

Hazing in Collegiate Organizations

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 colleges and universities in the state that work to decrease high-risk behaviors among college students by implementing strategic plans for prevention which include evidence-based strategies. To measure progress and obtain data, PIP implements the Missouri Assessment of College Health Behaviors (MACHB) Survey. The MACHB is an annual, online survey implemented each spring to assess the roles that alcohol, drugs (illegal and prescription), tobacco, interpersonal violence, and mental health issues have on student health and wellness. The 2018 MACHB included a new set of questions regarding hazing, defined as any activity expected of someone joining or participating in a group that humiliates, degrades, abuses, or endangers them regardless of a person's willingness to participate.¹ Past MACHB surveys have included a question about being forced, pressured, or coerced to drink more alcohol than an individual wanted to.

National Data

National data indicates that over half (55%) of students involved in organizations experience hazing, but that 95% of them did not report the hazing to campus officials. The reasons given for not reporting were that they didn't want to get the group in trouble (37%), they were afraid of negative consequences from the group or specific members (20%), and they were afraid members of the group would find out who reported it and they would be an outsider (14%). Additionally, 9 in 10 students who experience hazing behaviors do not consider themselves to have been hazed.¹

Acts of Hazing

The questions in table 1 were added to the 2018 MACHB asking students to self-report if the following acts were expected within an organization as a condition of joining or participating.

These acts are reported as an expectation of joining the group, and do not indicate the rates at which individual students may or may not have participated in or been required to engage in the reported activities. Among Missouri college students who indicated participating in an organization, 92% reported that their organization

Acts expected within an organization as a condition of joining or participating [Table 1]	
Participate in a drinking game	2.5%
Drink large amounts of a non-alcoholic beverage	1.0%
Sing or chant by self or with select others of groups in public (not related to an event, game, or practice)	3.2%
Associate with specific people and not others	1.7%
Drink large amounts of alcohol to the point of getting sick or passing out	0.9%
Deprive yourself of sleep	2.4%
Be screamed, yelled, or cursed at by other members	1.5%
Be awakened during the night by other members	1.2%
Attend a skit or roast where other members of the group are humiliated	0.9%
Endure harsh weather conditions without appropriate clothing	0.6%
Perform unwanted sex acts	0.1%
Forced physical activity	1.1%
Personal servitude	0.5%
Wear clothing that is embarrassing and not part of a uniform	0.6%
None of the above	92%
I prefer not to respond	4.3%

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did not expect any of the listed activities. The activities with the highest rates were: sing or chant by self or with select others not related to an event, game, or practice (3.2%), participate in a drinking game (2.5%) and deprive yourself of sleep (2.4%).

Among students who indicated that one of the listed activities was expected of group members, 77% considered the activity to humiliate, degrade, abuse or endanger them/someone else regardless of a person's willingness to participate. Only 17% of students did not consider the activities to be harmful, and 6.6% of students preferred not to respond.

The overall reported rates of hazing behaviors were very low, and we are unable to look at reported rates of these acts in specific groups as students involved in multiple organizations were not asked to indicate in which organization an act occurred.

Forced to Consume Alcohol

According to the MACHB 2018, 12% of Missouri college students report being forced, pressured, or coerced to drink more alcohol than they wanted to at least once in the past year. This number has remained fairly consistent over the past few years, but did decrease in 2018. This specific question is asked of all students, not just of students who participate in campus organizations, and the coercive behavior may or may not have occurred as part of such a membership. While this rate has been decreasing, the range on individual campuses is from 7.6% to 22%.

Forced, pressured, or coerced to drink more alcohol than I wanted to

2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
16.2%	14.0%	16.0%	15.0%	12.0%

Conclusion

Statewide rates of students reporting that organizations perform at least one type of hazing are low, but the range among individual campuses is from 4% to 16%. It is possible that Missouri's statewide data indicates under-reporting or a lack of recognition of hazing behaviors among college students. A vast majority (over 75%) of students indicated that these acts were detrimental to participants and although students may not specifically label an act as hazing, these acts are frequently associated with negative outcomes. Students may experience hazing in a variety of settings, such as their extracurricular organizations, but further analysis is needed to determine which organizations practice hazing at higher rates.

StopHazing is an organization committed to promoting safe school, campus, and organizational climates. Resources for campuses such as the Hazing Prevention Framework can be found at stophazing.org.

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

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References

1. Allan, E.J., & Madden, M. (2008). Hazing in View: College Students at Risk. Initial Findings from the National Study of Student Hazing.

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