated a group to address this problem, which led to the establishment of a coalition between the City of Newark and the University and the award of a grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to reduce harmful drinking among college students. As part of a national collaborative, UD instituted many policy changes including parental notification, a 3 strikes policy, Greek accreditation on campus, stricter enforcement of alcohol violations on campus and in the community, and environmental change including media campaigns and alternative activities. Rates of binge drinking declined during the next three years. In 2000, funding from the Foundation was reduced, the City administration changes, and efforts to change state laws relating to sales of alcohol and server responsibility came to naught in the face of legislative opposition from other areas in the state. Most telling was the reduction in media attention on the risks and consequences. University efforts focused on enforcing policies on campus and providing additional support for intervening and treating those with identified alcohol problems. Generational memories on campus last no longer than 4-5 years, and without continuing education and prevention efforts, rates of binge drinking on campus began to climb after 1999.

