

The Relationship Between Students' Home States Cannabis Laws on Cannabis Use and Motivations Among Missouri College Students

Partners in Prevention (PIP) is Missouri's higher education substance misuse consortium dedicated to creating healthy and safe college campuses. The coalition is comprised of 24 public and private colleges and universities in the state working to prevent high-risk behaviors by implementing evidence-based strategies. To measure progress and obtain data needed for the implementation of programs, PIP created the Missouri Assessment of College Health Behaviors (MACHB) Survey. The MACHB is an annual, online survey that has been implemented each spring since 2007. The survey assesses the roles alcohol, drugs (illicit and prescription), tobacco, interpersonal violence, and mental health have on student health and wellness. This brief will focus on the intersection of cannabis use, motivations to use, and home state cannabis laws among Missouri college students; with 'home state' referring to the reported state in which the student attended high school. The MACHB survey asks students about their marijuana/cannabis use, as "marijuana" may be a more recognizable name to students. However, only the term 'cannabis' will be used in this brief.

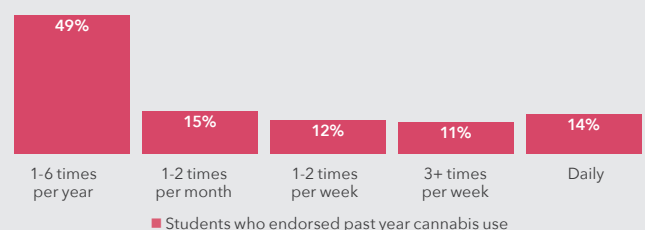
The data used in this brief is from the 2020 MACHB. This brief is aimed at investigating Missouri College students' cannabis use and motivations for use prior to the pandemic. All the 2020 data was collected prior to the lock-down.

Prevalence of Cannabis Use

According to the 2020 MACHB, 29% of students reported past year cannabis use of any method (e.g., derivative, smoke, etc.). Present studies actively refer to states with laws that have medical, and adult (recreational) use as "medical marijuana laws" (MML) and "recreational marijuana laws" (RML). RML states are states in which one does not need a medical cannabis card to purchase cannabis, while those with MML do require a medical card for cannabis purchase. Those without any laws would be places where cannabis use is illegal. Missouri students who participated in the 2020 MACHB mainly reported being from Missouri*

(68%), which is a MML state, 11% of Missouri students also reported being from a MML state other than Missouri, 13% from a RML state and 4.5% from a state with no legal cannabis use. 0.01% of Missouri students are from other US territories and 3.3% are from outside of the United States, where cannabis use laws vary. Though there is no significant difference in frequency of cannabis consumption between home states with differing cannabis use laws, it is important to note that smoking cannabis more than 1-2 times a month (18 days) out of the year looks very similar to everyday use as depicted in the graph below.

Frequency of Cannabis Use



Missouri students from home states with MML would reported using derivatives more frequently which was the only large difference seen in methods among students from home states with different cannabis use laws. In general, smoking is still the number one form of cannabis consumption for students of all home states.

The Intersection of Cannabis Use and Home States' Legal Cannabis Status

Missouri college students were categorized by their reported home state. Missouri college students from MML states (like Missouri) were more likely to report they used cannabis "To Relax" (81%), followed by "To Get High" (60%), "Help Sleep" (49%), "Relieve Pain" (34%), and "No Negative Consequences" (18%). Students from states with no legal cannabis laws were more likely to report "To Relieve Pain" (26%) as a motivator for using cannabis. Missouri students from states that had RML had no significant reported motivator behind use of cannabis.

Medical Cannabis Card Holders and Missouri College Students

Only a total of 5% of those that reported cannabis use in the past year had a medical cannabis card showing that while Missouri is a MML state, Missouri students that report using cannabis, primarily do not have a medical card to do so legally.

Report of Medical Cannabis Card		
Cannabis Medical Card Status	Frequency	Percent
No Medical card	2034	95%
Medical card- Missouri	72	3%
Medical card- another state	34	2%
Total	2140	100%

Summary

With most of the students who participated in in the MACHB being native Missourians, this can show the motivations behind cannabis use in a MML state helping to not only inform Missouri college administration and students affairs of students' motivations to use cannabis but can aid the knowledge of cannabis use behaviors of students from other MML states. In addition, derivatives are extremely concentrated, having high THC levels (35-77%) compared to smoking cannabis (19%). With derivatives being used more frequently in medical only states, this can increase likelihood of dependence among Missouri college students. If we are able to assess the motivations, we can better provide accurate information and harm reduction resources to Missouri college students. Especially with the ever-changing nature of cannabis laws, this is something important to monitor moving forward.

Resources

- nasp.org/images/uploads/events/Higher_Education_Cannabis_Toolkit.pdf
- 6bf0ab98-8c64-4b97-941a-e154ac6bfc3a.filesusr.com/ugd/286dad_bf7e9fceaa30496f92245db294c693da.pdf
- mopip.org/topics/cannabis.html

Contact Partners in Prevention at (573) 884-7551.

Report prepared by Hope Edwards, Missouri Partners in Prevention: Research Intern. Published August 2022.

*While Missouri is an MML state, the legislation was voted on in 2018, but the first dispensaries did not open until fall of 2020 (after the 2020 survey was deployed).