

Key Findings from the 2019 Missouri Assessment of College Health Behaviors

Partners in Prevention (PIP) is Missouri's higher education substance abuse consortium dedicated to creating healthy and safe college campuses. The coalition is comprised of 21 public and private college and universities in the state. The campuses in the coalition work to lower high-risk behaviors by implementing strategic plans for prevention which include evidence-based strategies. These strategies include 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, drugs (illegal and prescription), tobacco, interpersonal violence, and mental health issues have on student health and wellness.

The following are key findings from the 2019 MACHB

Alcohol Use

Seventy-four percent (74%) of Missouri college students report using alcohol in the past year, and 61% report using in the past month. The percentage of students who report binge-drinking (consuming 5 or more drinks in a two hour period) at least once in the past two weeks declined to 23% in 2019 from 25% in 2018 and is below the national average of around 38%. Of students who binge-drink, approximately 6.5% are frequent binge drinkers, defined as binge-drinking 3+ times in the past two weeks. One critical behavior to monitor is pre-gaming (or pre-partying) which is consuming alcohol before a social event. Pre-gaming is associated with higher levels of intoxication and a greater likelihood of experiencing negative consequences of alcohol use and is an important behavior to monitor among college students. Most students (61%) report pre-gaming and consume a mean of 2.7 drinks when pre-gaming.

Underage Alcohol Use

The majority of Missouri college students (71%) report that they first started drinking before age 21. Sixty-six percent (66%) of underage Missouri college students

report consuming alcohol in the past year and 21% of underage students report binge-drinking in the past two weeks. Underage students report that they obtain alcohol in a variety of ways, the most common being from an over 21 friend (47%) or from parents (11%)*.

Concerning Alcohol-Related Behaviors and Consequences

The MACHB tracks negative consequences and related behaviors of alcohol use. Of Missouri college students, 14% report driving after drinking and 21% report riding in a car with someone who had been drinking at least once in the past year. However, only 0.5% of students report being arrested for DUI/DWI in the past year. Other concerning consequences of alcohol use include having a hangover (46%), experiencing a "blackout" or memory loss (24%), being forced, pressured, or coerced to drink more (13%), engaging in risky sexual behavior (12%), being hurt or injured (9.3%), and having alcohol poisoning (4.7%) at least once in the past year. Alcohol use also impacts students' academics and 14% report missing class due to alcohol use and 7.6% report performing poorly on a test or assignment.

Marijuana

Marijuana is the most commonly used drug by Missouri college students after alcohol. The percentage of

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students who report using marijuana in the past year remained steady from 2018 to 2019 at 29%, but has risen from 22% in 2014. In 2019, approximately 9.4% of students report using marijuana at least once per week. This year, questions were added to determine reasons for using marijuana and negative consequences of use, which will be discussed in a separate brief in this volume. Of students who report using marijuana, 35% report driving after use at least once in the past year. The majority of students (90%) perceive that their peers have used marijuana at least once in the past year, while the reality is that 71% of students have not. Among students who use, almost one quarter (23%) are currently trying to use less or quit using marijuana altogether.

Illegal and Prescription Drugs

Illegal and prescription drug use are of concern among college students and are associated with adverse academic and health outcomes. Nine and a half percent (9.5%) of students report using at least one illegal drug (not including marijuana) in the past year. Missouri college students report using illegal drugs at the following rates: hallucinogens/club drugs (ecstasy, LSD, mushrooms, PCP, etc.): 5%, cocaine: 3.6%, K2/synthetic marijuana: 3.3%, inhalants: 0.8%, methamphetamines: 0.5%, and heroin: 0.2%.

Approximately 9.3% of Missouri college students report prescription drug use without a doctor's prescription in the past year. Additionally, 5% of students with a valid prescription report using in a manner other than prescribed in the past year. Of students who report misuse of either type, 37% have combined them with alcohol at least once which can have serious health effects. Use of prescription drugs without a prescription were reported at the following rates: stimulants: 5.5%, pain medications: 3.5%, benzodiazepines/sedatives: 2.0%, and sleeping medications: 1.5%.

Tobacco

Most Missouri college students (69%) have not used any tobacco products in the past year. In 2019, JUUL (a type of e-cigarette) was an option added to the responses based on an increase in usage among youth. With this added option, the rate of students using

tobacco products increased for the first time in recent years, from 25% in 2018 to 31% in 2019. Of the 31% of Missouri college students who have used tobacco, the most common forms used are JUULs (19%) cigarettes (12%), e-cigarettes (10%), cigars (8.1%), and hookah (5.9%). Additionally, 37% of students who use tobacco have tried to quit using since entering college.

Interpersonal Violence

Approximately 22% of Missouri college students have experienced non-consensual sexual contact in their lifetime, and 7.0% have experienced it in the past year. Of all sexual assaults, 35% occurred while the student was attending their current college or university. The majority of assaults occurred off-campus and not related to university events (58%) or on-campus in residence halls (30%). In the past year, 14% of students have experienced abuse in a relationship (e.g. verbal, physical, psychological, etc.).

Well-Being and Mental Health

Missouri college students self-report experiencing issues related to mental health in the past year, the most common being anxiety (57%), major depression (31%), panic attacks (28%), and chronic sleep issues (20%).* Of students who report experiencing a mental health concern, 37% did not seek assistance. The most common reported reasons for not seeking assistance were 'I do not think I need assistance' (63%), 'I am afraid people will judge me' (30%) and 'the cost is too expensive/insurance does not cover it' (23%).

In the past year, 23% of students have had suicidal thoughts and 1.8% attempted suicide. For those who had thoughts or attempts, 37% have sought assistance. Additionally, 47% of Missouri college students have been concerned about a friend having suicidal thoughts or exhibiting behaviors in the past year.

Positive Behavior Changes

The rate of students who report drinking and driving continues to decline (14% in 2019 vs 24% in 2013), as does the rate of students who have ridden with a drinking driver (21% in 2019 vs 30% in 2013). High-risk alcohol use behaviors such as binge-drinking and underage binge drinking have all decreased from 2018 (25% to 23%, and 23% to 21%, respectively). The

rate of students who use prescription drugs without a doctor's prescription continues to decline as well (9.3% in 2019 vs 15% in 2013).

Summary

Partners in Prevention continues to monitor critical health issues of college students including high-risk drinking, marijuana and other drug use, mental health, interpersonal violence, and tobacco use, and works to change the high-risk behaviors of college students

on Missouri campuses. Data consistently shows that student success and academic achievement is impacted by substance misuse, and prevention efforts are vital to the mission of institutions of higher education. For more information about Partners in Prevention and to explore our research, visit pip.missouri.edu.

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