

Mapping Health Promotion in Higher Education: A Review of Initiatives Across Core Domains

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BACKGROUND

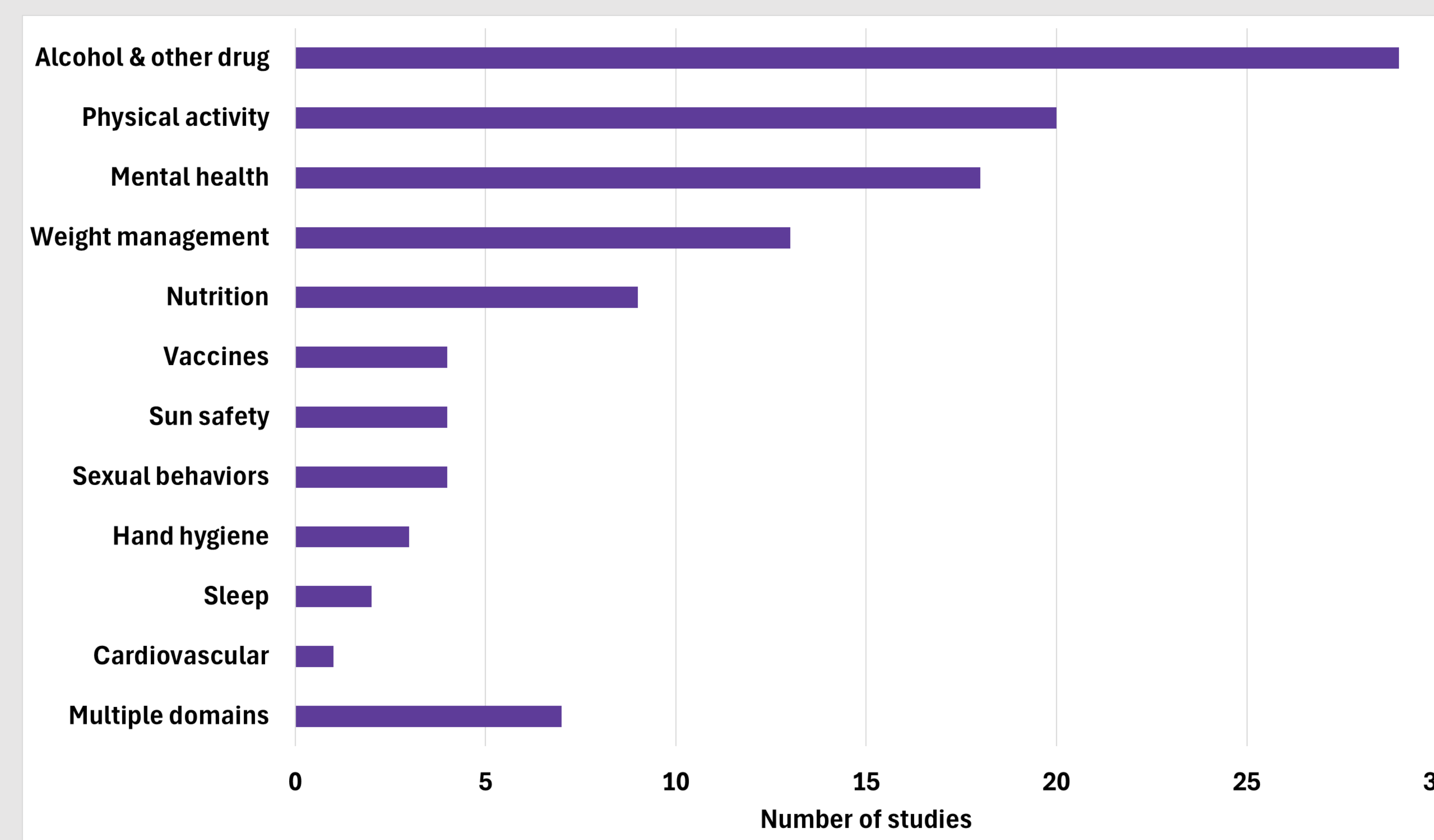
- Health promotion covers a wide range of topics in institutions of higher education.
- Digital solutions have emerged as an intervention delivery method in the 2000s.

PURPOSE

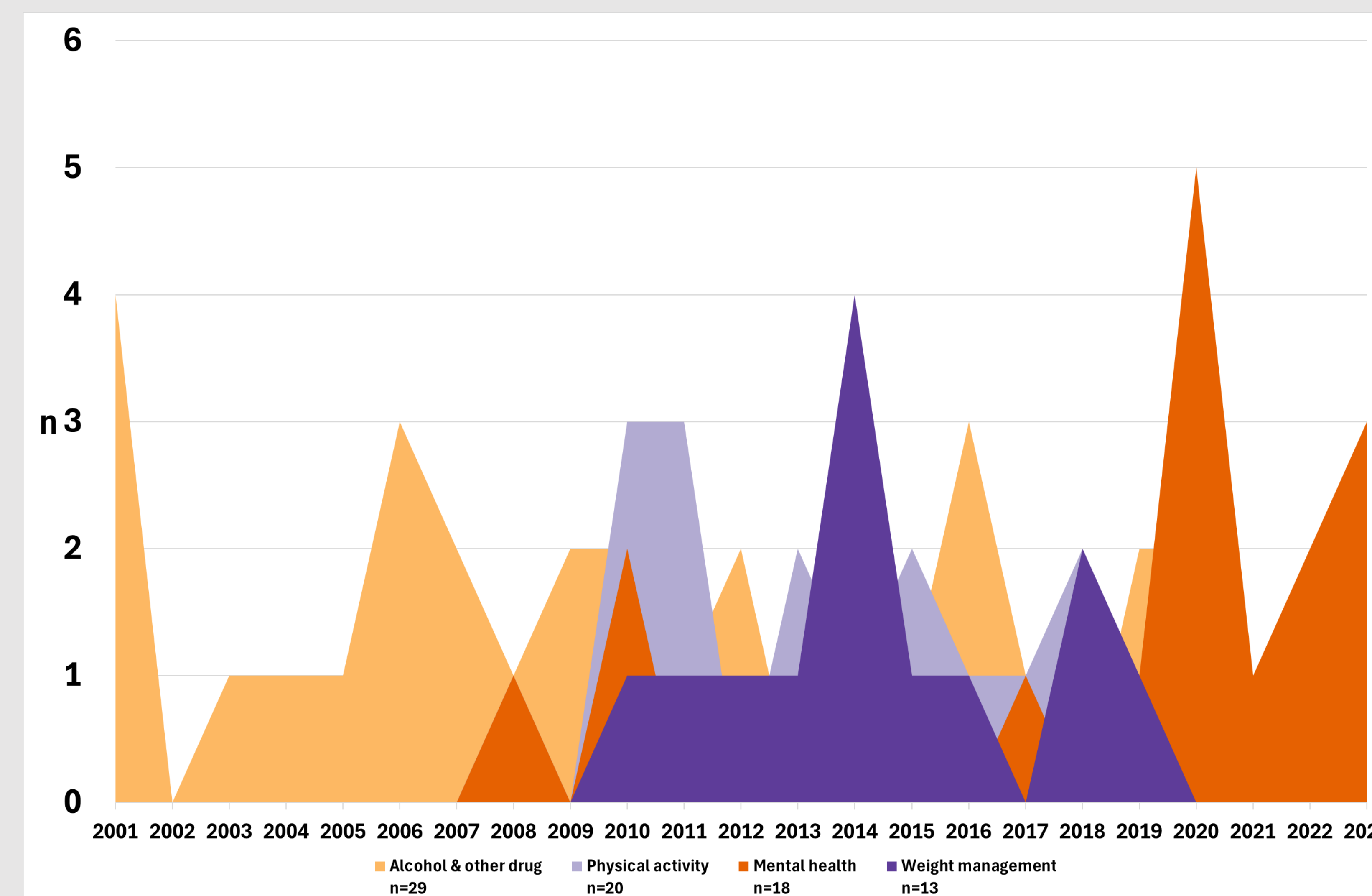
- Describe how the focus of health promotion interventions has shifted over the past decades.
- Describe which health domains are typically delivered through digital interventions and which ones typically use in-person delivery.

METHODS AND DATA ANALYSIS

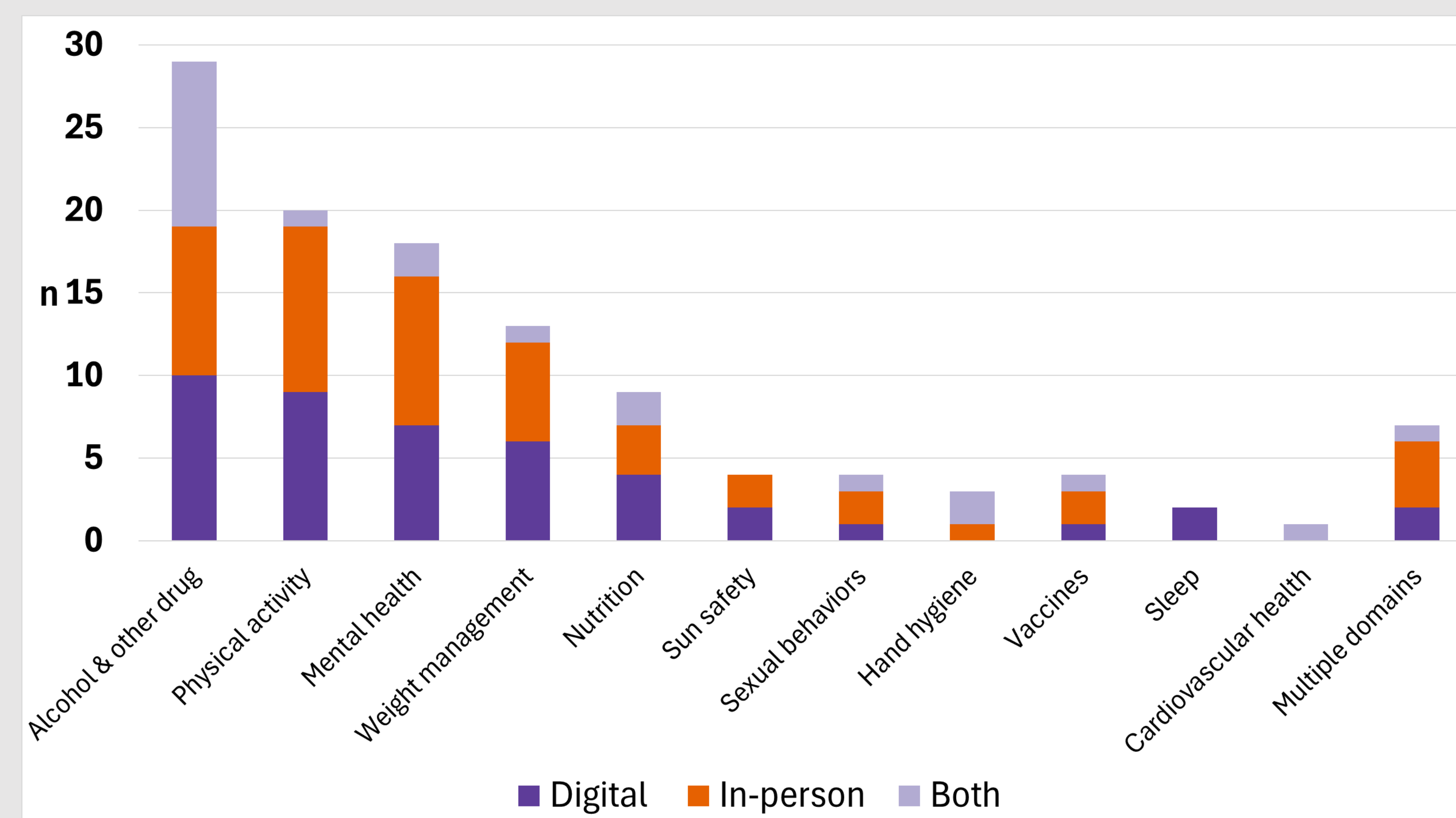
- Systematic literature search performed on PubMed, Embase, and PsycINFO databases.
- Original research articles published on or after 2001 describing a health promotion intervention implemented outside of the classroom at a U.S. university or college targeting students or the whole campus were included.
- Studies had to report pre- and post-intervention data or a comparison to a control group.
- Descriptive statistics (counts, percentages) were performed for data analysis



Number of studies addressing each domain of health promotion identified in the review.



Number of studies by year for the four most common domains.



Number of studies utilizing different intervention delivery methods by domain.

RESULTS

- A total of 114 studies were identified. Alcohol and other drugs was the most commonly studied domain representing 25% (n=29) of all studies.
- In-person delivery was used in 41% of the studies, followed by digital delivery (39%) and a combination of both (20%).
- The 1st digital intervention was published in 2003 (sun safety). Over 70% of digital interventions were published on or after 2013.
- In the early 2000s, the most published domain was alcohol & other drugs. From 2020 onwards, most studies have focused on mental health.
- Domains most commonly addressed through digital interventions were alcohol and other drug (23%), physical activity (21%) and mental health (16%).

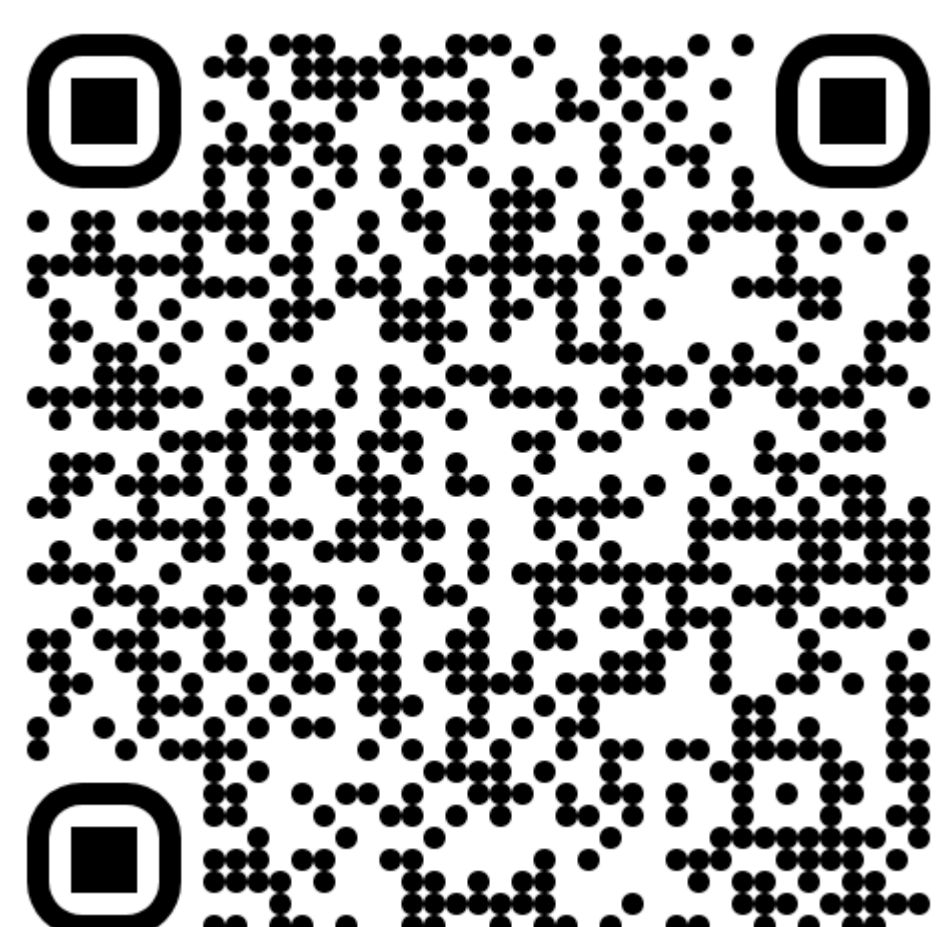
DISCUSSION

- Based on publication numbers, the focus of health promotion interventions has shifted in the past two decades from alcohol & other drugs to mental health, reflecting student needs.
- Weight management has not been a focus in recent years, which could reflect a transition to more holistic approach to health promotion. The current societal interest in peptides like glp-1 could lead to a new wave of weight management research.

CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

- Future research should analyze the effectiveness of health promotion interventions, especially across the currently leading domains of mental health and physical activity.

This study analyzed a sub-sample from the authors' review article: Islam J & Räisänen AM. In-person and digital health promotion interventions in higher education: An integrative literature review. *Journal of American College Health*. November 3, 2025 (online first).



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