

# Substance-Impaired Driving

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 25 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 that alcohol, drugs (illegal and prescription), tobacco/nicotine, interpersonal violence, and mental health have on student health and wellness. This brief will focus on substance-impaired driving among Missouri college students, including impairment by alcohol, marijuana/cannabis, and prescription drugs.

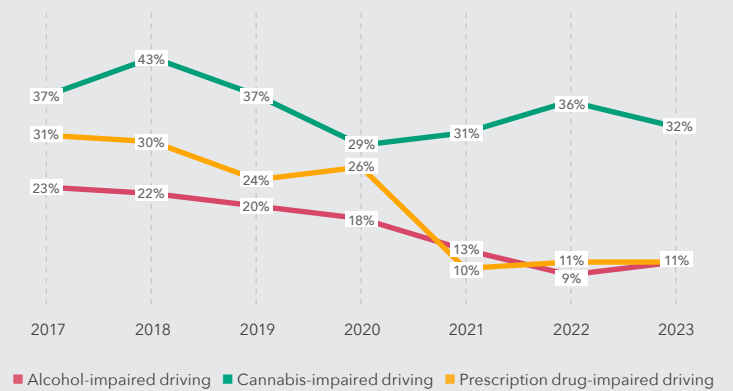
## Background

According to the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA), approximately 1,500 college students ages 18-24 die from alcohol-related unintentional injuries, including motor vehicle crashes, each year.<sup>1</sup> Related to drug-impaired driving, according to the National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH), in 2021, 11.7 million people ages 16 and up drove under the influence of illicit drugs, and a higher percentage of adults aged 21 to 25 drive after taking drugs or drinking than do young adults aged 16 to 20 or adults 26 or older.<sup>2</sup>

## Missouri Data

In 2023, 64% of Missouri college students report using alcohol, 33% report using cannabis and 5.1% report prescription drug misuse (either use without a doctor's prescription, or misuse of their own prescription) in the past year. The MACHB also asks students to report if they have driven after consuming alcohol, after misusing prescription drugs, and after using cannabis. Trend data for each of those impaired driving behaviors among students who have used in the past year are listed in chart 1.

Chart 1: Impaired Driving Trend Data

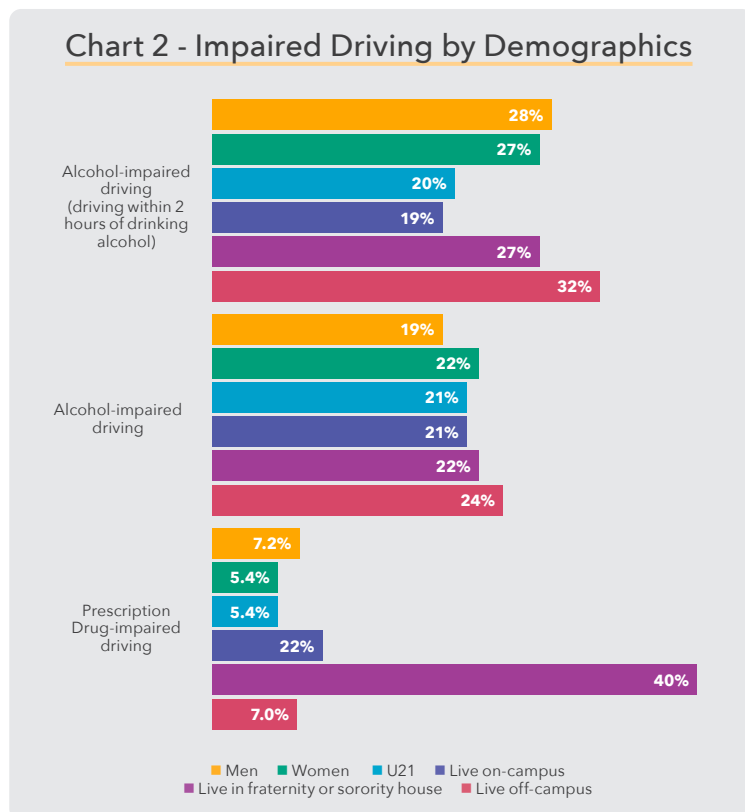


Looking at the data in chart one, we can see that the percentage of students who report driving after using cannabis is higher than students who drove after using alcohol or who drove after misusing prescription drugs. This is an important distinction because it shows that likely many young adults don't perceive driving 'high' negatively like they'd see driving drunk. The Colorado Department of Transportation recommends waiting six or more hours after smoking marijuana, and eight or more hours after eating marijuana before operating a motor vehicle.<sup>3</sup> Implementing educational materials about driving after using cannabis will be increasingly important with the passage of Amendment 3 legalizing

adult-use cannabis in Missouri. Additionally, while not all prescription drugs impair, the main categories asked about on the MACHB (stimulants, pain medications, benzodiazepines, and sleeping medications) are all drug categories that can impair and impact cognition and reaction time. Given that students are asked to report if they have driven after misuse (i.e., using without a valid prescription or misuse of their own medication), it is possible that their ability to drive was impaired.

## Demographics of Students Who Drive Impaired

Rates of impaired driving among various demographics are shown in chart 2. Overall, we see higher impaired driving rates among students who live off-campus. Additionally, this year's data reflects an increase in impaired driving across substances from women. Previously, a higher percentage of men drove impaired than women. It is to be noted that despite the depiction on Chart 2 showing a high percentage of students who live in fraternity or sorority houses driving while impaired from prescription drugs, that number of students was less than ten.



## Use of Designated Drivers (DDs)

Most Missouri college students (74%) report using a designated driver at least half the time that they needed one after drinking. However, it is important to note that 22% of students reported that they did not need a designated driver because they either walked or stayed where they were drinking. The percentage of students who always/almost always used a designated driver increased in 2023 from the past years, and the percentage of students who reported to never using a DD decreased. This is a positive response, as the reports show that college students are utilizing designated driver resources at a higher rate. Below is the data, shown as asked in the MACHB Survey, from 2021 to 2023 regarding how often students used a designated driver after drinking.

Table 1: Designated Driver Usage

In the last academic year, how often have you used a designated driver (or DD, defined as someone who had no alcoholic drinks) when you drank and needed a ride home?	2021	2023
100% (Always)	39%	45%
75-99% (Almost always)	14%	18%
51-74% (More than half the time I drank)	2.8%	5%
50% (About half of the time I drank)	1.7%	1.7%
25-49% (Less than half of the time I drank)	1.5%	1.7%
1%-24% (Almost never)	2.4%	3%
No, I have never needed a DD because I walked	4.0%	6.3%
No, I have never needed a DD because I just stayed where I was drinking	31%	16%
No, I don't use a DD	3.8%	2.9%

Missouri college students report using a variety of options for designated drivers, including friends/family members/acquaintances (65%), ride share programs like Uber/Lyft, etc. (33%), and a Fraternity or Sorority designated driver (15%) in the past year\*. Additionally, 89% of Missouri college students correctly identified a designated driver as someone

who has not consumed any alcohol, an increase from 87% in 2020.

## **Summary**

While rates of driving after consuming alcohol and prescription drugs continue to decline, there has been an increase in the percentage of students who report driving after using cannabis. Cannabis consumption and related impairment are not as easily quantifiable as alcohol (i.e. the body processes approximately one standard alcohol drink per hour), and the current recommendation is to wait 5-6 hours after consuming cannabis before driving. More education is needed with students on waiting a significant amount of time before driving after using cannabis. Similarly, as almost 1 in 4 students who drink report driving within 2 hours of consuming alcohol, messaging and education should focus on waiting until BAC (blood alcohol content) has reached zero and that students cannot gauge their level of impairment without knowing their BAC.

## **Prevention Initiatives**

Institutions of higher education in Missouri have worked to prevent impaired driving using statewide initiatives funded by the Missouri Department of Transportation delivered through Partners in Prevention.

### **CHEERS**

CHEERS is a statewide program that works with bars, restaurants, and nightclubs to provide free non-alcoholic drinks to designated drivers. CHEERS also promotes messages on social media and on campuses to promote using sober designated drivers. Learn more at [mopip.org/CHEERS](https://mopip.org/CHEERS)

### **Drive Safe Drive Smart**

Drive Safe Drive Smart (DSDS) is an educational program working to promote safe driving behaviors

and reduce impaired driving among college students in Missouri. Drive Safe Drive Smart provides resources and materials to campuses including brochures and handouts, social media, and more to assist in messaging and education. DSDS also promotes billboards in communities throughout the state. Learn more at [mopip.org/DSDS](https://mopip.org/DSDS)

### **Party Safe**

Party Safe is a free, online training for college students to learn about hosting safe and responsible parties and events. The training focuses on general party planning, alcohol and host responsibilities, and dealing with issues that arise. Learn more at [mopiptraining.org/partysafe](https://mopiptraining.org/partysafe)

### **SMART**

The State of Missouri Alcohol Responsibility Training (SMART) program is a free, online training for people who sell or serve alcohol in the state of Missouri. The training focuses on recognition of fake ID's, acceptable forms of identification, preventing service to minors and intoxicated individuals, and more. Learn more at [mopip.org/SMART](https://mopip.org/SMART)

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

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#### Citations

1. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2023, July). Harmful and underage college drinking. National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. Retrieved from <https://www.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/brochures-and-fact-sheets/college-drinking#:~:text=The%20most%20recent%20statistics%20from,injuries%2C%20including%20motor%20vehicle%20crashes.>
2. NIDA. (2019, December 31). Drugged driving drugfacts. Retrieved from <https://nida.nih.gov/publications/drugfacts/drugged-driving> on 2023, July 17.
3. Colorado Department of Transportation. (2022). How long should I wait to drive after getting high. State of Colorado. Retrieved from <https://www.codot.gov/safety/impaired-driving/druggeddriving/campaign-news/how-long-should-i-wait-to-drive-after-getting-high>