

Alcohol Use and Misuse
**Campus Prevention Network
National Insights Report**

2022 - 2023 Academic Year

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Executive Summary

Context for this Report

Alcohol use and non-use by college students has shifted dramatically over the past two decades. Contrary to popular belief, fewer students are drinking. However, a minority of students who do choose to drink are reportedly doing so in higher-risk ways. While the pandemic's impact on alcohol use among college students is still relatively unknown, these data insights reveal little change from pre-pandemic trends.

The data in this report not only mirror these trends but provide foundational support for prevention efforts that move beyond a singular focus on mitigating the effects of high-risk drinking to one with a greater emphasis on promoting a holistic wellness vision for campuses and their students. Insights reinforce the inherent connections between alcohol and other drug misuse and multiple disciplines of mental health, diversity and inclusion, and sexual and gender-based violence. It reveals notable distinctions in drinking patterns and drinking-related risks for diverse populations, suggests how alcohol use may contribute to or precipitate mental health challenges for already at-risk students, and reinforces the role that alcohol can play in creating environments that increase health and safety risks for our most vulnerable students. Thoughtful consideration and use of these findings can help institutions to innovate in their approach to prevention, creating opportunities that emphasize and enhance the positive characteristics that enable students and institutions to thrive.

How to Use This Report

We hope that higher education leaders and practitioners will share this report with campus stakeholders and use these insights to shape conversations on the future of alcohol and substance misuse prevention efforts, to inform and shape strategic plans, to benchmark institutional progress, and to inspire innovation that may usher forth a brighter future for all students.

About the Data

The data in this report were collected from 680,201 students across 375 colleges and universities. These students completed Vector Solutions' *AlcoholEdu for College* Pre-Course Survey between June 1, 2022 and January 26, 2023. The vast majority of respondents were incoming first-year students, with 75% being age 18 or younger.



Prevalence of Alcohol Use and Non-Use

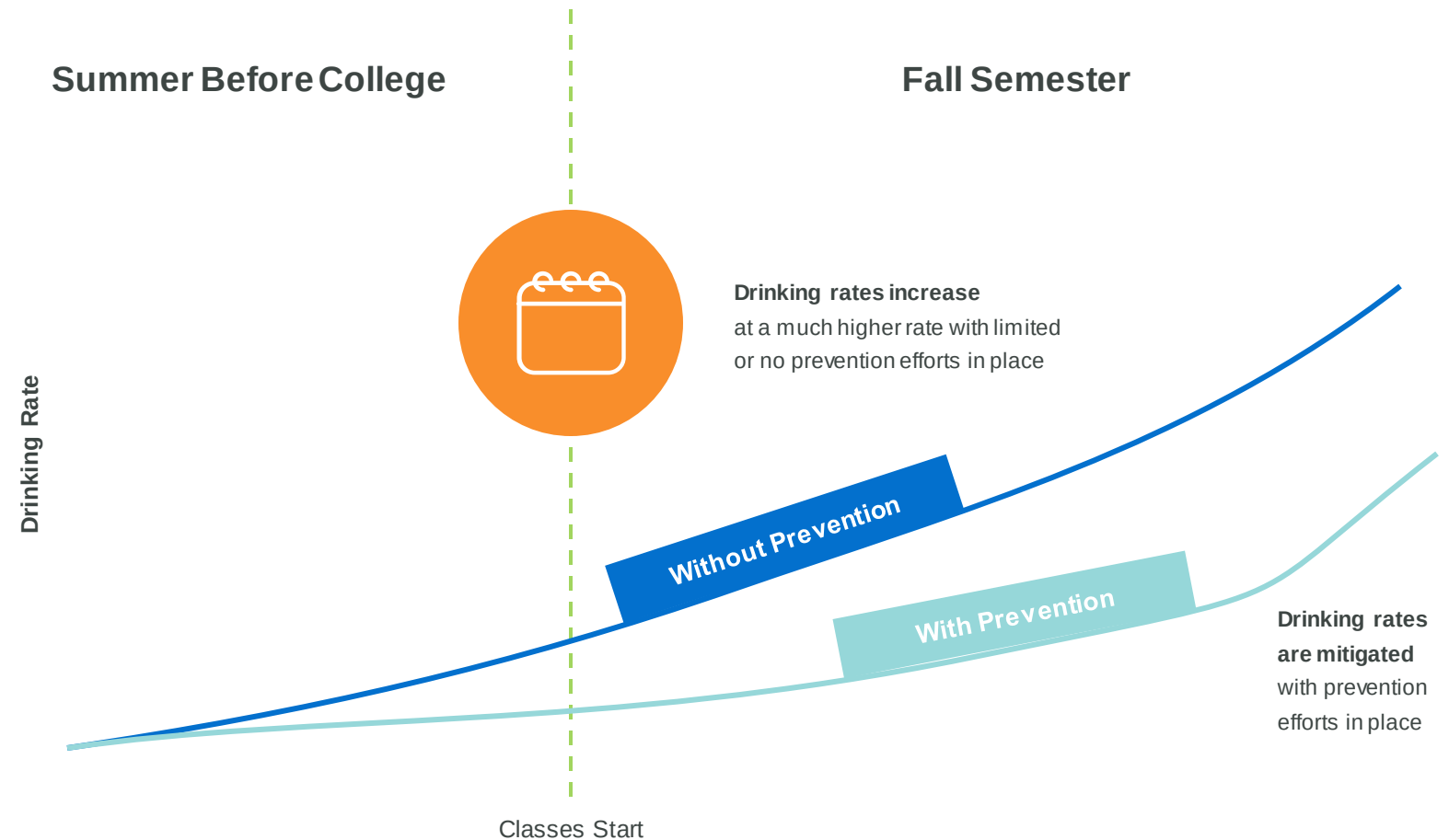
Data and insights from today's college students

Additional Context for This Report: The College Effect

Student drinking rates generally rise over the summer before they enter college, then increase substantially after their arrival on campus. This is known as the College Effect, and will exist to a lesser or greater degree on a given campus, depending on environmental and cultural influences.

Institutions have a narrow window of opportunity to mitigate the College Effect through primary prevention. To be most effective, these efforts should address all students, not just those with a history of heavy or problematic drinking and should include efforts to reinforce the behaviors of the majority of students who either do not to drink or who consume alcohol in low-risk ways.

The data in this report are a snapshot of students' alcohol-related attitudes and behaviors as they arrive on campus. It suggests that there are numerous positive attributes among students that can be reinforced to help mitigate negative outcomes for those who choose to drink, including specific populations that are at higher risk for experiencing harm.

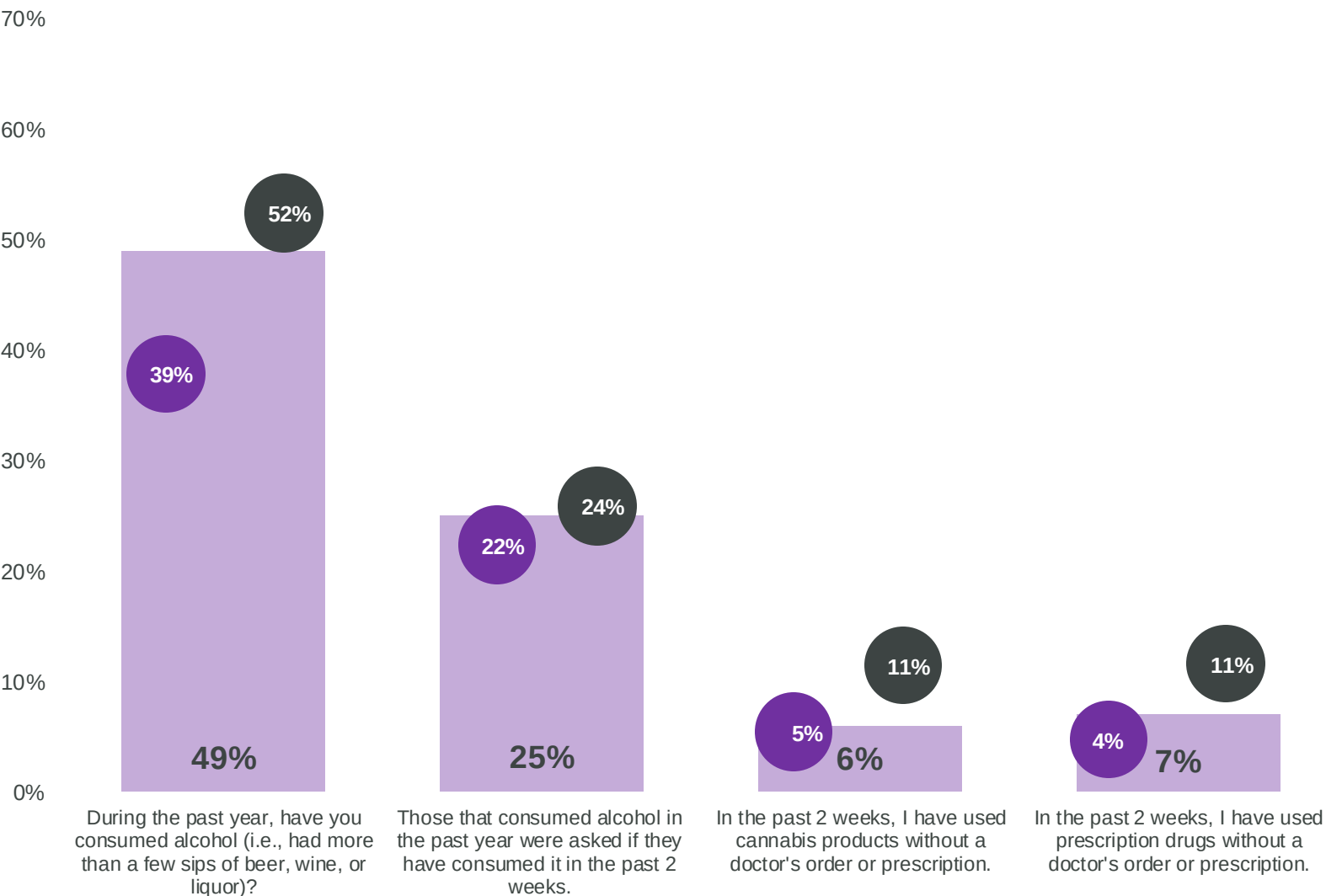


Prevalence of Drinking Remains Lower than Previous Decades

Just under half of incoming students indicate using alcohol in the past year, consistent with a 15-year trend of declining alcohol use. Further, only half of those students report drinking in the two weeks prior to the survey.

Prescription drug misuse prior to arriving on campus is low but is also highly susceptible to the College Effect, particularly for stimulants. Non-prescription use of cannabis among LGBTQ+ students is almost twice as high as the general population and suggests the need for schools to collect additional data to better address their needs.

Among Students of Color, alcohol use is a full 10% lower than all students. This is consistent with ongoing research that also points to poor social and academic outcomes for Students of Color at institutions with high rates of alcohol use. As schools strive to create communities of belonging, they should consider the role of alcohol and the challenges that high-risk environments present in attracting – and retaining – a diverse student body.



Note: Percentages represent the share of students who said "Yes" in response to the questions.

All Students Students of Color LGBTQ+ Students

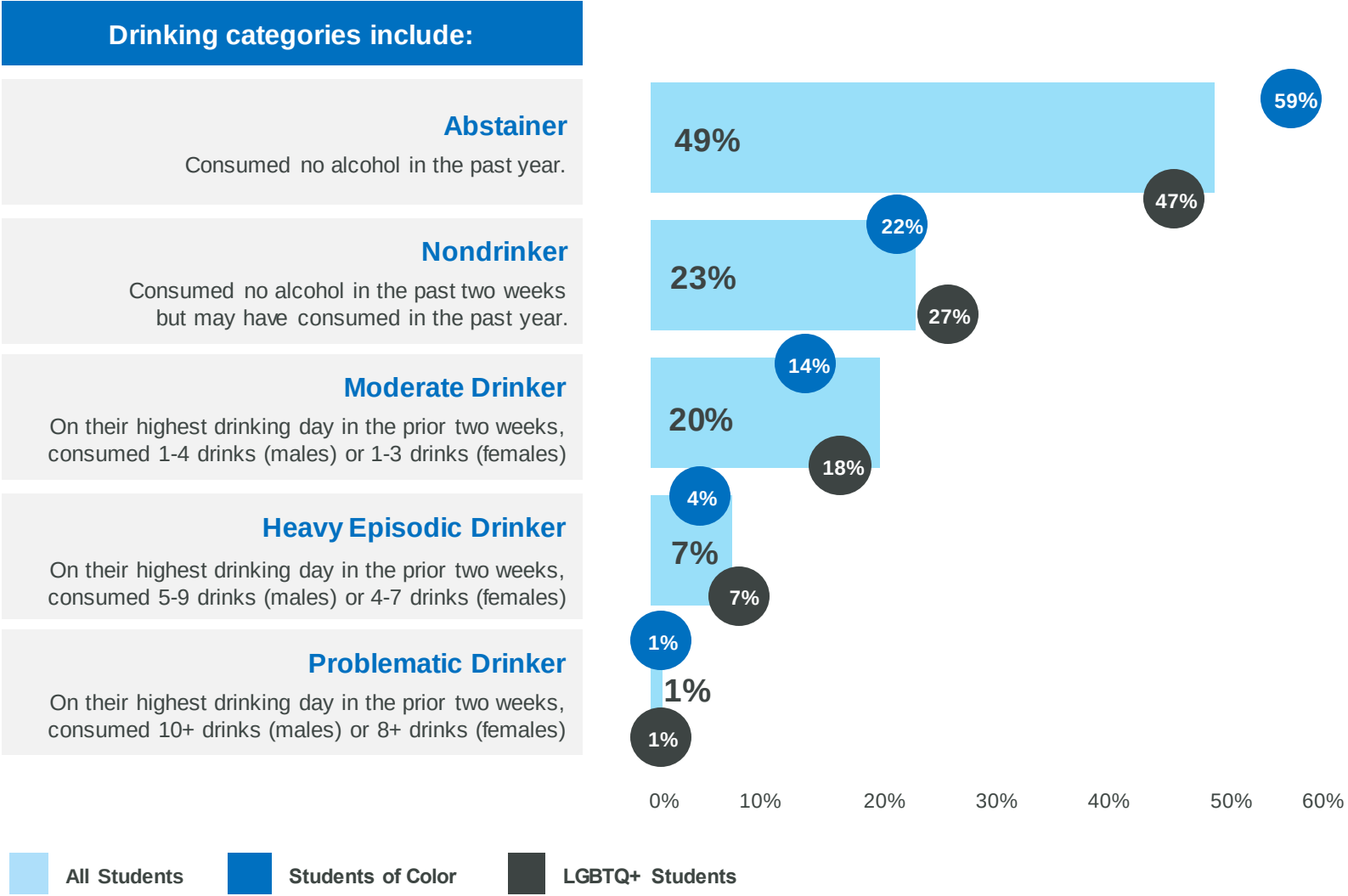
Drinking Rates Signal a Shift in Student Attitudes About Alcohol

Nearly three quarters of students arrive on campus having either consumed no alcohol over the past year (49%), or the past two weeks, with the percentage of abstainers even higher among Students of Color. In contrast, fewer than ten percent of all students are reporting drinking in high-risk ways. And yet, from media, current students and alumni, and even parents — the memorable college experience depicted includes high-risk drinking.

Colleges and universities have a responsibility to prevent incoming students from adopting higher-risk drinking behaviors once they arrive on campus. While well-intended, institutional messages that focus on mitigating the harms of high-risk drinking can unintentionally reinforce the misperception that most students drink and can cast drinking as an essential part of the college experience. Instead, normalizing non-drinking and providing a wide range of opportunities for students to find community and create connection without alcohol can set healthy student behaviors and expectations that persist throughout their time on campus.



Considering the College Effect, here is how students reported their drinking rates on pre-course surveys.

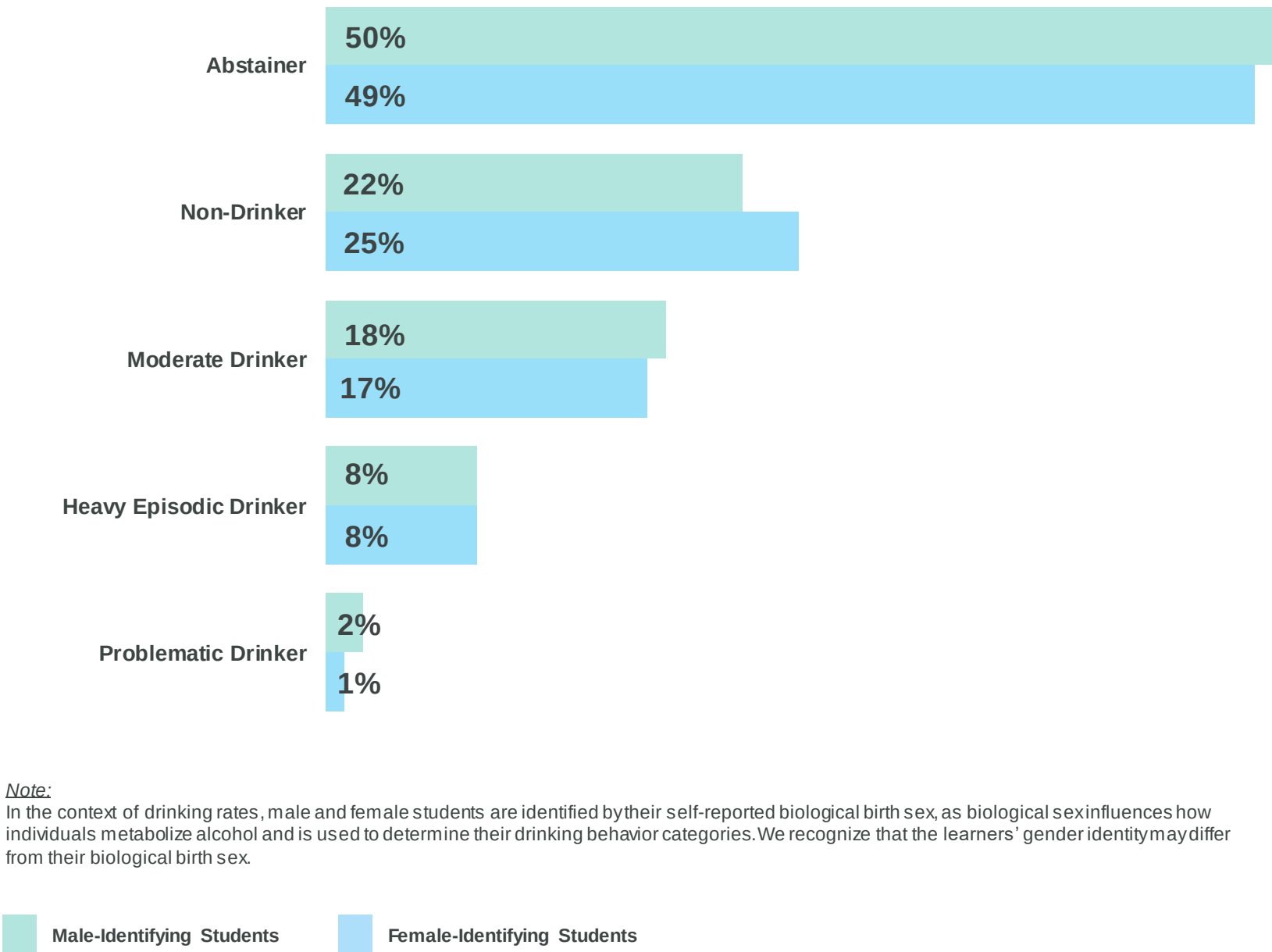


Drinking Rates By Gender Identity

Male- and female-identifying students often follow different drinking patterns and may experience the College Effect differently. As these data demonstrate, while drinking patterns may differ, students are drinking at approximately the same rate, regardless of their gender identity.

Other research as well as Vector Solutions' data has identified that college women are more likely to engage in "pregaming" than male students, consuming alcohol in preparation for a social gathering rather than at the event. Campus practitioners report that college women are also more likely to forego eating food before or while at a social event when they're drinking, and that the type of alcohol they consume is often different from that of college men. All of these factors suggest that institutions will make the most progress on reducing alcohol misuse by combining prevention programs and interventions targeted to the general student body with those that are tailored to address higher risk practices of specific sub-populations.

Student Drinking Rates, by Gender Identity



A group of five diverse college students are sitting on a wide set of stone steps outdoors. From left to right: a Black male student in a striped polo shirt and light-colored pants is looking at a smartphone; an Asian female student in a light blue button-down shirt and jeans is looking at a tablet; a white male student in a light blue button-down shirt and jeans is using a laptop; a white female student in a white button-down shirt and dark skirt is reading a book; and a Black female student with curly hair in a white sleeveless top and dark pants is writing in a notebook. They are all smiling and appear to be engaged in their work. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with trees and other people in the distance.

Alcohol-Related Experiences, Attitudes, and Behaviors

Data and insights from today's college students

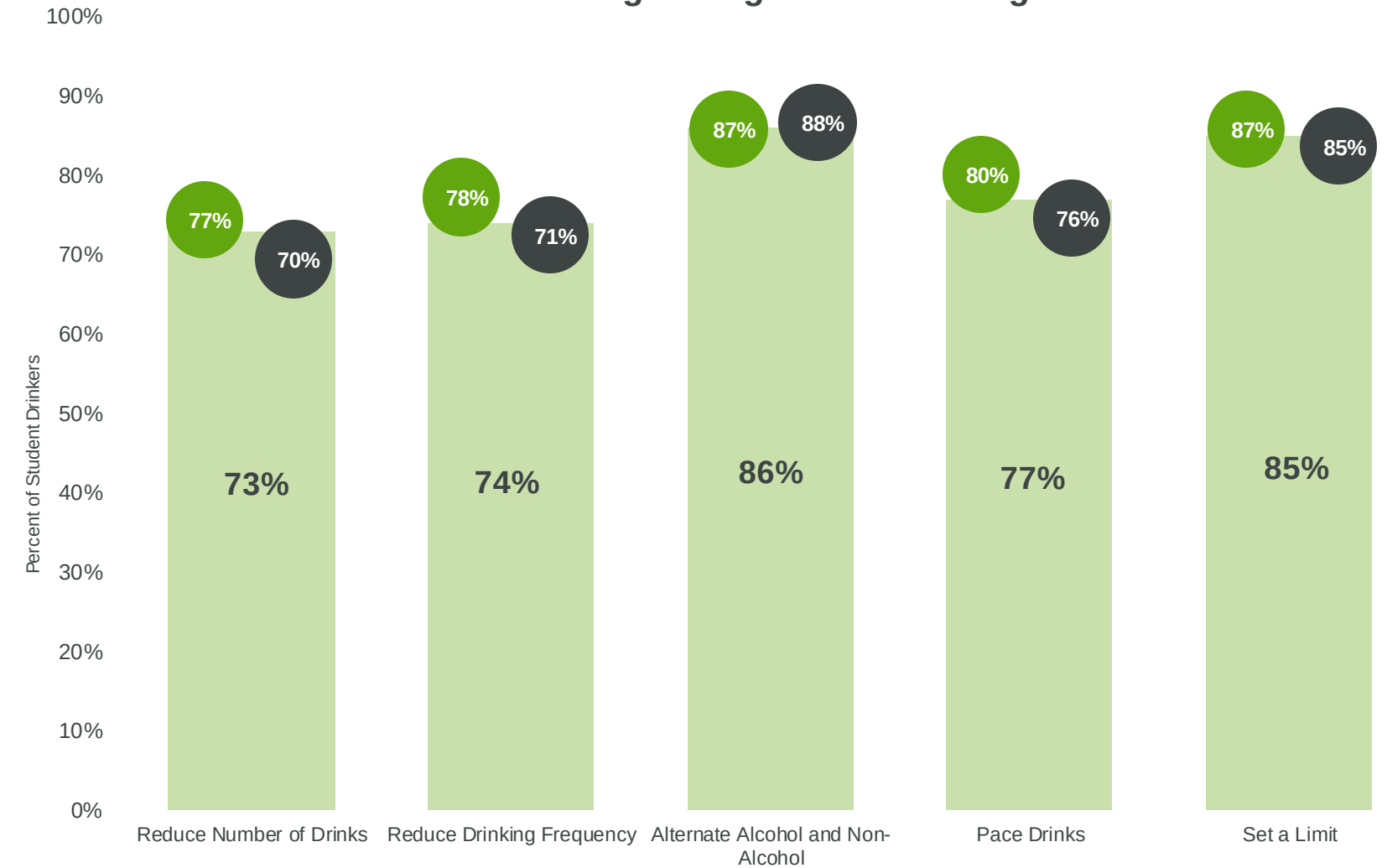
Most Drinkers Endorse the Use of Risk Reduction Behaviors

Among students who reported drinking, the majority indicate their intentions to engage in protective behaviors to reduce their risk of experiencing alcohol-related harms.

Institutions can put efforts in place to reinforce and provide support for these choices through social media and other frequently accessed modes of information on campus.

Additionally, institutions should consider efforts aimed at building out individual protective attributes, including positive self-image, self-control, social competence, and connections, all of which may enhance students' ability to follow through on behavioral intentions to mitigate personal risk.

Intention to Mitigate High-Risk Drinking



Note: Percentages represent the share of students who intend to engage in these behaviors in the next 30 days.

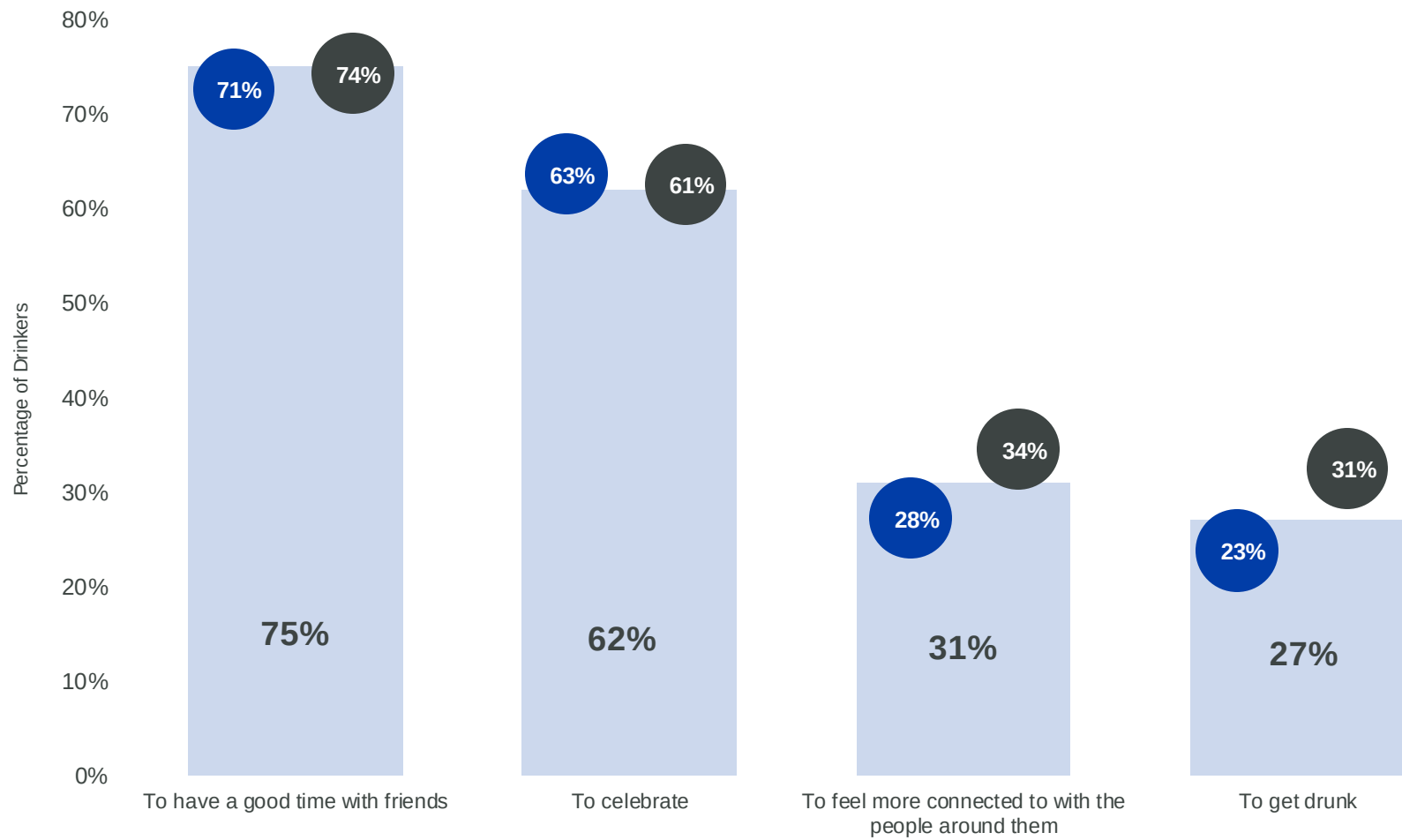
All Students Students of Color LGBTQ+ Students

Reasons for Drinking Focus on Connection While Identifying At-Risk Students

Overwhelmingly, students report the main reason they drink is not to experience the effects of alcohol, but rather to connect with their friends. While drinking rates for college students have been falling for over a decade, when students do drink, the data reflect that they're doing so with the goal of having fun or celebrating with peers.

For colleges and universities, these data provide an important clue to reducing drinking among college students. Providing more engaging and attractive social opportunities and environments where students can have a good time without needing to consume alcohol is an important first step. Also, building their social skills can help students make connections without relying on alcohol to reduce their social inhibitions.

Top Reasons Students Choose To Drink



Note: Percentages represent students who selected each option.

All Students Students of Color LGBTQ+ Students

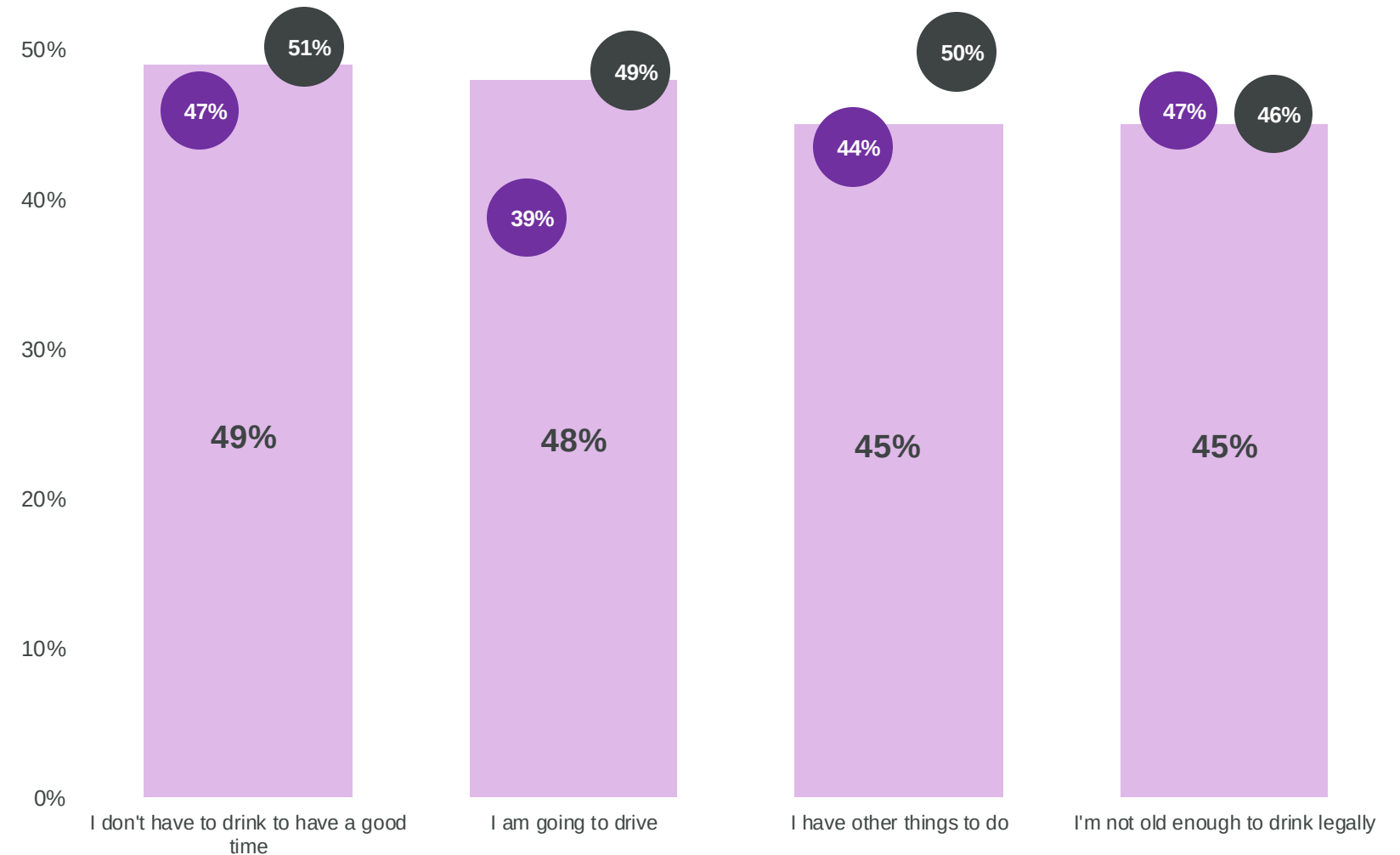
Legal and Social Motivations Top the List of Reasons for Choosing Not to Drink

Students who drink (but choose not to on occasion) and those who don't drink at all share similar reasons for refraining from alcohol use.

Students report that they don't have to drink to have a good time and that they have other things to do. Providing engaging and attractive options for socializing without alcohol can help reinforce these reasons shared by drinkers and non-drinkers alike.

Driving and not being old enough to drink legally indicate a focus on safety and risk-aversion, two characteristics of today's college students. They underscore the role that law and policy play for these students in deterring underage drinking, and therefore the need for consistent policy enforcement efforts.

Top Reasons Students Choose NOT To Drink



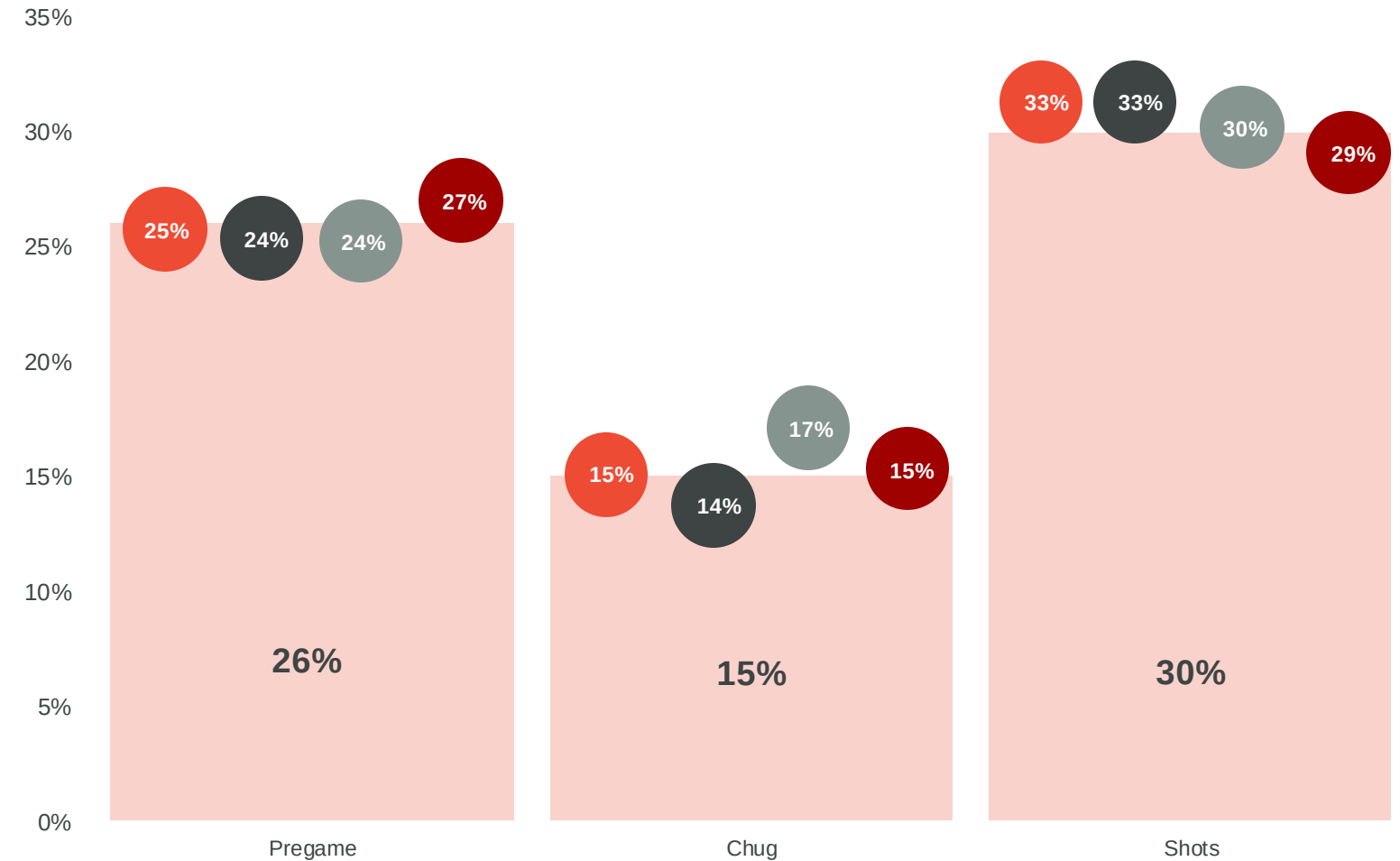
Note: Percentages represent students who selected each option.

All Students Students of Color LGBTQ+ Students

Pregaming, Shots Among the Highest Risk Drinking Behaviors

Pregaming (26%) and doing shots (30%) are the most common drinking-related risk behaviors. The dangerous practice of pregame typically involves drinking shots, so these behaviors often go hand in hand. This type of drinking has a number of adverse consequences especially as they relate to cognition and decision-making skills.

While men have historically been more likely than women to pregame, the number of female students who engage in pregame now slightly surpasses that of males. This is especially troubling because biological differences in body structure and chemistry lead most women to experience harmful effects more quickly and for longer periods of time, putting them at even greater risk from the moment they arrive at their next destination. Campuses would do well to initiate programs and policies that deter this practice for all students but with focused messaging for women that highlight the potentially greater impact on their health and



Note: Percentages represent responses of Frequently or Always.

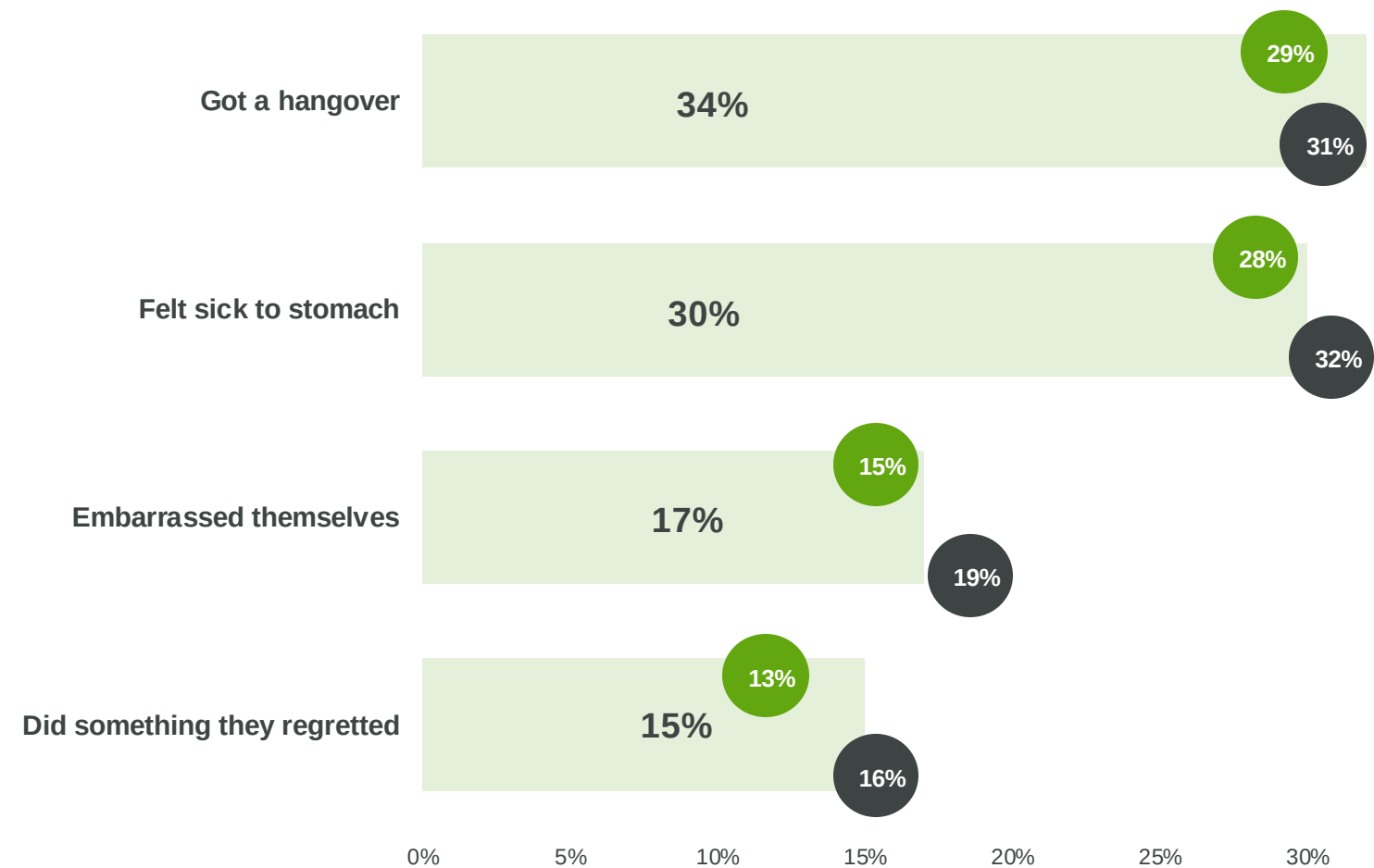
All Students Students of Color LGBTQ+ Students Male-Identifying Female-Identifying

Negative Drinking-Related Outcomes Impact Physical and Emotional Health

Among students who drink, having a hangover and feeling sick are two commonly reported physical outcomes of high-risk alcohol use. They are also likely to impact other aspects of one's life, including academic performance, athletics, and overall health. Students of Color are less likely to experience all of these outcomes, suggesting that individual protective factors may be more present for these students.

Experiences of embarrassment and regret can have long-term social and emotional consequences. LGBTQ+ students indicate more frequent occurrences of these outcomes in comparison to all students. This is largely concerning for a population already navigating higher than average mental health challenges. Collaboration between wellness offices and campus support and resource centers may provide additional data to help identify education and intervention efforts aimed at the specific needs of this at-risk group of students.

Top Negative Outcomes Experiences



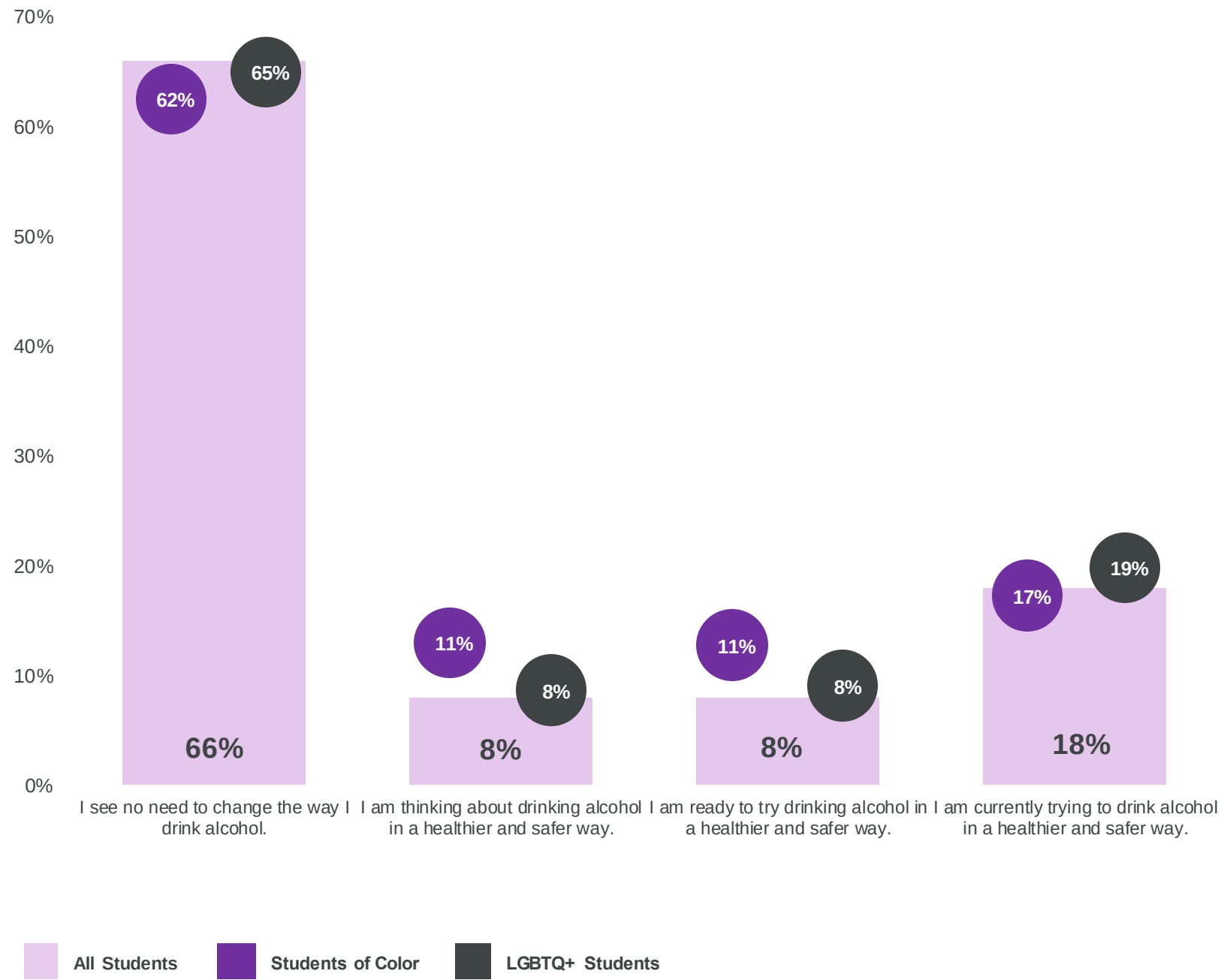
Note: Percentages represent students who experienced outcome one or more times.

All Students Students of Color LGBTQ+ Students

Students Arrive on Campus with Intentions to Change Drinking Behavior

One-third (34%) of students who report drinking indicate a readiness to change their drinking. Considering these data are often collected prior to students' arrival, effort should be made to create a comprehensive plan to reinforce already existing intentions. This may include suggestions for appropriate messaging from leadership, and programs to help build or reinforce social skills and competencies.

As noted previously, the College Effect varies from campus to campus. Its impact can be “dampened” by a campus environment that reinforces safe and healthy norms. These efforts can help support individual intentions and, ultimately, changes in behavior. However, for colleges where unhealthy behaviors are perceived as accepted and even encouraged, intentions may not be sufficient to support change.



Students Underestimate Their Peers Desire to Intervene

Young people are prone to misperceptions about their peers' attitudes and beliefs, which in turn influences their individual behavior. A person is more likely to seek help for themselves or others if they believe that they will be supported in that action by their community and that others will act with them. Feeling different from or unsupported by peers is likely to be an obstacle to intervening when witnessing concerning or potentially dangerous behavior by others.

These data reflect a significant gap between students' personal desire to act in a given situation and their perceptions of how they believe their peers will act under the same circumstances. Closing this gap will help increase the likelihood of students taking action, especially when done in concert with skill-building on how to effectively intervene. However, it will require efforts to understand and correct misperceptions that students hold about each other both within the entire student population and sub-groups, particularly LGBTQ+ students.

Social Norms



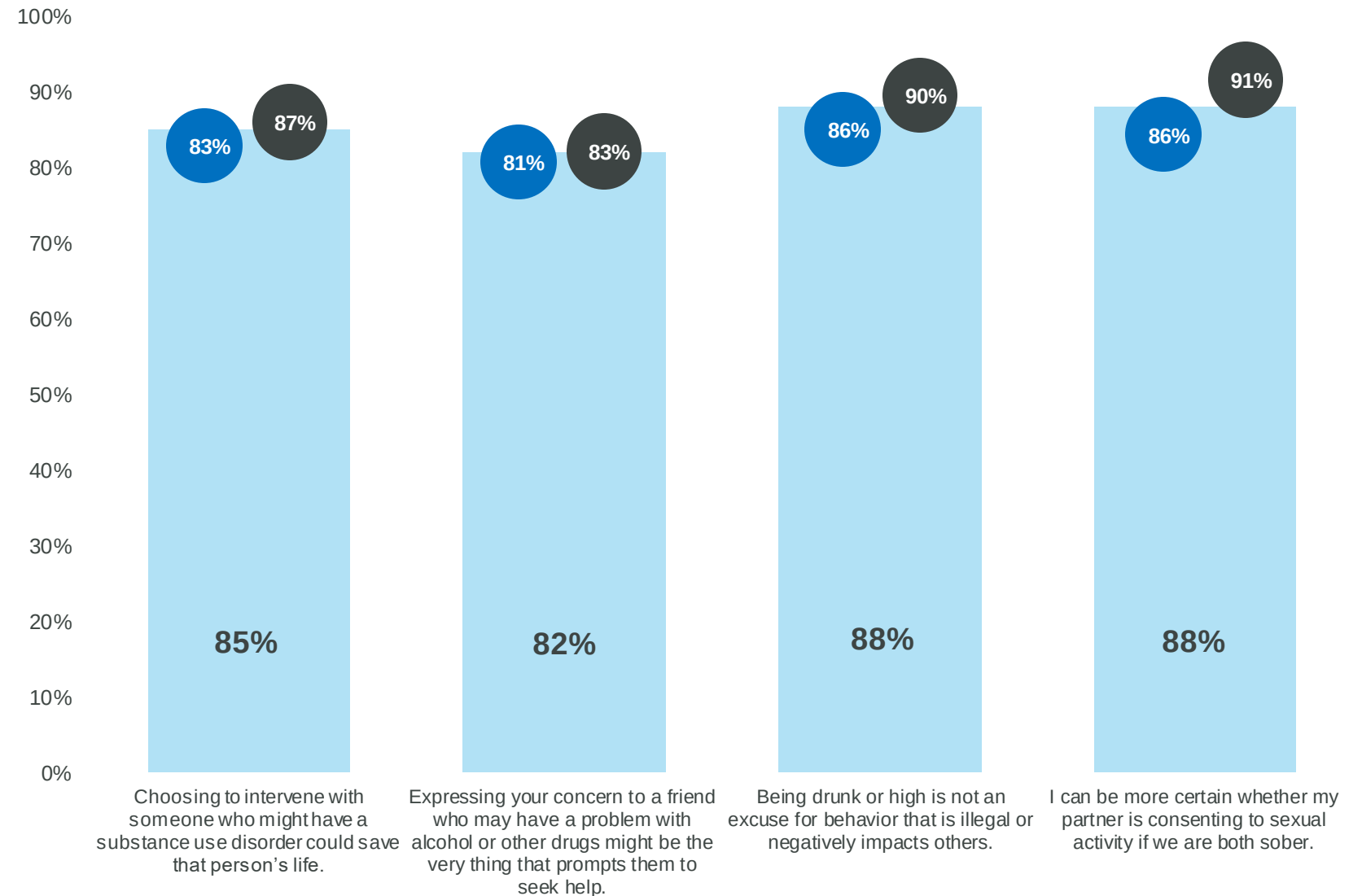
Note: Percentages represent students who selected "agree" or "strongly agree"

Students of Color LGBTQ+ Students

Most Students Endorse Positive Beliefs Around Keeping Themselves and Others Safe

A health-promoting environment should leverage findings such as these that indicate a majority of students already value helping behaviors. These data can be used to support the design and communication of a vision that reinforces community expectations of responsibility, connection, and concern for others.

Beyond vision statements, campuses must find multiple ways to reinforce these intentions, whether through providing skills training on how to communicate concern to a friend or through activities that align with and support students' reported values. As with bystander intervention, intentions and actions are more likely to occur and be successful when students believe their desire to help is consistent with the beliefs and norms of their peers as well as that of the institution.



Note: Percentages represent students who selected "agree" or "strongly agree"

All Students Students of Color LGBTQ+ Students

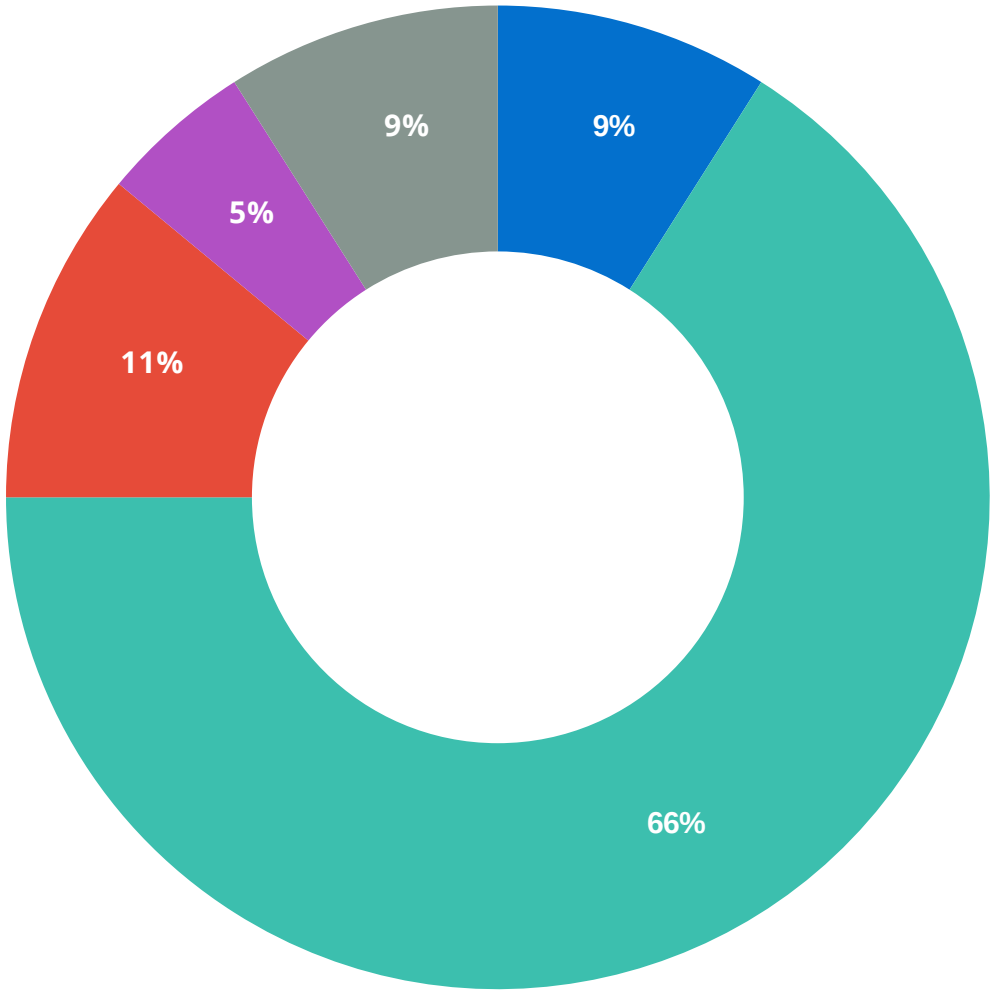
A group of five diverse college students are walking and laughing on a paved campus path. From left to right: a young man with short brown hair wearing a light blue button-down shirt over a white t-shirt and blue jeans, carrying a backpack; a young woman with curly brown hair wearing a white t-shirt, a plaid shirt tied around her waist, and black leggings, carrying a shoulder bag and books; a young man with short black hair wearing a white and grey striped polo shirt, grey pants, and headphones around his neck, carrying books; a young woman with long black hair wearing a light green long-sleeved shirt tied at the waist and blue jeans, carrying a shoulder bag and books; and a young woman with long dark hair wearing a white short-sleeved shirt and a dark denim skirt, carrying a shoulder bag and books. The background shows a large, light-colored building with classical architectural features and green trees. The entire image has a semi-transparent dark overlay.

Student Demographics

Student Demographics

These pages provide a summary of the demographics of students who participated in *AlcoholEdu for College* this year. Demographic information is self-reported by students as part of the Pre-Course Survey. All questions are optional, and students may choose not to share demographic information.

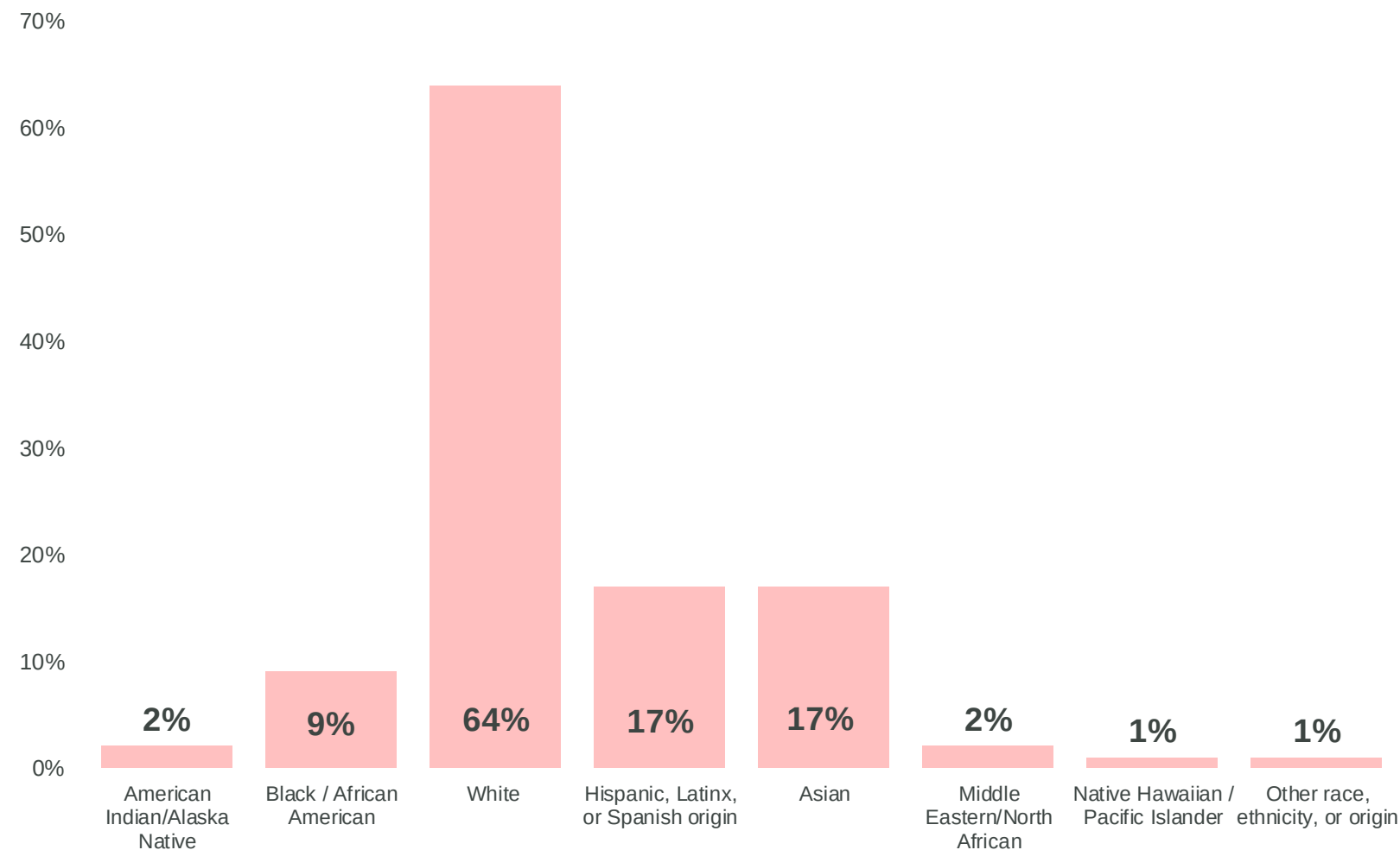
Age



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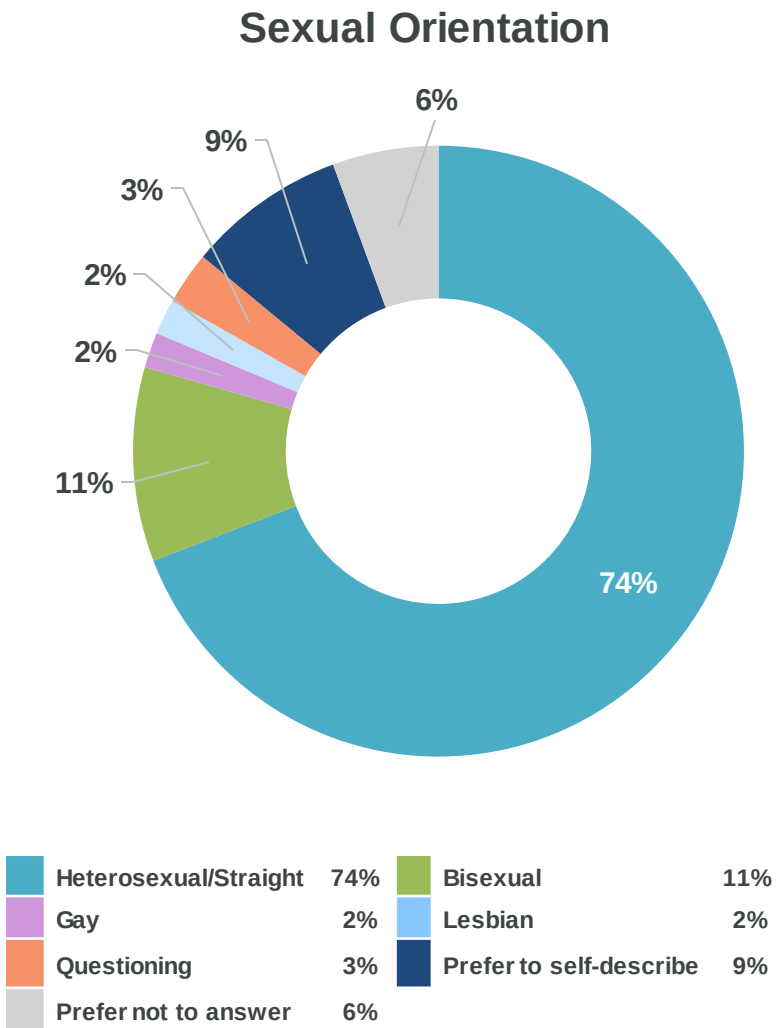
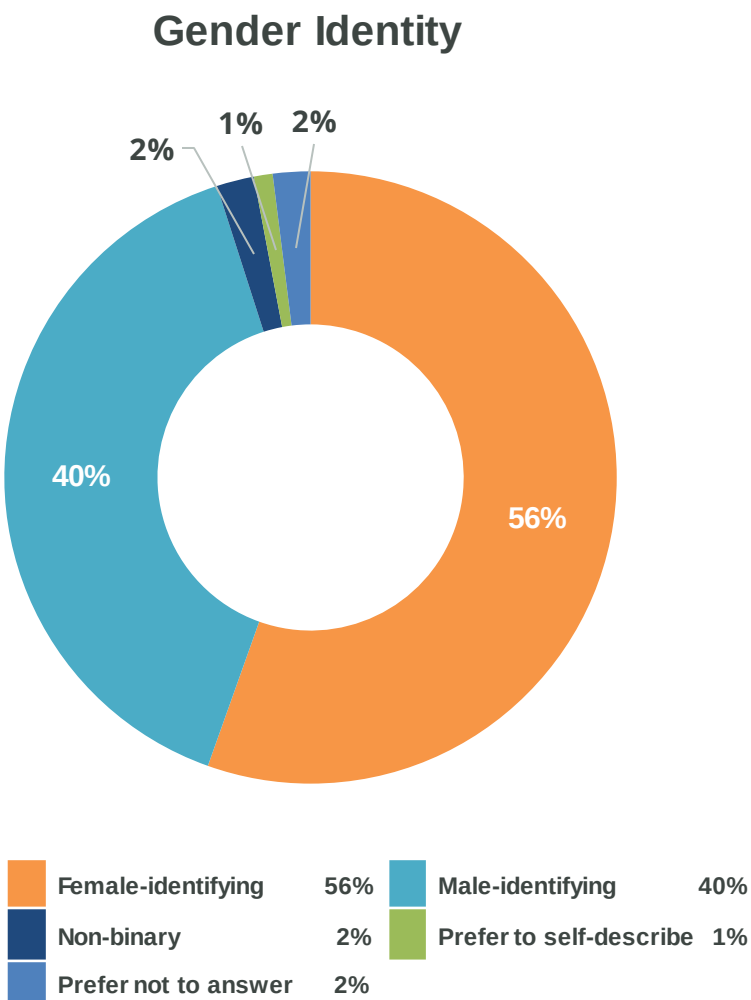
Race and/or Ethnicity



Note: Students could select more than one response.

Student Demographics

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Note: Students could select more than one response.

Do you identify as trans (e.g., transgender, transsexual, a person with transitioning sex or gender history, etc.)?					
Yes	1%	No	96%	Not sure	1%
			Prefer not to answer	2%	

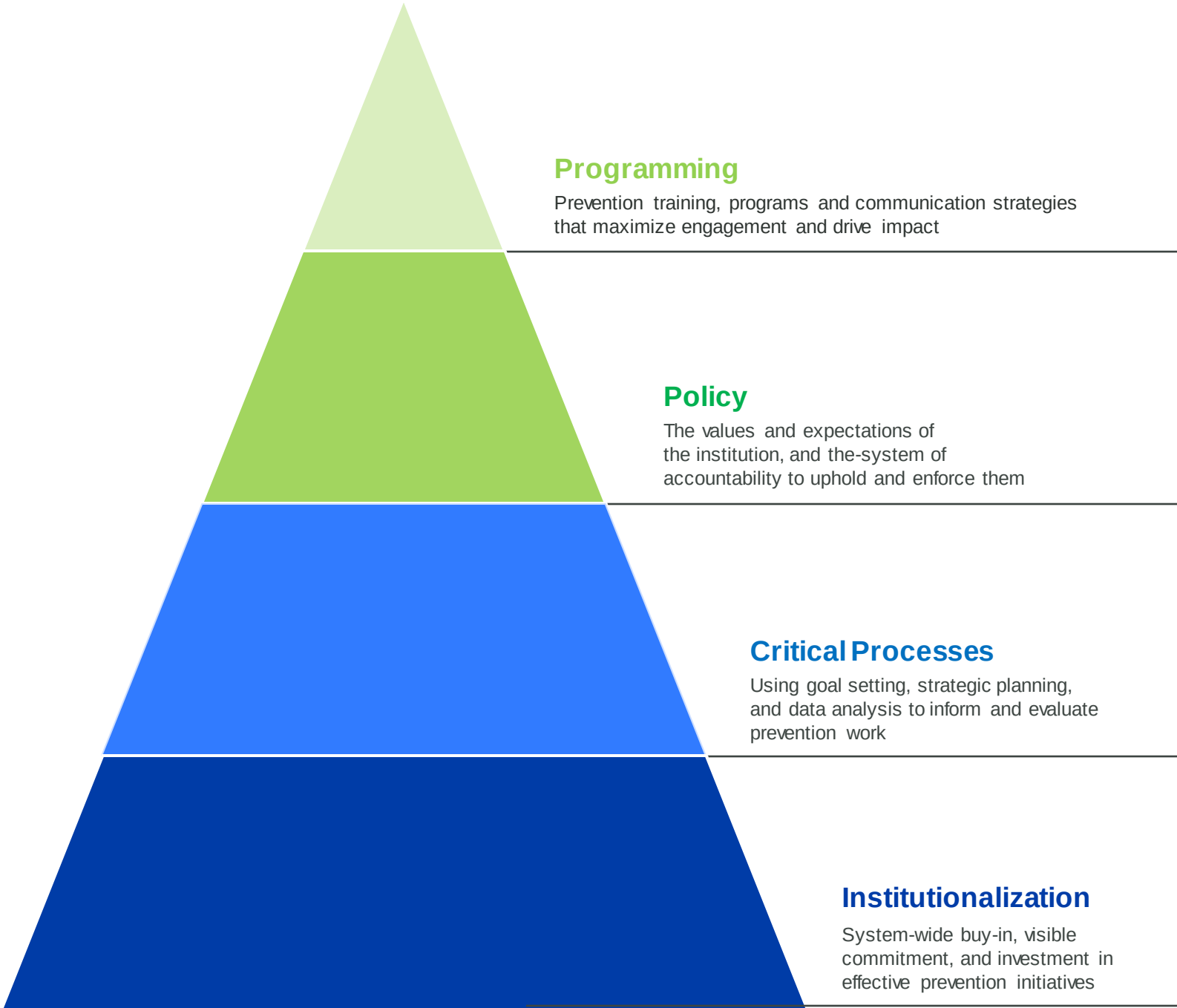


AlcoholEdu for College

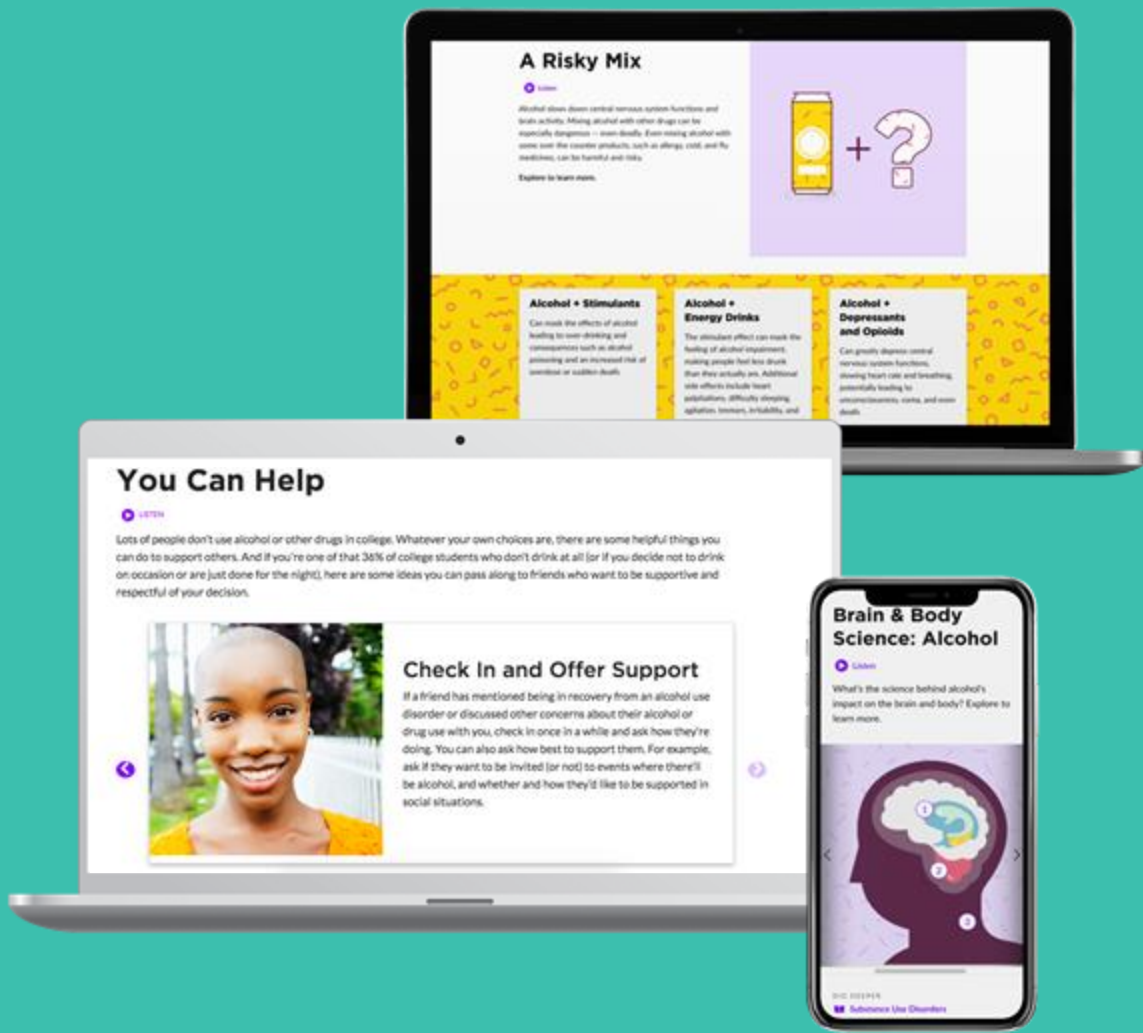
Supplemental Information

The Prevention Framework

The Prevention Framework, developed by Vector Solutions' Campus Prevention Network, defines the elements of a comprehensive approach to prevention, and the ways in which those elements build to an effective prevention program.



About AlcoholEdu for College



The Benefits of Working with Vector Solutions

Proven Efficacy

Nine independent studies have been published demonstrating the efficacy of Vector’s online programs in improving knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors.

True Expertise

Our team includes public health professionals, administrators from student affairs, campus prevention offices, legal experts, and more. Extend your team by partnering with ours.

Beyond Compliance

Our online programs are built by prevention and compliance experts to meet and exceed requirements from Title IX, Clery Act, and EDGAR part 86.

Data Driven

Our data and analytics provide real-time access to attitudinal and behavioral data from your unique populations, and national benchmarks to assess needs and strengths.

AlcoholEdu for College

Developed in Collaboration

with leading prevention experts and researchers.

Interactive Content

guided by recommendations from the National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA).

Informed by Emerging Research

on evidence-based practice (e.g., social norms approach, bystander intervention) and college student behavior

Cited as a Top-tier Strategy by NIAAA

in their College Alcohol Intervention Matrix (AIM).

Most Widely Used

universal online AOD prevention program since its development in 2000, with over 11M users to date.

AlcoholEdu for College Course Map

Part 1	1. Getting Started • Introductory Video • Custom Welcome Letter • Custom Welcome Video	2. Standard Drink • Student Alcohol Knowledge Interviews • Pre-Assessment • Standard Drink Definition • Identifying Standard and Non-Standard Drinks • Pouring Standard Drinks	Survey 1		3. Where Do You Stand? • Risk Factors & Choices • You Are Not Alone/Benefits of Not Drinking/Calories & Cash/Support for Your Choice • Your Drinking Profile/ Your Peak BAC/Reducing Your BAC/Drinking Consequences/Calories & Cash/Your Drinking Habits
	4. Goal Setting • What's Important to You? • What Do You Want to Focus on this Year • My Choices	5. Drinking & Motivation • What Do You Think? • Factors That Can Influence Decisions • Why/Why Not Drink? Poll • Expectancy Theory & Advertising • Ads Appealing to Men/Women • Alcohol & Advertising Poll • Write a Tagline	6. Brain & Body • BAC Basics • What Factors Affect BAC • Risk/Protective Factors • BAC Calculator • Marijuana & Drugs • Sexual Assault & Understanding Consent • Brain & Body Science • Biphasic Effect • A BAC Story		7. My Action Plan • Drinker/NonDrinker Plan • Choose Your Strategies • Activities on Campus
	8. Laws & Policies • Alcohol Related Laws • Campus Policies • Drinking & Driving	9. Helping Friends • Taking Care of Yourself & Others • Alcohol Poisoning • Helping Your Friends Poll • Drinking & Driving • Getting Help	Survey 2 and Post-Assessment		INTERSESSION
Part 2	10. Introduction • Welcome Back	Survey 3		11. Recognizing Problems • Taking Care of Yourself & Others – The Roommate	12. Course Conclusion • Summary of Key Topics • Review Goals, Choices and Plan

A semi-transparent dark overlay covers the entire image. In the background, a group of business professionals are gathered around a table. A man in a white shirt is on the left, gesturing with his hand. A woman with long dark hair is in the center, looking towards the man. Another woman with blonde hair and glasses is on the right, also looking towards the man. They appear to be in a collaborative meeting.

About Vector Solutions

Our Mission

We Make You Safer, Smarter, Better.

Our mission is to help higher education institutions and organizations create safer, smarter, better campus environments by improving safety, well-being and inclusion through comprehensive, evidence-based prevention strategies and solutions.

Safer. Smarter. Better.



Vector Solutions: Your Higher Education Partner

10 Million+
Annual
Learners

2,000+
Higher Ed
Customers

120+
Education
Team Members

9 Course
Efficacy Studies
in Peer-Reviewed
Journals

20+
Years In
Higher Ed

Elements of Best-in-Class Prevention



Comprehensive
Course Catalog

45+

Student Courses

240+

Faculty and Staff
Courses



High-Impact
Content

9

Efficacy Studies
in Peer-Reviewed
Journals



Powerful Training
Platform

21 Language
Translations

In-course
Configurations

Automations

Integration



Unparalleled Data
to Inform
Decision Making

Pre-, Post-, and
Follow-up Surveys

Impact Reports

National &
Custom Benchmarking

Climate Surveys

VectorSolutions.com/HE

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