

Suicidality 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 public and private colleges and universities in the state. The campuses in PIP 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. This brief will discuss rates and trends of Missouri college students' suicidal ideation and attempts.

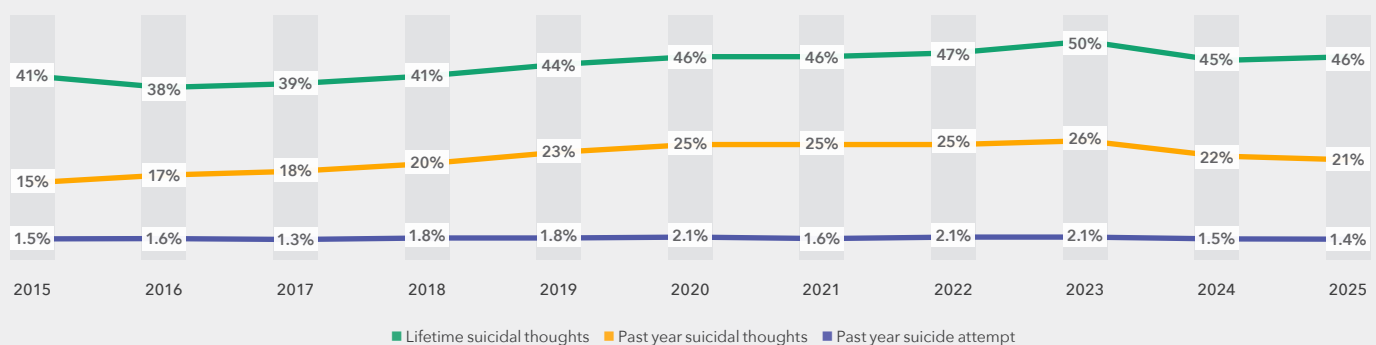
Trends in Suicidal Ideation and Attempts

Reported rates of suicidal ideation (thoughts of suicide) in the lifetime and in the past 12 months have slightly decreased over the past 2 years after hitting a high in 2023, as shown in Chart 1. In 2025, 46% of students reported suicidal thoughts in their lifetime, and around 1 in 5 (21%) reported suicidal thoughts in the past 12 months. Reported rates of suicide attempts in the past 12 months have remained relatively steady, but also decreased to 1.4% in 2025, a low not seen since 2017.

Help-Seeking for Suicidal Thoughts and Attempts

Among those who reported suicidal thoughts or attempts in the past 12 months, 37% sought assistance for their thoughts/attempt(s). The highest percentages of students reported primarily seeking assistance from family/friends (52%), an off-campus mental health center (44%), their college/university counseling services (29%) or an off-campus medical doctor (29%).

Chart 1: Suicidal Ideation



Students who reported not seeking assistance were asked about barriers that stop them from seeking help* (shown in Table 1). The most common reasons that contribute to students not seeking assistance are related to not thinking they need assistance (50%), concerns related to stigma - such as feeling shame (32%) or fear of judgment from others (23%), not feeling that it's helpful (27%), along with fears of hospitalization (32%), and concerns related to cost or lack of insurance coverage (22%).

Table 1: What are the Barriers that Stop you From Seeking Assistance?

I do not think I need any assistance	50%
I feel shame	32%
I have a fear of hospitalization	32%
It is not helpful	27%
I am afraid people will judge me	23%
The cost is too expensive/my insurance does not cover it	22%
I do not know any resources	8.6%
The waiting list is too long	7.9%
I do not have health insurance	6.3%

Encouraging Help-Seeking

Thirty-three percent (33%) of Missouri college students have been concerned about a friend having suicidal thoughts or exhibiting suicidal behaviors in the past 12 months. Sixty-three percent (63%) of students say they would likely or very likely bring up the topic of suicide with someone they think is at risk, and 85% would refer someone who says they are thinking of suicide to a resource. Additionally, 82% of students are also familiar with the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, a free and confidential resource available 24/7. Students are also asked to report if they would want a peer to do something if the person thought they were in danger of harming themselves, and 83% of students agreed or strongly agreed.

Suicide Prevention Training

Half (50%) of students indicated that they would be willing to complete an online suicide prevention training. Additionally, 29% of students reported that they had heard of Ask. Listen. Refer. which is a free online suicide prevention training available to colleges and universities in Missouri to help students, faculty, and staff learn to help prevent suicide.

Summary

As suicide is currently the second leading cause of death among college-aged individuals (18-24) it is vital to address the mental health needs and suicidality of Missouri college students. It is also important to promote help-seeking behaviors and work to eliminate barriers that may prevent students from seeking assistance. Encouraging active bystander behaviors and equipping students to have conversations about suicide (including how to refer others to resources) are evidence-based strategies that can also increase help seeking. For more information about a comprehensive approach to suicide prevention, [visit the Suicide Prevention Resource Center](#).

Resources

Ask. Listen. Refer.

Ask.Listen.Refer.(ALR) is a free online suicide prevention training program for colleges and universities. During the 20-minute ALR training program, participants learn about signs and symptoms of suicidal behavior, common myths about suicide, how to ask if someone is considering suicide, and how to make trauma-informed resource referrals. Participants are given a pre and post-test to evaluate knowledge, attitudes, and willingness to intervene. [Find the training at asklistenrefer.org](#).

Engage

Engage is a multi-level violence prevention program, created by Missouri Partners in Prevention with support from the Missouri Department of Health and Senior

Services Office on Women's Health in collaboration with the Missouri Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence. Engage frames bystander behavior within the context of community connection and sense of belonging and covers 4 primary topics, 1) alcohol and other substance use, 2) bias and discrimination, 3) interpersonal violence, and 4) mental well-being and suicide. [Click here for more information about Engage!](#)

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

The 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline is free, confidential, and available 24/7. Anyone can access 988 via call or text, or via chatting online at 988lifeline.org. People can use 988 if they are thinking of suicide, struggling with mental health or substance use crises, or any other kind of emotional distress. People can also dial 988 if they are worried about a loved one who may need crisis support. [Learn more about 988 here!](#)

Missouri 988

[Missouri 988](#) also has a [storefront](#) where promotional items can be ordered for free. SAMHSA also has a [988 toolkit](#) and [order form for print materials](#).

The Crisis Text Line

The Crisis Text Line (text MOSAFE to 741-741) is also a 24/7 digital resource for anyone experiencing issues such as anxiety, depression, eating disorders, thoughts of suicide, and more. [Learn more about the Crisis Text Line here!](#)

Missouri Suicide Prevention Resources

The Missouri Suicide Prevention Network

The Missouri Suicide Prevention Network (MSPN) is MSPN is an independent, non-partisan, voluntary group of individuals, organizations, and agencies (public and private) who lead statewide suicide prevention efforts. This group crafts the [Missouri Suicide Prevention Plan](#), which has recently been updated for the 2024-2028 timeframe. The plan includes 3 primary goals, 1) raise public awareness about suicide risk and prevention, 2) support community-led efforts to promote suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention care, and 3) help diverse groups and organizations create suicide prevention programs, systems, and policies. Every Missourian plays a role in preventing suicide and the Missouri Suicide Prevention Plan is for those who want to learn about our state's efforts for preventing suicide at the community level. [Learn more about MSPN here!](#)

The Suicide Prevention & 988 Guide for Schools

The Suicide Prevention & 988 Guide for Schools which was developed by MSPN to help school personnel utilize suicide prevention, intervention, and crisis response services along with postvention resources to better address and meet the needs of schools across the state. While primarily geared towards elementary through high schools, there is a higher education consideration section and can be helpful for parents, coalitions, and more. [View the guide here!](#)

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*question is select all that apply

**question is select up to 2

