

# Key Findings from the 2017 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 the implementation of approaches to address the riskiest behaviors on campus. 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 implemented each spring since 2007. The survey assesses the role that alcohol, drugs (illegal and prescription), tobacco, interpersonal violence, and mental health issues have on student health and wellness.

## Alcohol Use

Seventy-six (76%) of Missouri college students report using alcohol in the past year, and 63% report using in the past month. The percentage of students who report binge-drinking (consume 5 or more drinks in a two hour period) at least once in the past two weeks rose in 2017 from 24.5% to 27%, but is still below the national average of around 38%. Of students who binge-drink, approximately 8% are frequent binge drinkers, defined as binge-drinking 3+ times in the past two weeks.

## Underage Alcohol Use

While alcohol is illegal for those under age 21, 68% of underage Missouri college students report consuming alcohol in the past year and 24.5% of underage students report binge-drinking in the past two weeks. The majority of students (72%) report that they first started drinking before age 21. Underage students report that they obtain alcohol in a variety of ways, the most common being from an over 21 friend.

## Concerning Alcohol-Related Behaviors and Consequences

One of the most concerning behaviors regarding alcohol use among the college population is drinking and driving. Of Missouri college students, 17% report driving after drinking at least once in the past year

and 23% report riding in a car with someone who had been drinking at least once in the past year. However, only 0.7% of students report being arrested for DUI/DWI in the past year. Other concerning consequences of alcohol use include being hurt or injured (9.9%), engaging in risky sexual behavior (13%), being forced or coerced to drink more (15%), experiencing a "blackout" (26%), and having alcohol poisoning (4.6%) at least once in the past year.\*

## Marijuana

Marijuana is the most commonly used drug by Missouri college students after alcohol. Approximately 28% of students have used marijuana in the past year, and 8.4% use at least once per week. Of students who report using, 5% report driving at least once after using marijuana in the past year. Interestingly, the majority of students (86%) perceive that their peers have used marijuana at least once in the past year, while the reality is that 70% of students have not.

## Illegal and Prescription Drugs

Illegal and prescription drug use are of concern among college students and are associated with adverse academic and health outcomes. Approximately 12% of students report using at least one illegal drug (not including marijuana) in the past year. Missouri college students report use at the following rates:

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hallucinogens: 4.4%, cocaine: 3.9%, amphetamines: 3.1%, club drugs: 2.2%, heroin: 0.4%, and inhalants: 0.9%

Approximately 12% of Missouri college students report prescription drug use without a doctor's prescription in the past year. Of those students, 37% have combined them with alcohol at least once and 31% report driving after use. While not all prescription drugs impair driving, many common prescription drugs can cause reactions that may affect an individual's ability to drive. Usage rates of various prescription drugs areas follows: stimulants: 8.1%, pain medications: 4.4%, benzodiazepines: 3.6%, sleeping medications: 1.3%, and sedatives: 0.7%,

### **Tobacco**

Most Missouri college students (73%) have not used any tobacco products in the past year. Of those who have used (27%) the most common forms of tobacco used are cigarettes (15%), cigars (10%), hookah (9%) and e-cigarettes (7.7%). Over half of students who use tobacco (64%) have tried quitting since entering college but the majority of those (68%) have not sought assistance (i.e. at the University Health Center or off-campus doctor). Of all Missouri college students, 79% believe that their university should have smoke-free outdoor areas.

### **Interpersonal Violence**

Around 18% of Missouri college students have experienced non-consensual sexual contact in their lifetime, and 6% have experienced it in the past year. Of all sexual assaults, 34% occurred while the student was attending their current college or university. The majority of assaults occur on-campus (41%) or off-campus and not related to university events (56%). In the past year, 13% of students have experienced abuse in a relationship (e.g. verbal, physical, psychological, etc.) and 7.3% of students report being stalked.

### **Well-Being and Mental Health**

Missouri college students self-report experiencing issues related to mental health, the most common being major depression (25%), anxiety (49%), panic attacks (22%), and chronic sleep issues (17%). Of students who report experiencing these issues, 42% did not seek assistance. Approximately 6.2% of Missouri college students do not feel that they can go to anyone on campus when personal concerns arise.

In the past year, 18% of students have had suicidal thoughts, 37% have sought assistance for those thoughts, and 36% have been concerned about a friend having suicidal thoughts or exhibiting behaviors.

### **Positive Behavior Changes**

While there are significant concerns related to student health and wellness based on the responses in the MACHB, there are certain behaviors that have improved. For instance, the rate of students who report drinking and driving decreased from 25% in 2013 to the current 17%. Additionally, Missouri college students are more empowered to seek help for mental health concerns at their University Counseling center, an increase from 26% in 2013 to 48% in 2017. There has also been an increase in positive bystander behaviors from 2016 to 2017, including "telling someone if I heard neighbors fighting" (26% to 35%), get help if I saw a friend grabbing, pushing or insulting their partner" (42% to 56%), "speak up and express concern if I heard a stranger talking about coercing someone to have sex" (38% to 55%) and "speak up and express concern if I heard a friend talking about coercing someone to have sex" (56% to 64%). These changes in positive behavior indicate that initiatives aimed at reducing high-risk behaviors and encouraging positive behaviors are successful.

## **Summary**

Partners in Prevention continues to address the high-risk behaviors of Missouri college students through evidence-based practices and effective coalition work. Using multi-faceted approaches that target individual behaviors as well as environmental management, colleges and universities across the state are able to provide education and programming designed to influence student behavior. More information and best practices regarding each of the topics addressed in this research brief can be found at [pip.missouri.edu](http://pip.missouri.edu) under "Prevention Toolbox" in the related category.

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\*Answer is select all that apply

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