

Students' Basic Needs

Partners in Prevention (PIP) is Missouri's higher education substance misuse consortium dedicated to creating healthy and safe college campuses. This year, the coalition comprises 26 public and private colleges and universities throughout Missouri. Twenty-four of those have data included in the 2023 Missouri Assessment of College Health Behaviors (MACHB) survey. PIP member campuses 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 MACHB Survey. The MACHB is an annual, online survey that has been implemented each spring since 2007. The survey assesses the experiences of lack of basic needs among varying marginalized persons and other subpopulations.

Background

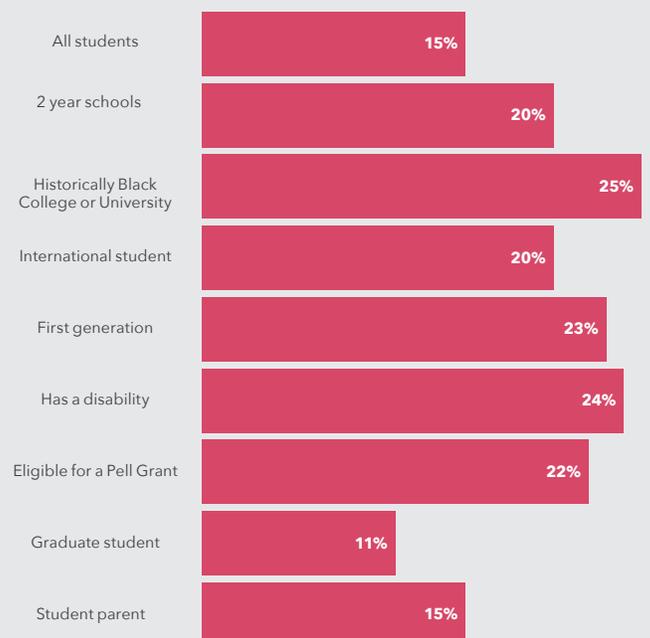
Basic needs for college students include more than just paying for food, having housing needs met, and having adequate clothing.¹ This survey assesses food insecurity, housing insecurity, basic transportation, and access to health care. Without stable housing, food, transportation, medical care, etc, students may be unable to successfully navigate the academics of higher education. They may be unable to attend class, complete assignments, and they may have to work outside of school to pay for their family's basic needs. This can further impact the quality of education they are able to receive by creating further barriers. While there are other contributing factors to access basic needs, this survey hopes to fill in some of those gaps by exploring this intersection among those who are graduate students, Pell Grant eligible, first-generation students, students who identify as having a disability, and many others. While the MACHB typically surveys undergraduate students, multiple campuses implement the survey with graduate students, whose data is included in this brief (n=6,750).

Food Insecurity

Food insecurity is the lack of access to enough food, having instances of food running out before someone

could get more, and lack of access to nutritional meals. Those who attend Historically Black Colleges or Universities (HBCUs) report the highest rates of frequently experiencing food insecurity (25%) among marginalized and other groups explored. Right behind that though, are students that identify as having a disability (24%). While 11% of graduate students report frequently experiencing food insecurity (see Chart 1),

Chart 1: Frequently Experienced Food Insecurity (always + very often)



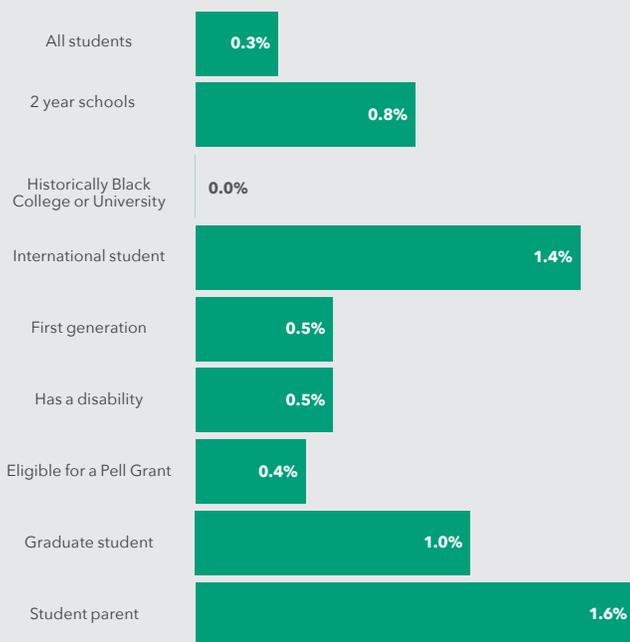
many of the other subpopulations are encompassed in the graduate student community (38% of graduate students identified as international students and 30% identified as first-generation).

Beyond basic barriers of accessing food pantries, such as not knowing the location or lack of access, additional barriers are faced among the international and BIPOC communities. Research has shown that there is a lack of cultural competency at food pantries.² BIPOC participants can feel unwelcome since the staff do not speak their language, and there may be a lack of food that aligns with their cultural practices or beliefs. Students from other countries may even be unaware of how to use certain ingredients due to lack of familiarity. This shows the need to provide food and ingredients from various countries of origin and offer a welcoming space for people of all backgrounds.

Housing Insecurity

The question surrounding housing insecurity in the MACHB is the endorsement of not having a consistent/permanent living arrangement. While most students don't experience housing insecurity, there are certain marginalized and other subgroups that experience it disproportionately. Those who identify as a parent report the highest rates of

Chart 2: Experienced Housing insecurity

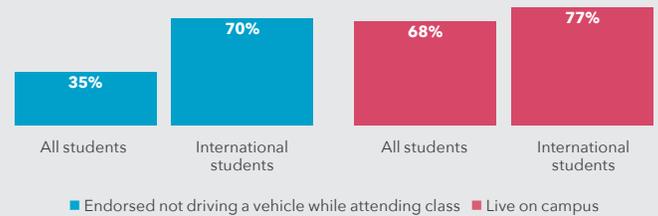


housing insecurity (1.6%) followed by international students (1.4%). The data reflected in the MACHB regarding HBCUs seem unique regarding housing insecurity. In a national report 55% of students at HBCUs experienced housing insecurity³ while 0% of students at HBCUs in the MACHB report housing insecurity. This may be due to the fact that Missouri only has two HBCU's.

Basic Transportation

Most students who took the MACHB report driving a vehicle while attending classes (65%), but only 29% of international students report driving a vehicle while attending classes. There are many international students who may be coming to the United States from another country without a driver's license, or only one in their home country, making it hard to access resources such as food and medical care. Additionally, 77% of international students in Missouri live on campus (compared to 68% of non-international students in Missouri). This shows that most international students are having to find ways to commute to anywhere off campus as well.

Chart 3: Experienced Lack of Transportation Among International Students



Health Care

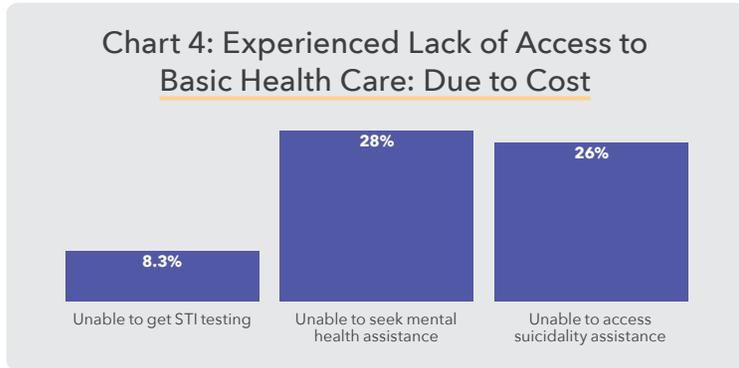
Lack of access to basic health care is a serious issue among college students. While the Affordable Care Act helped bridge that gap, there are still 1.7 million college students uninsured.⁴ This means about 10% of college students are uninsured compared to the 8.4% national average. This does not consider marginalized populations or those living in medical deserts. There may also be certain insurance that a campus (or community medical practices) won't accept. This leaves those students who are uninsured or have unaccepted insurance reliant on school-based health

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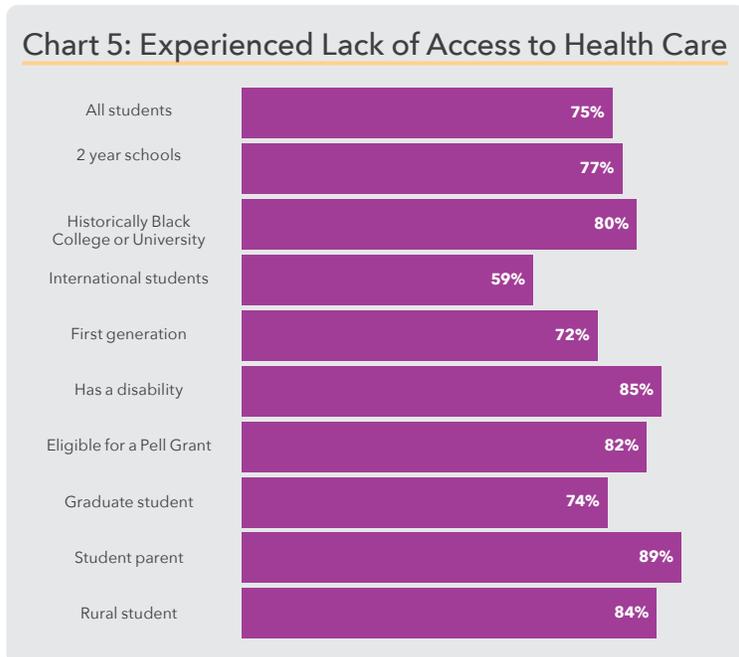
Funded by the Missouri Department of Mental Health, Division of Behavioral Health

insurance⁴. Some of these plans may have limited coverage and benefits, leaving students to pay for health care.

Students in Missouri were able to endorse reasons they were not able to access care for health or mental health concerns. Missouri college students who identified a barrier to accessing care and the endorsed barrier being “too expensive” is listed in the chart below.



While the most common barrier identified is the individual not thinking they need assistance, the second most endorsed reason for not seeking mental health assistance is due to the cost or insurance not covering it. It is also important to note that 3.8% of students couldn't access mental health care due to lack of insurance and 3.5% couldn't access care for seeking suicidality assistance due to lack of insurance.



Students that took the MACHB were able to endorse different barriers that stopped them from seeking

assistance. Below is the breakdown of the barrier to seeking assistance being “The cost is too expensive/ my insurance does not cover”. This is the combined barrier for accessing assistance for both mental health concerns and suicidality.

Compared to Missouri colleges in urban areas, students that attend a rural college were more likely to report cost as a barrier (73% vs 84%). The largest difference was seen between those who identify as student parents (75% vs 89%), followed by those who identify as having a disability compared to those who don't (85% vs 73%). This shows that there are many intersections to these health disparities.

Summary

Students' access to basic needs is a multifaceted issue that needs to be explored in more than just the traditional lens. This lens also needs to consider intersections of various identities. This can be done by asking the communities identified above how to best assist them. This could also be done by offering more culturally inclusive food pantries, having connections with local housing shelters, transportation that could either go farther or run later, and offering students affordable health care or access to affordable health care in the community. For more information about Partners in Prevention and to explore our research, visit mopip.org.

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

Report prepared by Hope Edwards, Opioid Project Coordinator. Data prepared by Kayleigh Greenwood and Meg Mottola, Research Coordinators, and Hope Edwards, Opioid Project Coordinator. Published January 2023.

Citations

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