

Missouri College Students of Color and Help-Seeking 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 24 public and private colleges and universities in the state. To measure progress and obtain data needed for the implementation of programs, PIP created the Missouri Assessment of College Health Behaviors (MACHB) survey. Among the 8,769 Missouri college students from the 23 colleges and universities who responded to the 2020 MACHB survey, 22% identified as a Student of Color. This brief will focus on the experience Students of Color have at Missouri colleges and universities with personal and mental health concerns, what on- and off-campus resources they utilize for those concerns, and what they recognize to be barriers to seeking help.

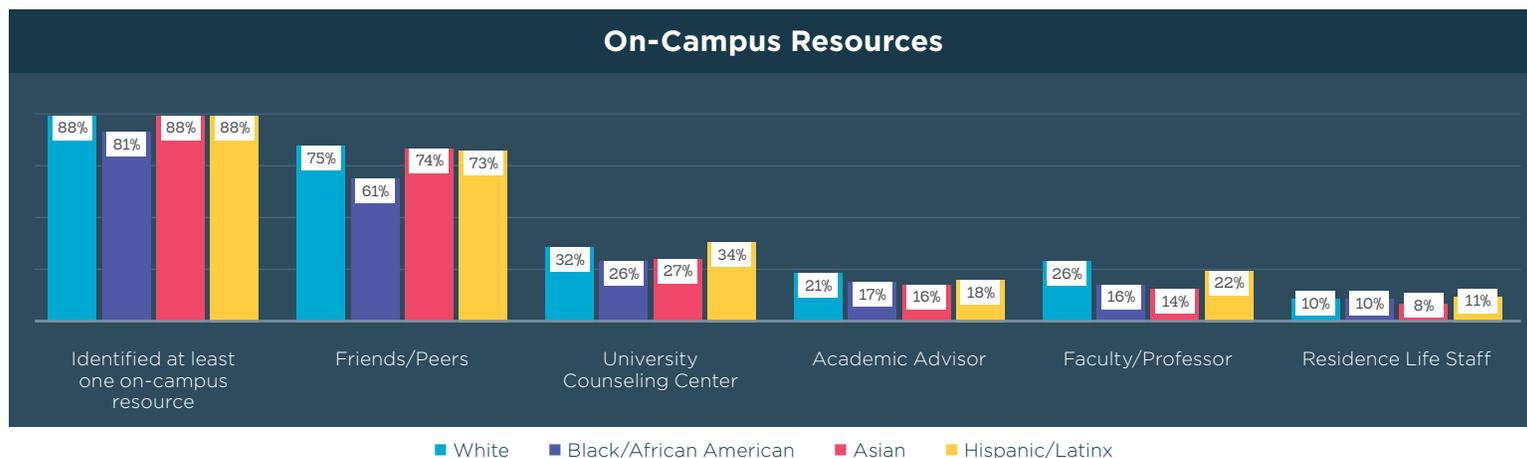
Background on Categorization of Racial/Ethnic Groups

In the 2020 MACHB survey, students are asked to self-report their racial/ethnic background. The question is 'select all that apply,' meaning students may be counted in multiple race categories. In order to look at broad comparisons between students of different racial backgrounds, 'Students of Color' in this brief is comprised of students who selected at least one of the following options: Black/African-American, Asian/Asian-American, Hispanic/LatinX, American Indian/Alaskan Native, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, Arab or Non-Arab North African/Middle-Eastern, Bi-racial/Multi-racial, Native Caribbean/Afro-Caribbean, and Other. Approximately eight percent (7.7%) of students comprised an 'Other race' category, by selecting Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, American Indian/

Alaskan Native, Arab or Non-Arab North African/Middle Eastern, Native Caribbean/Afro-Caribbean, Bi-racial/Multi-racial, and/or Other. Given, however, that students in the 'Other race' category may have very different experiences from one another and experience mental health concerns at very different rates, this brief will not include this 'Other race' category.

On-Campus Resources

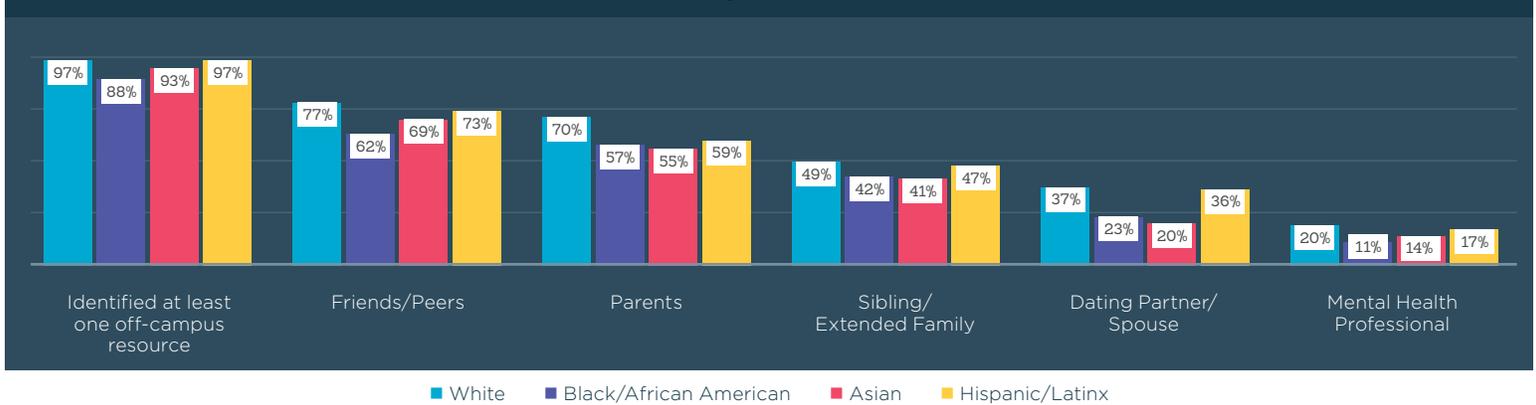
In the MACHB survey, students are asked to identify whom they feel they can go to on-campus when personal concerns arise. Options include friends/peers, as well as university resources such as the counseling center, health center, or faculty, and students may check all that apply. The chart below highlights on-campus resources used by racial/ethnic group. The most popular option among all racial and ethnic group was friends/peers, with a combined 67% of Students



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Off-Campus Resources



of Color selecting friends/peers, compared to 75% of White students, and a lower 61% among Black/African American students. Students of Color also largely endorsed the university counseling center (27%), an academic advisor (18%), and faculty/professor (18%) as on-campus resources. Sixteen percent (16%) of Students of Color endorsed the answer choice “Don’t feel like I can go to anyone on campus,” compared to 12% of White students.

Off-Campus Resources

Students were also asked whom they feel they can go to off-campus when personal concerns arise. The majority of students across all racial and ethnic groups once again chose friends/peers, as well as parents, a sibling/extended family, and a dating partner/spouse. While the percentage of students who endorsed these options was similar when comparing Students of Color, Asian, Black/African American, Hispanic/LatinX, the percentage of White students who endorsed these options was always higher. Consistent with on-campus resources, more Students of Color (9.0%) and Black/African American students (12%) selected the option that they don’t feel they can go to anyone off-campus when personal concerns arise, compared to only 3.0% of White students.

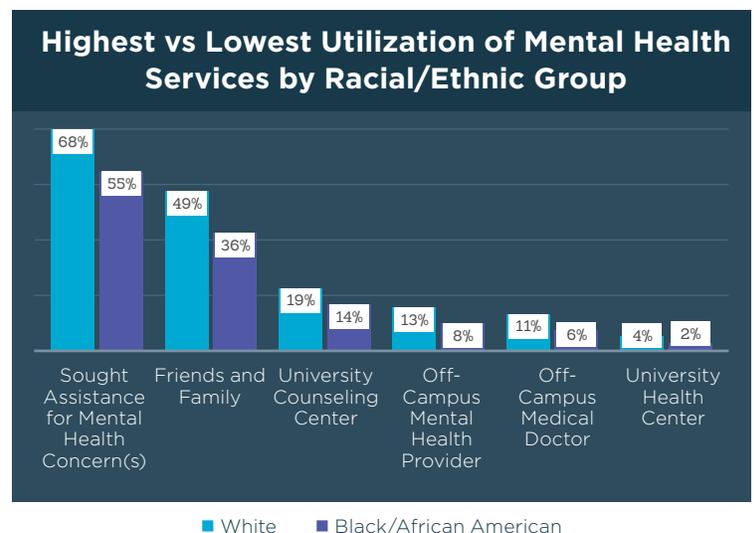
Mental Health Concerns

Sixty-four percent (64%) of Students of Color and 70% of White students reported at least one mental health concern in the past year. The top four mental health concerns among all racial and ethnic groups were: anxiety, major depression, panic attacks, and chronic

sleep issues. The highest percentage of anxiety and panic attacks was among White students at 64% and 32% respectively, although equal percentages of Students of Color and White students reported depression (33%) and chronic sleep issues (23%). Past year suicide attempts were highest among Black/African American students at 4.3%, which is approximately double the statewide average of 2.1%.

Services Used for Mental Health Concerns

Both on- and off-campus sources are listed for students to select where they initially sought assistance for their mental health concerns. Sixty-eight percent (68%) of White students sought any assistance, compared to 58% of Students of Color, and only 55% of Black/African American students. The following graph shows the racial and ethnic groups with the highest and lowest percentages of use for each service. Black/African American students consistently had the lowest utilization of both on- and off-campus



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resources, whereas White students always had the highest utilization of off-campus resources.

Barriers to Assistance

The most common barrier to seeking assistance across all racial/ethnic groups was, “not thinking I need any assistance with my mental health concerns,” with 55% of White students and 50% of Students of Color selecting this option. Stigma-related barriers included being afraid that people will judge them for seeking assistance, and this option was highest among Hispanic/LatinX students, with approximately 33% of Hispanic/LatinX students being afraid of judgement. The following table depicts other common reasons students selected for not seeking assistance. Barriers to seeking assistance were higher among Student of Color groups.

	White	Asian	Black/ African American	Hispanic/ LatinX
Do not think I need any assistance	55%	53%	47%	46%
I am afraid people will judge me	28%	24%	23%	33%
It is not helpful	22%	28%	19%	27%
The cost is too expensive/my insurance does not cover it	23%	19%	18%	21%
I do not know any resources	8.3%	14%	14%	11%

Summary

When experiencing personal and mental health concerns, students seek on- and off-campus resources for assistance. The most popular resource among students of all racial/ethnic groups is friends/peers, but this percentage is lowest among Black/African American students, who simultaneously have a higher percentage of feeling like they cannot go to anyone on- or off-campus when personal concerns arise. Students of color overall utilized both on- and off-campus resources less than White students for personal concerns. This trend is similar when students are asked about their mental health concerns. Students of Color, especially Black/African American students, sought less assistance for mental health concerns, but when they did, they utilized on-campus resources more than White students, possibly suggesting an inaccessibility to off-campus resources among Students of Color and Black/African American students. Although students of all racial/ethnic groups are affected by mental health concerns, this data suggests that White students have greater accessibility to assistance for these concerns, and highlights the need to consider what the different mental health needs are among the different racial/ethnic groups.

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