

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 26 public and private colleges and universities in the state working to prevent high-risk behaviors by implementing evidence-based strategies, including education, social norming campaigns, policy review and enforcement, and more. 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. 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 data related to impaired driving data collected from the 2024 Missouri Assessment of College Health Behaviors (sample size, N = 4956).

Background

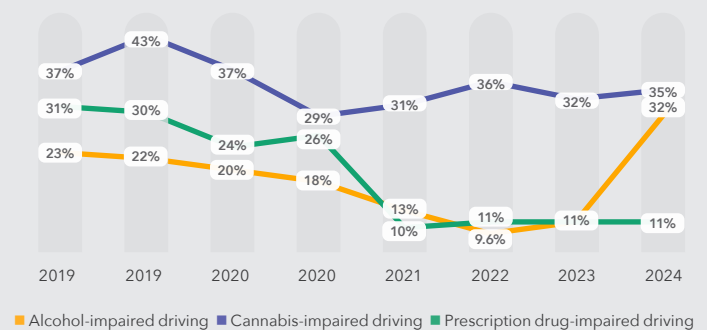
Alcohol and drug impairment are factors that can increase the likelihood of automobile injuries. According to the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA), approximately 1,500 college students ages 18-24 die from alcohol-related unintentional injuries, including motor vehicle crashes, each year.¹ According to the National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH), reported that 11.7 million people ages 16 and up drove under the influence of illicit drugs in 2021. Adults aged 21 to 25 are more likely to drive after taking drugs or drinking than young adults aged 16 to 20 or adults 26 or older.² Additionally, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, (NHTSA), reports that 56% of drivers involved in serious injury and fatal crashes tested positive for having at least one drug in their system.⁴

Missouri Data

In 2024, 60% of Missouri college students report using alcohol, 32% report using cannabis and 5.0% 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 within 2 hours after consuming alcohol, after misusing prescription drugs, or after smoking cannabis at any point in the past 12 months. 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



The data in chart one shows that the percentage of students who report driving after using cannabis is higher than the percentage of students who drove

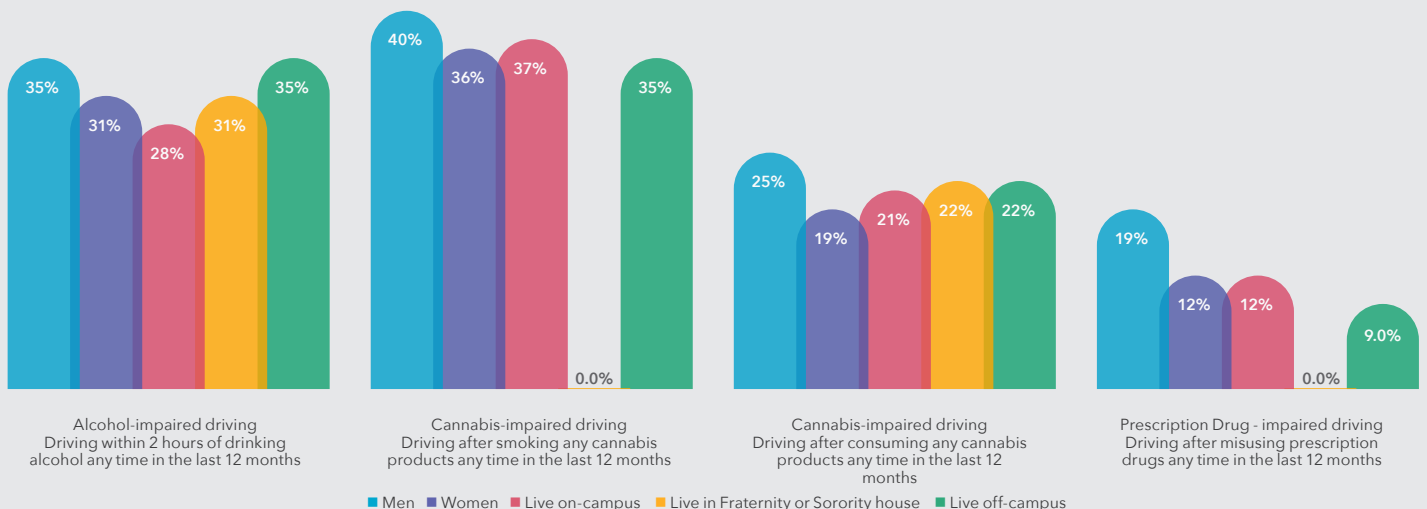
after using alcohol or who drove after misusing prescription drugs. This is an important distinction because it shows that many young adults likely don't perceive driving 'high' as negatively as they'd perceive driving drunk. The Colorado Department of Transportation recommends waiting six or more hours after smoking marijuana, and eight or more hours after consuming marijuana before operating a motor vehicle.³ Implementing educational materials about driving after using cannabis will be increasingly important with the passage of Amendment 3 which legalized adult cannabis use 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 drug 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 of students are shown in chart 2. Overall, the number of students who reported driving impaired increased

from 2023 to 2024, which brings attention to potential harm reduction strategies. Additionally, this year's data reflects an increase in impaired driving across each substance, but especially cannabis. Previously, the data showed that the highest rates of impaired driving occurred after alcohol usage, but this year, the data reflects that alcohol and prescription drug rates have slowly decreased while cannabis rates have remained high. The number of students that live on campus who reported driving impaired from cannabis grew from 21% in 2023 to 40% in 2024. Additionally, the 2024 MACHB collected data on cannabis impaired driving after smoking cannabis versus after consuming cannabis products. Overall, a greater number of students smoked cannabis before driving rather than consuming cannabis before driving. This could mean that students prefer smoking as their medium when using cannabis. The data also shows that students who live off campus have driven impaired from alcohol more often than students that live on campus, which is not surprising as students who live off campus live further from most common drinking spots (tailgates, Greek life parties, local bars). Lastly, it is important to note that the sample size was too small for those who live in a Fraternity and Sorority Life facility to report whether they drove after smoking cannabis or misusing prescription drugs.

Chart 2: Impaired Driving by Demographics



For more information, visit mopip.org

Funded by the Missouri Department of Mental Health, Division of Behavioral Health

Use of Designated Drivers (DDs)

More than two-thirds (67%) of Missouri college students 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 2024 from 2023 which is represented in the table below. The percentage of students who reported never using a DD increased. This outcome may be reflected by the increase in impaired driving across all measured substances, as discussed above. This could be a call to campuses to increase impaired driving prevention programming among students. Shown in Table 1 is data regarding how often students used a designated driver from 2023 to 2024.

Table 1: Designated Driver Use Over Time

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?	2023	2024
100% (Always)	45%	47%
51-99% (More than half the time I drank)	5.0%	16%
50% (About half of the time I drank)	1.7%	3.9%
1-49% (Less than half of the time I drank)	1.7%	3.2%
No, I have never needed a DD because I walked or stayed where I was drinking	22.3%	22%
No, I don't use a DD	2.9%	4.0%

Additionally, 89% of Missouri college students correctly identified a designated driver as someone who has not consumed any alcohol, and 50% have reported being the designated driver in the past year.

Summary

While rates of driving after using impairing substances have increased in some areas this year, the number

of students using these substances has decreased, or remained steady, with a significant number of students noting that they are actively considering or trying to change their drug or alcohol use. These positive changes could lead to positive changes in driving behavior related to substances as well. Cannabis usage and related impairment are not as easily quantifiable as alcohol (i.e. the body processes approximately one standard alcohol drink per hour), but 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 one's 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

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

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

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

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

Report prepared by Kate Kazlauskas, Missouri Partners in Prevention Program Coordinator. Data prepared by Meg Mottola, and Kayleigh Greenwood, Missouri Partners in Prevention's research team. Published November 2024.

*question is select all that apply

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>
4. NHTSA. (2021). Drug-Impaired Driving. Retrieved from Drug-Impaired Driving | NHTSA.

For more information, visit mopip.org

Funded by the Missouri Department of Mental Health, Division of Behavioral Health