

# **Binge Drinking and Other Risk Behaviors among College Students**

**2011**

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

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## College Risk Behaviors Study

### Key Findings

- 78% of UD students report drinking alcohol within the past month, including 2 out of 3 freshmen; 6 out of 10 UD students report they are binge drinkers (5 or more drinks in one sitting within the past month)
- Nearly 1 in 7 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 more likely to report having been sexually assaulted in the past month
- Students at UD are most likely to get alcohol from friends or at parties. This is true even for those legally old enough to purchase alcohol themselves.
- 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 2011 spring semester to a random sample of 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, 1,331 students chose to participate, corresponding to a 44% response rate, a rate equivalent to similar online surveys. Given the chance to specifically opt out of the survey, only 1% of students chose to do so.

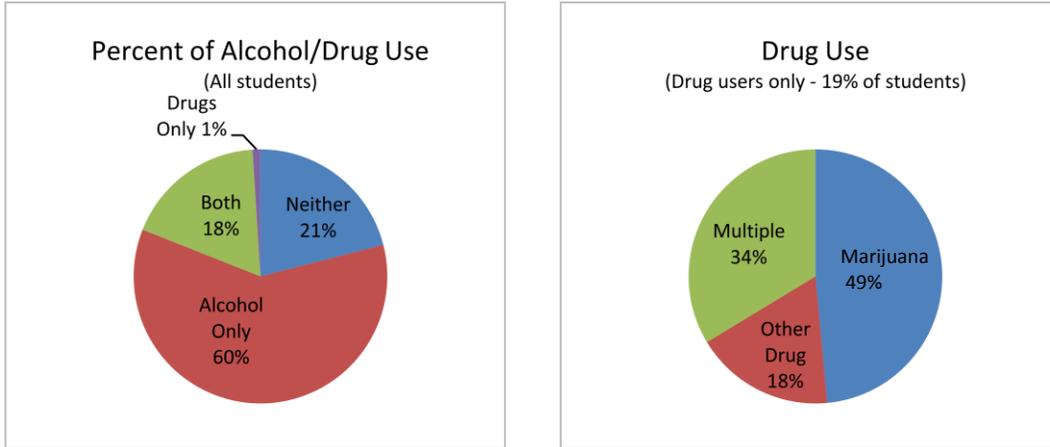
The sample is similar to the overall student body in distribution of gender and race/ethnicity, with slightly higher percentages of females and white students in the sample than in the total UD student population. It also includes a somewhat greater percentage of students living on-campus (56%) than does the population (44%).

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 over the past 18 years at University of Delaware.

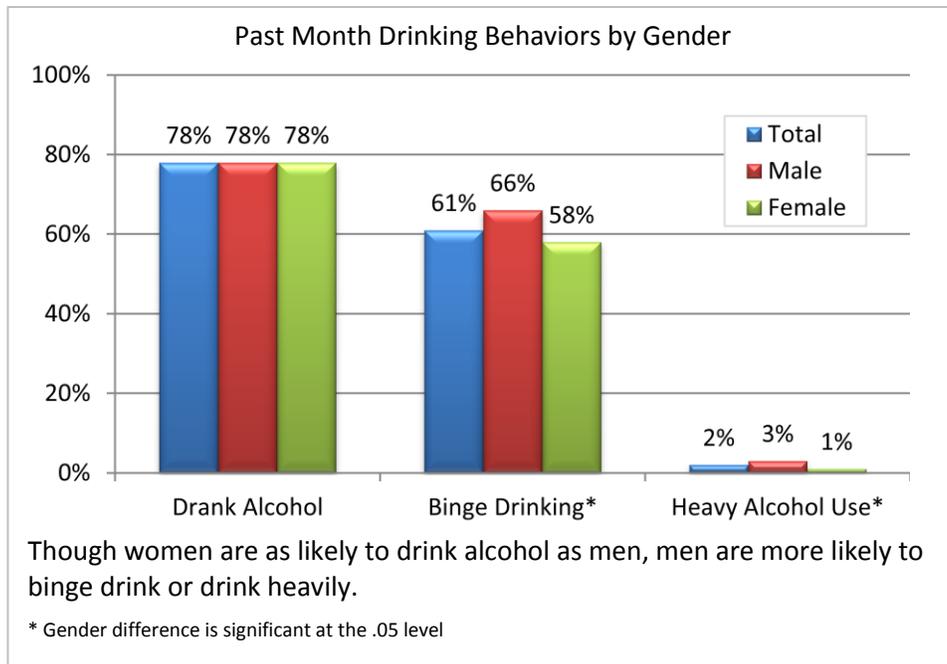
Characteristics of the Sample		
	Sample	UD
Gender		
Male	36%	43%
Female	64%	57%
Race		
White	79%	77%
Black	4%	5%
Hispanic	6%	6%
Asian	7%	4%
Other	4%	8%
Residence		
On-Campus	56%	44%
Off-Campus	44%	56%
Class Year		
Freshmen	23%	20%
Sophomore	28%	22%
Junior	25%	32%
Senior	24%	26%
Age		
18	14%	
19	28%	
20	26%	
21	21%	
22	9%	
23 or Older	2%	

## Alcohol Consumption Prevalence Rates

In general, the substance use of choice among students was alcohol. Though approximately 19% of students reported using illegal drugs, the vast majority were also using alcohol, with less than 1% of students using just illegal drugs. Of students using drugs, about half (49%) were using only marijuana.



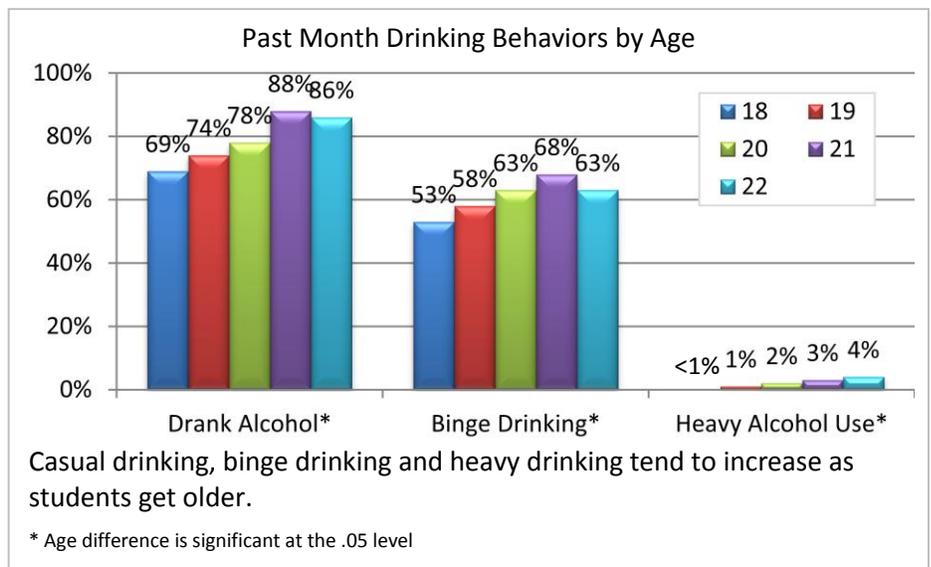
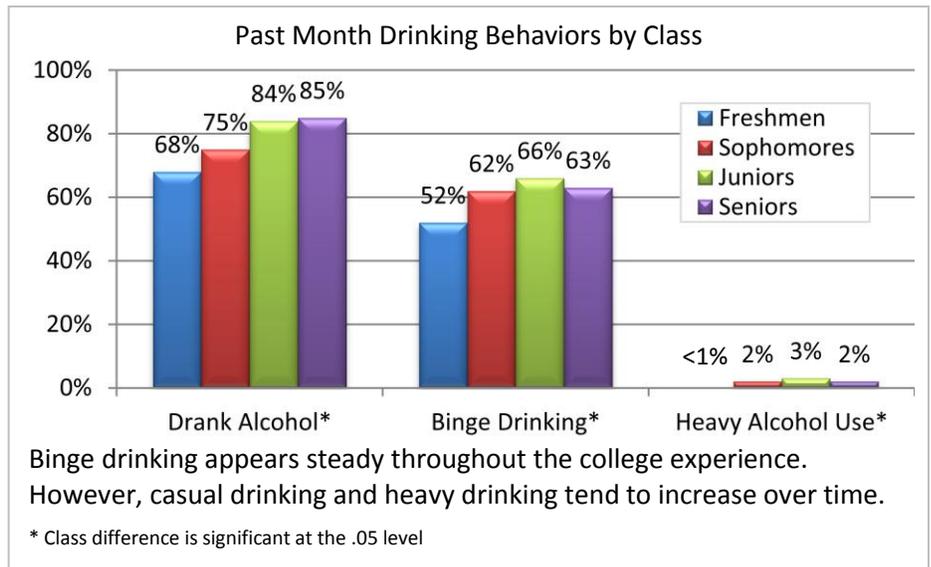
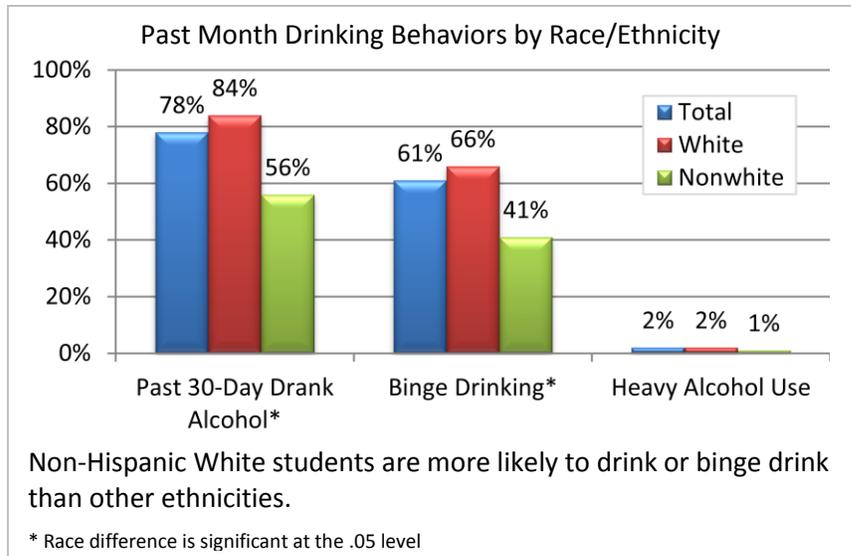
Alcohol was the most used substance, with 78% of students reporting drinking alcohol in the past month. The majority of students (61%) binge drank five or more drinks in a single sitting during the past month. Males (66%) were significantly more likely to engage in binge drinking than were females (58%). Heavy alcohol use (drinking on at least two-thirds of the past 30 days) is much lower, with 2% of students reporting heavy drinking habits. Men (3%) were three times as likely to report heavy drinking as women (1%).



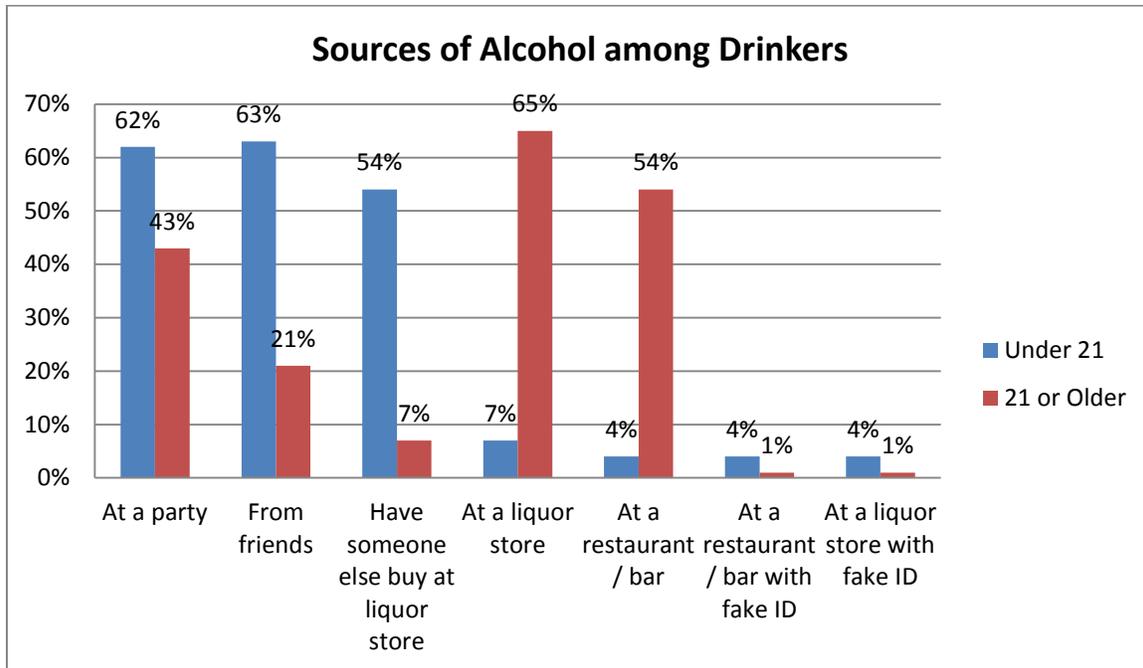
Additional differences emerge when alcohol use is examined by race/ethnicity. Past month alcohol consumption was much more common among non-Hispanic Whites (84%) than it was for minority students (56%). This is also true of binge drinking behaviors, with approximately two-thirds (66%) of White students reported binge drinking, and slightly less than half (41%) 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 can be seen over time. This applies to drinking in general, binge drinking and, to a lesser extent, heavy alcohol use.

Looking at drinking habits by age rather than class shows similar trends, with casual alcohol consumption, binge drinking and heavy alcohol consumption again increasing as students get older.



Students report getting alcohol from various sources in various ways.\* For those underage, parties and friends are the most likely sources, followed closely by having someone else (presumably also a friend) buy it for them. Turning 21 opens legal purchasing options at restaurants, bars and liquor stores. Those age 21 and older are much more likely to buy from these sources, and relatedly less likely to rely on parties and friends. These informal sources, however, still remain a source among these older students.



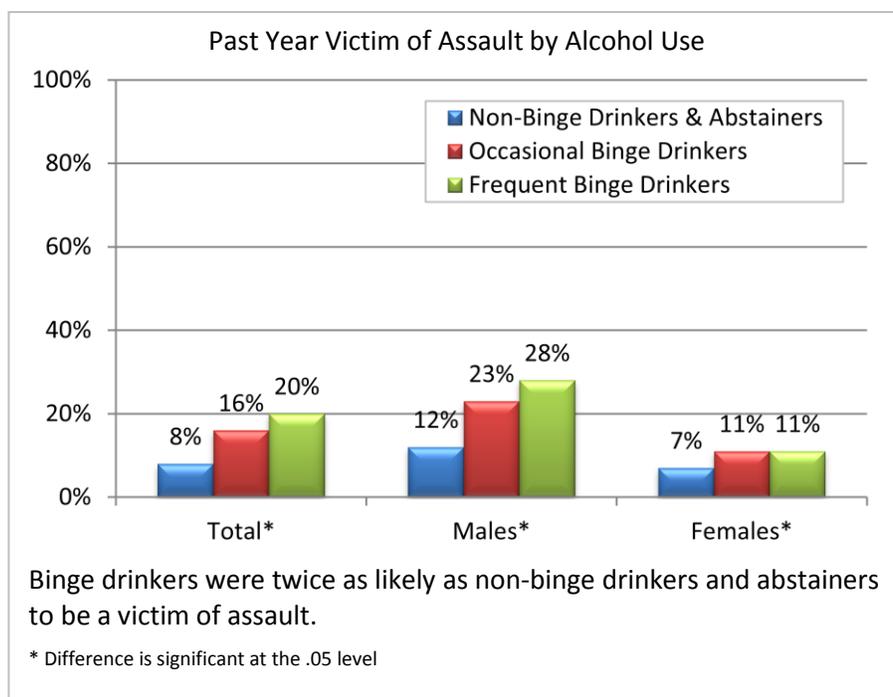
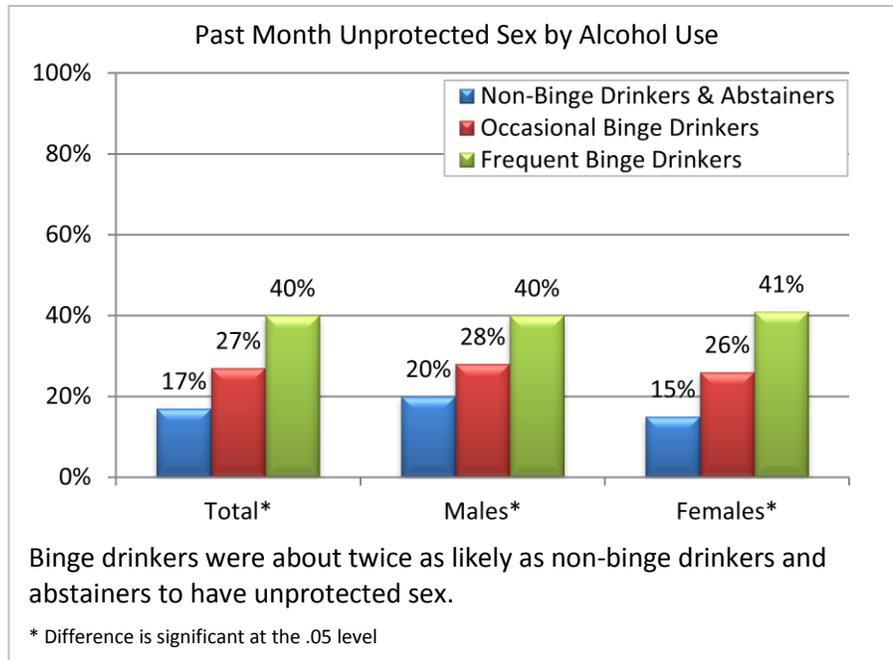
Also worth noting is that the use of false identification to obtain alcohol is low. Even looking only at those too young to purchase alcohol, only 4% of students report using a fake ID to purchase the alcohol at a restaurant, bar or liquor store. †

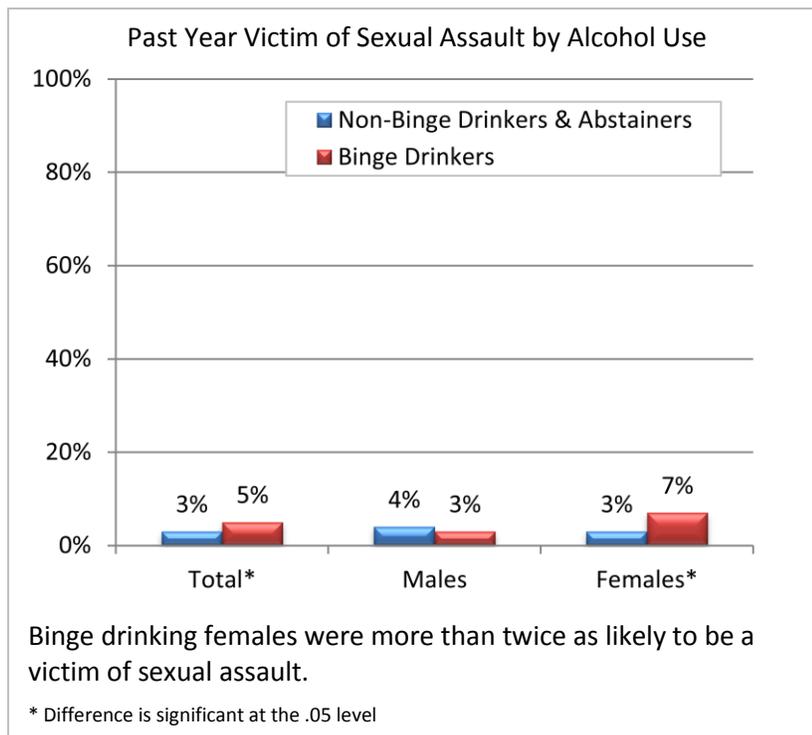
\* Students were asked, hypothetically, if they wanted alcohol, where they would get it. The percentages reported here reflect the proportion of alcohol-consuming students who reported they would “often” or “very often” get alcohol from these sources.

† For those age 21 and older, it is possible that they are reporting based on recent history from before they turned 21. Given that only one of these participants reporting hypothetical false ID usage was age 22 or older, this explanation seems likely.

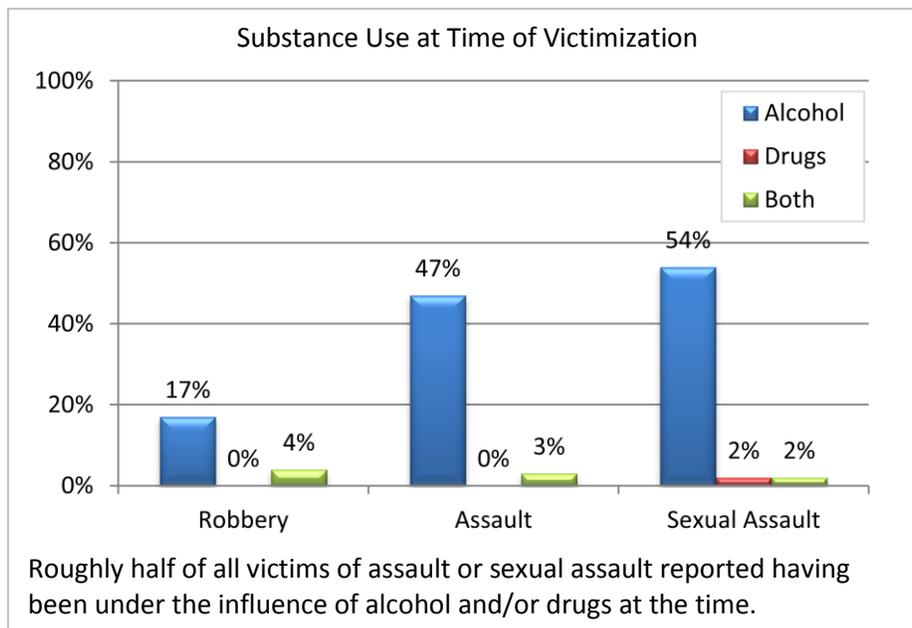
## Consequences of Alcohol Consumption

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.



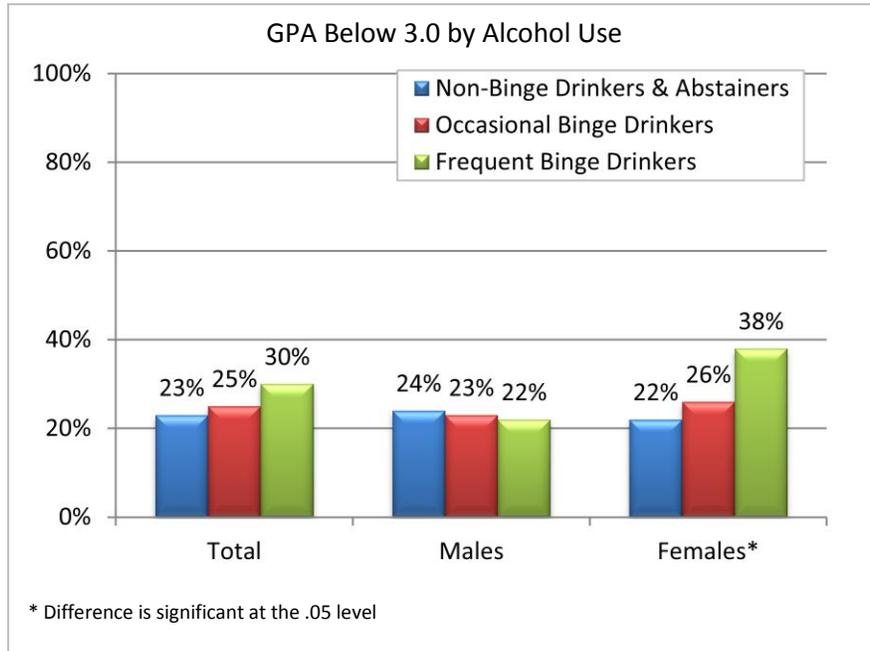


For assault and sexual assault,\* about half of victims report having been intoxicated with alcohol at the time. Some of these students also reported having used illegal drugs in addition to alcohol just prior to the victimization, though only a small number of alcohol-using victims reported additional substances.

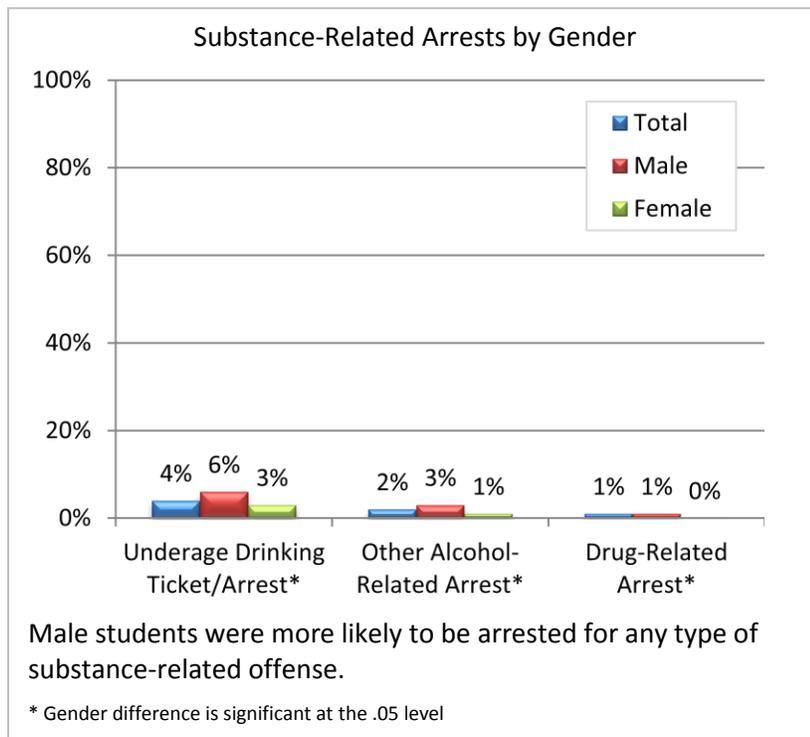


\* Victimization questions were defined as the following – Robbery: Having anything taken from you by force or the threat of force (3%) – Assault: Being attacked or someone threatening to attack you (13%) – Sexual Assault: Having been forced or coerced to engage in unwanted sexual intercourse of any kind including vaginal, anal, or oral sex (4%). All were limited to incidents occurring in the past year.

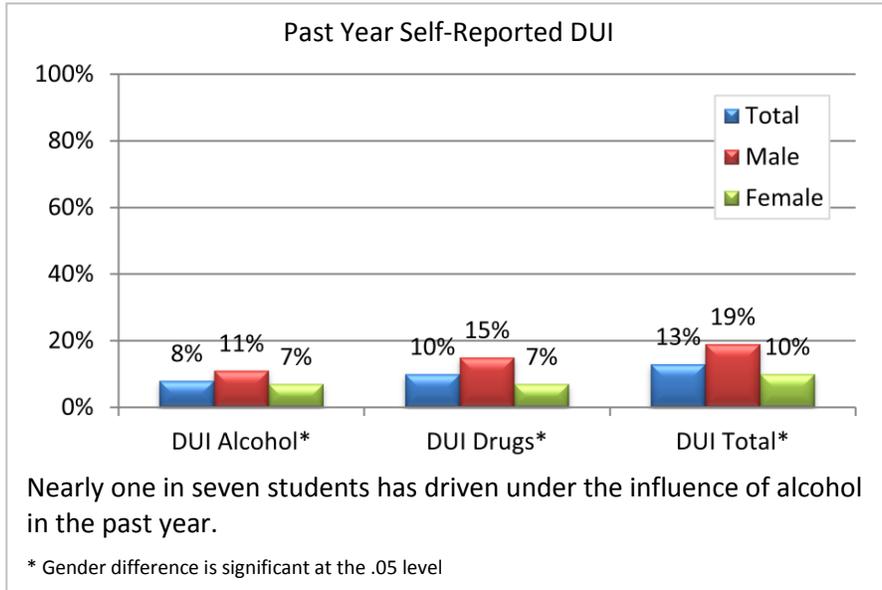
Students who binge drank were slightly more likely to report a low GPA, though this difference was only significant for female students.



Drug arrests are not frequently reported by participants, with only 1% of University of Delaware students reporting such a record. Underage drinking tickets/arrests, however, were reported by 4% of students. One percent of students also reported some other type of alcohol-related arrest.

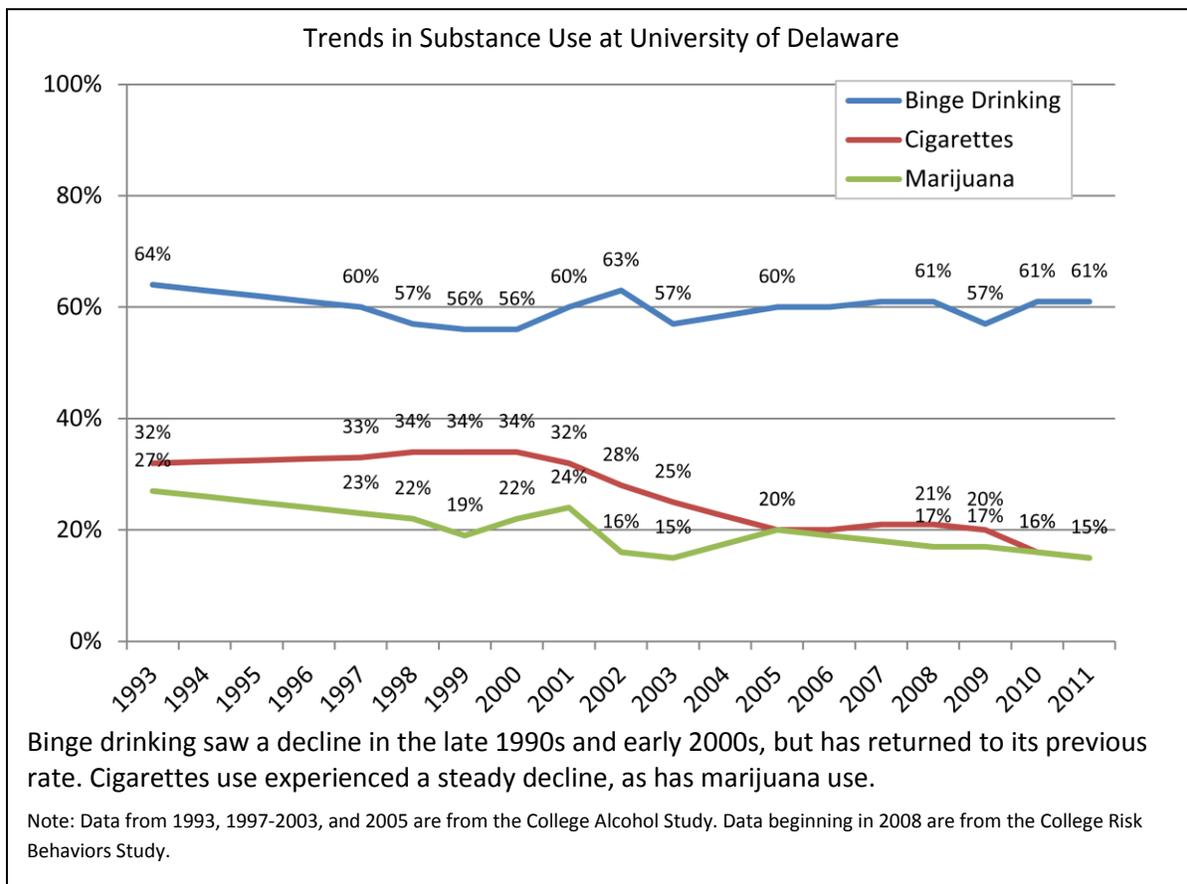


Among UD students, 8% report having driven while under the influence of alcohol during the past year. Moreover, 10% report driving under the influence of other substances. Combining these two types of DUIs, 13% of students reported having driven while under the influence of some substance in the past year. Males reported higher rates of driving under both categories of DUI. Note that this indicator does not differentiate between legal and illegal blood alcohol content levels for driving.



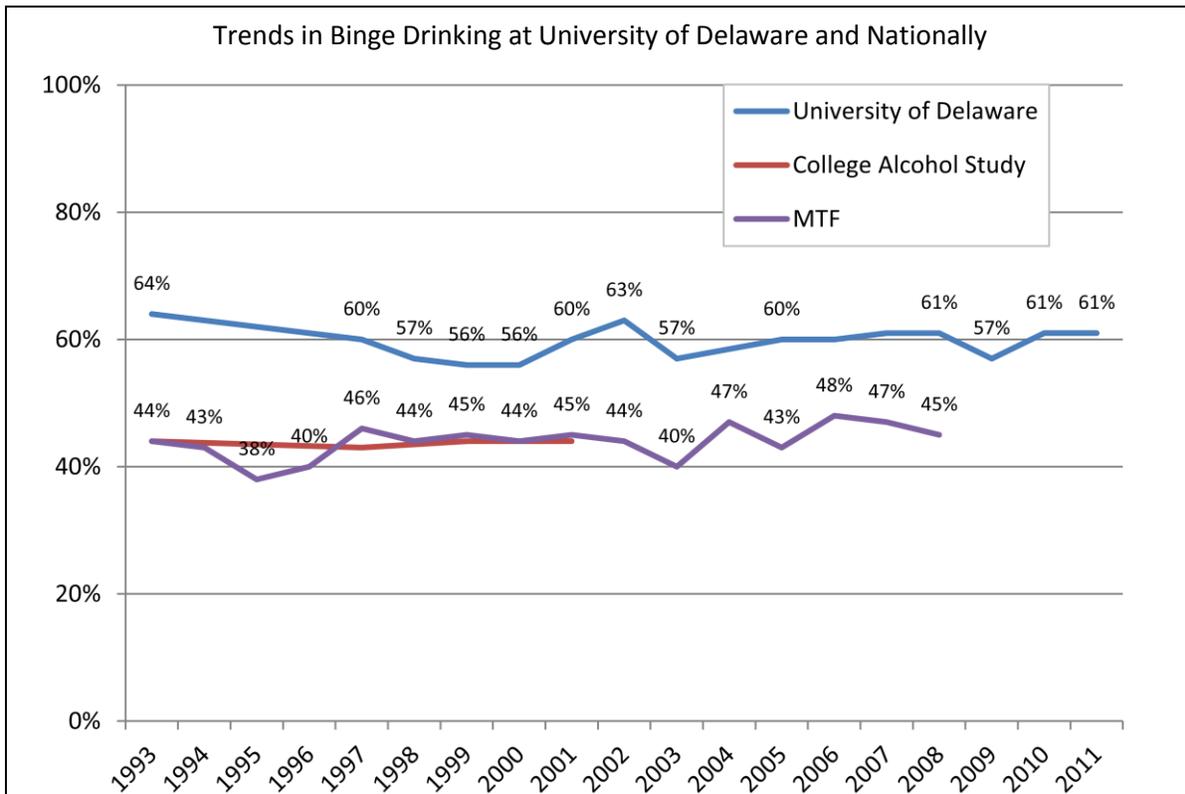
## Consumption Trends

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. Cigarette use has steadily declined over time. Marijuana use has also declined somewhat, despite a brief increase in 2005.



Initial reports for 2008-2010 indicated different estimates for cigarette use, alcohol, use and binge drinking for their respective years. 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 Monitoring the Future (MTF), 1993-2008.

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-Present) and MTF 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 MTF.

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 changed, 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.

