

Illicit Drug Use and Drugs of Concern

Partners in Prevention (PIP) is Missouri's higher education substance misuse consortium dedicated to creating healthy and safe college campuses. The coalition is comprised of 26 public and private colleges and universities in the state. This brief includes data for the 23 4-year institutions in the coalition; 2-year campuses participate in a separate version of the survey, and their data is not included in this statewide aggregate. The campuses in the coalition work to prevent high-risk behaviors by implementing evidence-based strategies including education, social norming campaigns, policy review and enforcement, and more. 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. The survey assesses the roles that alcohol, cannabis, other drugs (illegal and prescription), tobacco/nicotine, interpersonal violence, and mental health concerns have on student health and well-being. This brief will focus on use of illicit drugs and drugs of concern (drugs that may be legal to obtain/purchase but that still constitute drug use). The following are findings from the 2024 MACHB survey (N= 4,956).

Prevalence

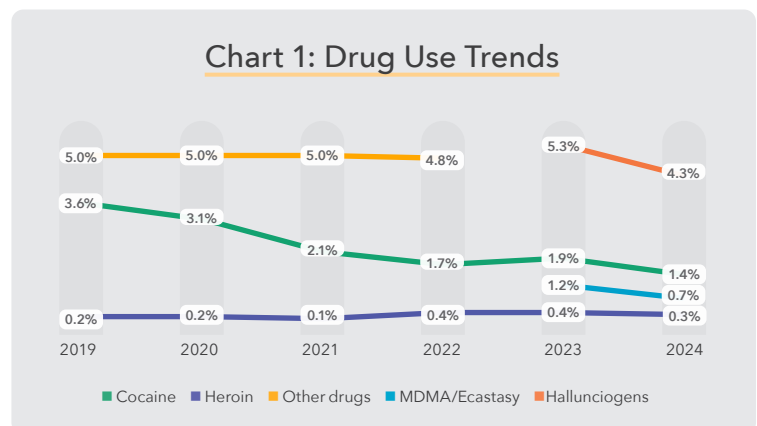
The 2024 MACHB asks students to report past year use (at least once) of the following drugs: cocaine, heroin, MDMA (ecstasy, molly), hallucinogens (mushrooms/psilocybin, LSD, PCP, etc.), or delta-8 THC (a less potent cannabinoid than delta-9 THC that can be extracted from hemp or cannabis)*. Approximately 13% of Missouri college students report using at least one of these drugs in the past year. Individual rates of use for the various drug categories are shown below in Table 1.

Table 1: Past Year Drug Use

	At least once in the past year:
Cocaine	1.4%
Heroin	0.3%
MDMA (ecstasy, molly)	0.7%
Hallucinogens (mushrooms/psilocybin, LSD, PCP, etc.)	4.3%
Delta-8 THC	11%
Any use in the past year	13%

Drug Use Trends

The MACHB has consistently asked about past year use of cocaine and heroin but has alternated questions year to year about other drug categories. Typically the 'other' drug category has primarily comprised hallucinogens & MDMA/club drugs, until 2023 when those 2 categories were separated. Trend data for the use of cocaine, heroin, combined 'other drug' category until 2022, and then separate MDMA/ecstasy and hallucinogens categories in 2023 & 2024 are shown in Chart 1. Overall, reported use rates of



cocaine have decreased since 2019 and heroin use rates have remained low.

Alcohol & Cannabis Use Related to Drug Use

MACHB data shows that students who consume alcohol in high-risk ways, including binge drinking (consuming 5 or more drinks for men or 4 or more drinks for women in a 2-hour period at least once in the past 2 weeks) along with students who have used cannabis in the past year were more likely to have used illicit drugs/drugs of concern in the past year (shown in Chart 2). There appears to be a correlation between high-risk alcohol use, cannabis use, and other drug use.

Summary

Partners in Prevention continues to monitor the alcohol and other drug use behaviors of Missouri college students. While rates of illicit drug use/drugs of concern are relatively low compared to past year use of alcohol (60%) and cannabis (32%), the data shows that students who use alcohol in high-risk ways and students who use cannabis are more likely to have also used illicit drugs in the past year. For this reason, screening and brief interventions for alcohol and cannabis use (BASICS – brief alcohol screening and intervention for college students, iCHAMP – individualized college health for alcohol & marijuana project) are critical to supporting students who may also be using other drugs. To find information about upcoming BASICS, iCHAMP, and other motivational interviewing training, visit mopiptraining.org.

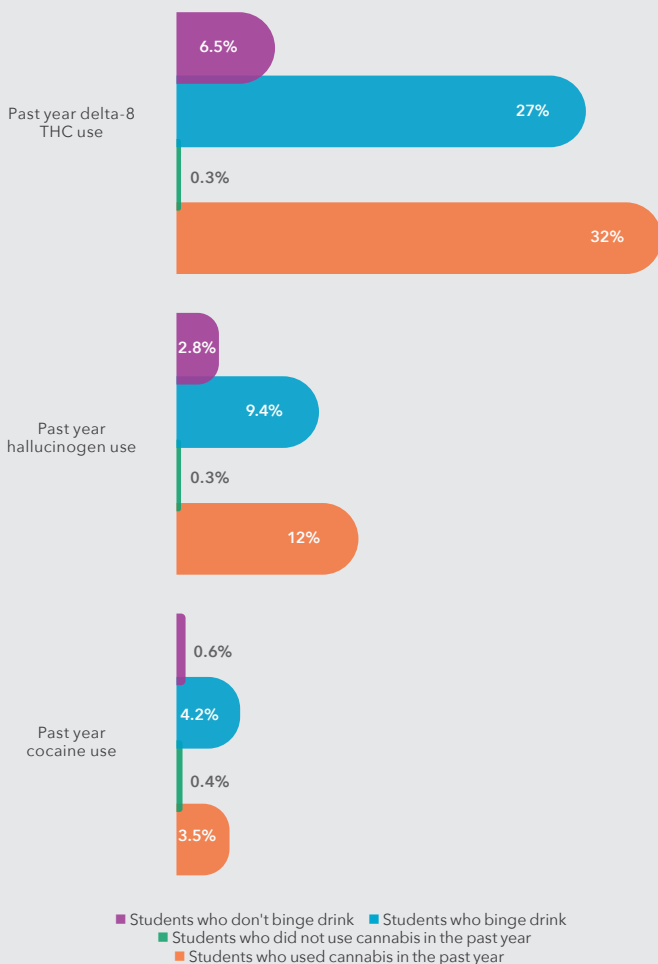
Missouri Partners in Prevention has also compiled resources on our website related to [illicit drug use](#) under our Prevention Toolbox.

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

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*As of August 2024, Missouri governor Mike Parson issued an executive order to ban the sale of drinks/candy/foods and other hemp-derived intoxicating substances including delta-8 THC and the ban will take effect September 1.

Chart 2: Drug Use among Students with High-Risk Alcohol & Cannabis Use Behaviors



For more information, visit mopip.org

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