

Key Findings from the 2024 Missouri Assessment of College Health Behaviors

Partners in Prevention (PIP) is Missouri's higher education substance misuse consortium dedicated to building and sustaining healthy and safe college campuses. The coalition is comprised of 26 public and private colleges and universities in the state. This brief includes data for the 23 4-year institutions in the coalition; 2-year campuses participate in a separate version of the survey, and their data is not included in this statewide aggregate. The campuses in the coalition work to prevent high-risk behaviors by implementing evidence-based strategies including education, social norming campaigns, policy review and enforcement, and more. 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, cannabis, other drugs (illegal and prescription), tobacco/nicotine, interpersonal violence, and mental health concerns have on student health and well-being.

Data consistently shows that academic achievement and retention are impacted by the health, safety, and well-being of students. Substance misuse, experiences of interpersonal violence, and mental health concerns are intersectional issues that impact students' ability to succeed and thrive while attending institutions of higher education. Comprehensive and evidence-informed prevention and health promotion practices are an investment in the lives of students and the overall campus environment.

The following are key findings from the MACHB survey (N= 4,956) of 4-year PIP member institutions as of Spring 2024:

5-Year Trends

The MACHB data has shown some consistent positive trends in the health behaviors of college students over the past 5-years. Generally, rates of alcohol use and heavy alcohol use have decreased along with consequences of alcohol use (e.g., hangover, vomiting, etc.). Additionally, rates of lifetime and

past year interpersonal violence (including abusive relationships and non-consensual sexual contact) have remained steady or slightly decreased. Rates of prescription drug misuse without a doctor's prescription have decreased steadily but rates of misusing a valid prescription have remained consistent. The data has also consistently shown a decrease in tobacco/nicotine product use, though 2024 was the first year since 2019 that an increase in use was seen. Past year experiences of mental health concerns had been steadily increasing, but in 2024 many remained consistent or slightly decreased. Rates of past year suicidal thoughts and past year suicide attempts have also remained steady. However, past year cannabis use and particularly use of edibles/edible cannabis products has increased since 2019.

Retention

One-quarter (25%) of Missouri college students have thought about transferring from their current college/university in the past year. Additionally, almost 1 in 5 students (18%) say they have thought of discontinuing

their college/university education in the past year. Students report that the top reasons contributing to their decision to either transfer or discontinue their education are their own mental health concerns (40%), lack of friends/loneliness (37%), and not having enough money to pay for school (35%).*

Sense of Belonging & Engagement

Over two-thirds (68%) of Missouri college students agree that they feel a sense of belonging to their campus community. Students also believe that they have the responsibility to contribute to the safety and well-being of other students at their school (79%), that involvement in campus/community causes is important to them (63%) and that they should make a difference on campus/in the community (63%). Around 71% of students report that they are currently involved in campus organizations/activities.

Alcohol Use

Most Missouri college students (60%) report using alcohol in the past 12 months. Binge-drinking (defined as a pattern of drinking that brings a person’s blood alcohol concentration (BAC) to 0.08 g/dl or above, which typically means consuming 4+ drinks for women and 5+ drinks for men in a 2-hour period at least once in the past two weeks) is a high-risk alcohol use behavior that PIP closely monitors each year. The binge-drinking rate decreased to 21% in 2024 from 23% in 2023 and is below the national average of around 33%¹. Approximately 5.3% of Missouri college students engage in frequent binge drinking, defined as binge-drinking 3 or more times in the past 2 weeks.

The MACHB also tracks consequences of and safety behaviors for alcohol use in the past 12 months. The top 3 reported consequences of alcohol use include hangover (36%), vomiting (26%), and blackout/memory loss (16%). Students also report engaging in safety and protective behaviors related to alcohol use, with students saying they always engage in the following behaviors: keep track of their drink at all times (84%), eat before/during alcohol consumption (71%), and make sure to get home safe with a friend (78%).

Underage Alcohol Use

Most Missouri college students who have consumed alcohol in their lifetime report that they first started drinking before age 21 (58%). Almost half of Missouri college students under the age of 21 (49%) report consuming alcohol in the past 12 months and 18% of underage students report binge-drinking in the past 2 weeks (a decrease from 20% in 2023). Underage students report that they obtain alcohol in a variety of ways, the most common being from over 21 friends (25%), from family members (13%), or from an under 21 friend who has a way to obtain alcohol (6.3%). *

Cannabis Use

Missouri legalized cannabis for adult/recreational use in November 2022 with the passage of Amendment 3, however, cannabis use among Missouri college students remained steady this year with 32% of students reporting use in the past 12 months (compared to 33% in 2023). In 2024, edibles/edible cannabis products became the most common form of cannabis used in the past year (25% compared to 24% smoked, 19% vaporized, and 8% in derivative form like wax/dabs/oils).

Chart 1: Alcohol Use Trend

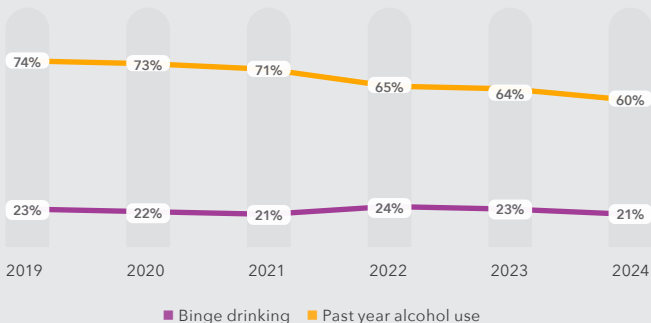
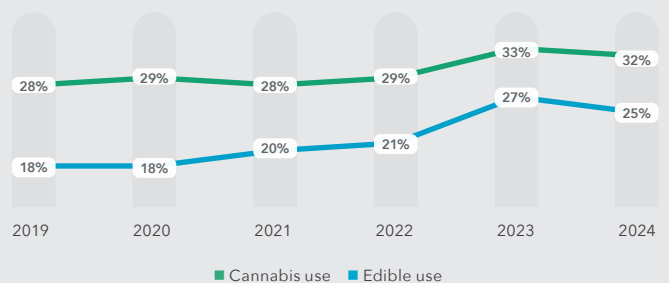


Chart 2: Past Year Cannabis Use Trend



Approximately 12% of students report frequent cannabis use (using cannabis one or more times per week). Of students who report using cannabis, 25% report driving after use at least once in the past 12 months and 21% report attending class after use. Related to perceptions of others' use, though 65% of students have not used cannabis in the past year, most students (65%) believe that their peers use cannabis 1 or more times per month.

Given the relatively recent change in Missouri state law, questions were included on the 2024 survey about intentions to change use given the legalization of cannabis for adult-use. Among students who do not currently use cannabis, the majority (90%) said that they do not plan to start using. Among students who currently use cannabis, most (59%) said that they plan to use cannabis the same amount as before legalization.

Illegal Drug Use and Drugs of Concern

Approximately 13% of students report using at least one illegal drug/drug of concern in the past 12 months and use rates of various types are shown in Table 2. We have denoted 'drugs of concern' that may be legal to purchase or obtain in Missouri with 2 asterisks in the table below.

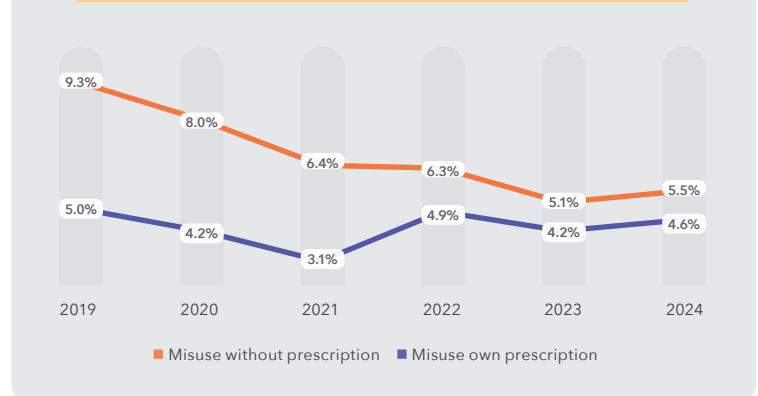
Table 1: Illegal Drug Use and Drugs of Concern Used in the Past 12 Months

Delta-8 THC**	11%
Hallucinogens (LSD, PCP, mushrooms, etc.)	4.3%
Cocaine	1.4%
MDMA/Ecstasy/Molly	0.7%
Heroin	0.3%

Prescription Drug Misuse

Approximately 5.5% of Missouri college students report prescription drug use without a doctor's prescription in the past 12 months (a slight increase from 5.1% in 2023). Additionally, 4.6% of students with a valid prescription report using in a manner other than prescribed in the past 12 months (a slight increase from 4.2% in 2023). Past year misuse of either type is included in Chart 3.

Chart 3: Past Year Prescription Drug Misuse



Of students who report misuse of either type, 22% have combined them with alcohol at least once, which can have serious health effects. Rates of misuse both with and without a prescription are shown in Table 2.

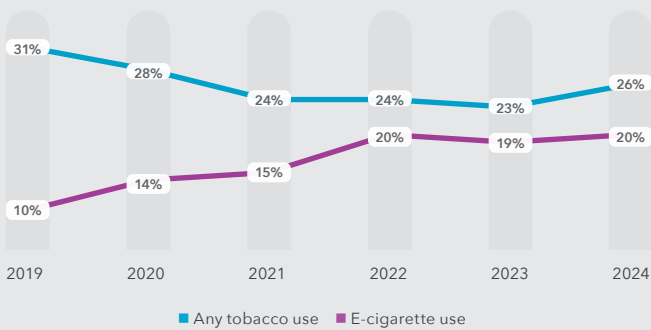
Table 2: Prescription Drug Misuse in the Past 12 Months

	Misuse without valid prescription	Misused own prescription
Stimulants (Adderall, Ritalin, etc.)	2.3%	1.6%
Pain medications (Oxycontin, Vicodin, etc.)	1.9%	1.8%
Sleep medications (Ambien, Halcion, etc.)	1.1%	0.9%
Benzodiazepines/sedatives (Xanax, Valium, etc.)	0.6%	0.7%

Tobacco and Nicotine Use

Twenty-six percent (26%) of Missouri college students report using tobacco/nicotine products at least once in the past 12 months (an increase from 23% in 2023). Past year usage rates for various types of tobacco/nicotine products are as follows: e-cigarettes/vaporizers - includes JUUL/Puff Bar, etc. (20%), cigarettes (11%), cigars (5.1%), smokeless tobacco/nicotine (6.3%), and hookah (1.9%). * Among students who have used e-cigarettes in the past year, over one-third (38%) report using every day. Additionally, students who use tobacco say they have considered quitting (17%), tried to quit (23%), or successfully quit using (32%) since entering college.

Chart 4: Past Year Tobacco/Nicotine Use

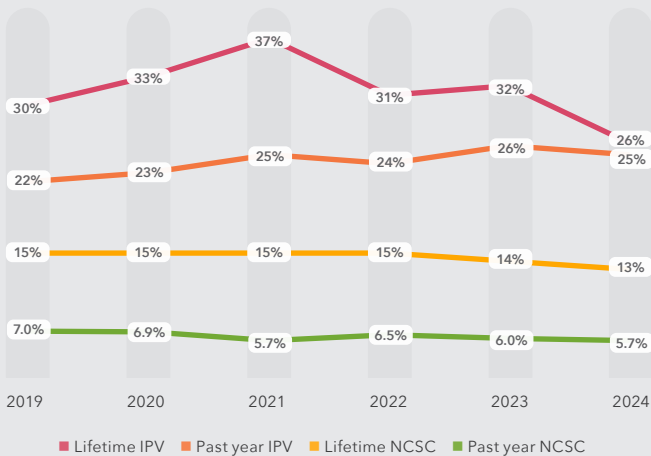


Interpersonal Violence

Around one-quarter (26%) of Missouri college students report experiencing intimate partner violence (IPV) in their lifetime, and 13% report IPV in the past 12 months. The most common forms of abuse students report experiencing in the past 12 months include emotional/psychological/mental abuse (10%), verbal abuse (7.3%) and sexual abuse (3.2%).

1 in 4 (25%) Missouri college students report experiencing non-consensual sexual contact (NCSC) in their lifetime, and 5.7% report NCSC in the past 12 months. The majority of NCSC occurred off-campus and not related to university events (44%) or on-campus in residence halls (38%) *.

Chart 5: Interpersonal Violence Trend



Questions about stalking are included on the MACHB every other year, and in 2024 6.4% of students report

experiencing stalking in the past 12 months. The most common methods of stalking students report include using a cell phone (40%), via social networks (39%), and showing up in-person outside of their home (23%)*.

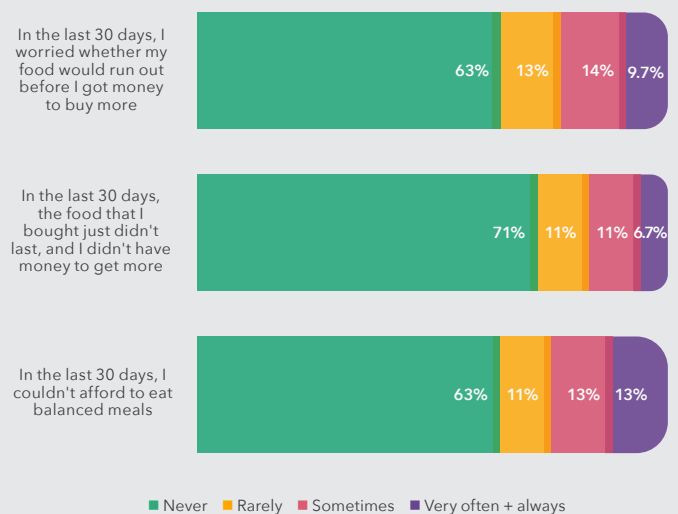
Sixty-seven percent (67%) of Missouri college students feel that they have the skills to intervene/prevent a potentially harmful situation, while only 55% of students say they know where to go to find resources on bystander intervention/violence prevention and related trainings at their campus. The vast majority of students (91%) report that they would want a peer to do something if they themselves were in danger of being harmed by someone else.

Well-Being and Sexual Health

Students are asked to gauge their stress levels in the two weeks prior to completing the survey and in 2024, around one-third of students report high-level stress (stress that is overwhelming - 29% or unbearable - 4.4%).

To better understand experiences of food insecurity in the past 30 days, students are asked to report if they are very often or always unable to afford eating balanced meals (13%), worrying whether food would run out before getting money to buy more (9.7%), or worrying that the food bought wouldn't last and they didn't have money to get more (6.7%).

Chart 6: Food Insecurity



New questions were added to the MACHB survey this year related to sex work and sugar dating. Students were asked to report if they currently or previously had traded sex and/or sexual services for money, and 1.9% of students report doing so previously, and 0.4% report doing so currently. Students were also asked if they have participated in sugar dating/sugaring (i.e., providing companion services for money or something of value). Around 1 in 5 (21%) of students report doing so previously and 5.3% report doing so currently.

Questions related to sexual health and STI testing are also included on the MACHB. Forty-three percent (43%) of students report that they had not been tested for STIs in the past year because they are not sexually active, 37% have not been tested but are sexually active, and 18% of students have been tested in the past year. Among students who were not tested, the most common barriers/factors contributing to their decision were not thinking they are at risk of getting an STI (48%), lacking access to testing (being too expensive/not being covered by insurance, etc. - 12%) or shame/embarrassment (8.2%). Students also report using sexual health products themselves/with partners in the past year such as contraception/pregnancy prevention methods (58%), barrier/STI prevention methods (51%) and emergency contraception (16%). *

Mental Health

Missouri college students self-report experiencing issues related to mental health in the past 12 months,

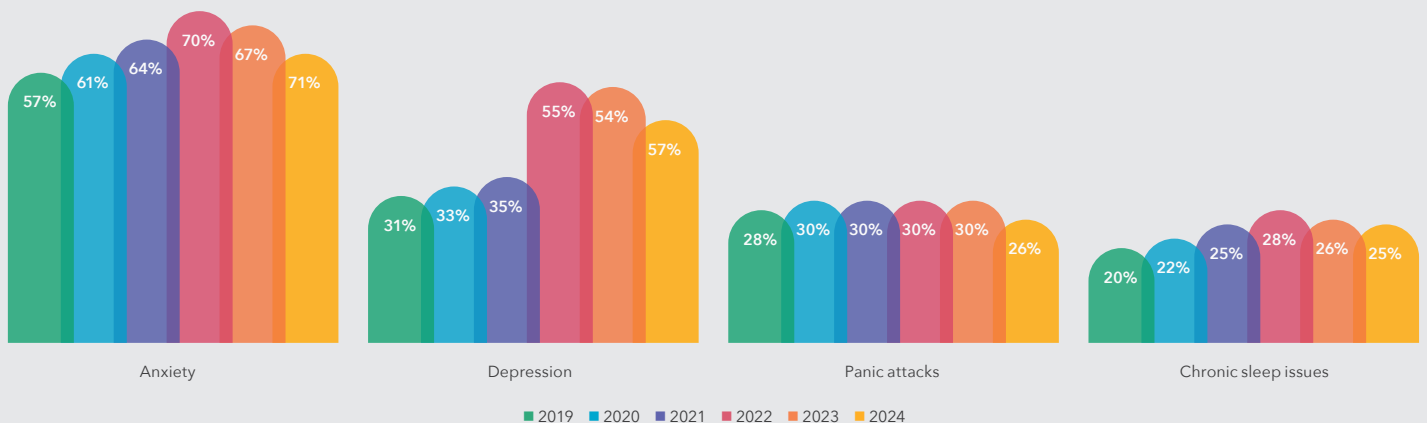
the most common being anxiety (61%), depression (47%), panic attacks (26%), and chronic sleep issues (25%). * Students are also asked to report if their mental health concern had been diagnosed by a mental health or medical professional. Almost half (47%) of those who had experienced a mental health concern had not received a diagnosis, 38% report being diagnosed with an anxiety disorder, and 29% report being diagnosed with major depression. *

For students who had experienced a mental health concern in the past 12 months, 23% did not seek assistance. For those who did seek assistance, their primary source of assistance was family/friends (36%), an off-campus mental health provider (23%), an off-campus medical doctor (23%), or the college/university counseling services (15%). Around 1 in 10 students (11%) said they did not seek assistance but practice self-care or other types of management on their own.*

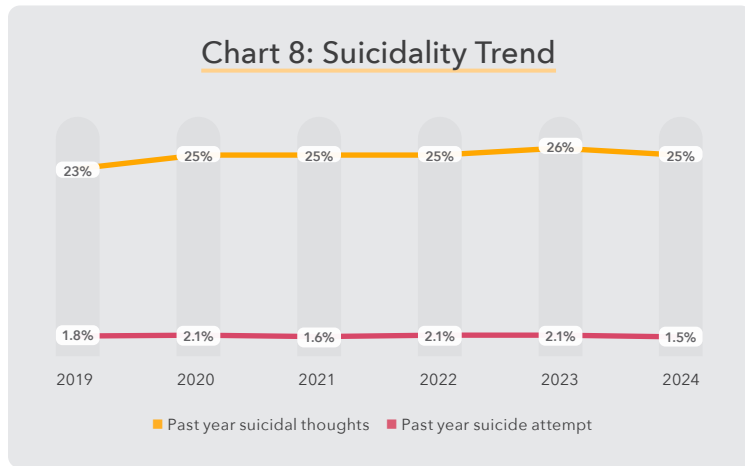
Suicidality

Almost half (45%) of Missouri college students report having suicidal thoughts in their lifetime, and 25% of students report suicidal thoughts in the past 12 months. In the past 12 months, 1.5% of students report attempting suicide. For those who had thoughts or attempts in the past 12 months, 38% sought assistance. The most common places students primarily sought assistance were family/friends (56%), an off-campus mental health center (47%), an off-campus medical

Chart 7: Past Year Mental Health Concern Trend



doctor (30%), or the college/university counseling services (31%). Additionally, 35% of Missouri college students have been concerned about a friend having suicidal thoughts or exhibiting suicidal behaviors in the past 12 months.



Summary

Partners in Prevention continues to monitor the critical health behaviors of college students. To reiterate, data consistently shows that academic achievement and retention are impacted by the health, safety, and well-being of students. Substance misuse, experiences of interpersonal violence, and mental health concerns

are intersectional issues that impact students' ability to succeed and thrive while attending institutions of higher education. Comprehensive and evidence-informed prevention and health promotion practices are an investment in the lives of students and the overall campus environment. For more information about Partners in Prevention and to explore our research, visit mopip.org.

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

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*question is a select all that apply

Citations

1. SAMHSA, Center for Behavioral Statistics and Quality. 2019 National Survey on Drug Use and Health. Table 6.21B—Types of Illicit Drug, Tobacco Product, and Alcohol Use in Past Month among Persons Aged 18 to 22, by College Enrollment Status and Gender: Percentages, 2018 and 2019. <https://www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/reports/rpt29394/NSDUHDetailedTabs2019/NSDUHDetTabsSect6pe2019.htm#tab6-21b>
2. B Han, WM Compton, EB Einstein, ND Volkow. Associations of Suicidality Trends With Cannabis Use as a Function of Sex and Depression Status(link is external). JAMA Network Open. DOI: 10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2021.13025 (2021).

For more information, visit mopip.org

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