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## Articles:

Recent Trends in Mental Health and Substance Use Concerns among Adolescents



The Mental Health Crisis on College Campuses



Mental Health Service Use among College Students



# Substance Misuse Prevention: A Collection of Readings

## Mental Health and Substance Misuse Trends and Statistics



[https://www.nea.org/sites/default/files/styles/1920wide/public/2023-03/mental\\_health\\_college\\_campuses.jpeg?tok=NrA3\\_SJF](https://www.nea.org/sites/default/files/styles/1920wide/public/2023-03/mental_health_college_campuses.jpeg?tok=NrA3_SJF)

### Mental Health, Substance Use, and Wellbeing in Higher Education in the U.S. (NIH, 2021)

The complexity and diversity of the U.S. higher education system, including varying institutional types and student demographics, directly impact students' mental health and substance use trends. Over the past two decades, reports have noted an increase in mental health problems among students, with a rise in both the self-reported symptoms of mental illness and substance use. Universities have seen dramatic increases in students seeking mental health services. Data from the Healthy Minds Study (HMS2) show a significant increase in students reporting anxiety symptoms, with those screening positive for generalized anxiety rising from 17.2% in 2013 to 31.2% in 2019. The percentage of students reporting severe anxiety also increased. College students are at risk for co-occurring mental health and substance use disorders. In 2018, 8.9 million young adults (18-25) had any mental illness (AMI), and 5.1 million had a substance use disorder (SUD), with 2.4 million having both. However, treatment for both conditions in tandem is less common than for individual conditions. The data highlights concerning trends in substance use among college students, with rising marijuana use and a significant portion engaging in risky drinking behaviors. The co-occurrence of substance use disorders with mental health issues calls for more integrated treatment approaches to address both conditions effectively.

## 5 Most Common Drugs Used by College Students (in sequential order, Ballard Brief, 2019)

1. Alcohol
2. Marijuana
3. Prescription Pills
4. Ecstasy
5. Cocaine

## Reasons for Substance Misuse on Campus:

Desire for social acceptance

Perceived norms of substance use

Academic stress

Time management issues

Increased independence

Social and campus culture

Mental health challenges

Curiosity and experimentation

## Substance Use Disorder Treatment Gap among U.S. College Students: Findings from the 2021 National Survey on Drug Use and Health

The impacts of SUDs on college students are wide-ranging, affecting not only their academic success but also leading to early mortality and substantial economic costs (McCollister et al., 2017). There are established psychosocial and pharmacological treatments, but treatment uptake among students is low, with only around 13% of individuals with an SUD receiving specialty treatment (Sahker et al., 2024). Various sociodemographic factors contribute to the treatment gap, including age, ethnicity, and severity of the SUD (more severe disorders are more likely to be treated). Social norms around alcohol and cannabis use in college environments may exacerbate the treatment gap (Willis et al., 2019).

The study used the 2021 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH), a nationally representative survey that collects data on substance use, mental health, and treatment among U.S. civilians aged 12 and older. The sample included college students aged 16 and older (those in their first to fifth or higher years of college) and a comparison group of non-students with an SUD.

In this study, more than one in five college students (21.8%) met DSM-5 criteria for a substance use disorder (SUD) in the past year. Students with SUDs differed significantly from those without SUDs in several demographic and substance use characteristics. Specifically, students with SUDs were more likely to be:

- Aged 21-25 years
- Non-Hispanic White
- Gay, lesbian, or bisexual
- Part-time students
- Publicly insured

Additionally, students with SUDs reported significantly higher levels of psychological distress compared to students without SUDs. Past-year substance use was higher among students with SUDs for all substances assessed. This study highlights a significant treatment gap for college students with SUDs. While over 20% of students met DSM-5 criteria for a past-year SUD, fewer than 5% of those with an SUD received treatment. This is a larger gap than seen in the general population, suggesting a critical need for better treatment accessibility and engagement for college students.

### Resources at USM

If you or someone you know is struggling with their mental health and/or substance use, here are some on-campus resources:

[Screen U](#)- an anonymous, free and confidential screening to help you understand your level of risk - available on USM Counseling website.

[USM Counseling Services](#)- schedule an appointment with experienced clinicians or sign up for a BASICS (Brief Alcohol Screening and Intervention for College Students)

The [ROCC](#) (recovery-oriented campus center)- A collegiate recovery program assisting and promoting student success through academic pursuits and personal journey

For comments on this newsletter or suggestions for future articles please contact: Diane Geyer LCPC, LADC, CCS, NCC~ Director of Training or Mary Furlong, Graduate Assistant~ Email: [diane.geyer@maine.edu](mailto:diane.geyer@maine.edu) or [mary.furlong@maine.edu](mailto:mary.furlong@maine.edu)