

Key Findings from the 2020 Missouri Assessment of College Health Behaviors

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 23 public and private colleges and universities in the state. The campuses in the coalition work to prevent high-risk behaviors by implementing evidence-based strategies. These strategies include 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, drugs (illegal and prescription), tobacco/nicotine, interpersonal violence, and mental health have on student health and wellness.

The following are key findings from the 2020 MACHB survey

Alcohol Use

Seventy-three percent (73%) of Missouri college students report using alcohol in the past year and 59% report using in the past month. The percentage of students who report binge-drinking (consuming 5 or more drinks in a two-hour period) at least once in the past two weeks declined to 22% in 2020 from 23% in 2019 and is below the national average of around 38%. Of students who binge-drink, approximately 5.4% are frequent binge drinkers, defined as binge-drinking 3 or more times in the past two weeks.

Underage Alcohol Use

The majority of Missouri college students (69%) report that they first started drinking before age 21. Sixty-four percent (64%) of underage Missouri college students report consuming alcohol in the past year and 19% of underage students report binge-drinking in the past two weeks (a decrease from 21% in 2019). Underage students report that they obtain alcohol in a variety of ways, the most common being from an over 21 friend (37%) or from parents (9.5%)*. Additionally, 21% of underage students indicate that they consume alcohol

in bars and restaurants, showing a need for community partnerships to prevent underage drinking.

Negative Consequences of Alcohol Use

The MACHB tracks negative consequences and related behaviors of alcohol use. Of Missouri college students, 12% report driving after drinking and 18% report riding in a car with someone who had been drinking at least once in the past year. However, only 0.3% of students report being arrested for DUI/DWI in the past year. Other consequences of alcohol use that students report include experiencing a "blackout" or memory loss (23%), being forced, pressured, or coerced to drink more (11%), engaging in risky sexual behavior (11%), being hurt or injured (9.8%), and having alcohol poisoning (4.0%) at least once in the past year*. Alcohol use also impacts academics; 15% of students report missing class due to alcohol use and 7.8% report performing poorly on a test or assignment.

Cannabis

Cannabis is the most commonly used drug by Missouri college students after alcohol. The percentage of students who report using cannabis in the past year remained steady from 2019 to 2020 at 29%. Approximately 11% of students statewide report using

cannabis at least once per week. Of students who report using cannabis, 29% report driving after use at least once in the past year. The majority of students (84%) perceive that their peers have used cannabis at least once in the past year, while the reality is that 69% of students have not. Among students who use, almost one quarter (24%) are currently trying to use less or quit using cannabis altogether.

In regards to changes in Missouri laws around cannabis, 9 out of 10 students who have used cannabis in the past year do not have a medical card or prescription. Additionally, 17% of Missouri college students have used a CBD (cannabidiol) product in the past year.

Illegal and Prescription Drugs

Six and a half percent (6.5%) of students report using at least one illegal drug (not including cannabis) in the past year. Missouri college students report using illegal drugs at the following rates: Cocaine: 3.1%, heroin: 0.2%, and other drugs (ecstasy, LSD, mushrooms, PCP, etc.): 5%

Approximately 8% of Missouri college students report prescription drug use without a doctor's prescription in the past year. Additionally, 4.2% of students with a valid prescription report using in a manner other than prescribed in the past year. Of students who report misuse of either type, 29% have combined them with alcohol at least once, which can have serious health effects. Rates of misuse without a prescription are as follows: stimulants: 4.9%, pain medications: 2.6%, benzodiazepines/sedatives: 1.7%, and sleeping medications: 1.0%. Students who misuse stimulants report that they do so to help them concentrate (71%), to improve academic performance (56%), and to be alert/stay awake (55%)*. Students who misuse pain medications report that they do so to relieve/manage pain (64%), to relax/relieve tension (42%), and to feel good/get high (26%)*.

Tobacco and Nicotine

Twenty-eight percent (28%) of Missouri college students report using any tobacco or nicotine products in the past year. Usage rates for various

products are as follows: JUULs (18%), cigarettes (10%), e-cigarettes/vaporizers (14%), cigars (5.8%), hookah (4.1%), and smokeless tobacco (3.4%)*.

Interpersonal Violence

Approximately 23% of Missouri college students have experienced non-consensual sexual contact in their lifetime, and 6.9% have experienced it in the past year. Of all instances of non-consensual sexual contact, 32% occurred while the student was attending their current college or university. The majority of non-consensual sexual contact occurred off-campus and not related to university events (52%) or on-campus in residence halls (37%)*. In the past year, 14% of students have experienced abuse in a relationship (e.g. verbal, physical, psychological, etc.) and 7.3% of students report experiencing stalking.

Well-Being and Mental Health

In 2020, questions about stress levels were cycled into the survey, with 34% of students reporting that their stress is overwhelming or unbearable. The most common source of stress is school/academics (90%). Questions were also added to the survey this year about well-being and flourishing. On average, students get around 6.7 hours of sleep per night. In Missouri, approximately 10-15% of students are experiencing high food insecurity (very often or always not being able to afford balanced meals and/or food not lasting and not having money to buy more). Finally, questions on flourishing related to feeling purpose, being engaged, and having positive self-esteem were reported highly among students, with the average score on the flourishing scale being 46.05 (on a scale ranging from 8 to 56).

Missouri college students self-report experiencing issues related to mental health, the most common being anxiety (68%), major depression (33%), panic attacks (30%), and chronic sleep issues (22%)*. Of students who report experiencing a mental health concern, 33% did not seek assistance. Of those who did seek assistance, 48% went to friends and family, 16% to the University Counseling Center, and 12% to an off-campus medical provider.**

In the past year, 25% of students have had suicidal thoughts and 2.1% attempted suicide. For those who had thoughts or attempts, 38% have sought assistance. The most common places students sought assistance were an off-campus mental health provider (29%) or the campus counseling center (28%). Additionally, 47% of Missouri college students have been concerned about a friend having suicidal thoughts or exhibiting behaviors in the past year.

Positive Behavior Changes

The rate of students who report drinking and driving continues to decline (12% in 2020 vs 24% in 2013), as does the rate of students who have ridden with a drinking driver (18% in 2020 vs 30% in 2013). High-risk alcohol use behaviors such as binge-drinking and underage binge drinking have both decreased from 2019 (23% to 22%, and 21% to 19%, respectively). The rate of students who use prescription drugs without a doctor's prescription continues to decline as well (8%

in 2020 vs 15% in 2013).

Summary

Partners in Prevention continues to monitor critical health behaviors of college students including high-risk drinking, cannabis and other drug use, mental health, interpersonal violence, and tobacco use. Data consistently shows that student success and academic achievement is impacted by substance misuse, and prevention efforts are vital to the mission of institutions of higher education. For more information about Partners in Prevention and to explore our research, visit pip.missouri.edu.

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

*question is select all that apply

**question is select up to 2 choices

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