

Introduction

Survey data represent a valuable source of information on prevalence estimates, use and behavior patterns, drug preferences, and emerging trends. Survey data, however, are not without limitations. No single survey exists which covers all populations abusing substances. Substance abuse surveys typically fall into the following categories: 1) household surveys, 2) criminal justice surveys, and 3) school surveys. These surveys can miss segments of the population that have been impacted by substance abuse including the incarcerated, the homeless, and school dropouts. The survey data are self-report data and have inherent validity concerns due to respondent dishonesty, forgetfulness, or poor comprehension. Assessments of validity have been mixed. Research suggests that validity concerns are more evident for the criminal justice population and for reporting use of some drugs such as cocaine and heroin that may have an associated stigma. Nevertheless, collection of alcohol and drug use data via surveys provides useful information on large diverse populations that would not otherwise be available. Characteristics and highlights of the following survey data sources are provided:

[Behavioral Risk Factor Survey \(BRFS\)](#)

[Core Alcohol and Drug Survey](#)

[Missouri College Health Behavior Survey \(MCHBS\)](#)

[Missouri Student Survey \(MSS\)](#)

[Monitoring the Future \(MTF\)](#)

[National Survey on Drug Use and Health \(NSDUH\)](#)

[Youth Risk Behavior Survey \(YRBS\)](#)

Behavioral Risk Factor Survey (BRFS)

- **Conducted by:** Centers for Disease Control (CDC) in partnership with state health departments
- **Established:** 1984
- **Frequency of Reporting:** Annual
- **Type of survey:** Household
- **Mode of survey:** Telephone interview
- **Age groups:** Ages 18 or older
- **Completed interviews:** About 450,000 nationwide and 5,400 in Missouri.
- **Level of reporting:** National, state, and Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services planning regions
- **Some strengths:** BRFS does include data on adult consumption of alcohol and use of tobacco. BRFS has a relatively large sample size. The survey allows for year-to-year comparisons.
- **Some limitations:** BRFS does not include data on drug use nor does it include adolescents in its target population.

- **Other notes:** BRFSS definitions of binge drinkers and heavy drinkers differ from that of the [National Survey on Drug Use and Health \(NSDUH\)](#) – BRFSS definitions depend upon gender.
- **Website:** <http://www.cdc.gov/brfss> and <http://cntysvr1.lphamo.org/pubdocs/brfss/index.php>

Core Alcohol and Drug Survey

- **Conducted by:** Missouri Partners in Prevention
- **Established:** 1990 for the University of Missouri, Columbia campus. Eleven other public university campuses began implementation in 2001.
- **Frequency of Reporting:** Annual
- **Type of survey:** School/Higher Education
- **Mode of survey:** Paper Questionnaire
- **Grade levels:** Undergraduate students at 12 Missouri higher education institutions
- **Completed interviews:** Varies by campus
- **Level of reporting:** Campus level
- **Some strengths:** Core captures data on attitudes, perceptions, and opinions about use of alcohol and drugs in addition to use and consequences of use.
- **Some limitations:** Core is used primarily as a tool at the local campus level.
- **Website:** <http://coreinst.siuc.edu/>

Missouri College Health Behavior Survey (MCHBS)

- **Conducted by:** Missouri Partners in Prevention
- **Established:** 2007 to replace annual Core Alcohol and Drug Survey
- **Frequency of Reporting:** Annual
- **Type of survey:** School/Higher Education
- **Mode of survey:** On-line Survey
- **Grade levels:** Undergraduate students at 13 Missouri higher education institutions
- **Completed interviews:** Varies by campus
- **Level of reporting:** Campus level
- **Some strengths:** The MCHBS measures attitudes, perceptions, and opinions about use of alcohol and drugs in addition to use and consequences of use. Other behaviors surveyed include gambling, safe driving, mental health issues, and tobacco use. Measure has been validity tested against the Core Alcohol and Drug Survey with favorable results.
- **Some limitations:** MCHBS is not a national survey.
- **Website:** <http://pip.missouri.edu/mchbs/>

National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH)

- **Conducted by:** Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)
- **Established:** 1971, originally titled National Household Survey on Drug Abuse
- **Frequency of Reporting:** Annual
- **Type of survey:** Household
- **Mode of survey:** Face-to-face interview
- **Age groups:** Ages 12 or older
- **Completed interviews:** 68,487 nationwide and about 900 in Missouri for 2010 survey.
- **Level of reporting:** National but can also obtain state and sub-state planning regions by combining multiple survey years
- **Some strengths:** NSDUH allows for year-to-year comparisons for national data and a rolling multi-year comparison for state and sub-state data. In addition to substance use data, NSDUH provides data on past year alcohol or illicit drug dependence or abuse.
- **Some limitations:** NSDUH interviews household residents only, and the survey estimates are based on these populations. Not represented in the surveys are prison and jail inmates, other institutionalized individuals, and the homeless. Limited drug and demographic data are available at the state level because of the small sample size. NSDUH does not separate out smokeless tobacco and chewing tobacco. Age categories generally limited to 12-17, 18-25, and 26 and older.
- **Other notes:** NSDUH definitions of binge drinkers and heavy drinkers differ from that of the [Behavioral Risk Factor Survey \(BRFS\)](#) – NSDUH definitions do not depend on gender.
- **Website:** <http://www.oas.samhsa.gov/nsduh.htm>

Missouri Student Survey (MSS)

- **Conducted by:** Missouri Department of Mental Health (DMH)
- **Established:** 2000
- **Frequency of Reporting:** Every even numbered year
- **Type of survey:** School
- **Mode of survey:** Web-based
- **Grade levels:** Grades 6th through 12th but more concentrated on 9th grade
- **Completed interviews:** 129,901 in 2010
- **Level of reporting:** State and Missouri Division of Alcohol and Drug Abuse (ADA) planning regions
- **Some strengths:** MSS is offered to all Missouri public school districts. MSS includes the younger middle school population in addition to the high school population. MSS also captures data on risk and protective factors and antisocial behaviors in addition to substance use patterns.
- **Some limitations:** Some school districts opt out of the survey. In 2010, 426 of the 522 districts participated in some capacity, and 372 had sufficient sample sizes for district-level analysis. Caution must be used if combining grades because weighting is not applied. Data are only available every other year.

- **Other notes:** MSS definition of binge drinking is different than that of NSDUH. MSS combines ecstasy with other club drugs which is different than NSDUH.
- **Website:** <http://www.dmh.missouri.gov/ada/rpts/survey.htm>

Monitoring the Future (MTF)

- **Conducted by:** National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA)
- **Established:** 1975
- **Frequency of Reporting:** Annual
- **Type of survey:** School
- **Mode of survey:** Paper questionnaire
- **Grade levels:** 8th, 10th, and 12th graders; college students; and young adults
- **Completed interviews:** About 46,000 students nationwide
- **Level of reporting:** National
- **Some strengths:** MTF provides data on lifetime, past year, and past 30 day use of various illicit drugs including methamphetamine. Questions regarding prescription drug use including use of OxyContin, Vicodin, and Ritalin have been added in recent years. MTF also captures data on perception of harm and disapproval.
- **Some limitations:** MTF does not provide state level data.
- **Other notes:**
- **Website:** <http://www.monitoringthefuture.org/>

Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS)

- **Conducted by:** Centers for Disease Control
- **Established:** 1991
- **Frequency of Reporting:** Every odd-numbered year
- **Type of survey:** School
- **Mode of survey:** Paper questionnaire
- **Grade levels:** 9th through 12th
- **Completed interviews:** 16,460 nationwide and 1,624 in Missouri in 2009
- **Level of reporting:** National and State
- **Some strengths:** YRBS includes questions on alcohol, drug, and tobacco use. YRBS includes questions on lifetime steroid use and lifetime IV drug use.
- **Some limitations:** Some states do not participate in the YRBS -- three in 2009. YRBS does not capture data on private schools or home-school children. Current drug use limited to marijuana and cocaine. Limited data are available at the state level due to small sample size. Data only available every other year.
- **Other notes:** YRBS definition of binge drinking similar to that of the [National Survey on Drug Use and Health \(NSDUH\)](#).
- **Website:** <http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/yrbs/index.htm>