



Sexual Assault Victimization and Perpetration among those Involved in Greek Life and Varsity Athletics: A Large National Study



Kate W. Hamilton¹, Stephanie Ward², Emily Matis, & Kate Walsh,^{1,2}

¹Ferkauf Graduate School of Psychology, Yeshiva University, ²University of Wisconsin, Madison

BACKGROUND

- One in five women and 7-12% of men report sexual assault (SA) victimization (i.e., unwanted sexual contact) during college
- Some students, including those involved in fraternities and sorority life (FSL), and campus athletics, have elevated SA victimization and perpetration rates
 - drinking in these subgroups may contribute to SA rates (e.g., Franklin, 2016; Murnen & Kohlman, 2007)
- Inconsistencies and limitation of prior research:
 - samples at single universities (e.g., Franklin, 2010; Boeringer, 1996)
 - varied definitions of sexual assault used (e.g., Mohler-Kuo, Dowdall, Koss & Wechsler, 2004; Franklin 2010; Canan, Jozkowski & Crawford, 2018)
 - limited work on athletic membership and SA victimization and perpetration (e.g., Boeringer, 1996; Murnen & Kohlman, 2007; McCray, 2015)
- Current study examined SA victimization and perpetration, binge drinking, and the use of drinking protective behavioral strategies (PBS), a possible mitigating factor for alcohol-related sexual assault (Neilson et al., 2018), among college students drawn from multiple campuses who did and did not participate in FSL and athletics

OBJECTIVES

- 1) Utilize a large national sample to better understand rates of SA victimization among college students who participate in FSL and varsity athletics
- 2) Better understand alcohol-related SA victimization and perpetration as well as drinking and alcohol protective behaviors (APB) among students involved in FSL and varsity athletics

METHODS

- Large national sample ($N = 88,975$) of students from 62 different campuses who completed a survey about college student health
 - M age = 22.3, $SD = 6.2$
 - Gender: 65.2% Female, 32.5% Male, 0.3% Transgender
 - Race/ethnicity: 72.7% White; 6.7% Black; 11.7% Hispanic or Latino; 10.5% Asian or Pacific Islander; 1.8% American Indian/ Alaskan or Hawaiian Native
 - Sexual Identity: 89.1% Straight; 2.6% Gay or Lesbian; 3.8% Bisexual; 2% Questioning
 - FSL involvement: 11% (12.1% women, 10.6% men)
 - Varsity athletics involvement: 8.0% (7.5% women, 9.2% men)
 - M days binge drinking (5+ drinks/sitting) in past 2 weeks: 2.46 ($SD = 1.62$)
 - M APBs (e.g., alternating alcoholic and non-alcohol beverages, tracking drinks, etc) = 25.4 ($SD = 9.1$)

RESULTS

Fig 1. Prevalence of past-year alcohol-related assault victimization by gender, FSL, and athletics involvement

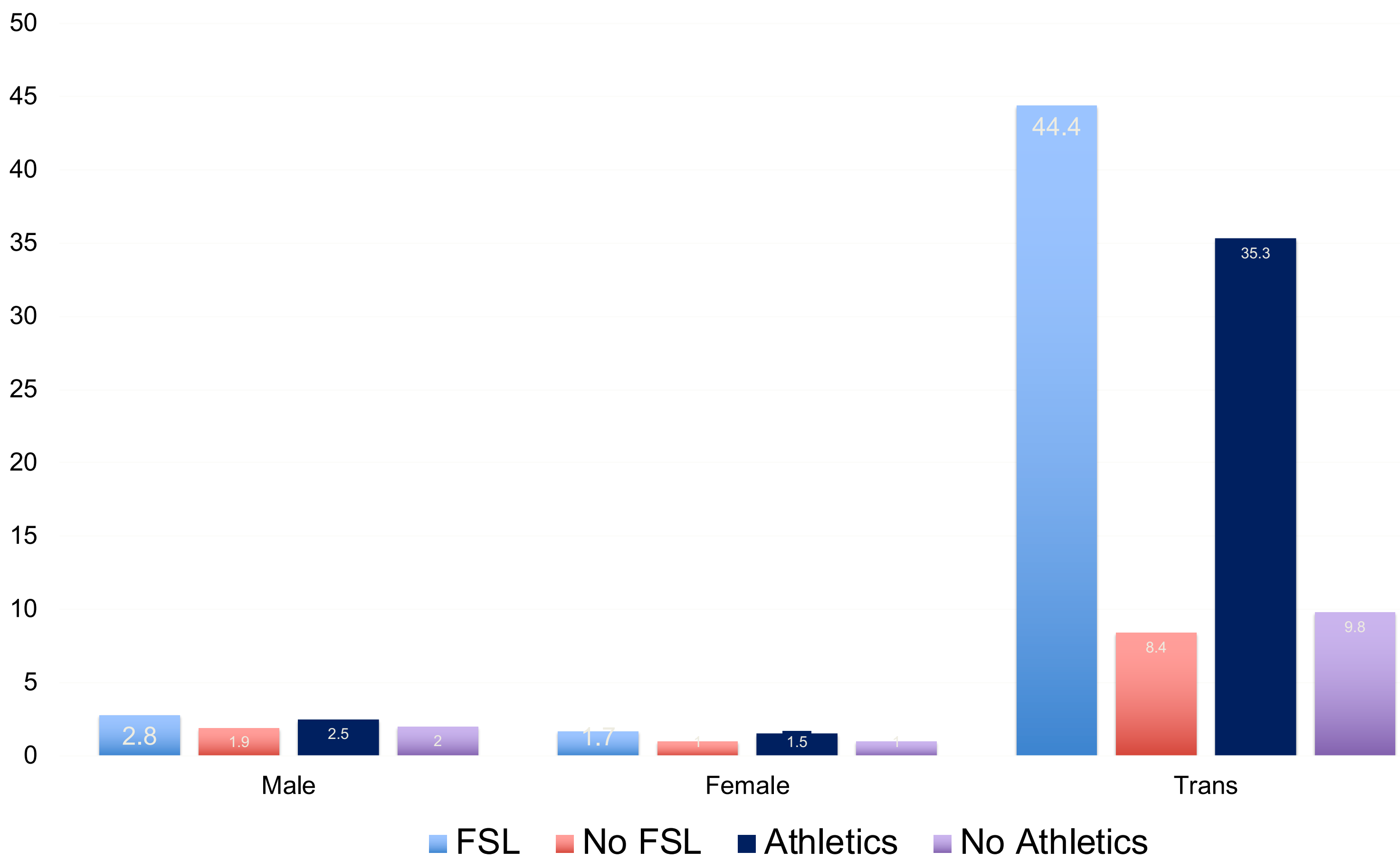
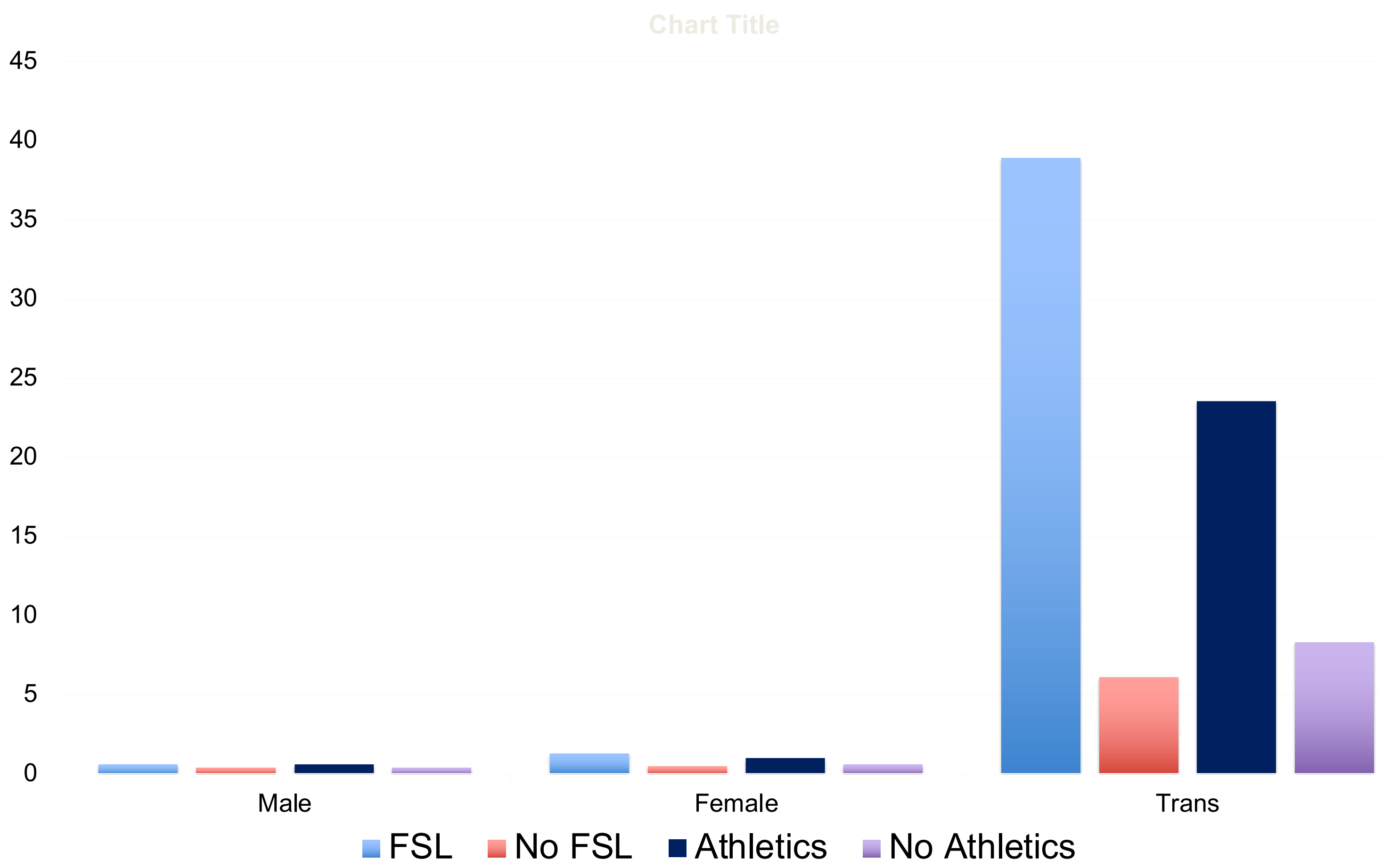


Fig 2. Prevalence of past-year alcohol-related assault perpetration by gender, FSL, and athletics involvement



RESULTS

- 6.5% of students experienced a past-year SA; among students who drink, 1.7% reported past-year non-consensual SA victimization while drinking and 0.5% reported non-consensual SA perpetration
- **Objective 1:**
 - Female, male, and transgender students involved in FSL or varsity athletics were more likely to report past-year SA victimization ($ps < .001$)
- **Objective 2:**
 - Among students who reported drinking, female, male, and transgender students involved in FSL or athletic were more likely to report past-year substance-related SA victimization ($ps < .001$; Fig 1) and male and transgender students involved in FSL or athletics were more likely to report past-year substance-related SA perpetration ($p < .01$; Fig 2)
 - Among all genders, students involved in FSL and athletics reported significantly more days of binge drinking in the past two weeks ($ps < .001$) and significantly fewer APB ($ps < .01$)

CONCLUSION

- This study is among the first to use a large national sample of college students to show a higher prevalence of SA among FSL members and athletes
- Although transgender students reported a higher prevalence of SA relative to male and female students, the patterns of findings with SA and FSL and athletics membership were consistent across genders
- Consistent with work in single samples (e.g., Franklin, 2016), FSL and athletes had higher rates of binge drinking and lower use of APBs
- Findings suggest evidence-based SA prevention programming for sorority women, fraternity men, and varsity athletes should be further developed and likely include alcohol harm reduction strategies to impact higher rates of binge drinking and sexual assault observed among these groups
- Campus mental health and substance use providers should also be aware of increased rates of SA and potentially increased treatment needs among these groups