

Tobacco/Nicotine Use Among Missouri College Students

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 28 public and private colleges and universities in the state working to prevent high-risk behaviors by implementing evidence-based strategies, including education, social norming campaigns, policy review and enforcement, and more. This brief includes data for the 23 4-year institutions in the coalition; 2-year campuses participate in a separate version of the survey, and their data is not included in this statewide aggregate. 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 have on student health and wellness. This brief will focus on data related to tobacco/nicotine use collected from the 2025 Missouri Assessment of College Health Behaviors (sample size, N = 5634).

Introduction

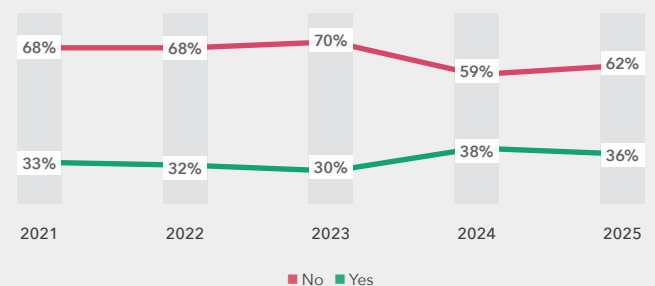
While cigarette smoking has decreased, other forms of tobacco/nicotine use such as e-cigarettes and smokeless tobacco have increased, leading to no significant decreases of overall tobacco/nicotine use within the past few years¹. E-cigarette use is most prevalent within youth and younger adults, an age group in which initiation of tobacco use can result in occasional or daily use^{2,3}. Previously it has been thought that initiation of use commonly began in adolescence but recent research shows that initiation has shifted from youth to young adults⁴. Considering that young adults comprise the majority of the student population of a college, we will examine tobacco/nicotine use trends among Missouri college students from the 2025 MACHB survey.

Tobacco/Nicotine Use

In the MACHB, students are asked to report if they have ever used tobacco/nicotine products and over

the past 5 years, most students say that they have not. However, student report of ever use has increased from 30% in 2023 to approximately 37% in 2024-2025 (Chart 1).

Chart 1: Ever Use of Tobacco/Nicotine Products



Corresponding to ever use, past year use of any tobacco/nicotine product has also increased. There was a decrease in use for years 2021-2023, but rates have risen to 28% in 2025, matching 2020 use (Chart 2). For type of product used, e-cigarettes remain to be the most commonly used product followed

Chart 2: Past Year Use of Any Tobacco/Nicotine Products

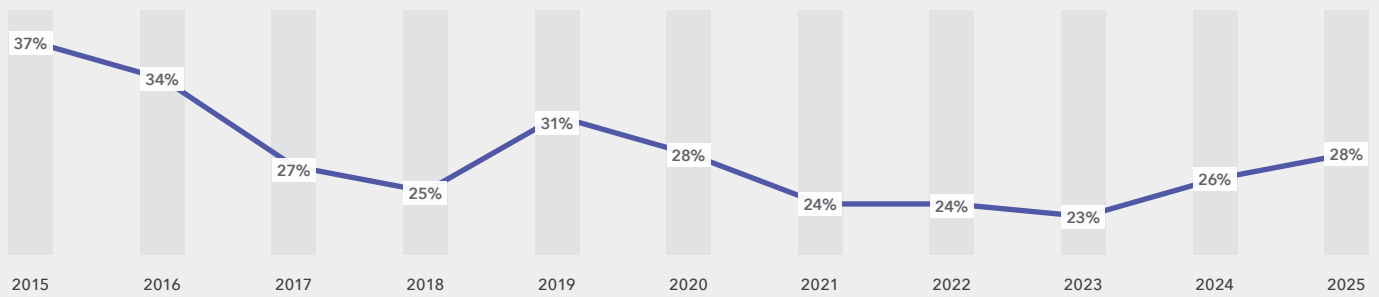
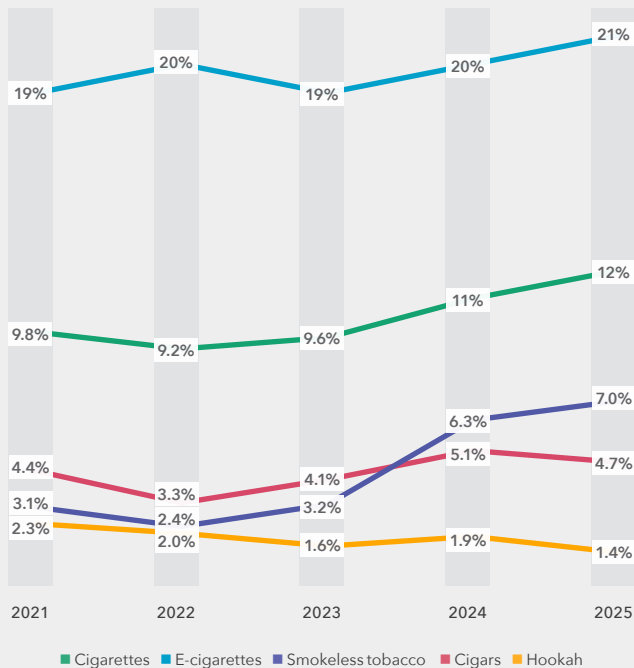


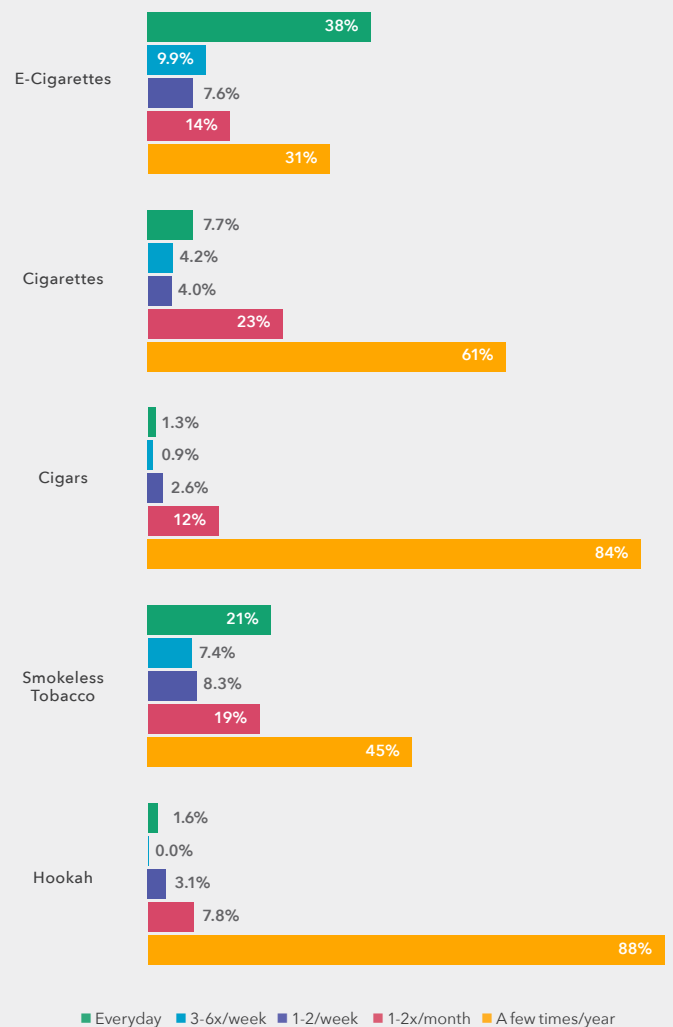
Chart 3: Tobacco Product Trends



by cigarettes. Smokeless tobacco has increased in popularity in 2024-2025 and is the third most popular product surpassing cigars and hookahs (Chart 3).

Students were additionally asked to report frequency of use for all products. Cigarettes (61%), cigars (84%), smokeless tobacco (45%), and hookah (88%) were most reported as being used a few times a year. Products that were reported as being used daily were primarily e-cigarettes (38%) and smokeless tobacco (21%) (Chart 4).

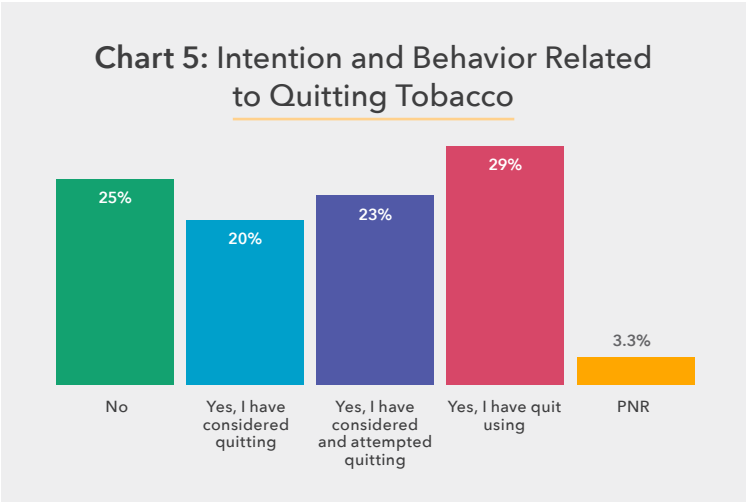
Chart 4: Frequency of Use



Intention to Quit

A combined 72% of students report that they have expressed intention to quit tobacco/nicotine use since entering college compared to 25% of students who have not. 20% of students have considered quitting,

23% have attempted, and 29% have successfully quit using tobacco/nicotine (Chart 5).



When asked to state reasons that contributed to students considering to quit, most say that they don't want to have a habit that they will regret (52%). For other listed reasons, over a third say that they don't want to develop a tobacco-related illness (45%), state that they are no longer interested in using (35%), and/or because tobacco products cost too much (34%) (Table 1).

Table 1: Reasons For Considering Quitting Tobacco/Nicotine Products

I don't want to have a habit I will regret (e.g. being dependent on tobacco/nicotine)	52%
Potential of getting sick or developing a lasting disease	45%
I am not interested in using anymore	35%
Tobacco products cost too much	34%

Table 2 lists the resources that students go to when seeking help for quitting tobacco/nicotine. Most students have not sought assistance for quitting (66%). For students that have sought assistance, 15% sought from family/friends and 6% from online resources. For professional help, 3% report seeing off-camps professionals, with less than 1% seeking help from on-campus resources such as the counseling center (0.5%), health center (0.4%) and wellness center (0.4%).

Table 2: Assistance Sought for Quitting Tobacco

Have not sought assistance	66%
Family/friends	15%
Online resources/Mobile App	6%
Off-campus medical doctor/facility	3%
Campus counseling center/services	0.5%
Campus health center/services	0.4%
Campus wellness center/services	0.4%
Other	2.6%
PNR	13%

Exposure to Secondhand Smoke/Vapors

Most students have reported that they have been exposed to secondhand smoke/vapor from tobacco/nicotine products (71%, Chart 6). When specifying locations that students have been exposed (Table 3), most students have been exposed at social gatherings off-campus (67%), at bar/restaurants (54%), and outdoor public spaces such as parks, on college campuses, sporting events, etc. (50%). Other locations of exposure have been in a friend's car (39%), inside one's own living space (25%) and family living space (23%), in a college building (19%) or in one's own car (17%).

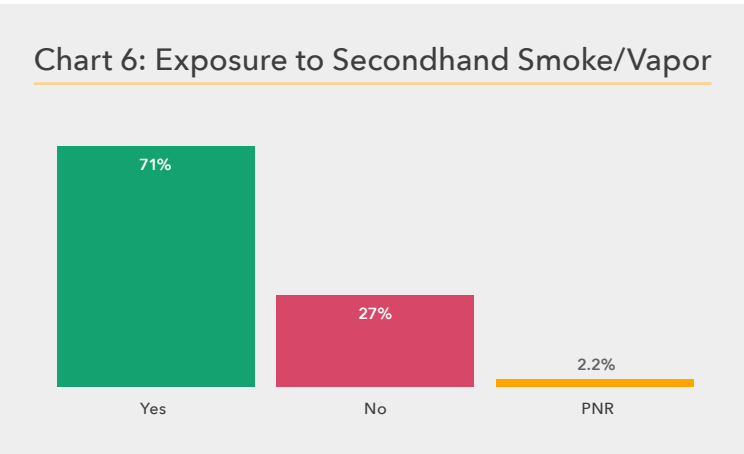


Table 3: Locations of Secondhand Smoke/Vapor Exposure

At a social gathering/friend's house (off-campus)	67%
Bar/restaurant (including outdoor seating/patios)	54%
Outdoor public space (e.g., parks, on a college campus, sporting events, etc)	50%
In a friend's car	39%
My house/my apartment/my room	25%
My family's house/apartment	23%
In a college campus building (e.g., school bathroom, dining hall, residence hall, etc.)	19%
In my own car	17%
Other	3.6%
PNR	1.8%

Tobacco Policy Awareness

Table 4 displays students' awareness of tobacco-free policies. Most students (84%) are aware of their campus of tobacco-free policy, 47% believe that their campus enforces the policies, and 57% believe that their campus is concerned about tobacco/nicotine use.

Table 4: Tobacco Policy Awareness

Aware of policy	84%
Believe that campus is concerned	57%
Believe that policies are enforced	47%

Summary

The 2025 MACHB has revealed that tobacco/nicotine use has been increasing in the last two years, with

e-cigarettes remaining to be the most commonly used product and smokeless tobacco becoming more popular. Despite the increase, most students have reported intentions or have quit tobacco/nicotine use but most have not sought assistance. This calls for the need to provide and increase awareness of cessation resources for students. Campuses may also consider updating tobacco-free policies and discuss enforcement strategies to maintain tobacco-free environments on campuses. Information regarding cessation resources and tobacco prevention can be found on our website.

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

Report prepared by Meekim Nguyen, Missouri Partners in Prevention Coordinator. Data prepared by Meg Mottola, and Kayleigh Greenwood, Missouri Partners in Prevention's research team. Published November 2025.

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