

# Assessing Well-being with the Flourishing Scale

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. The MACHB is an annual, online survey that has been implemented each spring since 2007 that assesses students' experiences of substance use, mental health and well-being, and interpersonal violence. The 2020 MACHB survey adapted the Flourishing Scale questions to measure students self-perceived success in important areas.

## Background

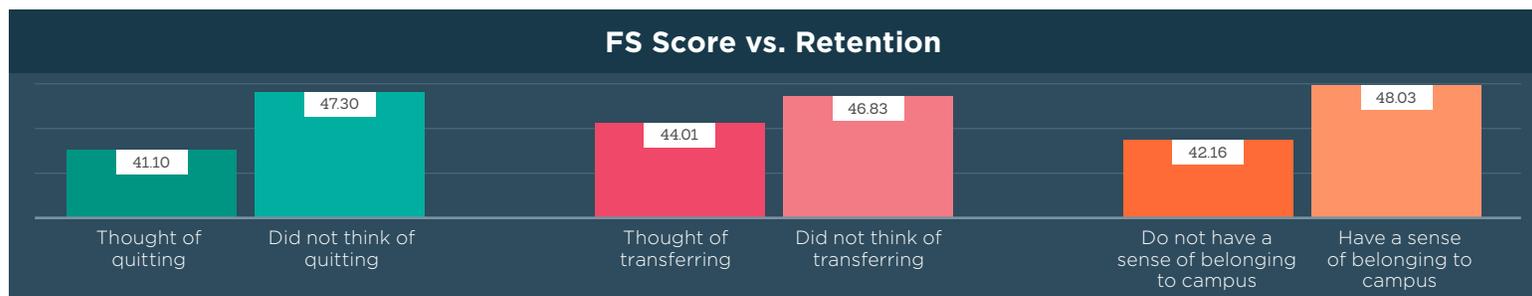
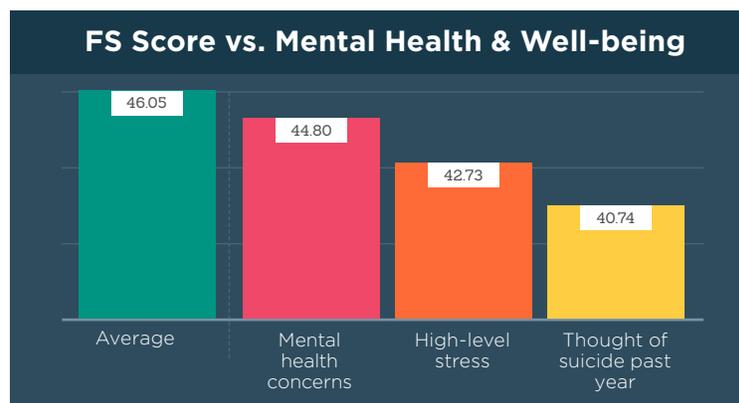
The Flourishing Scale<sup>1</sup> (FS), created by Dr. Diener et al., includes eight questions related to feeling purpose, being engaged, and having positive self-esteem. The sum of each question provides a single psychological well-being score which ranges from 8 to 56. The average Flourishing Scale score among Missouri college students is 46.05.

## Subpopulations

On average, female students have a higher FS score than male students (46.44 vs. 45.73). Students of color have a lower score than Caucasian students (45.98 vs. 46.12). The mean FS score among LGBQQAP<sup>2</sup> students is significantly lower than their peers (42.23 vs. 47.03). Students who are affiliated with Fraternity or Sorority life report a higher FS score than other students (47.63 vs. 45.87). Additionally, FS score is positively associated with students' sense of belonging and retention. The average FS scores among students who do not have a sense of belonging, who thought of transferring, or quitting their college are significantly lower than their peers. The chart below shows the differences.

## Well-being and Mental Health

The Flourishing Scale score reflects students' well-being and mental health as well. Students who experienced overwhelming or unbearable stress in the past two weeks have an average FS score 42.73. The average score among the 71% of Missouri college students who self-report experiencing mental health concerns in the past year is 44.80. In the past year, 25% of students had suicidal thoughts. Their average FS score is 40.74, which is 12% lower than the state average.

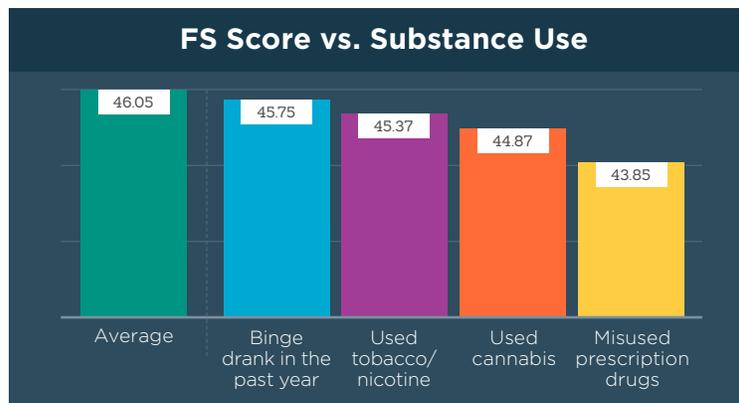
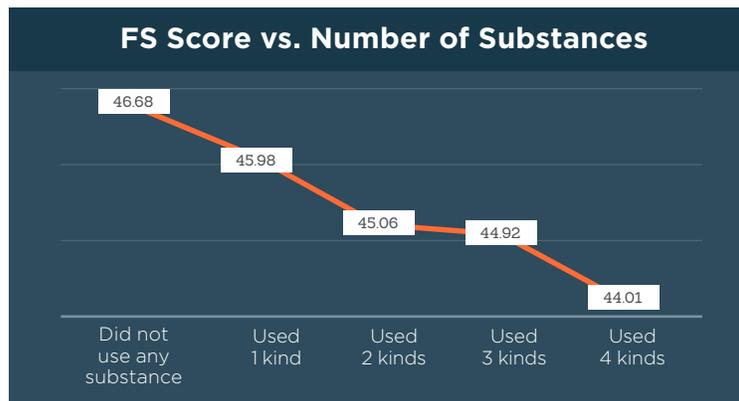


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## Substance Use

The 2020 MACHB survey results show that students who used substances in the past year have a significantly lower mean FS score than others. Twenty-two percent of Missouri college students report binge-drinking<sup>3</sup> in 2020. Their average FS score is 45.75. The mean FS scores of students who misused prescription drugs (either used without a prescription or misused other than prescribed), who used cannabis, and who used tobacco/nicotine products in the past year are 43.85, 44.87, and 45.37 respectively. Additionally, students who used multiple substances report a lower FS score.



## Summary

The Flourishing Scale is highly associated with students' health and well-being. This data shows that the average FS scores are significantly lower among underrepresented groups of students, students who use one or more types of substances, and students who experienced high-levels of stress or mental health concerns, compared with their peers. The Flourishing Scale could help campus substance prevention professionals and administrations to better understand students' psychological well-being and self-esteem level.

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

Brief and data prepared by Dong Ding, Research Coordinator. Published April 2021.

1. Diener, E., Wirtz, D., Tov, W., Kim-Prieto, C., Choi, D., Oishi, S., & Biswas-Diener, R. (2010). New measures of well-being: Flourishing and positive and negative feelings. *Social Indicators Research*, 39, 247-266.

2. LGBQQAP represents student's self-report sexual orientation as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Queer, Questioning, Asexual, or Pansexual.

3. Binge drinking definition in the 2020 MACHB survey is consuming 5 or more drinks in a 2-hour period at least once in the past 2 weeks.