

# Interpersonal Violence on Missouri College Campuses

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 who work to lower high-risk behaviors by implementing strategic plans for prevention utilizing evidence-based strategies. 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. This brief will focus on students' experiences of interpersonal violence, which includes non-consensual sexual contact and relationship abuse. Approximately 9,700 Missouri college students responded to the 2019 MACHB survey, and the breakdown of gender was 59% female, 40% male, 1.6% individuals who identify as transgender, gender-queer, or self-identify their gender, and 1.3% prefer not to respond (question is select all that apply).

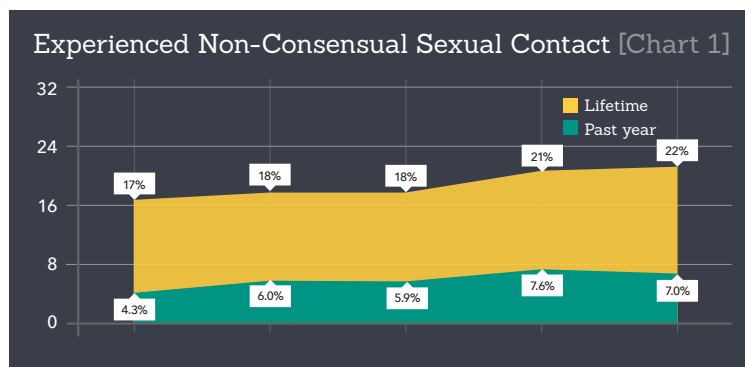
## Relationship Abuse

According to the 2019 MACHB survey, 29% of Missouri college students report experiencing any abuse (verbal, sexual, physical, psychological, financial, or other abuse) in an intimate relationship in their lifetime and 14% of students report experiencing abuse in the past year. Among individuals who experienced relationship abuse in the past year, 70% were females, 28% were males and 3.3% were individuals who identify as transgender, gender-queer, or self-identify their gender\*. In regards to sexual orientation, students who experienced abuse were predominately heterosexual (77%).

## Non-Consensual Sexual Contact

Approximately 22% of Missouri college students have experienced non-consensual sexual contact (NCSC) in their lifetime and 7% have experienced NCSC in the past year. In 2019, approximately 7.7% of students report that the NCSC occurred while they were attending their current institution. Reports of experiencing NCSC in the lifetime and in the past year have increased since 2015, as shown in chart 1. While this could be due to an increase in perpetration, it could also be due to

awareness of what constitutes non-consensual sexual contact, greater comfort and ability in reporting, and a cultural shift around the issue, including movements such as #MeToo.



Most students who experienced non-consensual sexual contact while attending their college or university experienced it off-campus and not related to university activities (58%) or on-campus in a residence hall building (30%).\*

Of students who experienced NCSC in the past year, 78% were female, 20% were male, and 2.6% were individuals who identify as transgender, gender-queer, or self-identify their gender\*.

# Intersection of Abuse, Non-Consensual Sexual Contact, and Mental Health

The MACHB allows us to examine the multiple experiences of students that may impact each other, such as experiences of trauma (e.g. abuse, non-consensual sexual contact) and mental health. However, we are not able to determine causality, and these mental health concerns may have been present before the abuse or NCSC occurred.

Students who experienced relationship abuse in the past year were more likely to have experienced NCSC in the past year than students who reported no abuse (54% vs 46%). Students who reported experiencing abuse or NCSC in the past year also reported higher rates of experiencing certain mental concerns than their peers, shown in the table below.

	Experienced abuse, past year	Did not experience abuse	Experienced NCSC, past year	Did not experience NCSC
Major Depression	55%	27%	58%	29%
Anxiety	78%	54%	77%	56%
Chronic sleep issues	36%	17%	40%	18%
Panic Attacks	50%	24%	53%	26%
Self-injury	15%	4.2%	21%	4.7%

The question on the MACHB that asks students to report which mental health concerns they have experienced in the past year includes 'abusive relationship' and 'sexual assault' as options. For students who indicated experiencing sexual assault, 66% report that they sought assistance, and for

students who experienced an abusive relationship, 69% sought assistance. However, it is possible that these students also reported experiencing another type of mental health concern (e.g. anxiety, depression) and sought assistance for that concern and may not have directly sought assistance for sexual assault or an abusive relationship. Among students who experienced sexual assault or an abusive relationship and sought assistance, the most common sources of assistance were from friends and family, the University Counseling Center, or an off-campus medical doctor.

## Summary

Almost one third of Missouri college students report experiencing an abusive relationship in their lifetime, and around one fifth have experienced non-consensual sexual contact. Campuses must work to create environments that prevent interpersonal violence and support students who have experienced abusive relationships or non-consensual sexual contact. Students who experience interpersonal violence are more likely to report experiencing mental health concerns, further impacting their health and well-being and showing a need for mental health services that are trauma-informed. Visit [pip.missouri.edu/topics/personal.html](http://pip.missouri.edu/topics/personal.html) to find information on best practices and resources.

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

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\*Select all that apply