At a Glance: Misperceptions of Substance Use

Perceptions hold importance and tend to drive behavior. A person may behave differently or use a substance at a different rate than they otherwise would if they perceive substance use to be common. In the following document, the misperception is the percentage of Missouri college students that reported they thought other students use certain substances. The reality is the percentage of Missouri college students who actually use certain substances.

Alcohol

**Drinks on a typical night of drinking**

- **Misperception**: 3.81 drinks consumed
- **Reality**: 2.13 drinks consumed

**Missouri college student alcohol consumption**

- **Misperception**: 98% consume alcohol
- **Reality**: 70% consume alcohol

JUUL

- **Misperception**: JUULing is safer than cigarette smoking and other tobacco products
- **Reality**: JUULing is not safer than cigarette smoking and other tobacco products. The amount of nicotine in one JUUL pod is equivalent to a pack of cigarettes. Juuls are likely to create an enormous increase in young people addicted to nicotine.

- **Smoking 1 JUUL pod is the same as smoking 20 cigarettes**

Cannabis

**Consumed cannabis 1-2 times/month**

- **Misperception**: 30%
- **Reality**: 4.7%

**Have never consumed cannabis**

- **Misperception**: 7.2%
- **Reality**: 62%

This data is taken from the 2019 Missouri Assessment of College Health Behaviors survey (N=9752), implemented at 21 institutions of higher education in the state. For more information on the survey please visit [pip.missouri.edu/research.html](http://pip.missouri.edu/research.html)

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