

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

2018

April 2018

Prepared by the University of Delaware

Center for Drug & Health Studies

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This research was sponsored by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration Center for Substance Abuse Prevention. The views and conclusions expressed in this report do not necessarily represent those of the sponsoring agency.

College Risk Behaviors Study

Introduction

The College Risk Behaviors Study (CRBS) was administered during the 2018 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, 1,110 students chose to participate, corresponding to a 37% response rate, a rate equivalent to or better than similar online surveys. Given the chance to specifically opt out of the survey, fewer than 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. Due to the large difference in gender, the data were weighted to adjust the sample gender ratio to match that of the population.

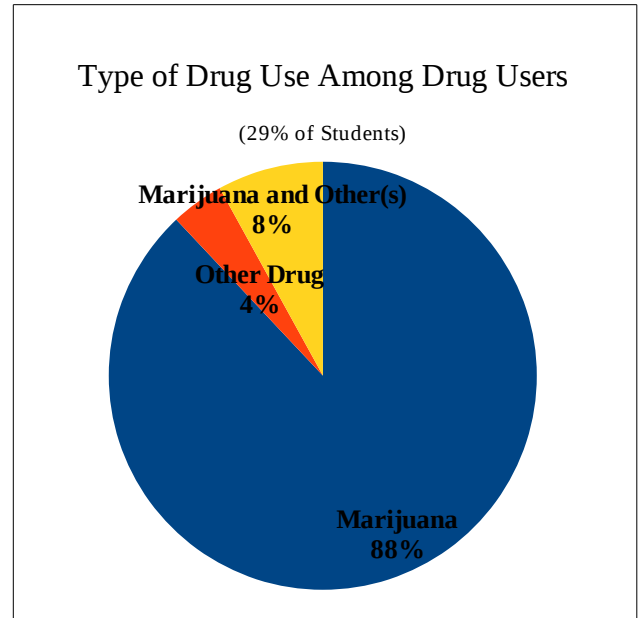
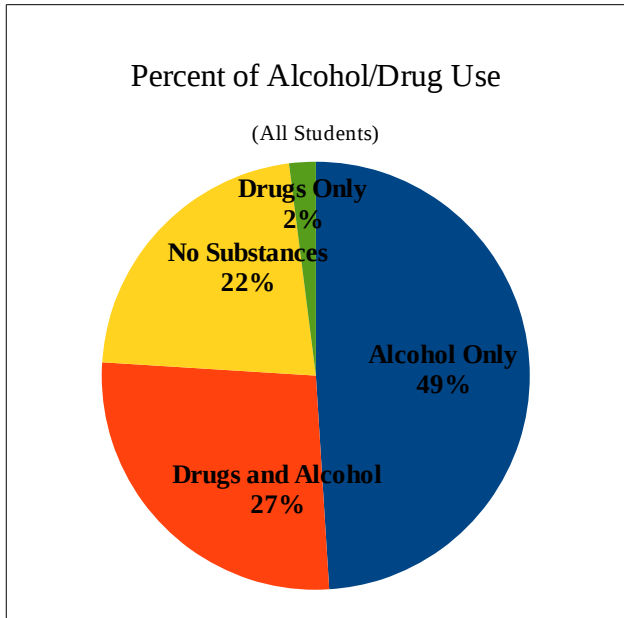
This report will address several issues relating to substance consumption using data from these participants. First, consumption prevalence rates will be presented for varying levels of alcohol consumption, with gender and race/ethnicity differences and similarities highlighted. Second, an in-depth analysis 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 20 years at University of Delaware.

Characteristics of the Sample		
	Sample	UD
Gender		
Male	31%	42%
Female	69%	58%
Race		
White	74%	73%
Black	6%	5%
Hispanic	8%	8%
Asian	9%	5%
Other*	3%	9%
Residence		
On-Campus	52%	
Off-Campus	48%	
Class Year		
Freshmen	26%	
Sophomore	24%	
Junior	27%	
Senior	23%	
Age		
18	16%	
19	27%	
20	24%	
21	22%	
22	8%	
23 or older	2%	

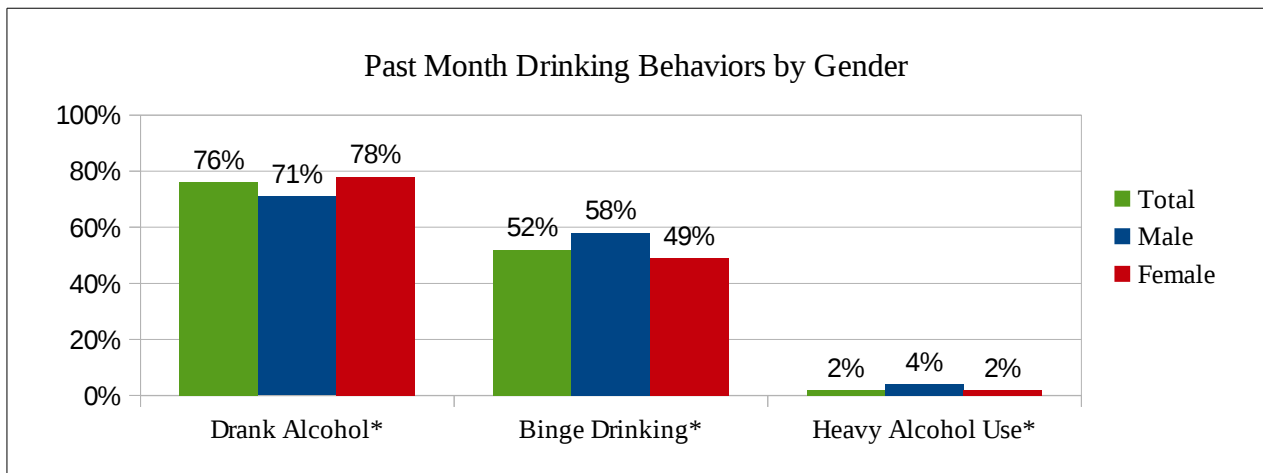
* International students are considered "other" under race in University statistics, but associated with their self-reported race in this study, which accounts for the difference seen here in race/ethnicity proportions.

Alcohol Consumption Prevalence Rates

In general, the substance use of choice among students was alcohol. Though approximately 29% of students reported using illegal drugs, the vast majority were also using alcohol, with less than 2% of students using just illegal drugs. Of students using drugs, over four-fifths were using only marijuana.



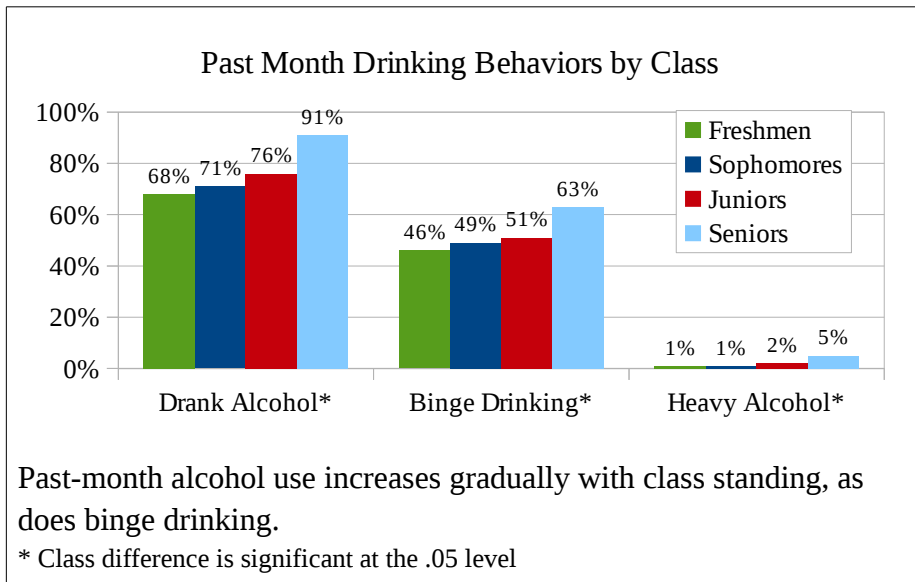
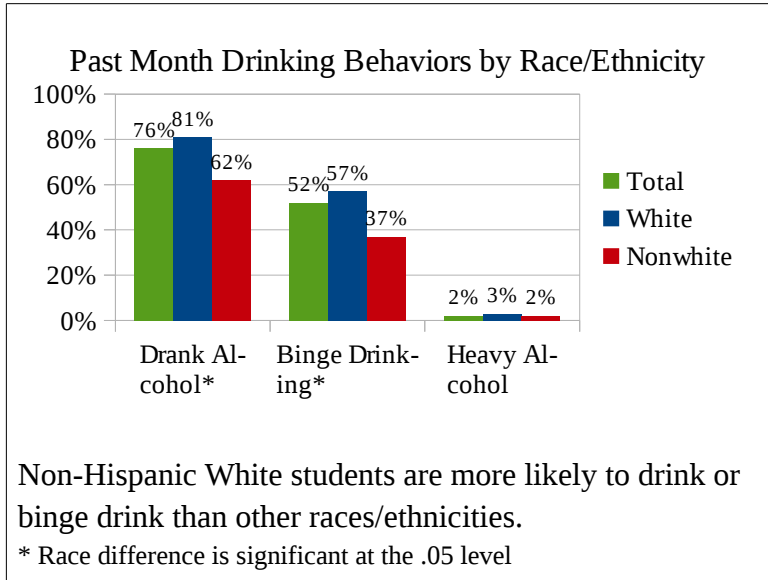
Alcohol was the most used substance, with 76% of students reporting drinking alcohol in the past month. The majority of students (52%) binge drank five or more drinks in a single sitting during the past month. Males (58%) were significantly more likely to engage in binge drinking than were females (49%). 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.



Although women are more likely to drink alcohol than men, men are more likely to binge drink or be heavy alcohol users.

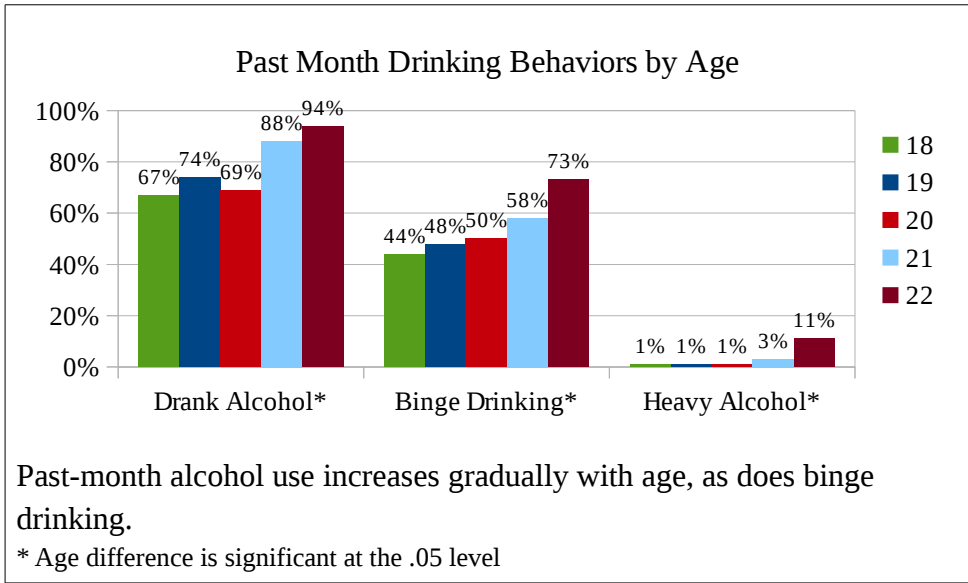
* Gender difference is significant at the .05 level

Additional differences emerge when alcohol use is examined by race/ethnicity. Past month alcohol consumption was much more common among non-Hispanic Whites (81%) than it was for minority students (62%). This is also true of binge drinking behaviors, with nearly two-thirds (57%) of White students reported binge drinking, and slightly more than one-third (37%) of students identifying with other races reported similar drinking.

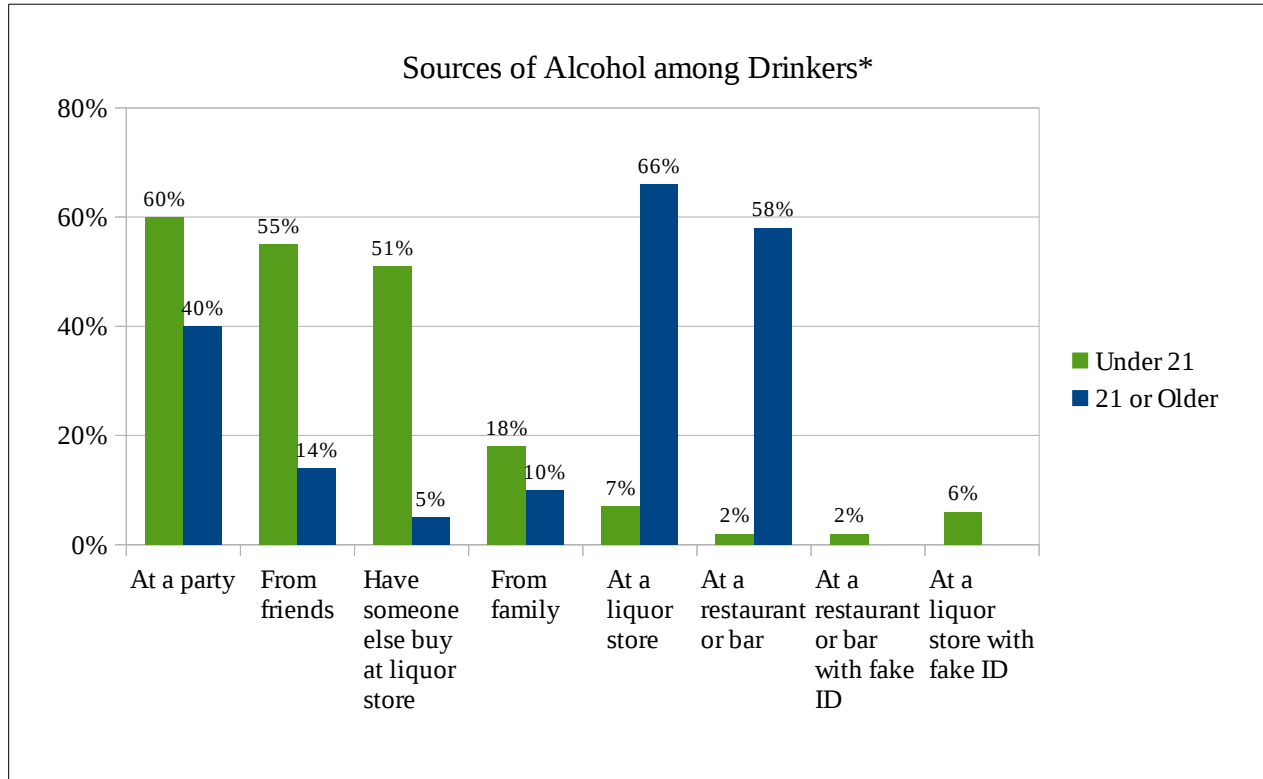


When broken down by class year, a steady increase in alcohol consumption can be seen over time.

Looking at drinking habits by age rather than class shows similar trends, with casual 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.

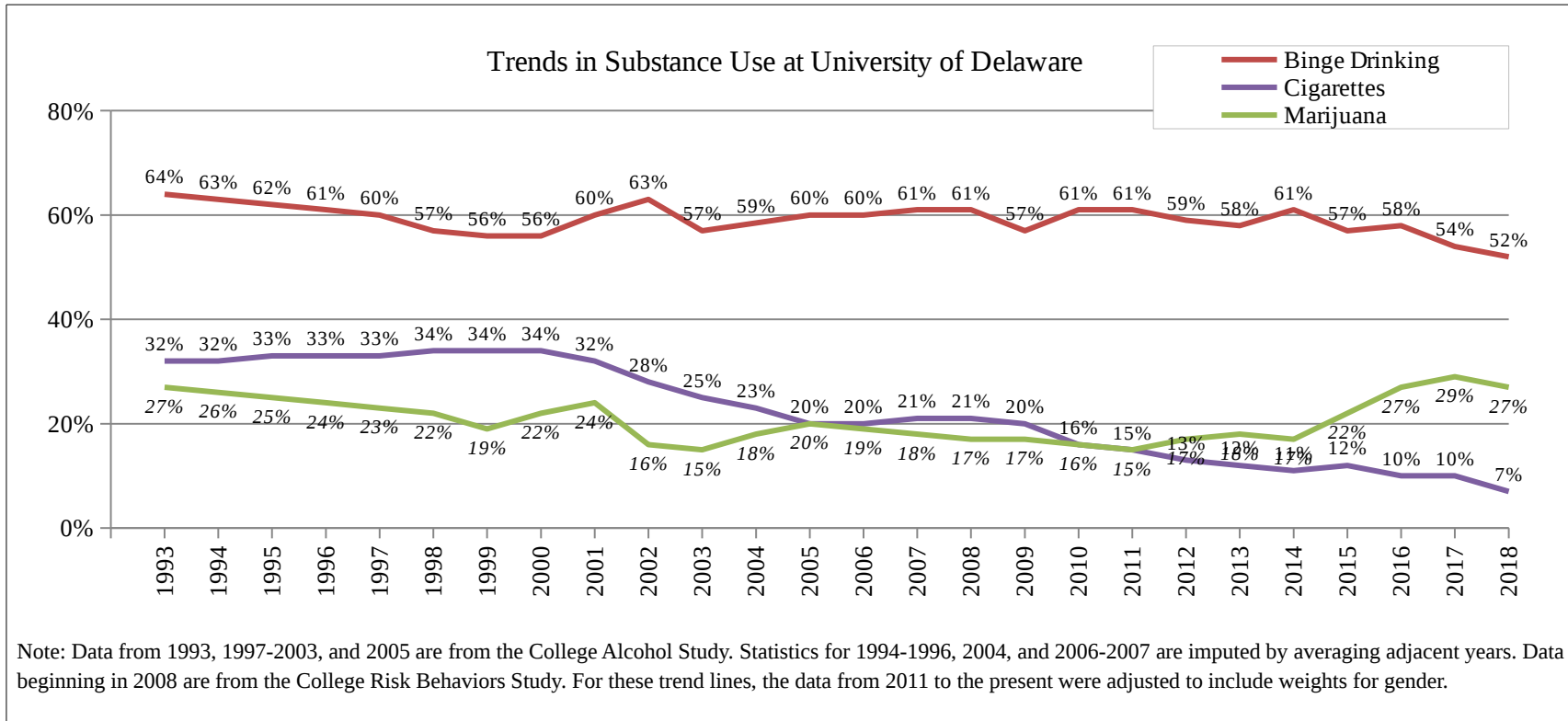


Also worth noting is that the use of false identification to obtain alcohol is low. When looking only at those too young to purchase alcohol legally, only 6% of students report using a fake ID to purchase the alcohol at a restaurant, bar, or liquor store in the past year.

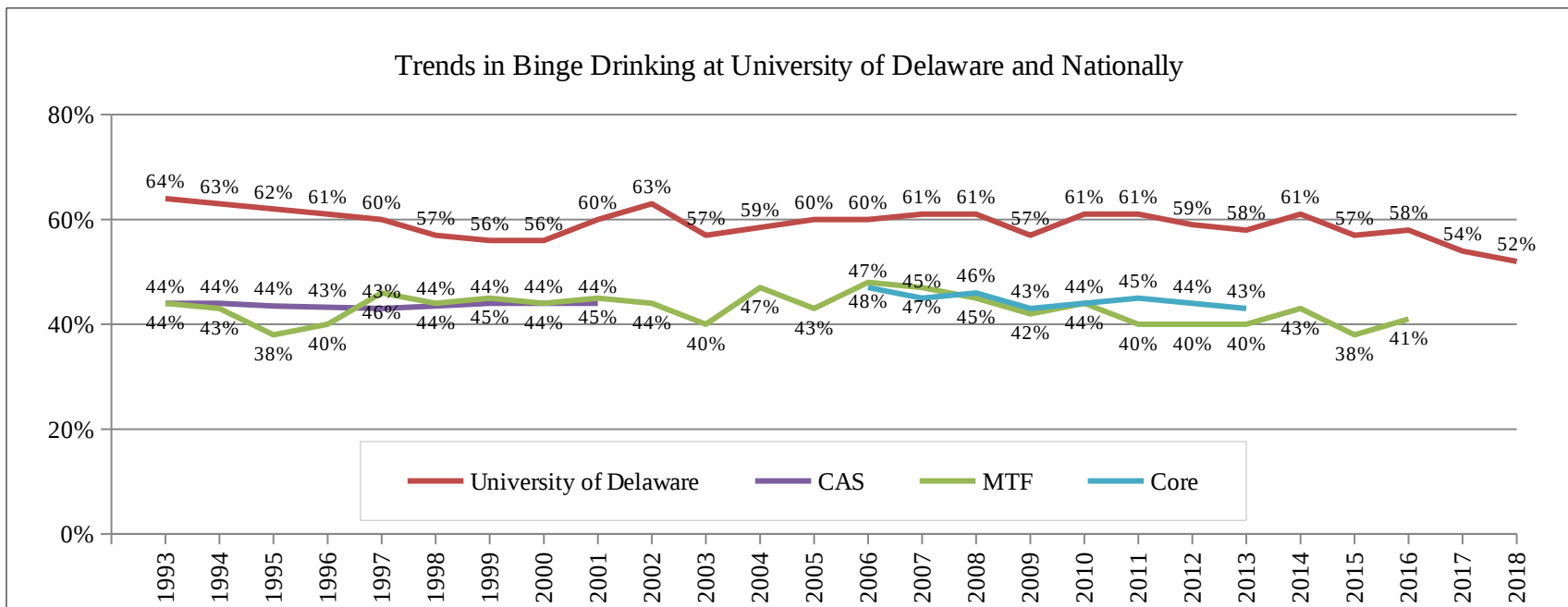
* Students were asked, hypothetically, if they wanted alcohol, where they would get it. The percentages reported here reflect the proportion of alcohol-consuming students who reported they would “often” or “very often” get alcohol from these sources.

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, cigarette use has steadily declined over time, while marijuana use has recently risen to its former levels. Binge drinking has also declined in recent years.



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.

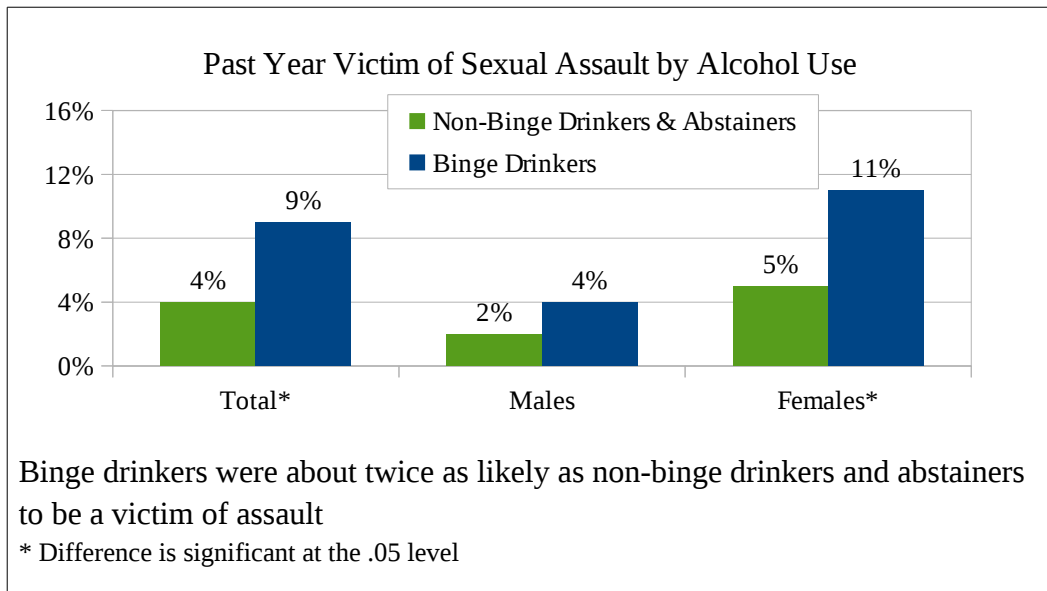
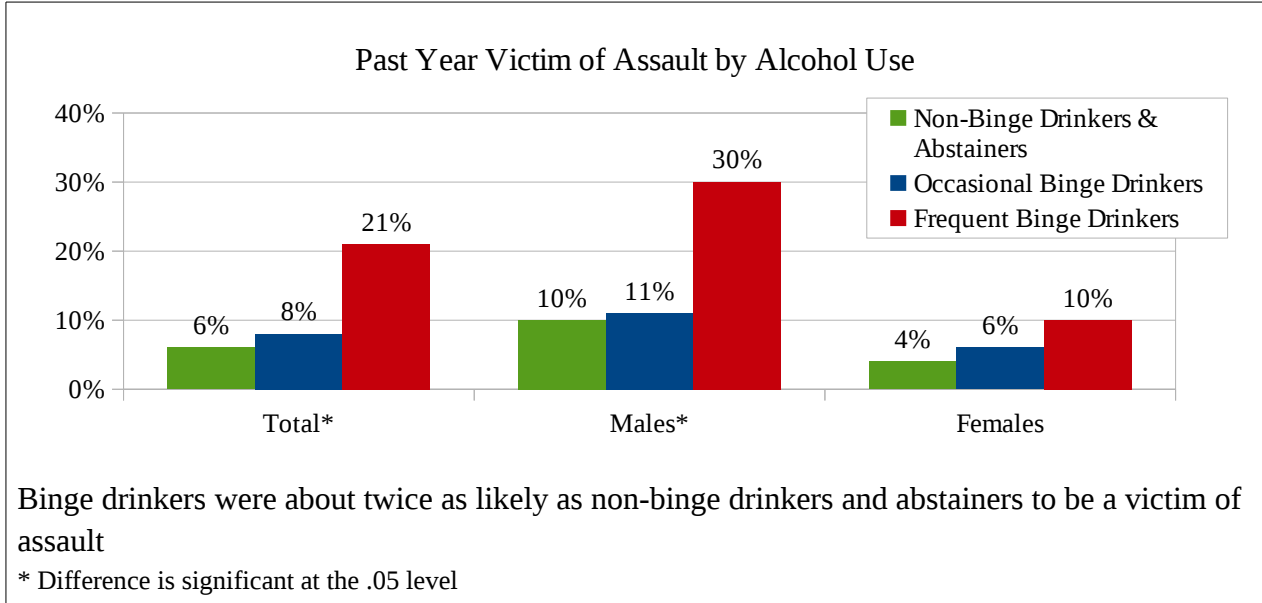


The changes in binge drinking rates at University of Delaware appear to be a local phenomenon and not something occurring nationally.

Note: National data from the College Alcohol Study (CAS) 1993-2001, the Core Alcohol and Drug Survey 2006-2013, and from Monitoring the Future (MTF) 1993-2016. UD statistics for 1994-1996, 2004, and 2006-2007 are imputed by averaging adjacent years. 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.

Consequences of Alcohol Consumption

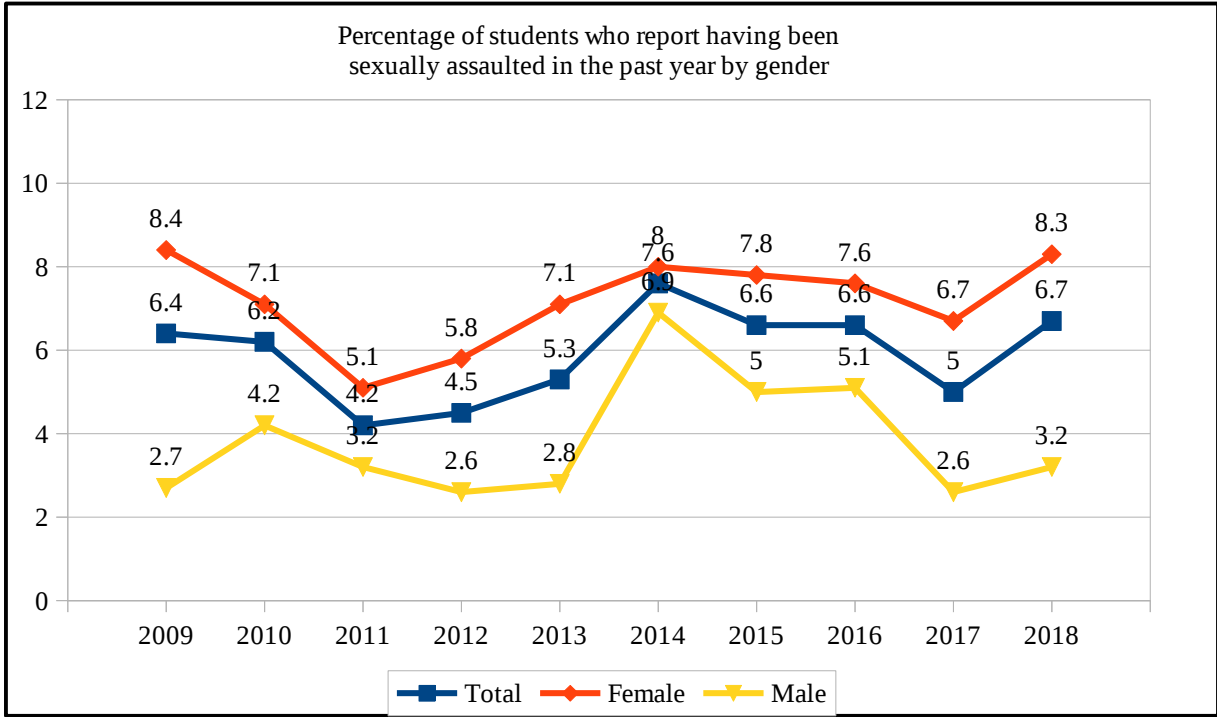
The College Risk Behaviors Study also measured several potential consequences of alcohol consumption and binge drinking. The data below present a comparison between binge drinkers and non-binge drinkers for the likelihood of experiencing these consequences. Binge drinking was defined as drinking five 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.



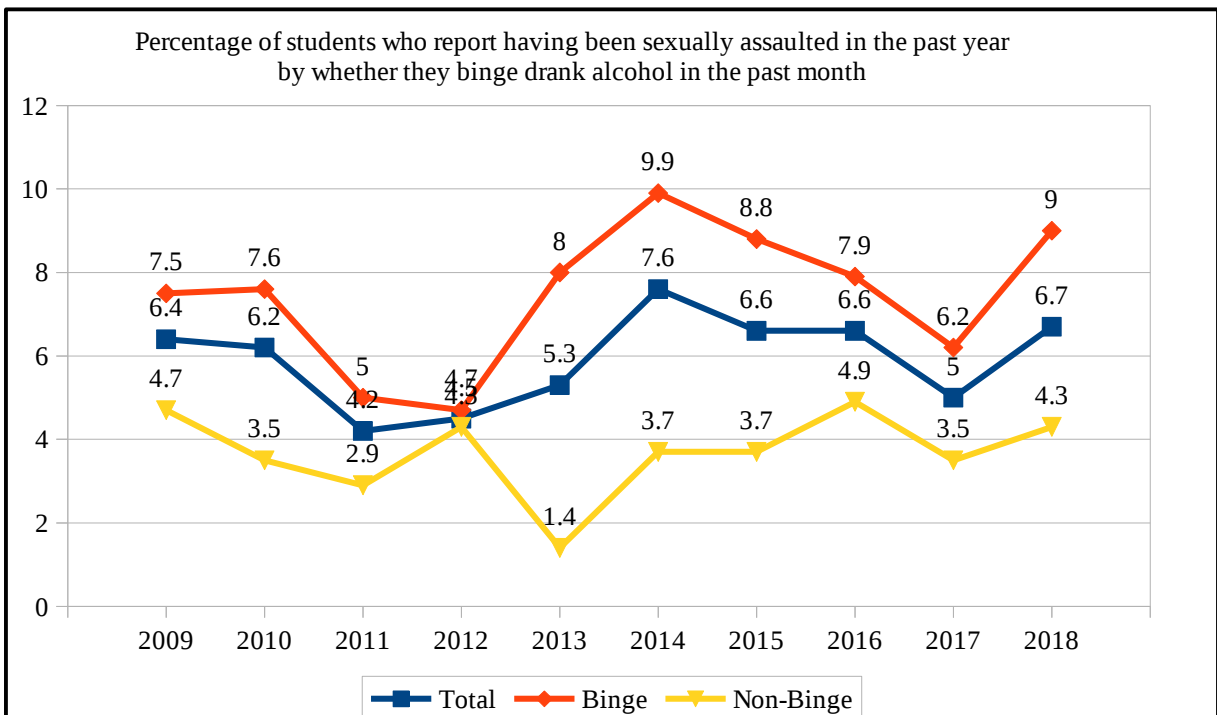
* Victimization questions were defined as the following – Assault: Being attacked or someone threatening to attack you – Sexual Assault: Having been forced or coerced to engage in unwanted sexual intercourse of any kind including vaginal, anal, or oral sex. All were limited to incidents occurring in the past year.

Consequences Trends

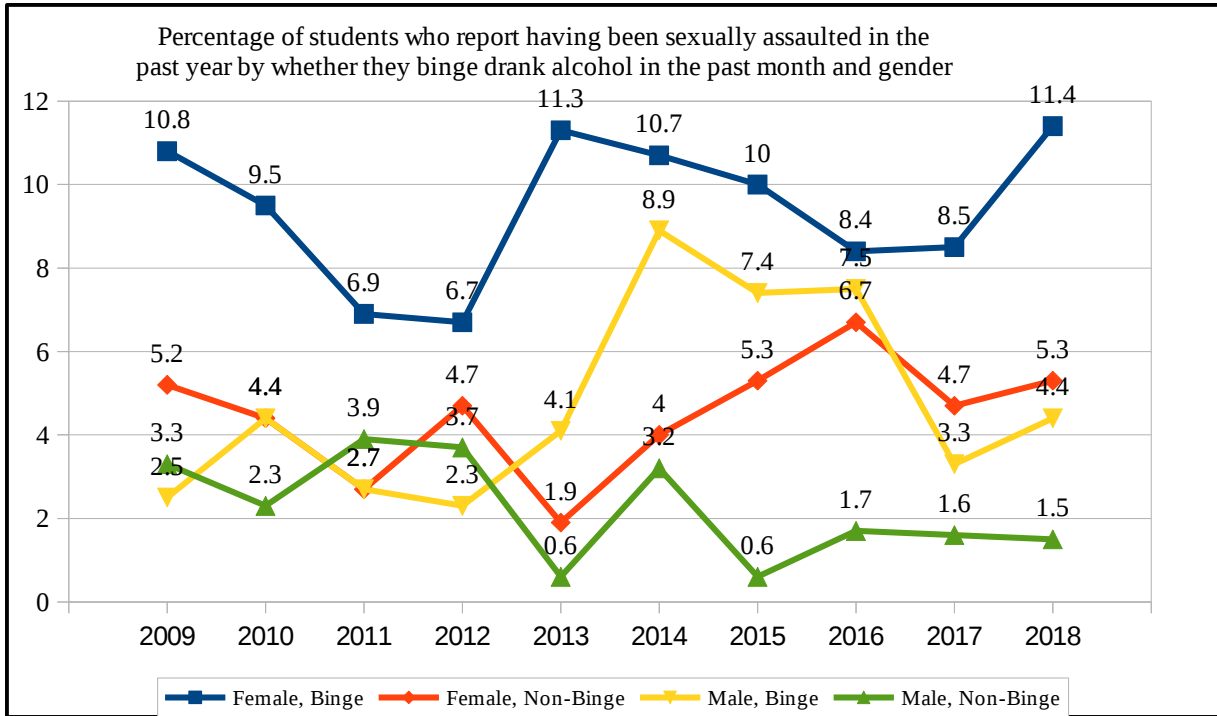
Tracking the changes in consequences over time, the data suggest that sexual assaults increased for both males and females after 2012.



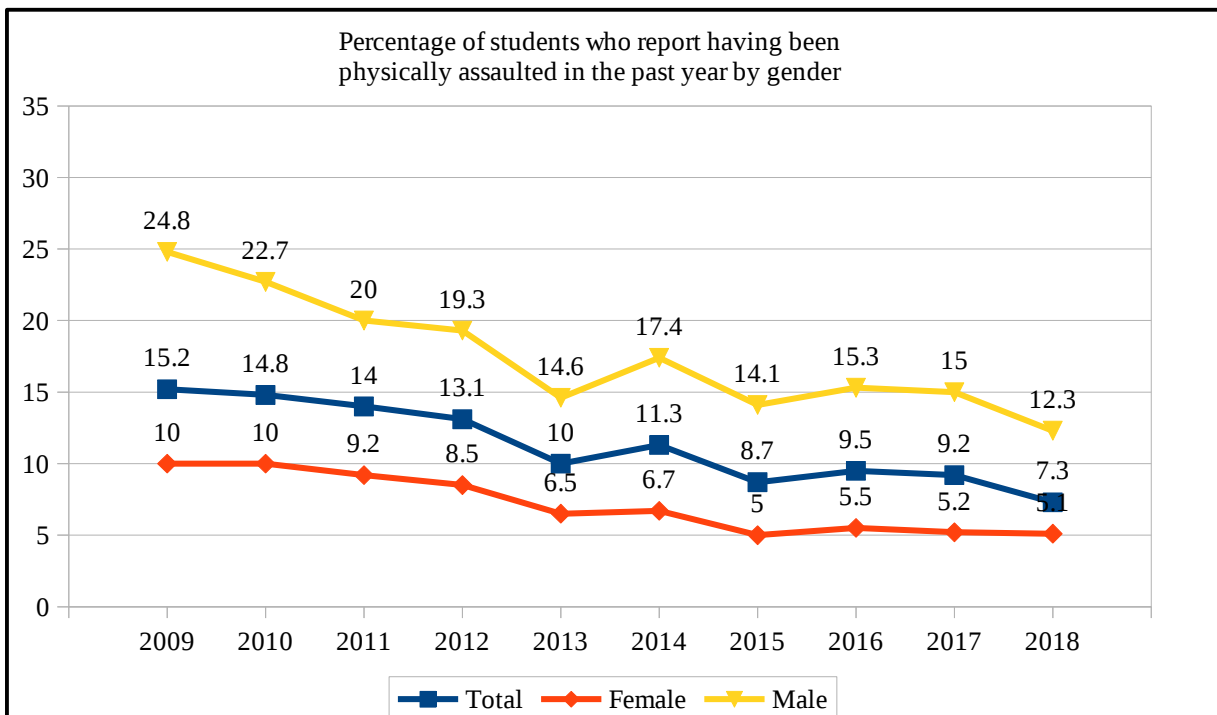
When examined by binge drinking behavior, the same increase between 2012 and 2014 can be seen, but only for binge drinkers.



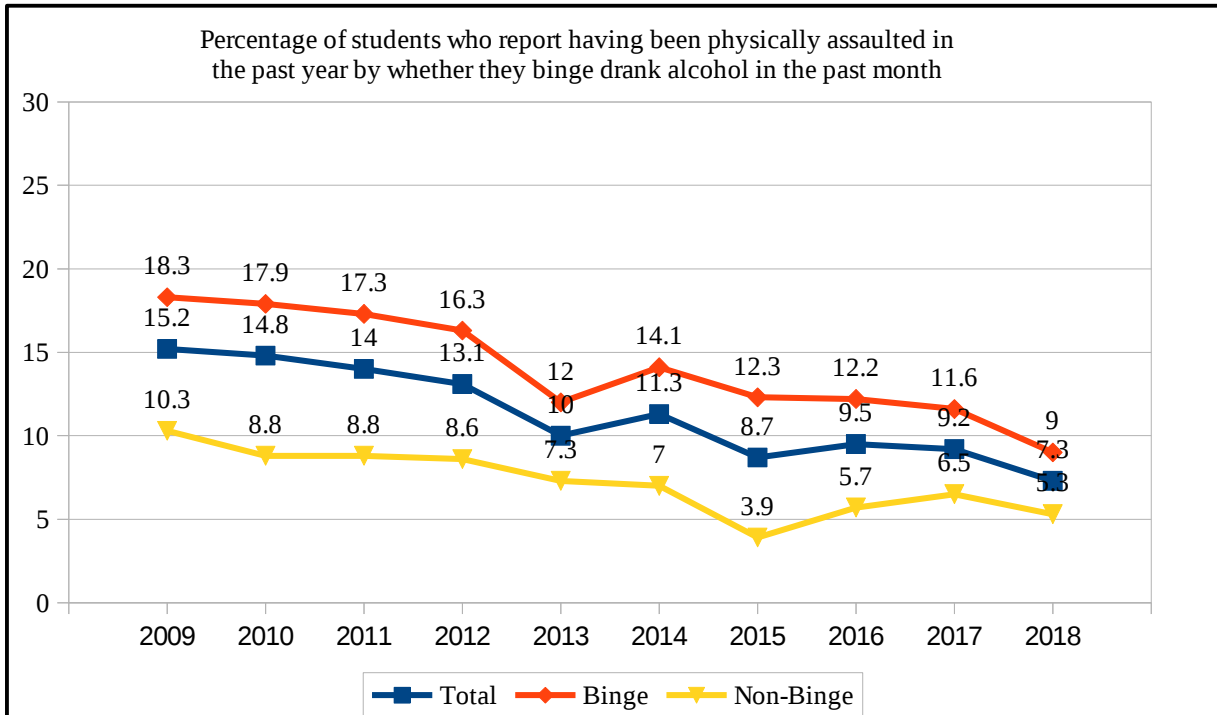
A rise in victimization between 2012 and 2014 can be seen for both male and female students who binge drink. The rates have declined in the years since then for males, but remaining higher than 2012 rates for binge drinking females.



Tracking the changes in consequences over time, the data suggest that physical assaults in general have decreased steadily regardless of gender.



The data also suggest that this decline occurred regardless of binge drinking behavior.



Breaking down the statistics by both gender and binge drinking behavior indicates a steady decline in each category, with binge drinking males – who with the highest rate had the most potential for a decline – seeing the largest of the declines, but remaining stable over the past few years.

