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Dartmouth Student Well-Being: High-Risk Drinking Prevention

In his *Moving Dartmouth Forward (MDF)* address on Jan. 29, 2015, President Philip J. Hanlon '77 said: “to truly create a safe environment—and one that is advantageous to learning—we will also have to tackle the challenge of excessive drinking.” Our campus continues to address the reduction of high-risk drinking and related harms by implementing effective strategies and best practices in the field of prevention.

To combat public health problems, members of the community must be informed and involved in making positive change. In support of this goal, a series of reports will be released over the course of several months sharing current Dartmouth data, information, and recommendations with the community.

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Questions?

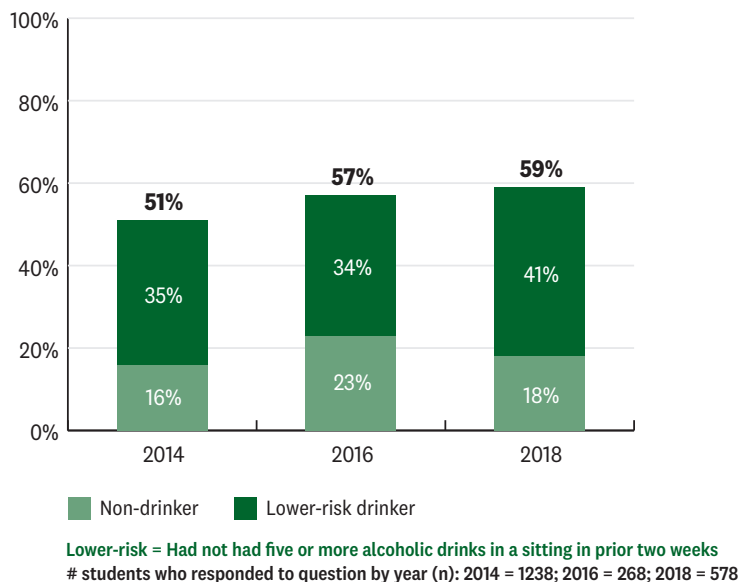
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EXPANDING THE HEALTHY MAJORITY (2/5)

As a population, we tend to overestimate the unhealthy behaviors and underestimate the positive, protective behaviors of those around us.¹ For instance, contrary to common assumptions about college student drinking behaviors, **the majority of Dartmouth students (59 percent) do not report high-risk drinking** (five or more drinks in one sitting) in the past two weeks. That majority has been growing on our campus since 2014. Additionally, **most Dartmouth students who drink engage in protective and harm-reduction strategies.**² Research shows that perceptions (or misperceptions) are one of the strongest predictors of behavior¹; therefore, knowing the true landscape of the attitudes and behaviors of Dartmouth students is critical in supporting the healthy majority.

**Dartmouth Health Surveys:
Percentage of Non-Drinkers and Lower-Risk Drinkers³**



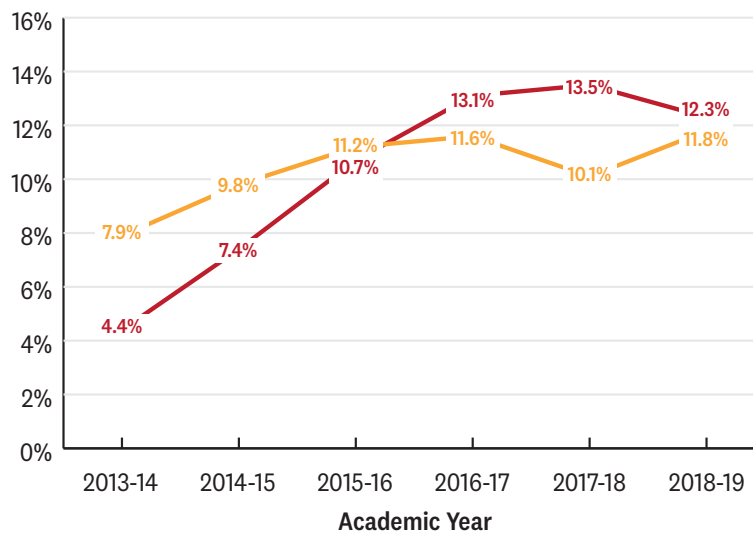
The most common protective behaviors of Dartmouth students who drink:

- **75 percent** eat before and/or during drinking most of the time or always
- **65 percent** keep track of how many drinks they are having most of the time or always
- **69 percent** choose not to drink sometimes or more often when partying or socializing
- **96 percent** did not drive after drinking any alcohol, and 100 percent did not drive after drinking five or more drinks.

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Incoming students: As our campus has taken on the challenge of reducing high-risk drinking in the past six years, we have seen a growing number of incoming students reporting riskier drinking prior to enrolling at Dartmouth. The number of students at pre-matriculation qualifying as high-risk drinkers or very-high-risk drinkers before they step foot on campus has nearly doubled from 2013 to 2018. Of note, 2016-2017 marked the first year that very-high-risk drinkers exceeded the number of high-risk drinkers coming to Dartmouth.⁴

Percentage of High-Risk Drinkers (HRD) and Very High-Risk Drinkers (VHRD) in incoming class – Pre-matriculation⁴



Number of HRD and VHRD in incoming class – Pre-matriculation⁴

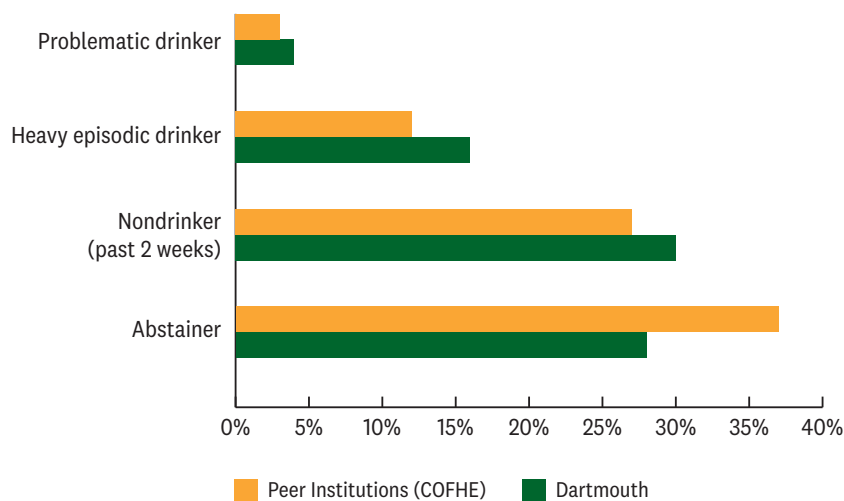
	2013-2014	2018-2019
HRD	85	128
VHRD	47	133
Total	132	261

HRD = consumed 5+ alcoholic drinks in a sitting once in past 2 weeks
 VHRD = consumed 5+ alcoholic drinks in a sitting two or more times in past 2 weeks

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When comparing incoming Dartmouth students to peer institutions, we found that in the fall of 2018, Dartmouth first-year students were less likely to be abstainers and more likely to be heavy episodic or problematic drinkers.⁶

Comparison of Dartmouth Incoming Drinker Categories with Peer Institutions (Pre-matriculation, Fall 2018)



Day of their highest alcohol consumption in the past 2 weeks:
Problematic drinker: 10+ drinks (male) or 8+ drinks (female)
Heavy episodic drinker: 5-9 drinks (male) or 4-7 drinks (female)
Nondrinker—Consumed no alcohol in the past two weeks, but may have consumed in the past year
Abstainer—Consumed no alcohol in the past year
COFHE—Consortium on Financing Higher Education

The ‘College Effect’: Studies of national student alcohol use have identified a trend termed the “college effect,” in which a rise in consumption is observed beginning in the summer before a student enters college and continues through their arrival on campus. College environments can produce a significant increase in alcohol consumption regardless of a student’s previous drinking history; however, schools can create circumstances that facilitate those tendencies or moderate them.⁵

AlcoholEDU®: Mitigating the College Effect: Incoming Dartmouth first-year students are expected to complete two evidence-based pre-matriculation online education programs as a primary prevention effort to mitigate the college effect. EVERFI’s AlcoholEdu® and Sexual Assault Prevention for Undergraduates (SAPU) help reduce the harms associated with alcohol misuse and sexual violence. Completion rates for both programs have been steadily increasing over time, with the most recent Dartmouth students, the Class of 2022, recording a **completion rate of 98 percent**, an all-time high for each.

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A large majority of students reported that AlcoholEdu® helped prepare them to prevent an alcohol overdose (89 percent), help someone who may have alcohol poisoning (92 percent), and establish a plan ahead of time to make responsible decisions about drinking (91 percent).⁶

Supporting the Healthy Majority

Providing consistent alcohol-free and low-risk social options for students particularly during traditional drinking times sets a tone for incoming students and creates circumstances that can moderate the college effect. These events, in which the healthy choice (to abstain or drink in low-risk ways) is the easy choice, also support the majority of Dartmouth students making, or wanting to make, responsible decisions regarding alcohol.

Thirty-five percent of the incoming Class of 2022 (413 students) reported that they would like to attend events that do not focus on alcohol.⁶

Collis After Dark offers late night events every Friday and Saturday of the academic year and features various forms of entertainment, such as live music, video-game tournaments, comedians, late-night meals, crafts, and cultural events. Attendance at Collis After Dark events from January 2018 to November 2018 was approximately 4,900 students (some students attended more than one event) and included students of different genders, race and ethnicities, and class years.

House Events: In the past two years there have been almost 1,500 alcohol-free or low-risk drinking community activities within the House system that bring together undergraduates, graduate students, faculty, and staff. House events span a range of social and intellectual interests, including arts and culture, competitive and outdoor activities, house leadership, intellectual engagement, and volunteerism.

Additionally, Dartmouth offers many College-sponsored, alcohol-free events, such as athletic contests, overnight outdoor experiences through the Outdoor Program Office, and performances at the Hopkins Center for the Performing Arts.

MAKING THE HEALTHY CHOICE, THE EASY CHOICE.



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¹Perkins, H.W., Haines, M.P., & Rice, R. (2005) Misperceiving the college drinking norm and related problems: a nationwide study of exposure to prevention information, perceived norms, and student alcohol misuse. *Journal of Studies on Alcohol* 66(4), 470-478.

²Dartmouth College, Office of Institutional Research (2018). 2018 Dartmouth Health Survey Results. Response Rate 26%, N=603. Retrieved from [2018 Dartmouth Health Survey PDF](#).

³Dartmouth College, Office of Institutional Research (2014, 2016, 2018). Dartmouth Health Survey Results. Retrieved from [Dartmouth Health Surveys](#).

⁴Dartmouth College, Office of Institutional Research (2013 - 2018). Dartmouth Short Survey Summary Report (Unpublished reports from 2013 -2018). Hanover, New Hampshire: Dartmouth College.

⁵U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Institutes of Health. The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (2018). [CollegeAim Alcohol Intervention Matrix](#).

⁶EVERFI (2019). AlcoholEdu® for College (unpublished data retrieved Dec. 19, 2018). Response Rate 98%, N=1,179, Hanover, New Hampshire: Dartmouth College.