

# Tobacco/Nicotine Use Among Missouri College Students

Partners in Prevention (PIP) is Missouri's higher education mental health and substance misuse consortium dedicated to creating healthy and safe college campuses. The coalition is comprised of 25 public and private colleges and universities in the state, 24 of whom have data included in the 2023 survey. The campuses in the coalition work to address the critical health behaviors of students using evidence-informed 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 (illicit and prescription), tobacco/nicotine, interpersonal violence, and mental health have on student health and wellness. This brief will focus on examining trends of tobacco/nicotine use among Missouri college students from the 2014-2023 MACHB surveys. Topics will include tobacco use and reasons for use, type of products used, experiences while using tobacco, quitting considerations, e-cigarette use, and attitudes and awareness as it relates to tobacco-free campus policy.

## Tobacco/Nicotine Behavioral Use

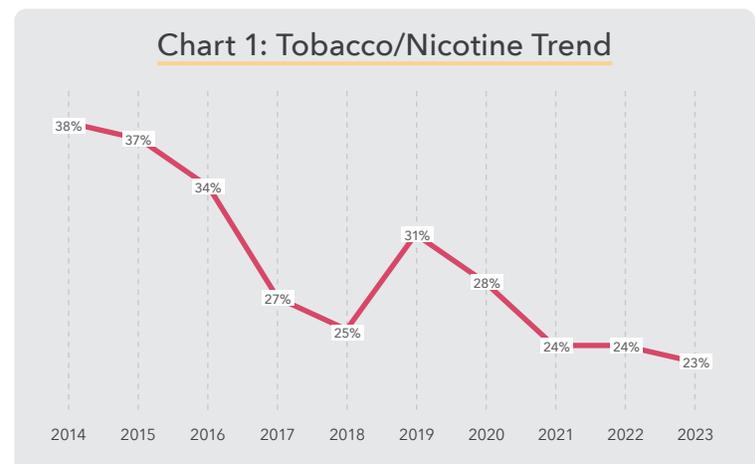
Each year on the MACHB, students are asked to self-report their behaviors related to tobacco use. The survey asks students how old they were when they first used tobacco/nicotine products. While 70% of students have never used tobacco, roughly 7.6% started when they were between the ages of 13-15. The results for the age of first use over the past three years can be viewed in Table 1.

**Table 1: Age of First Use of Tobacco**

	2021	2022	2023
12 or younger	1.4%	1.5%	1.5%
13-15	5.6%	7.9%	7.6%
16	5.8%	5.9%	5.7%
17	4.9%	4.6%	4.2%
18	8.2%	7.2%	5.1%
19-20	4.3%	3.1%	3.8%
21+	2.3%	1.6%	1.9%
Never used	68%	68%	70%

According to the 2023 survey, 23% of college students report using tobacco products at least once in the past 12 months, the lowest percentage in the last nine years. Chart 1 illustrates the PIP average among Missouri students for tobacco/nicotine use. Past several years usage rates for various types of tobacco products among the statewide average are shown in Chart 2: e-cigarettes/vaporizers - includes JUUL/Puff Bar, etc. (19%), cigarettes (10%), cigars (4.1%), smokeless tobacco (3.2%), and hookah (1.6%).

**Chart 1: Tobacco/Nicotine Trend**



**Chart 2: Tobacco/Nicotine Product Use Trends**

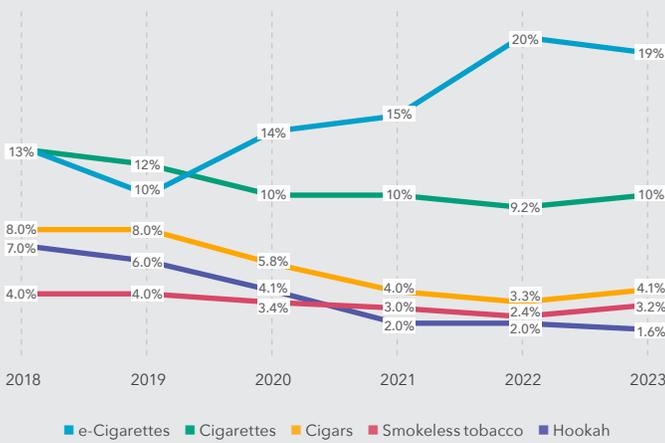


Table 2 represents tobacco trends from 2018 to 2023 broken down by sub populations. Across all categories, e-cigarettes are the most common form of tobacco use among all students, under 21-year-olds, Greek students, athletes, and individuals that binge-drink. Binge-drinking (defined as a pattern of drinking that brings a person’s blood alcohol concentration (BAC) to 0.08 g/dl or above, which typically means consuming 4+ drinks for women and 5+ drinks for men in a two-hour period at least once in the past two weeks) is a high-risk alcohol use behavior that PIP closely monitors each year. Across all sub populations, students who binge-drink use the most tobacco/nicotine products on average compared to any other sub population, followed by Greek students.

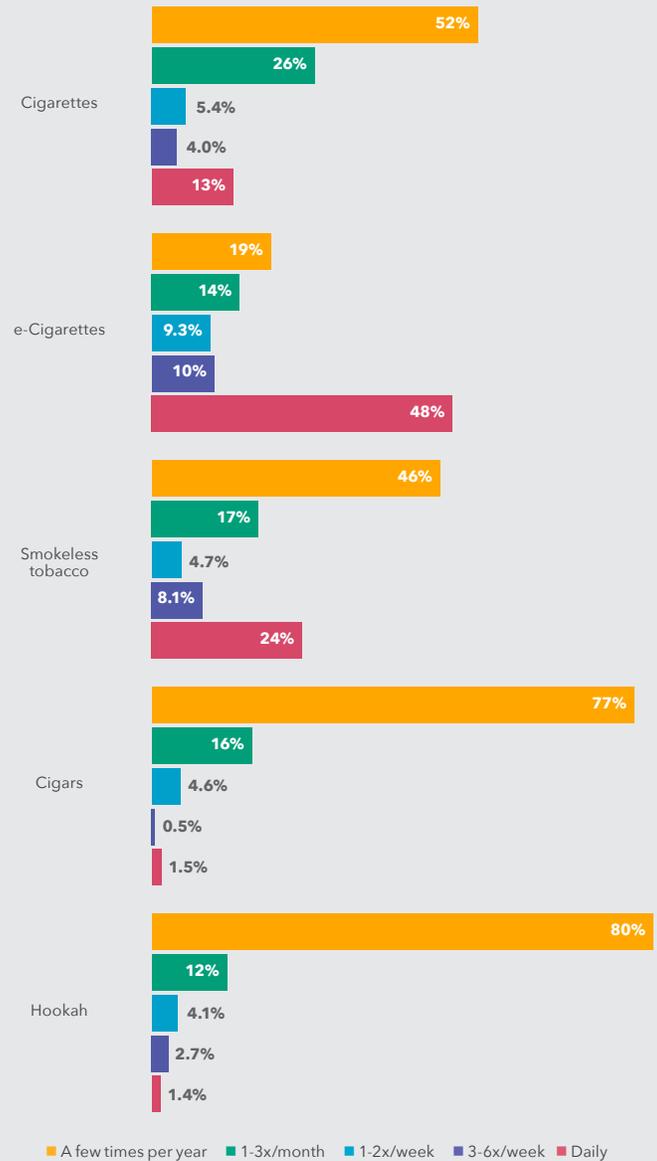
**Table 2: Tobacco/Nicotine Product Use Trends Among Sub Populations in 2023**

	All students	Under 21	Greek	Athletes	Binge drinkers
Any use	23%	20%	38%	20%	51%
E-cigarettes	19%	18%	33%	16%	44%
Cigarettes	10%	7.2%	19%	5.6%	25%
Cigars	4.1%	3.3%	11%	4.0%	12%
Smokeless Tobacco (e.g., chew, spit, dip, snus)	3.2%	2.7%	9.5%	4.3%	10%

Chart 3 illustrates the frequency of tobacco/nicotine use among those who report using broken down by type (cigarettes, e-cigarettes, smokeless tobacco, cigars, and

hookah). Among those who report smoking cigarettes, the majority (52%) are using a few times a year; among those who report using e-cigarettes, 48% are using every day; among those who report using smokeless tobacco products, 46% use a few times a year and 24% use every day; among those who report using cigars and hookah, the majority use a few times a year.

**Chart 3: Frequency of Use (Among Users)**



The survey asks students if in the last 12 months they have experienced any of the following due to their tobacco use while attending school. The most common responses among students were that they had experienced irritability, frustration, or anger because they did not have access to tobacco (21%) and that they also felt restless when they did not have access to tobacco (20%). Table 3 presents other

experiences of Missouri college students regarding their tobacco use.

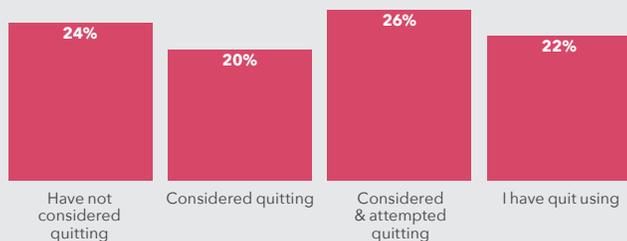
**Table 3: Experiences Due to Tobacco Use**

	PIP 24
Needed to take a tobacco break to make it through academic events (e.g., class, webinar, meeting)	16%
Needed to take a tobacco break to make it through a test/exam	5.6%
Experienced difficulty concentrating on academic work	11%
Experienced irritability, frustration, or anger because I didn't have access to tobacco	21%
Experienced anxiety, depression, or sad mood because I didn't have access to tobacco	14%
I felt restless when I didn't have access to tobacco	20%
Experienced physical health consequences because of withdrawal during my tobacco use (e.g., increased appetite, headaches, dizziness, cough, fatigue, insomnia, etc.)	13%
Other	0.8%

## Behaviors Related to Quitting Tobacco

Since entering college, twenty-two percent (22%) of tobacco users have quit. Twenty-six percent (26%) of users said they considered and attempted to quit, twenty percent (20%) said they considered quitting, and twenty-four percent (24%) said they have not considered quitting. Chart 3 illustrates the behaviors related to quitting tobacco amongst Missouri students. The MACHB survey asks students to report some of

**Chart 3: Behaviors Related to Quitting Tobacco**



the reasons they have considered quitting (if they have considered quitting at all). Table 4 represents the top five reported reasons that contribute to quitting tobacco among Missouri students. The main reasons being that students do not want to have a habit they will later regret and the expensive cost of tobacco products.

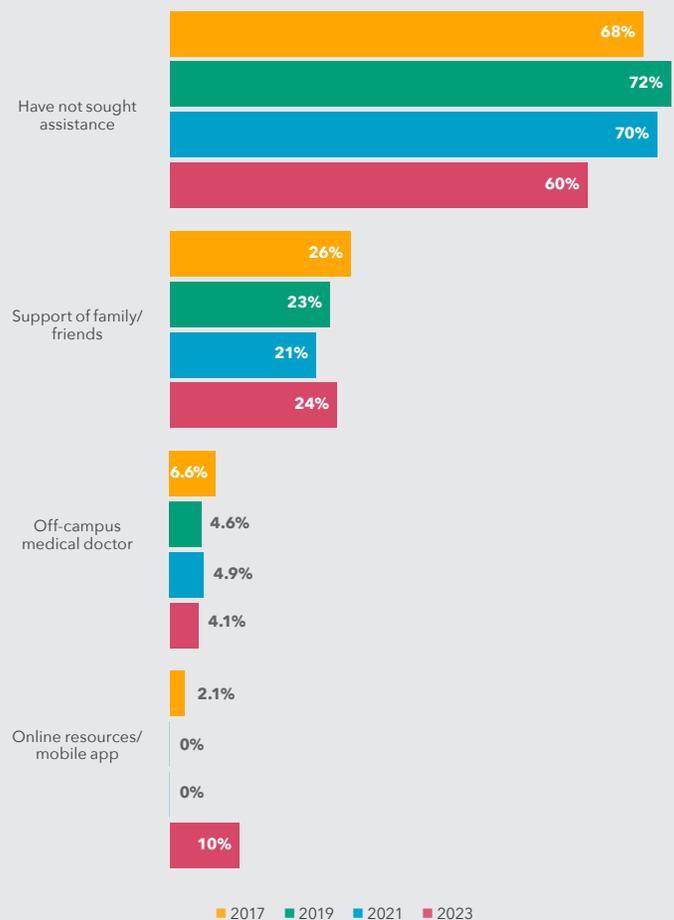
**Table 4: Reported Reasons that Contribute to Quitting Tobacco Considerations**

	PIP 24
I don't want to have a habit I will regret (e.g., being dependent on tobacco/nicotine)	58%
Potential of getting sick or developing a lasting disease	49%
Tobacco products cost too much	48%
My future plans (e.g., finding a job, graduation)	30%
I am not interested in using anymore	36%

Chart 4 illustrates the breakdown of where students sought assistance for quitting tobacco (if they have considered or attempted quitting). The majority (60%) of Missouri students have not sought assistance for tobacco cessation. The two most common places where students sought assistance for quitting was family and friends (24%) and online resources or a mobile app (10%).

Table 5 presents students' awareness of tobacco

**Chart 4: Assistance Sought for Quitting Tobacco**



related policies on their campus in 2023. The majority of students (87%) are aware of tobacco-related campus policies, however, under half (46%) believe that campus enforces those policies.

**Table 5: Student Awareness of Tobacco/Nicotine Related Policies**

Tobacco Related Policy	PIP 24
Aware of Campus Policies	87%
Believe campus enforces policies	46%
Believe campus is concerned	56%

## Summary

Partners in Prevention continues to monitor the critical health behaviors of college students. To reiterate, data consistently shows that academic achievement and

retention are impacted by the health, safety, and well-being of students. Substance misuse, experiences of interpersonal violence, and mental health concerns are intersectional issues that impact students' ability to succeed and thrive while attending institutions of higher education. Comprehensive and evidence-informed prevention and health promotion practices are investment in the lives of students and the overall campus environment. For more information about Partners in Prevention and to explore our research, visit [mopip.org](http://mopip.org).

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

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