

Health & Well-Being of Missouri College Veterans and Current Military

Partners in Prevention (PIP) is a statewide coalition of 21 public and private colleges and universities in Missouri with the mission of building safe and healthy campuses. PIP tracks students' high-risk behaviors and behaviors that promote health and wellness through the annual implementation of the Missouri Assessment of College Health Behaviors (MACHB) survey. By examining student mental health concerns, PIP can track the wellbeing of Missouri college students of specific subpopulations. Although students who are members United States Armed Services (USAS) only make up about 3% (280/9357) of the population of Missouri college students, recognizing their health behaviors is imperative to creating supportive and safe campuses for all students. This brief focuses on health, well-being, and help-seeking behaviors for Missouri college students who are veterans and current members of the USAS.

Background

According to the 2018 MACHB, the average age of Missouri college students who are members of the USAS is 23 years old, and 63% of students who are members of the USAS have been in school for three or more years. Twenty-nine percent (29%) of Missouri college students who are veterans or are currently in the military are female, 70% are male, and 1.0% prefer not to respond.

Key Findings

- Report lower rates of binge and frequent binge drinking
- Report higher rates of tobacco use
- Report higher rates of gambling
- Less feel like they can go to someone on campus for personal concerns
- Report lower rates of suicidal thoughts and suicide attempts

Alcohol and Tobacco

According to the 2018 MACHB, 78% of students who are members of the USAS consumed alcohol in the

past year. The MACHB also asks students to report their participation in "binge" drinking (consuming five or more drinks in a two-hour period) and frequent binge drinking (binge drinking at least three times over the past two weeks). Compared to their peers, veterans and current military members report lower rates of binge drinking (19% v. 26%) and frequent binge drinking (5.9% v. 7.1%).

Binge Drinking Rates in the Past Two Weeks		
	Military	Non-military
0 times	81%	74%
1 time	8.6%	12%
2 times	4.5%	6.6%
3 times	3.0%	2.6%
4 times	1.1%	2.3%
5+ times	1.8%	2.2%

In the past year, students who are currently in the military report greater rates of tobacco use than their non-military peers (35% v. 25%). The primary tobacco products used by students in the military include cigarettes (19%), smokeless tobacco (14%), e-cigarettes (11%), and cigars (8.8%).*

**indicates check all that apply*

For more information, visit pip.missouri.edu

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Mental Health, Well-Being, and Gambling

Students who are in the military report lower rates of overwhelming stress (17% v. 27%) and unbearable stress (3.0% v. 4.2%) than their non-military peers. In the past year, Missouri college students who are members of the USAS also report lower rates of anxiety (41% v. 53%), major depression (21% v. 27%), and panic attacks (16% v. 25%).

One high-risk behavior that students who are members of the USAS participate in more than their peers is gambling (30% v. 22%). In the past year, members of the USAS who gamble report unbearable levels of stress at higher rates than their non-military peers who do not gamble (5.8% v. 0%). In addition, students who are members of the USAS and gamble report financial concerns as a main source of stress at a rate of about 9% more than members of the USAS who do not gamble (61% gamble v. 52% do not gamble).

Suicide

Students who are currently in the military report having suicidal thoughts in their lifetime (35% military v. 42% non-military) and suicidal thoughts in the past year (15% military v. 21% non-military) at lower rates than their peers. In addition, thirty-five percent (35%) of Missouri college students who are members of the USAS have been concerned about a friend having suicidal thoughts or behaviors.

Help-Seeking Behaviors

For stress-related concerns, students in the military tend to go to friends and peers (59%), the university counseling center (30%), or a faculty member or professor (29%). However, 19% of students who are members of the USAS do not feel like they can go to anyone on their campus for their personal concerns. In regards to suicide, 35% of students in the USAS sought assistance for their thoughts or attempts, primarily from an off-campus mental health provider,

the university health center, a hospital emergency room, or an off-campus medical doctor.

Resources

Ask. Listen. Refer.

Seventy-four percent (74%) of students who are members of the USAS reported that they would be likely to very likely to bring up the topic of suicide with someone they think is at risk, and 3 out of 4 reported to be likely or very likely to refer someone who discloses that they are thinking about suicide to a local resource. Ask.Listen.Refer. is an online suicide prevention training program offered to students, faculty, and staff across Missouri to train individuals in the detection, intervention, and referral of friends at risk for suicide. For more information, visit www.asklistenrefer.org.

National Institute of Drug Abuse

The National Institute of Drug Abuse (NIDA) provides resources and research specifically related to members of the military. The NIDA often spotlights health topics such as tobacco use, smoking, alcohol use, and more. More information can be found at www.drugabuse.gov/related-topics/military.

Veterans Affairs

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) provides current military members, veterans, and their loved ones with resources and support regarding mental health. These include programs, services, articles, and fact sheets on topics such as anxiety, depression, health, and suicide prevention. Veterans and their loved ones can contact the Veterans Crisis Line via phone call, text, or online chat for free, confidential support 24/7. Service members, Guardsmen, and Reservists can also visit militarycrisisline.net for additional resources and free confidential support.

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

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