

Key Findings from the 2023 Honest Opioid Perspectives & Experiences Survey

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 26 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 including education, social norming campaigns, policy review and enforcement, and more. 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, cannabis, other drugs (illegal and prescription), tobacco/nicotine, interpersonal violence, and mental health concerns have on student health and well-being.

Reporting in the MACHB has consistently shown that most Missouri college students do not use/misuse opioids¹. Unique experiences were reported in the HOPE survey, given that most Missouri college students who took the survey did endorse using/misusing opioids (82%). This may be attributed to the name of survey due to asking for "honest experiences".

In 2023, the PIP Opioid Project Coordinator created the Honest Opioid Perspectives & Experiences (HOPE) Survey. This survey assessed knowledge surrounding opioids and harm reductive measures related to opioid use/misuse, as well as opioid use behaviors, onset, experiences of unmet needs, and occurrences of Adverse Childhood Events (ACEs). The following are key findings from the 2023 HOPE survey (N=1,650) among Missouri college students who filled out the survey either by seeing the ad on Facebook or from flyers dispersed at PIP member institutions.

Definitions

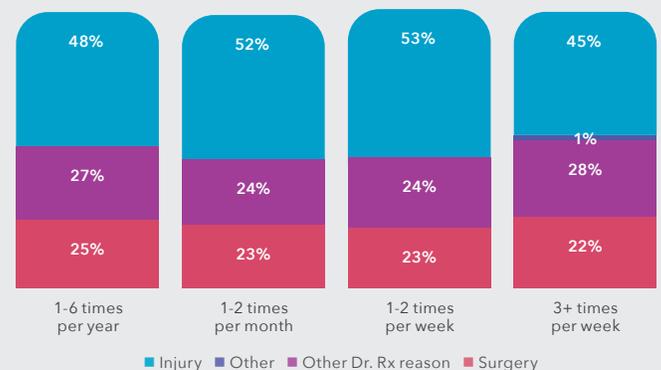
If you have questions about language or definitions used in the HOPE survey, [check out the Fact Sheet - HOPE Survey here](#).

Opioid Use/Misuse Onset and Age

There was an endorsement of daily use among 16 students, but those experiences are not included in this brief.

Chart 1 shows the endorsed reasons of onset of use compared to frequency of use.

Chart 1: Frequency of Opioid Use vs. Start of Use



As you can see among all frequencies, the most commonly endorsed reason for the onset of use was following an injury. This is also reflected in the general

data with 41% endorsing injury, followed by surgery (32%), doctor's prescription for other reasons (29%), and a combined 1% reported "prefer not to respond" and "other". This suggests that there may be certain student populations are at a higher risk for the use/misuse of opioids. Those groups include student athletes, those who get their wisdom teeth removed, those who drink alcohol frequently, and those who may experience hazing.

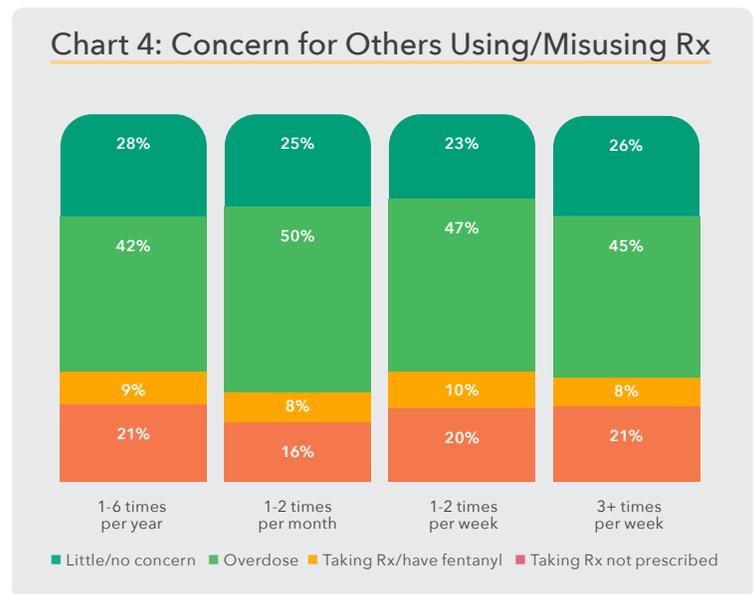
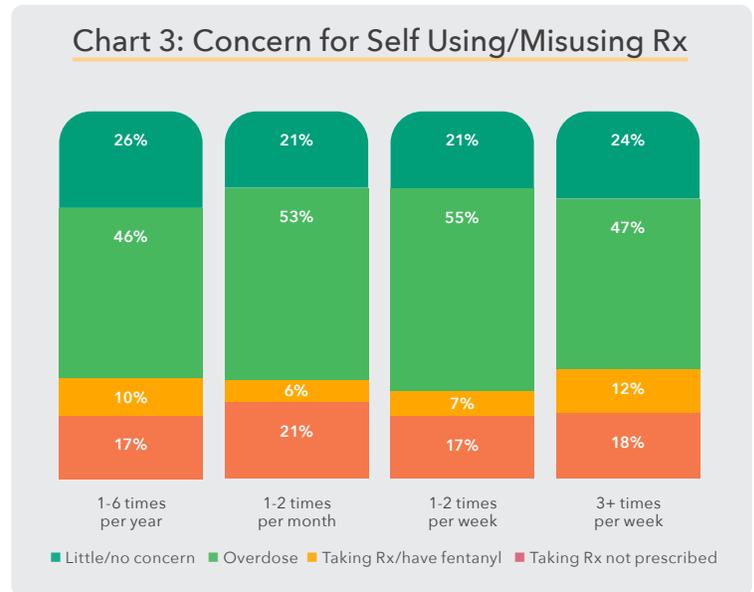
Chart 2 shows that it is mostly older students that report higher frequency of opioid use/misuse.



Of note, this graph also shows that frequency of opioid use/misuse increases as age does. Those who are 22-24 years old have the highest reported use compared to other age groups, indicating that many students do not come in with opioid use/misuse behaviors and that they rather begin in college.

Perceived Harm for Self & Others

In Chart 3 and 4 we see that despite there being concerns for self and others surrounding the use/misuse of opioids, use/misuse still occurs.



Among all Missouri college students surveyed, only 48% would be concerned (very likely+ likely) about taking pills not prescribed to them. Additionally, among all students surveyed only 41% (very likely +likely) would be worried about taking a pill not prescribed to them that might have fentanyl in it, a factor that was also seen among those who use/misuse prescription pills.

Chart 5: Think Use of Rx Not Prescribed Could Threaten My Life

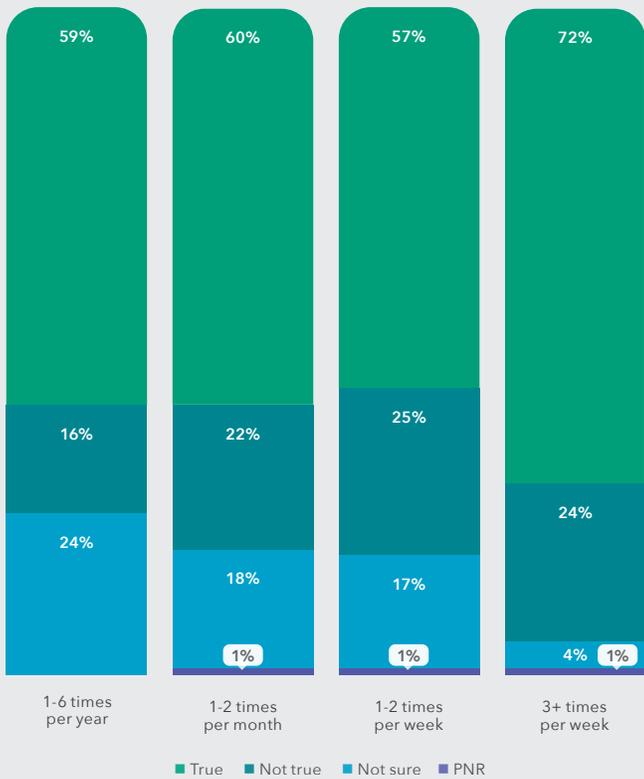


Chart 5 illustrates that although students may perceive harm associated with misusing prescriptions, they continue to use them at both high and low frequencies. The occurrence of substance use disorders as the use/misuse of substances does alter brain functions. Meaning that the knowledge and perception of risks doesn't necessarily mediate the behaviors.

Protective Factors/Knowledge Check

Given the data shown in tables 1 & 2, it appears that knowledge about protective factors for the use/misuse of opioids needs to not only be provided to those who endorse using opioids, but also to those who do not use. Most students who endorsed not using/misusing opioids in the past year do not have knowledge of the Good Samaritan Law. This lack of knowledge could create a concern should a person unintentionally consume an opioid resulting in an overdose, given worries about getting in trouble for seeking needed medical assistance.

Table 1: Knowledge: No Past Year Use

	Yes	No	Not Sure
Fentanyl	59%	29%	12%
Xylazine	50%	37%	14%
Good Samaritan Law	32%	51%	15%
Narcan	53%	28%	20%

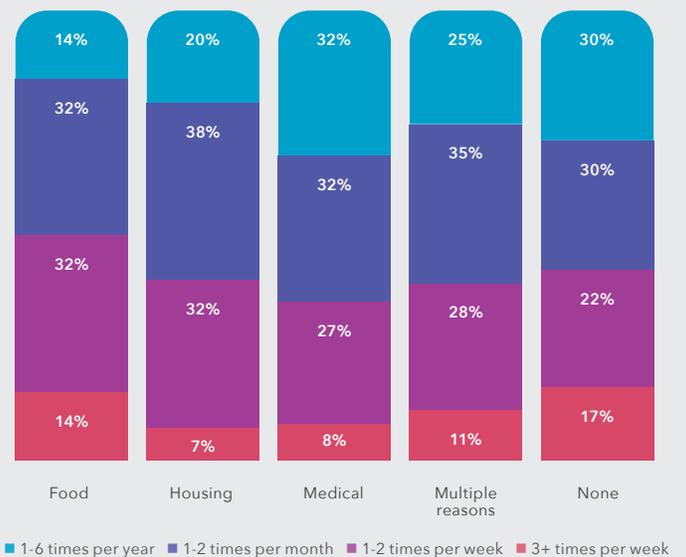
Table 2: Knowledge: Past Year Use

	Yes	No	Not Sure
Fentanyl	84%	11%	4.3%
Xylazine	83%	14%	4.0%
Good Samaritan Law	57%	20%	23%
Narcan	77%	16%	7.1%

Unmet Needs

Research has shown that there is an association with unmet needs and substance use/misuse², especially if events resulting in their being unmet needs happen before the person is 18 years of age³. The endorsed experiences of unmet needs related to food, housing, medical, or combination of any of these experiences are reported below among those who have used/misused opioids in the past year.

Chart 6: Experiences of Insecurity by Opioid Use Frequency



While Chart 6 combines experiences, endorsement of medical insecurity is significant among those who have used/misused opioids in the past year. In Table 3 you can see a breakdown of those who have experiences of unmet needs occurring before the age of 18 and those who have & haven't used/misused opioids.

Table 3: Experienced Any Unmet Needs Before the Age of 18

	Yes	No	Not Sure
No past year use	38%	14%	48%
Past year use	62%	12%	26%

Summary

In analyzing the data garnered through the HOPE survey, it is of significance that older students endorse using/misusing opioids on a more frequent basis, which therefore indicates students may start using/misusing opioids after starting their college career. Given that the number one reason students endorsed starting to use/misuse opioids are after being injured, it follows that student athletes are an at-risk population. Educating at-risk student populations about alternative pain management prior to injury could be a prime opportunity to decrease the use/misuse of opioids among these student populations. As stated above, most college students who don't use opioids have little knowledge about the risks associated with opioids and possible protective factors. This shows a need for educational opportunities about opioid use/misuse among all college age students, regardless of past use/misuse.

For those students who have used/misused in the past year, they endorse that they are aware of the risk factors associated with use, yet they continue to use. It would follow that education related to harm reductive measures could be the best way to address use/misuse. A key opportunity to provide such harm reductive services would be providing a place on campus to access Narcan/naloxone.

Resources

PIP Basecamp for Prescription Drug Misuse Prevention

Offers sample Narcan policy, Narcan toolkit for campuses, Narcan brochures, and Good Samaritan Law graphics. [Learn more here.](#)

Opioid Overdose Training & Resources

PIP training and resources educational for students and educators. [Learn more here.](#)

Missouri Institute of Mental Health

Where to get Narcan and fentanyl test strips from the Missouri Institute of Mental Health. [Learn more here.](#)

Missouri Department of Health & Senior Services

Resources offered by Missouri Department of Health & Senior Services, overdose prevention and response, link to Time 2 Act, and additional resources.

[Learn more here.](#)

National Harm Reduction Coalition

Resources for persons who use substances and providing harm reductive care. [Learn more here.](#)

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

Report and data prepared by Hope Edwards, Opioid Project Coordinator
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Citations

1. Masters, J., & Leitchuh, M. (2017). Opioid Use by Missouri College Students . Missouri's Higher Education Substance Abuse Consortium, 6(1).
2. Danek R, Blackburn J, Greene M, Mazurenko O, Menachemi N. Unmet mental health need

and subsequent substance use in individuals with a history of depression: are there differences between metro and nonmetro areas? *Am J Addict.* 2023; 32: 360-366. doi:10.1111/ajad.13393

3. CDC. (2022, December 9). Adverse childhood experiences. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/od2a/case-studies/ACEs.html>