

MINORITY STUDENT HEALTH BEHAVIORS

Partners in Prevention (PIP) is Missouri's higher education substance abuse consortium focused on promoting healthy behaviors on college campuses. In order to gain an understanding of the current health behaviors of college students, PIP implements the Missouri College Health Behavior Survey (MCHBS) each spring. The information gained from the MCHBS not only allows PIP to learn more about the risky behaviors of Missouri college students as a whole, but also provides the opportunity to focus on the behaviors of particular demographics and sub-populations of students at Missouri's college campuses.

DISCUSSION

Non-white students comprise more than 16% of the Missouri undergraduate population at PIP member campuses. Of the roughly 9,000 students that completed the MCHBS in 2014, (1440) students reported a race/ethnic identity other than "white". Non-white students comprise a large proportion of the student body at Missouri college and university campuses and report unique health and behavior trends.

Generally, these students report beginning drinking later in life than their peers. Compared to the general sample, non-majority students report: lower drinking rates (almost 1 in 3 don't drink, compared with less than 1 in 4 for the general population), lower binge drinking rates, fewer negative consequences of alcohol use (fewer reports of hangovers, vomiting after overconsumption, and blackouts or memory loss), lower rates of both marijuana and tobacco use than the general population, and greater success when trying to quit these substances.

In addition to the alcohol, tobacco, and drug use data, non-majority students report notable differences on mental health and sexual behavior portions of the MCHBS survey. For instance, non-white students report lower instances of suicidal thoughts and self-injury attempts but similar levels of stress in both their personal and academic life. Regarding sexual behavior, these students report similar numbers of sexual partners compared to the general population. Results suggest a lower occurrence of

abusive relationships among non-white Missouri college students. Minority students also reported being less likely to use drugs or alcohol to help them feel more comfortable with a sexual partner, and fewer instances where they engaged in unplanned sexual behavior due to alcohol and drug use than the general population.

Non-white Students

- » Drink less and have lower high-risk drinking rates
- » Experience fewer alcohol related negative consequences
- » Lower levels of tobacco use
- » Lower levels of marijuana use

SUMMARY

In recognizing the diversity of Missouri university and college campuses it is important to understand the unique and specific health needs and behaviors of students. Minority students, a large and growing demographic on campus, are representative of this need and are indeed unique in their health behaviors. A better understanding of the behavior of non-white students will help professionals to develop more targeted and effective solutions for their needs.

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