

Hazing in Collegiate Organizations

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. The campuses in the coalition work to prevent high-risk behaviors by implementing evidence-based strategies. 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 concerns have on student health and well-being. This brief will focus on hazing in collegiate organizations.

National Data

Hazing is defined as any activity expected of someone joining or participating in a group that humiliates, degrades, abuses, or endangers them regardless of a person's willingness to participate. National data indicates that over half (55%) of college students involved in organizations experience hazing, but that 95% of them did not report the hazing to campus officials. The reasons given for not reporting were that they didn't want to get the group in trouble (37%), they were afraid of negative consequences from the group or specific members (20%), and they were afraid members of the group would find out who reported it, and they would be an outsider (14%). Additionally, 9 in 10 college students who experience hazing behaviors do not consider themselves to have been hazed.¹

Acts of Hazing

The MACHB survey includes questions related to hazing every other year, and questions were first asked in 2018. The questions intentionally do not label behaviors as hazing, given the hesitancy from students to both identify and report hazing. Students are asked to report if 'in association with organizational involvement,

was there any activity expected of someone joining or participating in the group?*' In 2022, 9.2% of Missouri college students reported at least one expected activity as a condition of joining the group. Trend data for students reporting at least one expected activity in order to join a collegiate organization is shown in chart 1, along with the percentage of students who prefer not to respond (PNR). Unfortunately, the rate of students who reported at least one expected activity has increased from 3.7% in 2018 to 9.2% in 2022.

Trend data for specific expected activities is included in table 1. It's important to note that these activities are

Chart 1 - Expected Activities to Join a Group Trend Data, 2018-2022



reported as an expectation of joining the group, and do not necessarily indicate the rates at which individual students participated in or were required to engage

in the reported activities. In 2022, among Missouri college students who indicated participating in an organization, 87% reported that their organization did not expect any of the listed activities. The activities with the highest reported rates were sing or chant by self or with select others of groups in public -not related to an event, game, or practice (3.7%), participate in a drinking game (3.0%) and deprive yourself of sleep (2.6%).

Table 1

	2018	2019	2020
Sing or chant by self or with select others of groups in public (not related to an event, game, or practice)	3.2%	3.7%	3.7%
Participate in a drinking game	2.5%	3.3%	3.0%
Deprive yourself of sleep	2.4%	2.3%	2.6%
Associate with specific people and not others	1.7%	1.9%	1.9%
Be screamed, yelled, or cursed at by other members	1.5%	1.6%	1.8%
Be awakened during the night by other members	1.2%	1.2%	1.1%
Forced physical activity	1.1%	0.9%	1.1%
Drink large amounts of a non-alcoholic beverage	1.0%	1.0%	0.9%
Drink large amounts of alcohol to the point of getting sick or passing out	0.9%	0.9%	0.7%
Attend a skit or roast where other members of the group are humiliated	0.9%	0.8%	0.9%
Endure harsh weather conditions without appropriate clothing	0.6%	0.6%	0.8%
Wear clothing that is embarrassing and not part of a uniform	0.6%	0.6%	0.4%
Personal servitude	0.5%	0.6%	0.4%
Perform unwanted sex acts	0.1%	0.1%	0.2%
None of the above	92%	87%	87%
I prefer not to respond	4.3%	4.3%	3.7%

Students are also asked to report if they considered any of the activities to humiliate, degrade, abuse, or endanger themselves/someone else (regardless of a person’s willingness to participate). In 2022, among students who indicated that one of the listed

activities was expected of group members, 17% did consider the activities to be harmful, 77% did not consider the activities to be harmful, and 6.1% preferred not to respond.

Organizational Involvement

The overall reported rates of an expectational activity as a condition of joining a group were relatively low, but if students indicated at least one activity they are then asked to report at which organization(s) the expected activity occurred*. The 5 organizations in which the highest percentages of students reported these activities were PHA Sorority/Panhellenic Association Sorority (12%), IFC Fraternity/ Interfraternity Council Fraternity (10%), honors/academic/professional clubs (6.0%), intercollegiate/varsity athletics (5.5%), and sports clubs/Intramural (5.1%). Almost one-third (32%) of students preferred not to respond in which organization the activity occurred.

Forced, Pressured or Coerced to Consume Alcohol

According to the 2022 MACHB, 7.8% of Missouri college students reported being forced, pressured, or coerced to drink more alcohol than they wanted to at least once in the past year. This specific question is asked of all students, not just of students who participate in campus organizations, and the coercive behavior may or may not have occurred as part of such a membership. While this rate has decreased from 16% in 2016 (shown in chart 2), in 2022 the reported percentages on individual campuses ranges from 4.0% to 19%.

Chart 2 - Forced, Pressured, or Coerced to Drink Trend Data



Conclusion and Resources

Missouri's statewide data indicates potential under-reporting and/or a lack of recognition of hazing behaviors among college students, which is also reflected in the national data. Less than one-fifth (17%) of students considered the expected activities to be harmful, though data shows that the majority of students who experience hazing (71%) suffer from physical, emotional and/or mental health concerns. These effects can result in decline in academic performance, depression and anxiety, substance misuse, PTSD, lowered self-esteem and self-efficacy, erosion of trust within the group, and more.² It's important to set and communicate policies, provide education, and promote reporting tools related to hazing.

Stop Hazing is an organization committed to promoting safe school, campus, and organizational climates.

They provide great resources for campuses such as the [Hazing Prevention Framework](#), tools for building healthy groups and teams, and the [Hazing Prevention Toolkit](#). For more information and resources visit stophazing.org.

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

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References

1. Allan, E.J., & Madden, M. (2008). Hazing in View: College Students at Risk. Initial Findings from the National Study of Student Hazing.
2. Goestchius, S.C., Alfred University. Consequences of hazing. (2014). From <https://hazingprevention.usc.edu/what-is-hazing/consequences-of-hazing/>