

Anxiety, Stress, and Suicide

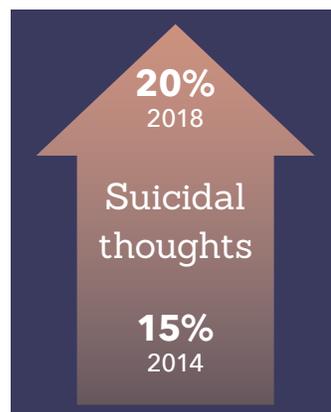
Partners in Prevention (PIP) is a statewide coalition of 21 public and private colleges and universities in Missouri with the mission of building safe and healthy campuses. PIP tracks students' high-risk behaviors and behaviors that promote health and wellness through the annual implementation of the Missouri Assessment of College Health Behaviors (MACHB) survey. By examining student mental health concerns, PIP can track the overall wellbeing of Missouri college students. This brief focuses on trends in suicidal thoughts, anxiety, and stress over the past five years in Missouri college students.

Introduction

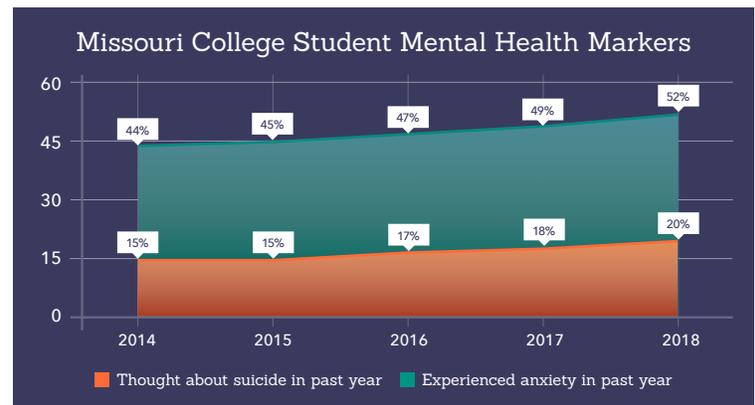
According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, suicide rates among the American public have risen significantly since 1999. Specifically during this time period, Missouri has persistently ranked among the highest with a 36% increase. Furthermore, suicide is the second highest cause of death in individuals ages 15-24.¹ College students are in a particularly high risk group when it comes to dying by suicide. It is critical for college administrators, faculty, staff, and students to understand how to assist those who are contemplating suicide so that they are able to get the assistance they need.

Missouri College Students' Suicidal Thoughts

According to the MACHB, rates of suicidal thoughts and experiences of anxiety have increased over the past five years, which follows the trends reported by the CDC. In Missouri, the rate of students who reported experiencing anxiety in the past year has increased from 44% in 2014 to 52% in 2018. Similarly, the percentage of students who report having suicidal thoughts in the past year has increased from 15%

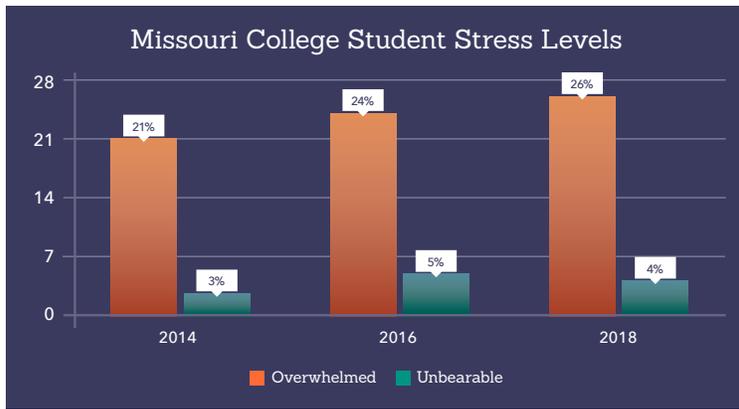


in 2014 to 20% in 2018. At the intersection of stress and anxiety in 2018, 49% of students who thought about suicide in the past year also experienced anxiety.



Stress Levels

Every two years, students who take the MACHB are asked to report their stress levels over the past two weeks. From 2014 to 2018, there has been an increase in students who report feeling both overwhelmed and that their stress is unbearable. Current students report feeling overwhelmed at a rate of 26%, which is higher than their 2014 peers (21%). This remains true for the students who report feeling that their stress is unbearable with an increase from 2.7% in 2014 to 4.2% in 2018. This specific data is collected on a bi-yearly basis, and therefore it is important to continue to watch this trend as stress, anxiety, and suicidal thoughts continue to rise.



Programs and Education

Ask. Listen. Refer.

Ask. Listen. Refer. is a free, statewide online suicide prevention training program designed to train and educate students, faculty, staff, and other members of college and university campuses across Missouri. The program trains individuals to 1) identify people at risk for suicide 2) recognize the risk factors, protective factors, and warning signs of suicide, and 3) respond to and get help for people at risk. Learn more and complete the training at asklistenrefer.org.



RESPOND

While RESPOND training is not offered specifically through Partners in Prevention, it is a recommended

training for PIP institutions. It is an 8 hour, in person training that empowers participants to recognize and effectively support and refer a person experiencing a mental health challenge or crisis. If you are interested in more information about how your mental health center can license RESPOND, contact us at pip@missouri.edu or, contact Christy Hutton at huttoncc@missouri.edu.

Additional PIP Resources

PIP offers a wide range of resources about suicide prevention. Information offered includes multiple data briefs, best practices for suicide prevention, national resources, additional research, and poster campaigns. This can be found in our suicide prevention WIKI, which can be found at pip.missouri.edu/topics/suicide.html.

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

Report Prepared by Erica Braham, graduate research assistant. Data prepared by Dan Reilly, research coordinator, Dong Ding, graduate research assistant, Erica Braham, graduate research assistant, and Alex Swanson, graduate research assistant.

References

1. <https://www.cdc.gov/vitalsigns/suicide/index.html>

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