

Students Attending 2-Year Colleges in Missouri

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 23 public and private colleges and universities in the state working 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. This brief will focus on the health behaviors (including alcohol and other drug use, interpersonal violence, and mental health) of students attending 2-year colleges in Missouri. Data from a total of four, 2-year colleges will be included in this brief (N=1032), 2 of which are formal members of the PIP coalition, and 2 of which are not formal members, but implemented the MACHB survey in 2020. Three of the colleges are community colleges, and one is a 2-year technical school.

National 2-Year College Student Demographics

The demographic makeup of students attending 2-year colleges typically differs from 4-year colleges. According to the Community College Research Center, a higher percentage of undergraduate students of color (particularly Hispanic/Latinx) were enrolled in 2-year colleges than White students.¹ Students attending 2-year colleges are also more likely to be from low-income families and to be first-generation students.² While there is abundant information on the demographics of students attending 2-year colleges, there is an absence of research on the health and well-being of these students.

Missouri 2-Year College Student Demographics

Missouri 2-year college student data differs slightly from national demographics. Approximately one fifth (21%) of students at 2-year colleges are students of color (6.8% Black/African American, 1.5% Asian/Asian American, 5.5% Hispanic/Latinx, and 7.4% Bi-Racial or another racial/ethnic group) compared to 31% of students attending 4-year colleges who are students of color. At 2-year Missouri colleges, 39%

of students are first-generation students and 26% are parents, both of which are greater than students at 4-year colleges (26% and 4%, respectively). Additionally, one third (33%) of students at 2-year colleges are age 25 or older compared to only 6.7% of students at 4-year colleges.

Alcohol Use

More students at 2-year colleges report first consuming alcohol before age 16 than students at 4-year colleges (20% vs 14%). However, 66% of 2-year college students have consumed alcohol in the past year and 14% report binge drinking (consuming 5+ drinks in a 2-hour period at least once over the past 2 weeks), which are both lower than their counterparts at 4-year colleges (73% report consuming alcohol in the past year and 22% report binge-drinking).

Other Drug Use

Similar to alcohol use, more students at 2-year colleges report first using cannabis before age 16 than students at 4-year colleges (12% vs 6.8%). There is little difference between the rates of lifetime cannabis use for students at 2-year versus 4-year colleges (64% and 61%, respectively). However, past year use is much

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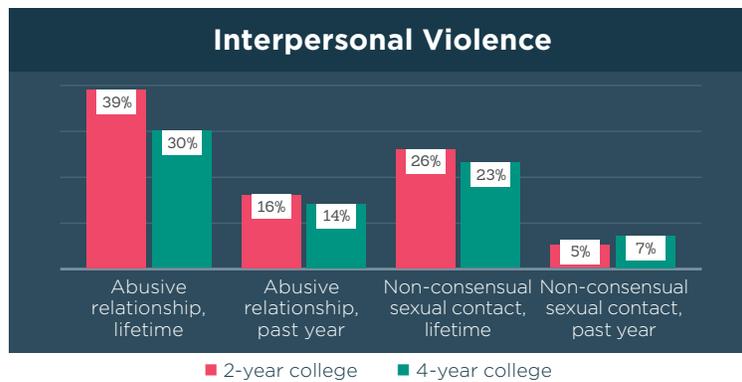
lower among students at 2-year colleges (19%) than at 4-year colleges (30%). Inversely, 19% of students at 2-year colleges report using a CBD (cannabidiol) product in the past year, compared to 17% of students at 4-year colleges.

Rates of any illegal drug use (other than cannabis) and prescription drug misuse in the past year among students at 2 and 4-year colleges are shown in table 1. Regarding tobacco/nicotine use, more students at 2-year colleges report using any type of tobacco/nicotine product in the past year (32%) than students at 4-year colleges (28%). The most common types of tobacco/nicotine products used at 2-year colleges are cigarettes (16%) and e-cigarettes (16%), whereas at 4-year colleges the most commonly used products are JUUL (18%) and e-cigarettes (13.5%).

	Students at 2-Year Colleges	Students at 4-Year Colleges
Any illegal drug use (other than cannabis)	4.3%	6.7%
Rx misuse without a doctor's prescription	6.9%	8.1%
Rx misuse with a valid prescription	4.2%	4.3%

Interpersonal Violence

Students at 2-year colleges report experiences of abusive relationships (both in their lifetime and in the past year) and non-consensual sexual contact at higher rates than students at 4-year colleges. However, the rate of non-consensual sexual contact in the past year is lower among students at 2-year colleges.



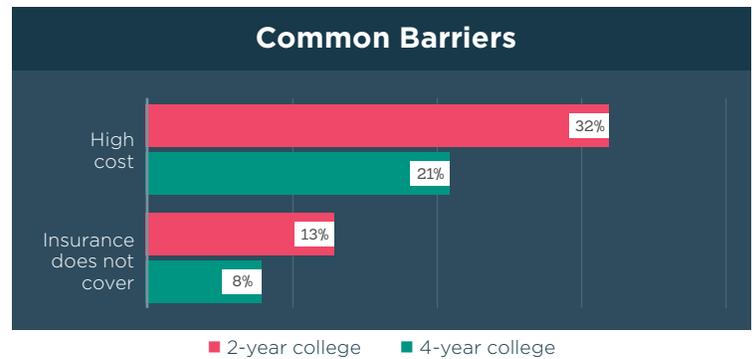
Mental Health and Suicide

More students at 2-year colleges reported that their stress in the past 2 weeks was overwhelming (40%)

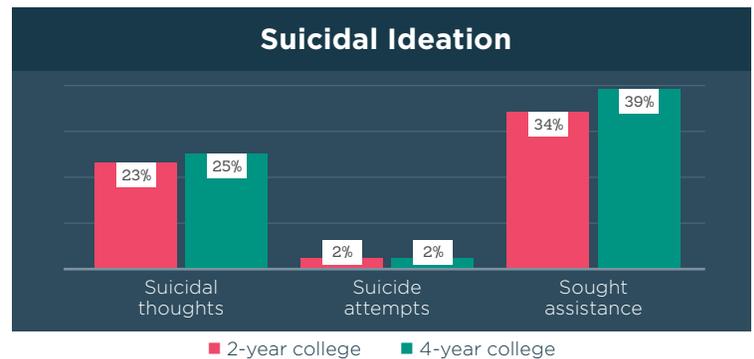
or unbearable (6.2%) than students at 4-year colleges (29% and 5%, respectively). Students also report experiencing common mental health concerns in the past year, which are shown in table 2. Rates are similar among students at 2 and 4-year colleges, with students at 2-year colleges reporting higher levels of major depression, chronic sleep issues, and bipolar disorder.

	Students at 2-Year Colleges	Students at 4-Year Colleges
Anxiety	58%	61%
Major depression	37%	33%
Panic attacks	30%	30%
Chronic sleep issues	26%	22%
Eating disorder	11%	12%
Bipolar disorder	4.5%	3.3%

Students at 2-year colleges reported financial barriers to seeking help for a mental health concern at higher rates than students at 4-year colleges.

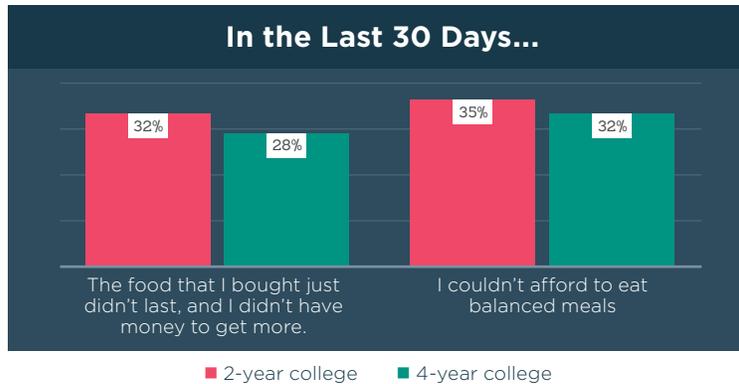


Rates of suicidal thoughts in the past year, suicide attempts in the past year, and assistance seeking for suicidal thoughts or attempts (among those who thought or attempted) are comparable between students at 2-year and 4-year colleges.



Well-being and Flourishing

More students at 2-year colleges reported facing food insecurity than students at 4-year colleges. Students who responded sometimes, usually, or always to the questions in the chart below represent the percentage of students facing food insecurity.



Related to flourishing, the scale in the MACHB survey measures self-perceived success in important areas such as relationships, self-esteem, purpose, and optimism. The scale provides a single psychological well-being score, and a high score represents a person

with many psychological resources and strengths (scores range from 8-56). Students at 2-year colleges report a slightly higher mean flourishing score (46.19) than students at 4-year colleges (46.03).

Summary

Overall, alcohol and other drug use rates are lower among students at 2-year colleges than at 4-year colleges. However, certain health and well-being concerns such as interpersonal violence, mental health concerns, and food insecurity are greater among students at 2-year colleges. For more information about Partners in Prevention and to explore our research, visit pip.missouri.edu.

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

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1. Community College Research Center, Community College FAQ's.
2. Ma, J. & Baum, S. Trends in Community Colleges: Enrollment, Prices, Student Debt, and Completion.