



ADAPT

COMMUNITY

ASSESSMENT

Taney and Stone Counties

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ABOUT ADAPT

ADAPT is a Coalition in Taney County that is working to raise awareness regarding substance use prevention through youth leadership opportunities, prescription drug prevention programs, and collaboration with evidence-based underage drinking prevention initiatives throughout the community. You can read more on their website at https://www.taneycountyadapt.com/

The Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention Team (ADAPT) 2024 Community Assessment of Stone and Taney Counties is a comprehensive mixed-methods assessment of adult and youth substance use behaviors, attitudes, risk factors, and protective factors. Funded by a SAMHSA Strategic Prevention Framework – Partnerships for Success grant, an ADAPT Adult Community Survey (ACS) will be conducted biennially over the next five years. This report describes the findings of the first community assessment, which will serve as the baseline data to track changes over time.



385 Taney County Respondents

198 Stone County Respondents

The project team developed a community survey to determine the current social norms, attitudes, substance use behaviors, and the levels of protective and risk factors to highlight the current needs for mental health and substance use prevention in Taney and Stone County. The ADAPT Community Survey (ACS) was conducted online via SurveyMonkey in February and March of 2024. Eligibility criteria was determined by residency in either Taney and Stone County, as well as being 18 years of age or older.

The ADAPT team disseminated invitations to take the online survey through various marketing strategies such as their website, social media accounts, paid social media ads, radio ads, TV spots, postcards sent on rural routes, and communication networks of ADAPT and their partners, such as local community events, local Facebook groups, faith communities, schools/daycares, YMCA, and other nonprofits. To reach a greater number of Hispanic/Latino individuals, the survey was marketed in Spanish. These efforts yielded a total convenience sample of 583 complete and eligible responses for both counties. The survey population is important to ADAPT because their prevention efforts target promoting mental health, preventing youth use, and reducing adult use and misuse of alcohol, cannabis, and e-cigarettes in Taney and Stone County. Further, the questionnaire contained skip logic that delivered questions about parenting behaviors and family communication for parents of children of all ages. The demographics section of the survey also included questions about ethnicity/race, gender identities, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status to fill existing data gaps surrounding mental health and substance use for these communities.

To determine statistical significance of disparities between Hispanic vs. Non-Hispanic counterparts and LGBTQ+ vs. Non-LGBTQ+ counterparts, SPSS was utilized to run a Mann-Whitney test to determine discrepancies between the mean ranks of the two groups in question. Statistical significance was determined at a P-value of less than 0.05.

- ✓ More than half of ACS respondents in Taney County (53%) and in Stone County (58%) were parents.
- ✓ Almost two-thirds (63%) of total ACS respondents were female (59% in Taney, 66% in Stone).
- ✓ Almost a quarter of total ACS respondents were Hispanic/Latino (23%).
- ✓ 10% of total ACS respondents (9% for Taney, 11% for Stone) were LGBTQ+.
- ✓ Most ACS respondents fell in the average household income brackets for both counties.



Focus Groups and Key Informant Interviews

6 Total Focus Groups

10 Key Informant Interviews

To include in-depth community perspectives, the project team hosted in-person focus groups with adults and youth from Taney and Stone County, as well as interviews with community leaders representing various sectors. The team recruited participants using ADAPT's personal and professional contacts, outreach to specific groups of interest, and referrals from participants. The inclusion criteria for focus groups included adults or youth living in Taney or Stone County. For the key informant interviews, the inclusion criteria included adults living in or serving Taney or Stone County from various sectors such as substance use prevention/recovery, law enforcement, parents and general community members, business owners, school personnel, and individuals who are part of the Hispanic and LGBTQ+ community to inform health disparities data. The team hosted 6 in-person one-hour long focus groups, and a combination of 10 in-person and virtual 30-minute interviews in the months of February and March 2024. Focus groups and key informant interviews were semi-structured, with a predetermined list of about 5 -10 guiding questions based on the objectives of the meeting and the participants. Special efforts were made to recruit participants from the LGBTQ+ and Hispanic communities.

This evaluation will be detailed by county and include disparity data, and focuses mainly on adult and youth mental health and the following substance use in adults and youth:

- Tobacco/Nicotine/Vaping
- Alcohol
- Marijuana
- Other drugs



Secondary Data Sources

To supplement primary data collected through the community survey, focus groups, and key informant interviews, secondary data sources were utilized. Secondary data sources include the 2022 Missouri Student Survey (MSS), the Missouri Department of Mental Health (MO DMH) Behavioral Health Data Dashboard, MO DMH 2023 Behavioral Health County Profiles, MO DMH 2023 County Status Reports on Missouri's Substance Use and Mental Health, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) PLACES and Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS), SAMHSA's National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH), and the University of Missouri All Things Missouri Starter and Story Maps.

Community Survey

When administering the online community survey, utilizing convenience sampling can introduce selection bias, as it may not accurately represent the entire population. Additionally, target numbers of survey respondents for each county were not achieved, potentially undermining the representativeness of the data. Further, when comparing responses between disparity-vulnerable populations (LGBTQ+ with non-LGBTQ+ counterparts) and (Hispanic with non-Hispanic counterparts), the sample size of the former may be too small, making it challenging to draw meaningful conclusions about the extent of the disparities.

Focus Groups

The adult focus group was a more established group, and participants in youth focus groups were recruited from established school clubs, potentially limiting the findings regarding perspectives and needs of adults and youth.

KEY FINDINGS

STONE AND TANEY COUNTIES

ADULT MENTAL HEALTH

- Majority of ACS respondents believed that mental health is a concern among adults in Taney (90%) and Stone County (91%).
- Majority of ACS respondents rated their own mental health positively in Taney (87%) and Stone County (86%).
- More than a quarter of Taney (29%) and Stone County (27%) ACS respondents were unaware or unsure of services in their communities.
- ACS respondents in Taney County (30%) reported higher levels of difficulty accessing services compared to Stone County (25%).
- Cost, availability of services, and knowledge of services were reported to be the top barriers to accessing mental health and substance use services in Taney and Stone County.
- Other reported barriers to accessing mental health and substance use services included transportation, fear of judgment for seeking services, waiting times, and providers being at capacity and unreliable.
- Lack of healthy mental health coping skills and social abilities reported among adults exacerbate decision-making challenges regarding healthcare, living, and finances.

YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH

- Majority of ACS respondents believed that mental health is a concern among youth in Taney (91%) and Stone County (93%).
- More than half parents in the ACS reported their children receiving counseling or treatment for emotional or stress-related issues.
- One half to two-thirds of parents in the ACS reported their children struggling with mental/emotional health issues at least sometimes in Taney (67%) and Stone County (59%).
- Females reported significantly more symptoms of depression, suicide ideation, self-harm, and poor coping skills compared to their male counterparts.
- Students reported hesitancy in confiding in counselors due to fear of repercussions and perceived lack of support.
- Mental health coping mechanisms varied among students, but there was a consensus that more effective coping strategies are needed within the school environment.
- Adult focus group participants reported that teachers do not have sufficient mental health resources or training and receive a lot of blame, leading to teacher turnover. Parents also reported lacking the tools they need to help their children adapt with their conditions or mental disabilities they may have.
- Students expressed a need for accessible mental health resources, such as text-based counseling services, weekly emotional check-ins, designated safe spaces, and anonymous drop-boxes for seeking support.

KEY FINDINGS

STONE AND TANEY COUNTIES

ADULT SUBSTANCE USE

- Alcohol was reported as the top substance of concern in Taney and Stone County, followed by meth use and illegal opiate use as reported by ACS respondents.
- Two-thirds of ACS respondents were concerned about marijuana or cannabis use among adults, but it was perceived as the least concerning behavior in Taney and Stone County. Due to the legalization of marijuana, participants shared it is becoming more normalized in the community.
- The highest perception of risk was associated with adult use of prescription drugs not prescribed to them in Taney (88%) and Stone County (85%) as reported by ACS respondents.
- Most ACS respondents have had at least one alcoholic drink in the past month, less than half reported use of all other substances. Generally, a higher percentage of past 30-day use was observed in Stone County compared to Taney County.
- More than one-third of ACS respondents engaged in binge drinking in the past month in Taney (39%) and Stone County (44%).
- Almost a quarter of ACS respondents reported using marijuana or cannabis in the past month in Taney (21%) and Stone County (22%).
- One in three of ACS respondents reported using tobacco in the past month in Taney and Stone County.
- Almost one-third of ACS respondents reported using e-cigarettes or other nicotine vaping devices in the past month in Taney (26%) and Stone County (30%).
- Two-thirds of those who use tobacco/nicotine products attempted to quit in the past year in Taney and Stone County, as reported by ACS respondents.

YOUTH SUBSTANCE USE

- The majority of ACS respondents reported that alcohol and drug use among youth is a concern in Taney (81%) and Stone County (80%).
- E-cigarette/nicotine vaping device use was mentioned by focus group participants as the most common substance use concern among youth.
- More than three-quarters of ACS respondents associated high levels of risk with youth alcohol and drug use, with the highest risk being non-prescribed prescription drugs.
- Youth reported learning about substances from friends, older people and family members, and social media.
- Youth reported accessing substances primarily through peers and older adults in their lives (family members, friends of age), with e-cigarettes obtained from online sources and gas stations. Alcohol was reported to be acquired through theft at retail stores and gas stations, fake IDs, or some gas stations not IDing. Marijuana was reported to be accessed through connections at dispensaries, and it was mentioned that youth also engage in selling these substances among themselves.

KEY FINDINGS

STONE AND TANEY COUNTIES



YOUTH SUBSTANCE USE

- Between a quarter to half of ACS respondents reported storing e-cigarettes/nicotine vaping devices, tobacco, prescription drugs, and alcohol in unlocked locations, creating ease of access for household members.
- Less than a quarter of ACS respondents reported rarely or never monitoring alcohol at home to prevent theft, while marijuana or cannabis are not present in more than half of households.
- More than three-quarters of parents in the ACS reported first talking to children about risks of alcohol and drugs **before age 13**.
- The majority of parents reported strong parental supervision and engagement in alcohol and drug education, but **more consistent parental communication about youth substance use is needed**. Participants highlighted the need to encourage parents to talk directly to their children about risks, be aware of what substances are present at home, and know who their children spend time with.
- Youth advocated for long-term effect awareness, education on how to quit, involvement in extracurriculars, and access to mental health support to deter substance use.

TANEY COUNTY

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

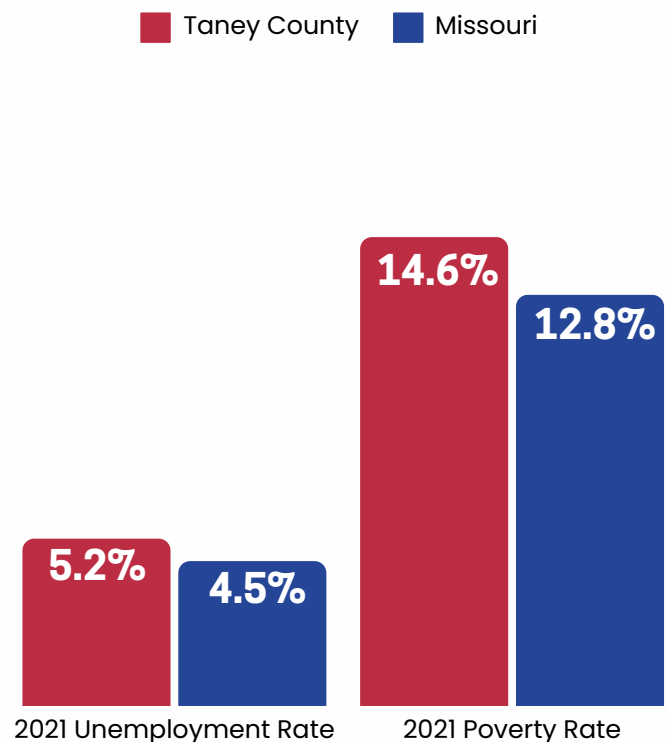


Taney County is located in Southwest Missouri and has a population estimate of 56,821 as of 2022. It ranks 20th in population size among Missouri's 115 counties including St. Louis City.

The region's economy is driven by seasonal tourism and Branson, one of the most populated cities in the region (12,638 residents), hosts more than 9 million visitors each year. About 45% of local jobs are in tourism and there is high demand for low pay/skilled workers. The seasonal nature of tourism means that the unemployment rate varies significantly throughout the year, peaking in the first quarter and returning to a more normal rate by August.

In 2022, the median household income was \$53,009, compared to the statewide value of \$71,520.

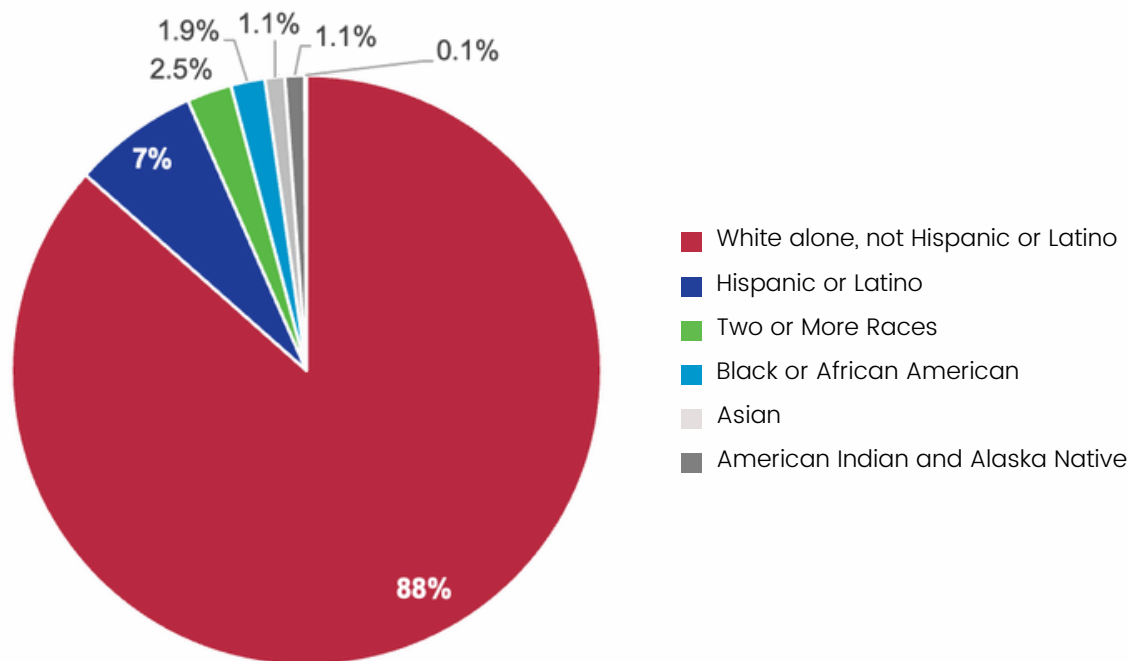
The 2021 unemployment rate in the county was 5.2%, which was greater than the statewide unemployment rate of 4.5%. In 2021, the poverty rate was 14.6%, compared to the statewide poverty rate of 12.8%. According to County Health Rankings, 22% of youth (under 18) in Taney County live in poverty, compared to a state rate of 17%. There are significant disparities related to race, with 58% of black youth and 35% of Hispanic youth in Taney County living in poverty.



TANEY COUNTY

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

The population is primarily Caucasian working class (88%), and approximately 10–12% of the population have not graduated from high school. Six percent of Taney County residents over age five speak a language other than English at home but this statistic increases to 11% for the city of Branson.



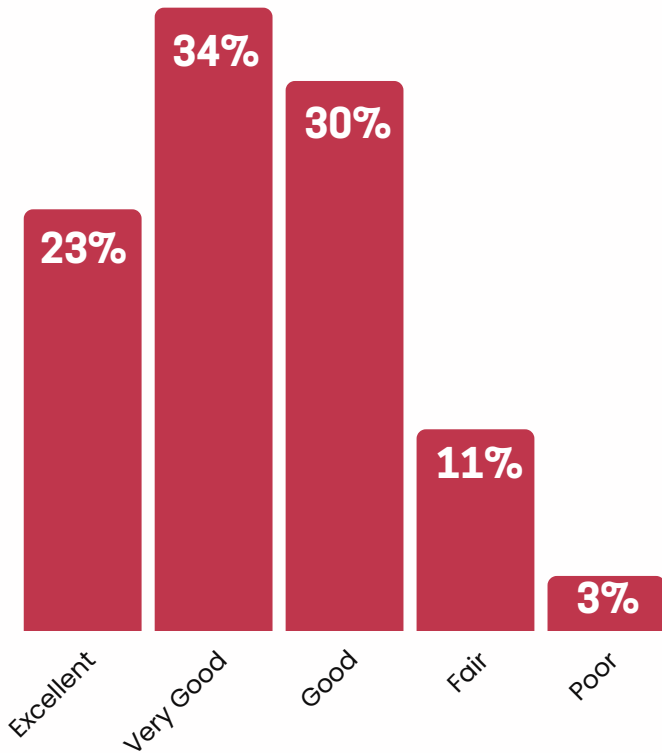
Taney County has 51% female residents and more older adults and disabled people than the state average. Local data on sexual orientation and gender identity has not been collected but according to the 2019 Gallup Daily Tracking Survey, 3.8% of adults in Missouri identify as LGBTQ+. The Youth Risk Behavior Survey from the same year reports that 12.7% of Missouri youth identify as either gay, lesbian, or bisexual.

TANEY COUNTY

MENTAL HEALTH IN ADULTS

Prevalence

Majority of ACS Respondents Positively Rate Their Own Mental Health



When asked about the most common mental health concerns facing adults in the community, the focus group participants shared the following mental health concerns:

- Childhood trauma
- Lack of coping skills
- COVID-19 lingering effects
- Dissociation
- Isolation
- Stress
- Hopelessness
- Drug and alcohol addiction

The majority of ACS respondents “Agree” and “Strongly Agree” (90%) that mental/emotional health among adults is a concern in their community.

When ACS respondents were asked to rate their own mental/emotional health, the majority rated their mental/emotional health positively, with 87% rating it as excellent, very good, or good. A smaller percentage (14%) rated their mental/emotional health as fair or poor.

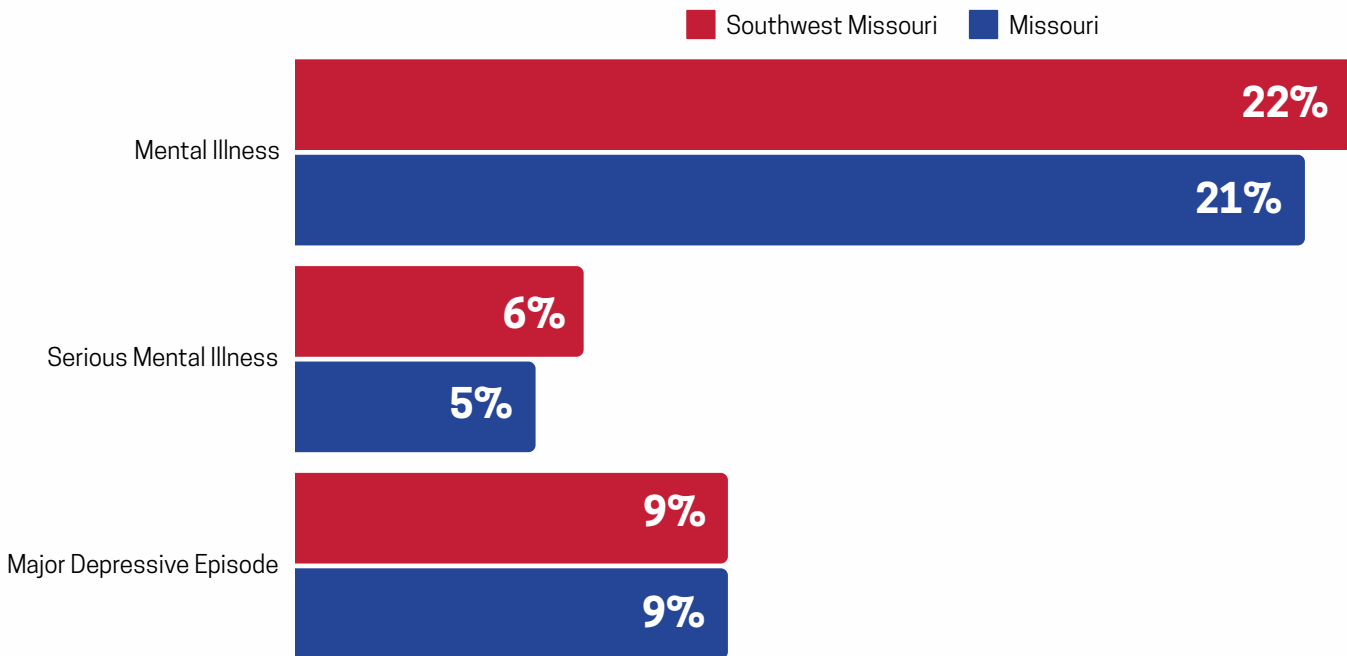
Focus group and key informant interview respondents cited stress from numerous healthcare, living, and financial decisions, impacting mental health among adults. Focus group participants cited lack of mental health coping skills and social abilities exacerbate decision-making challenges, and the effect of upbringing on these skills, especially when not previously patterned in the household, could lead to dissociation and/or withdrawal, compounded by the lingering effects of COVID-19. There is an overall lack of perceived support and connection in the community as reported by focus group respondents, and the community is currently working on regrouping and forming stronger support networks.

TANEY COUNTY

MENTAL HEALTH IN ADULTS

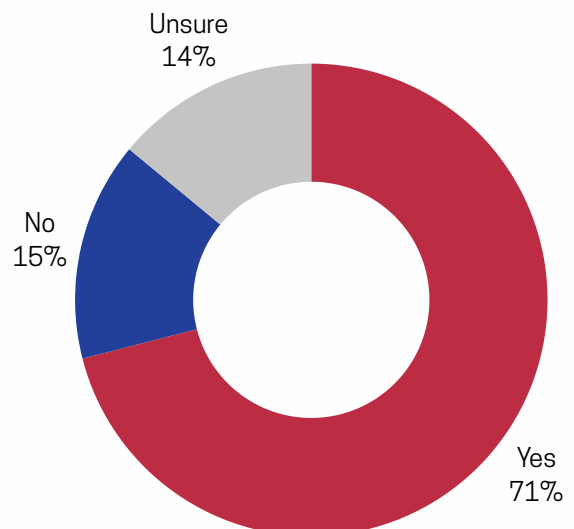
According to the MO DMH 2023 Behavioral Health Taney County Community Profile, 17% of adults aged 18 years and older did not have good mental health for 14 days or more.³ According to the Missouri 2016 County-Level Study (CLS), the average poor mentally healthy days per month for Taney County residents was 4.16.⁴ The 2016-2018 National Survey on Drug Use and Health reported 22% of Southwest Missouri residents ages 18 and over have a mental illness, 6% have a serious mental illness, and approximately 9% had at least one major depressive episode in the past year.³ In 2022, 792 Taney County residents received treatment for serious mental illness at publicly funded facilities.³

Mental Health for Ages 18+, NSDUH 2016-18



Access

While a significant majority of ACS respondents (71%) reported being aware of services in their community that could help with mental/emotional health or substance use-related problems, more than a quarter of respondents (29%) either indicated being unaware (15%) or unsure (14%) of such services.

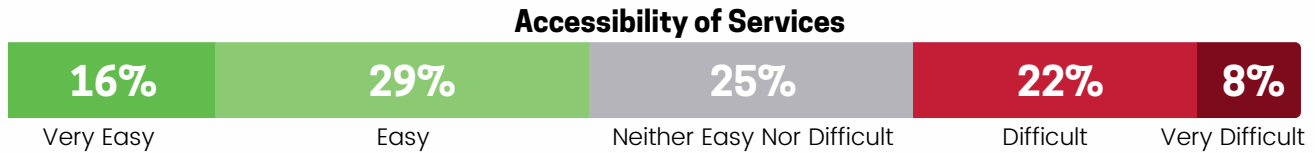


Awareness of Services

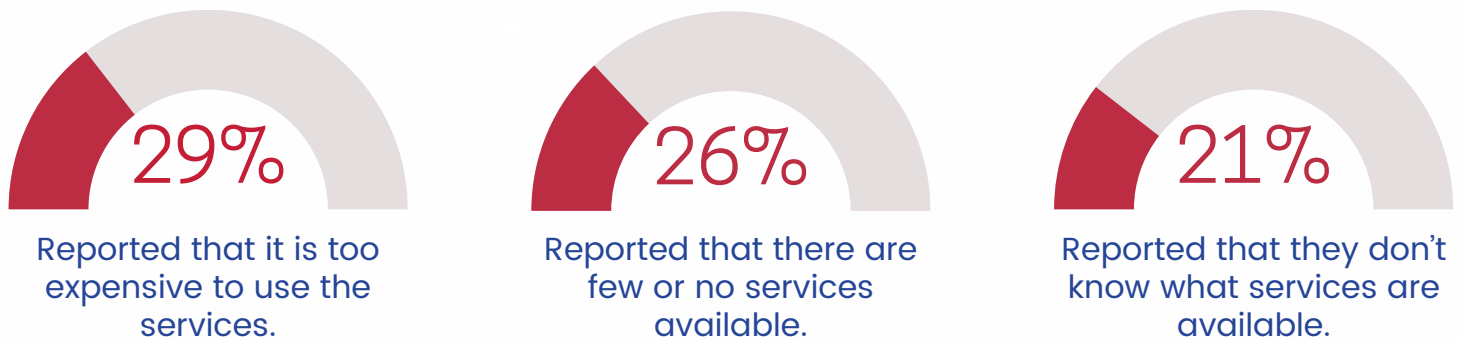
TANEY COUNTY

MENTAL HEALTH IN ADULTS

There was a mixed perception of the accessibility of mental health and substance use-related treatment services within the community. Nearly one-third of respondents considered it difficult or very difficult to access such services (30%), and a quarter of respondents felt that it was neither easy nor difficult.



When ACS respondents were asked about mental health access barriers, the most commonly reported factors making it difficult to access and receive local mental health and/or substance use-related treatment services included cost, the availability of services, and knowledge of available services.



Other significant barriers identified included lack of knowledge about available services (21%) and fear of judgment related to seeking services for mental health or substance use (17%). Respondents also expressed concerns about lack of transportation (16%). Participants had the option to add any other mental health access barriers as an option to the survey, and length of waiting times, reliability of services, and insurance coverage were highlighted.

Such themes were observed in the qualitative data collected regarding mental health access and use. Long waiting times, lack of awareness of available services, overall lack of services (providers) and limited resources, and lack of transportation were commonly mentioned among respondents.

Some barriers highlighted include:

- Lots of hand-offs
- Lack of safe spaces and community ebelonging
- Resources not being close to the area
- Generational and community stigma
- Self-acceptance
- People not admitting when they need help, especially among men
- Clinic open times

TANEY COUNTY

MENTAL HEALTH IN ADULTS

To alleviate some barriers, focus group participants shared that there are virtual mental health services available in Taney County. However, internet and phone access and affordability, lack of safe spaces, and need for technology literacy among older adults present as key issues. It was noted that senior citizens deal with a lot of mental health issues that are not addressed as they are low-income, in addition to lack of budgeting skills and low technology literacy, and more resources and services should be provided to them. There was a general consensus that mental health fairs/workshops for community members are needed to gain knowledge about mental health resources and gain referrals, as well as crisis intervention training and cross-sector collaborations.

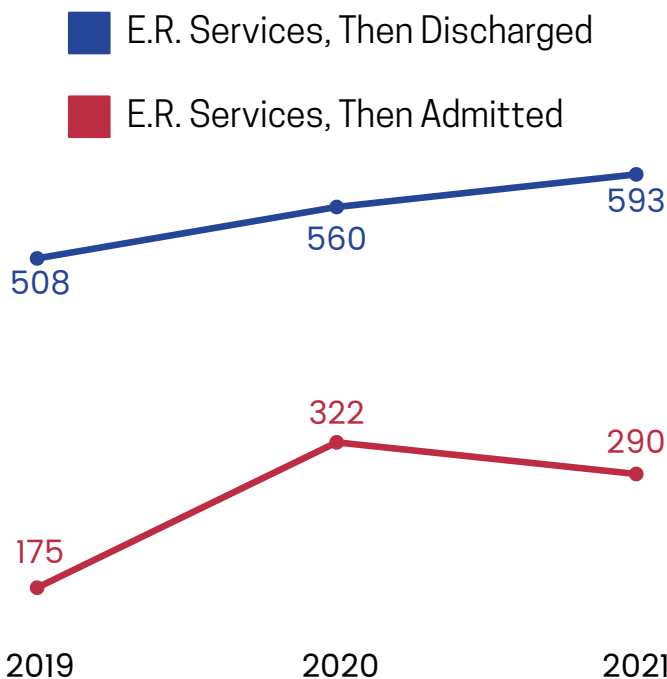
“There are lots of hand-offs and it’s a never-ending cycle because no one has funding, time to help, and opportunity to give to those who need it. Everything is busy and backlogged.”

-Taney County Adult

Taney County is a HRSA designated medically underserved area (MUA); and medical, dental, and mental health professional shortage area (HPSA). The ratio of mental health providers at 16.1 providers per 100,000 residents is 71.9% lower than the state rate of 57.2 providers which means fewer people have access to services and longer waiting times for appointments.⁵

Consequences

3-Year Trend of Receiving Mental Health Services, MO DMH 2023



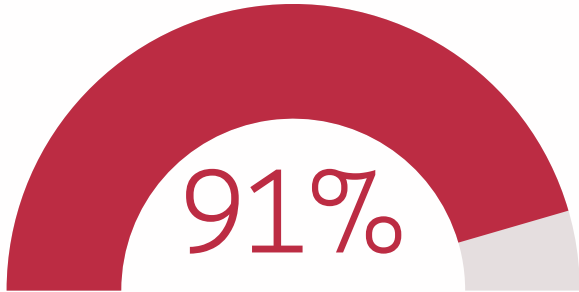
The limited access to behavioral health services leads to higher emergency department visits, as a total of 883 individuals received emergency room services for mental health being the principal disorder in 2021, as reported by the MO DMH 2023 Taney County Community Profile.⁶ Individuals struggling with serious mental illnesses are at higher risk for homicide, suicide, accidents, and chronic conditions such as cardiovascular and respiratory diseases, and substance use disorders.

Suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death for ages 10-34 in Missouri, and in 2021, 14 Taney County residents died by suicide.³

TANEY COUNTY

MENTAL HEALTH IN YOUTH

Prevalence



The majority of ACS respondents “Agree” and “Strongly Agree” that mental/emotional health among youth is a concern in their community.

When parents were asked to rate their child’s mental health, two-thirds (67%) reported that their child struggles with emotional or stress-related issues at least sometimes. Among those, the most common frequency reported was sometimes (43%). A smaller proportion (9%) indicated that their child never struggles with emotional or stress-related issues.

ACS Parent Respondents Ratings of Their Child’s Mental Health



When youth in focus groups were asked about the most common mental health concerns that people their age experience, the following were mentioned:

- Anxiety
- Suicide
- Stress and pressure
- Depression
- Lack of energy
- Eating disorders
- Self-harm
- Childhood trauma
- Alcohol Addiction

Students in focus groups reported facing significant stressors including academic pressures, extracurricular demands, and social expectations, leading to anxiety and mental health challenges. Trust issues and emotional bottling exacerbate these challenges. Social media also plays a role, with students acknowledging its negative impact on self-esteem and mental well-being, though some view it as a tool for self-improvement. While some students feel supported by certain adults, particularly those who listen without judgment, there's a general sentiment in the youth focus groups that schools could do more to prioritize mental health.

TANEY COUNTY

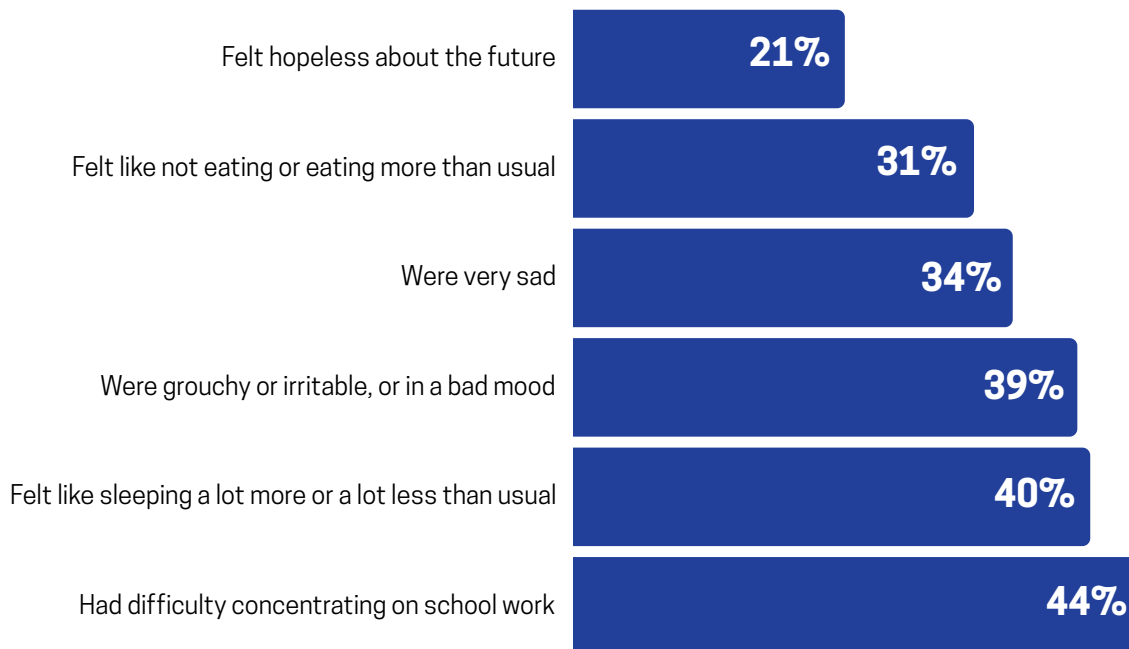
MENTAL HEALTH IN YOUTH

In terms of coping skills, students in focus groups shared various methods they utilize such as spending time with pets or loved ones, sleeping, crying, food and coffee, listening to music, reading their bible, taking a break from homework, running, reading, etc. Coping mechanisms varied among students, but there was a consensus that more effective coping strategies are needed within the school environment. Adult focus group participants shared that youth are always provided with medications as opposed to being equipped with coping skills. Further, they shared that teachers do not have sufficient mental health resources or training and receive a lot of blame, leading to teacher turnover.

Students in focus groups suggested ideas such as a way where people can text people for free counseling and it would share coping mechanisms by text. Another idea suggested was a weekly survey to students asking them how they feel or if they need to talk to someone, a safe space room to destress, and a drop box where students choose what person receives drop box notes.

In the 2022 MSS, one in three Taney County students (grades 6-12) reported “often” or “always” feeling very sad in the past month.⁷

Depression Scale (% Often or Always in the Past Month), 2022 MSS

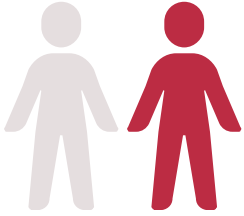


In the 2022 MSS, two in three Taney County students (grades 6-12) reported that they have adults in their lives to turn to when things feel overwhelming. Youth in the 2022 MSS also reported that they are experiencing symptoms of depression and do not always use healthy coping mechanisms. Half of youth (grades 6-12) in the 2022 MSS agree/strongly agree that they handle stress in a healthy way, a 15% decrease from 2016. Females reported significantly more symptoms of depression, suicide ideation, self-harm, and poor coping skills compared to their male counterparts.⁷

TANEY COUNTY

MENTAL HEALTH IN YOUTH

Access



Approximately one in two of parent respondents in the ACS reported that their child has received counseling or treatment for emotional or stress-related issues.

Adult focus group participants mentioned waiting times to receive mental health services persists as an issue for youth as well. In general, adult focus group participants feel that youth have a lot of resources for mental health in school and afterschool programs. There are always parents, teachers, and counselors to go to. Focus group and key informant interview participants shared that there is more stigma for seeking mental health services in adults as opposed to youth, but there is still some stigma for youth too depending on the parental perspective and lack of support. Further, parents reported lacking the tools they need to help their children adapt to conditions or mental disabilities they may have.

Youth focus group participants shared that there are three counselors at Branson High School who are easily accessible, however, students expressed reluctance to fully confide in them due to fear of repercussions and perceived lack of support. In addition to counselors and safe adults, there is the 988-suicide hotline posted on ID cards and whiteboards. Students shared that there are also posters and sticky notes in the bathroom with resources, and students felt that they are easily accessible. However, participants reported that they aren't used by students because it feels very business-like.

In the 2022 MSS, two in three Taney County students (grades 6-12) reported that they know where to go in their community to get help.⁷

"It's calling random people who don't know anything about you. How are they supposed to stop you if you have suicidal thoughts, they don't mean anything to you and they're not part of your life. Understand it is words of kindness and encouragement, but you just don't know the person. Doesn't feel comfortable. It's like calling a business - professional setting."

-High School Student

Consequences

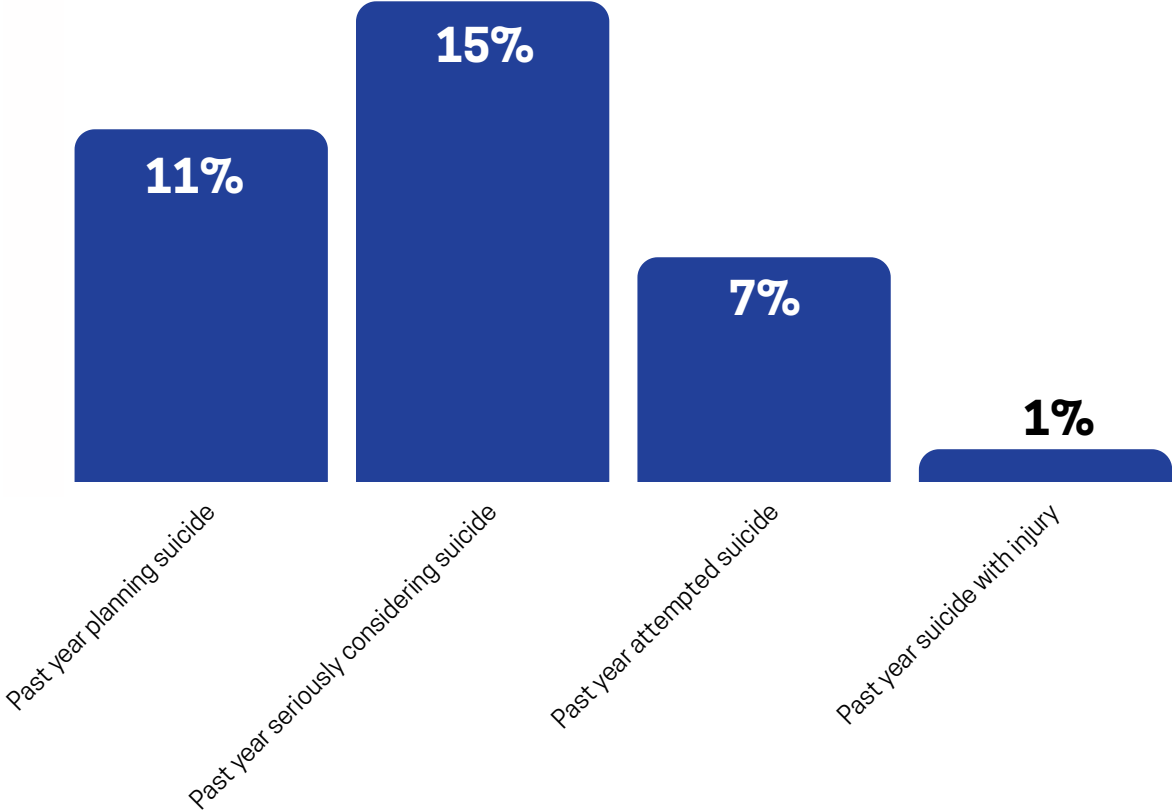
Adult focus group participants mentioned that youth get mental health diagnoses and there are instances where they sell their medications, leading to more mental health problems. In Taney County, young people had the highest rates of receiving clinical services from the Division of Behavioral Health; more than doubling between 2019 and 2021.⁸ Between 2011 to 2015, the rate of mental/behavioral hospitalizations (not substance abuse) for youth ages 1-19 was 85.78 per 10,000 people.⁹

TANEY COUNTY

MENTAL HEALTH IN YOUTH

In the 2022 MSS, 15% of students said they had seriously considered suicide in the past year.⁷

Last 12 months (% reflects “1+” answer), 2022 MSS



TANEY COUNTY

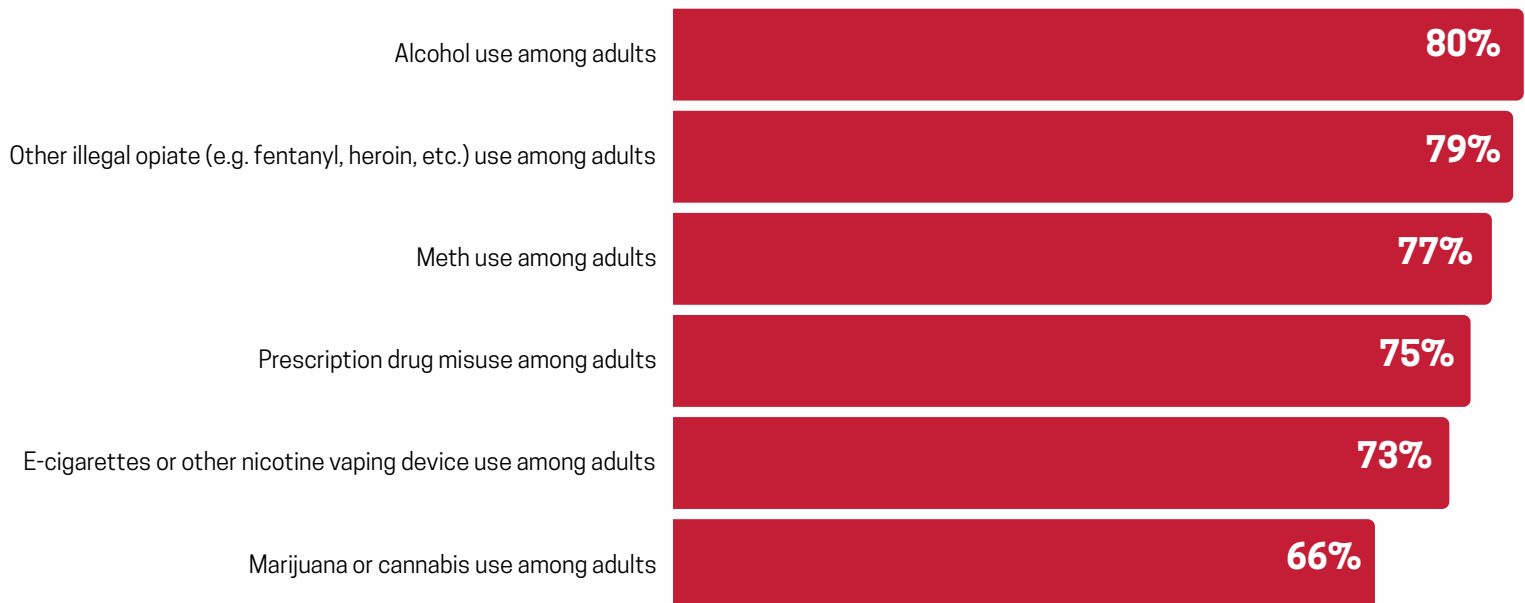
SUBSTANCE USE IN ADULTS

Community Attitudes

Alcohol was perceived as the greatest concern among adults in the community among the majority of ACS respondents (80%). Illegal opiate (fentanyl, heroin, etc.) use among adults was perceived as the second biggest problem in the community, amassing more than three-quarters (79%) of total responses. Meth use was the third-ranking behavior in the community where respondents “Agree / Strongly Agree” that it is a problem (77%).

Three-quarters of ACS respondents (75%) “Agree / Strongly Agree” that prescription drug misuse among adults is a problem in the community, and almost three-quarters of respondents (73%) reported that about e-cigarette or other nicotine vaping device use. Marijuana or cannabis use was perceived as the least concerning behavior in the community, amassing almost two-thirds of responses (66%).

“Agree / Strongly Agree” that Substance Use is a Concern



Focus group participants reported meth use as a rampant problem for adults. Further, Ketamine was reported as becoming a bigger issue because people have built a tolerance for marijuana and prescription drugs. Examples of substances mentioned by key informants include taking prescription medications not prescribed to individuals, excessive alcohol consumption/binge drinking, marijuana (especially since legalization), and other street drugs such as methamphetamine, opiates, and some cocaine and heroin use specifically among adults. All key informants agreed that alcohol, tobacco, vaping, and marijuana are very common in the community.

TANEY COUNTY

SUBSTANCE USE IN ADULTS

Methamphetamine was mentioned as a problem by almost every sector representative. The recovery center representative reported that methamphetamine and alcohol are the top substance use problems, and veterans contributed the highest percentage of alcohol misuse. Key informant interview participants believed that substance misuse often remains concealed initially, with individuals becoming more open after encountering legal consequences or losing concerns for secrecy. Additionally, participants highlighted the challenge of identifying substance use in outwardly healthy individuals, and that working adults may easily hide substance use. A health sector representative noted that substance use presents as generational oftentimes, but there is a positive dramatic shift in the community wanting to talk about substance use and willingness to address it. Educating government officials to understand and address the existing infrastructure leading to mental health and substance use concerns was reported as a need.

"It's [Substance Use] everywhere. You might see people walking down the street talking to themselves or pushing a grocery cart down the street. And a lot of people like to be 'off grid' around here so that no one is paying attention to what they are doing."

-Taney County Adult

The Taney County 2019 Community Health Needs Assessment indicates substance misuse is a problem for adults.¹⁰ Among Taney County residents admitted to Missouri's Division of Behavioral Health substance use disorder treatment programs in 2021, the two most common primary substances were alcohol followed by methamphetamine.¹¹

Risk

Drug abuse and alcohol abuse were indicated as the top two risky behaviors in the Taney County 2019 Community Health Needs Assessment.¹⁰

In the ACS, the highest level of perceived moderate to great risk (88%) was associated with adults using prescription drugs not prescribed to them. The majority perceived moderate to great risk (79%) in using marijuana or cannabis and tobacco, followed by e-cigarettes (78%). ACS respondents perceived drinking 4 or 5 alcoholic drinks on one occasion as a moderate or great risk, with 77% expressing some level of concern. Less than half of all respondents perceived great levels of risk associated with alcohol, tobacco, e-cigarettes or vaping devices, and marijuana or cannabis.

TANEY COUNTY

SUBSTANCE USE IN ADULTS

Moderate/Great Risk

Use a prescription drug not prescribed to them?

88%

Use marijuana or cannabis?

79%

Use tobacco?

79%

Use e-cigarettes or other nicotine vaping devices?

78%

Drink 4 (for women) or 5 (for men) or more alcoholic drinks on one occasion?

77%

Focus group and key informant interview participants shared locations where substance misuse is occurring:

- In private
 - Socially, in their own homes or the homes of others who use
- In public
 - Gas stations
 - Bathrooms
 - Public Parks
 - Vehicles
 - More secluded public places

Substances were mentioned by key informants and focus group participants as used to cope with stress, trauma, difficult life circumstances, and seek relief from physical or emotional pain. Other reasons stated for using substances in general include self-medication, to relax, or the individuals are addicted. Respondents noted challenges arising from substance use, including short-term marked changes in behavior depending on the substance (sluggishness, erratic behavior, etc.). Signs of use mentioned included anxiety, depression, lack of motivation, tremors, difficulty concentrating, seizures, and overdoses in certain cases.

TANEY COUNTY

SUBSTANCE USE IN ADULTS

Alcohol

Prevalence

Two-thirds of ACS respondents (63%) reported consuming at least one alcoholic drink in the past 30 days. A smaller proportion of respondents (39%) reported engaging in binge drinking (defined as 4 (women) or 5 (men) or more drinks on one occasion) in the past 30 days. Driving and working under the influence was mentioned as a problem by key informants and focus group participants.

Past 30-Day Behaviors

Have at least one alcoholic drink?

63%

Drink 4 (for women) or 5 (for men) or more alcoholic drinks on one occasion?

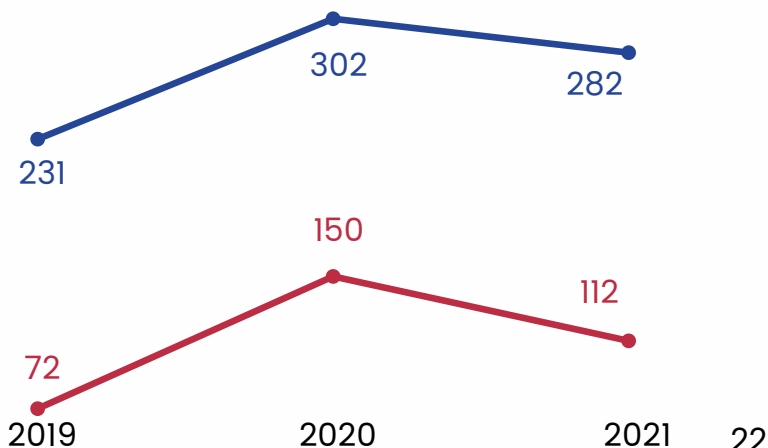
39%

Alcohol is the most commonly used substance in Missouri adults.¹² According to the 2020 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS), 18% of Taney County adults report engaging in binge drinking within the past 30 days, slightly higher than the national rate of 17%.¹² Excessive drinking (binge or heavy drinking) is at 19%, similar to state and national levels.¹²

Consequences

E.R. Services, Then Discharged

E.R. Services, Then Admitted



Key informants shared awareness of long-term health effects of alcohol use such as alcohol-liver damage. A recovery personnel stated that substance use is associated with mental health, criminal justice, DCFS and law enforcement involvement, domestic abuse, children removed from families, loss of job, loss of driver's license, being unable to feed family members, and homelessness.

In 2022, 33% of individuals admitted into public treatment programs were due to alcohol.⁶ In 2021, Taney County residents had a total of 394 alcohol-related hospital/emergency room visits.⁶ In 2021, Taney County had 232 DWI arrests, and 4 liquor law violations.³ Alcohol-related crashes are more likely to produce fatalities and injuries, and from 2019 to 2021, alcohol-related traffic crashes increased from 72 to 93 in Taney County.³ According to the County Health Rankings Report 2017 - 2021, 25% of motor vehicle crash deaths were alcohol-related driving deaths.¹³

TANEY COUNTY

SUBSTANCE USE IN ADULTS

Tobacco



One in three ACS respondents reported using tobacco in the past 30 days.

A key informant in the ambulatory care sector stated that there are higher rates of tobacco use among individuals with low socioeconomic status. Among those who did use tobacco, 8% of ACS respondents reported use on all 30 days. Of those who used tobacco/nicotine in the past year, 61% reported stopping the use of tobacco or nicotine vaping products for one day or longer in an attempt to quit within the past 12 months.

According to the 2018 BRFSS, current cigarette-smoking is declining in Missouri, falling under 20% since 2011. Current cigarette-smoking continues to be significantly higher in adults with less than a high school education (40%). In the Southwest region of Missouri, 24% of adults currently use cigarettes. The prevalence of current smoking among adults aged 18 years or older is 20%.¹²

E-cigarettes/Nicotine Vaping Devices



One in four ACS respondents reported using e-cigarettes/nicotine vaping devices in the past 30 days.

Among those who did use vaping devices, 4% reported use on all 30 days.

In general, the 2018 BRFSS reported that Missouri adults report lower levels of current use of e-cigarettes (6%), with a quarter of adults reported having ever used an e-cigarette in their lifetime.

Marijuana/Cannabis



One in five ACS respondents reported using marijuana/cannabis in the past 30 days.

Focus group participants and key informants noted that smoking cigarettes has decreased over the last couple of decades and marijuana is taking the place of cigarette smoking. Marijuana is becoming more acceptable in the community and easily accessible through dispensaries due to legalization and medical marijuana sales in Missouri since October 2020, however, key informants shared that some people still access it from dealers due to cheaper costs.

According to the MO DMH 2023 Taney County Community Profile, 8% of adults currently used marijuana in the past month in the Southwest region of Missouri. In 2022, 11% of Taney County residents were admitted into public treatment programs due to marijuana.³

Prescription Drugs



Almost one in five ACS respondents reported using prescription drugs not prescribed to them in the past 30 days.

Prescription drugs were mentioned by key informants to be primarily accessed through networks.

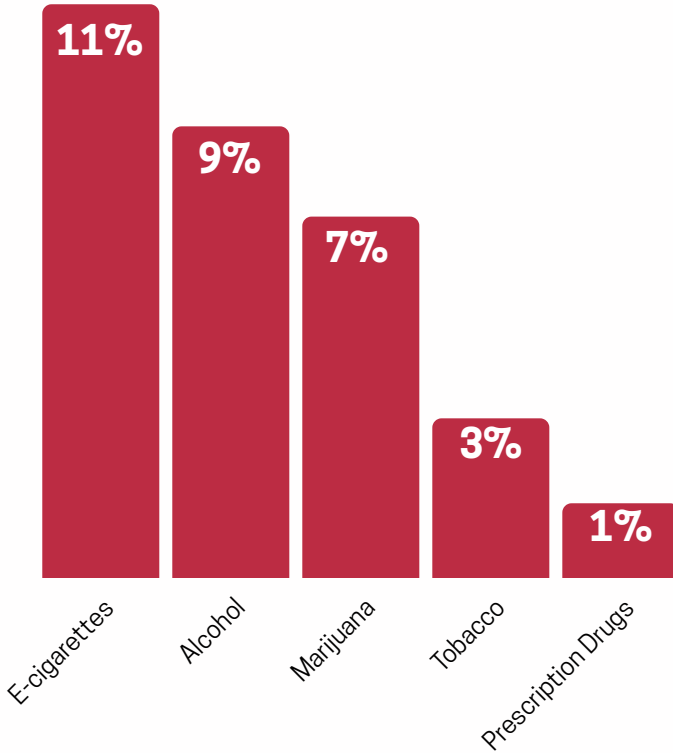
In 2022, 12% of people admitted into public treatment programs were due to prescription drugs.³ The 2021-2022 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (SAMHSA) reported that 4% of Missourians 18 or older misused prescription pain medications in the past year.¹⁴ According to the MO DMH 2023 Taney County Community Profile, misuse of prescription pain medication in the past year was reported by 5.1% of adults in the Southwest region of Missouri.

TANEY COUNTY

SUBSTANCE USE IN YOUTH

Prevalence

Past 30-Day Use (Grades 6-12), 2022 MSS



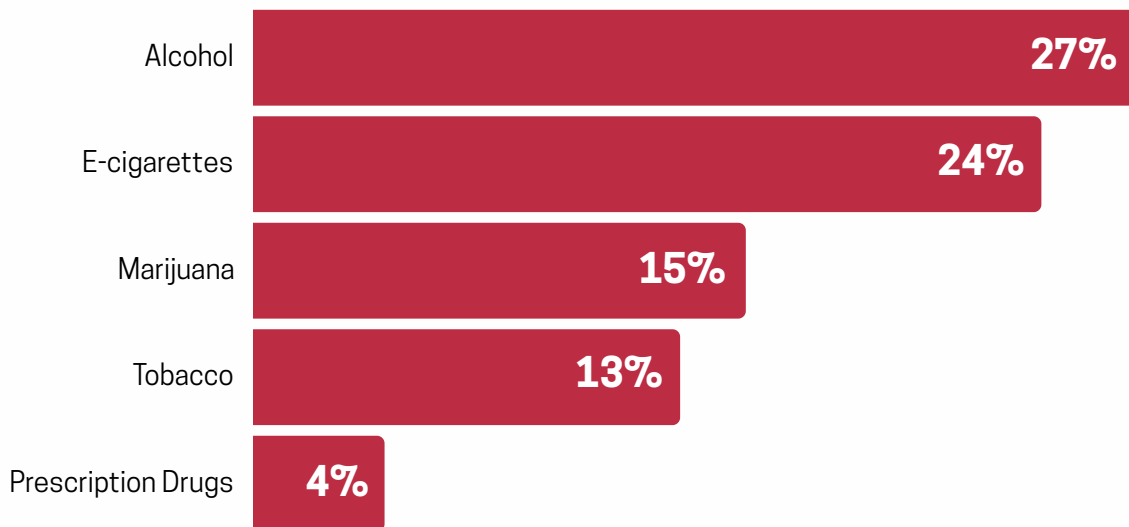
The 2022 MSS for Taney County indicates that e-cigarettes, alcohol, and marijuana are the three most commonly used substances by local youth, with e-cigarettes being the highest (alcohol at the state level).⁷

Youth focus group participants mentioned substances they see people their age using including:

- Tobacco/Nicotine/Vaping
- Alcohol
- Marijuana
- Other drugs

For lifetime substance use among youth in Taney County (grades 6-12), the 2022 MSS highlighted that alcohol was the highest, followed by e-cigarettes.

Lifetime Use (Grades 6-12), 2022 MSS





E-CIGARETTES/NICOTINE VAPING DEVICES

All adult focus group participants noted vaping as a huge problem in the community. Vaping was mentioned by youth focus group participants as the most common substance use concern among youth and there is a high level of addiction and dependency on it. Students shared they know youth as young as fifth grade who vape. When asked how many youths they have seen vape this week, the range was 0-5.

Students shared locations where vaping occurs:

- Bathrooms
- In class
- Empty hallways
- Theater halls
- School bus
- Choir room
- By the dumpsters
- In their jackets

Students reported that the most common place to vape is the school bathrooms. There are vape detectors in the bathroom, but they don't always work. Whenever a student is caught vaping in the bathrooms, the bathrooms are locked, and it negatively impacts everyone else. Students shared that it is always the same group of students who block stalls or stare in the mirror in the bathrooms as they vape, usually between lunches or classes. Students shared there is a lack of education on how to quit vaping.



ALCOHOL

Alcohol was shared by youth focus group participants to be the second most common substance use concern. Locations where alcohol is used are before and after parties. Alcohol is used at school events by youth, such as football games, kickback parties, and homecoming. Students shared that people their age drink alcohol and drive under the influence. Alcohol was seen on campus before and during school hours, and some put it in their water bottles.

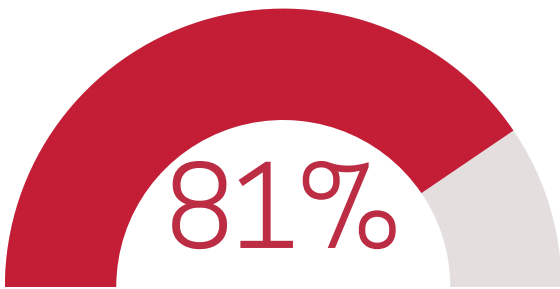
TANEY COUNTY

SUBSTANCE USE IN YOUTH

MARIJUANA/CANNABIS

Students shared that people their age are putting marijuana in their vapes or utilizing edibles. Locations of use include locker rooms, bathrooms, and parks. Adult focus group participants shared that youth in elementary schools are testing positive for marijuana due to parental use, and it continues with them into high school.

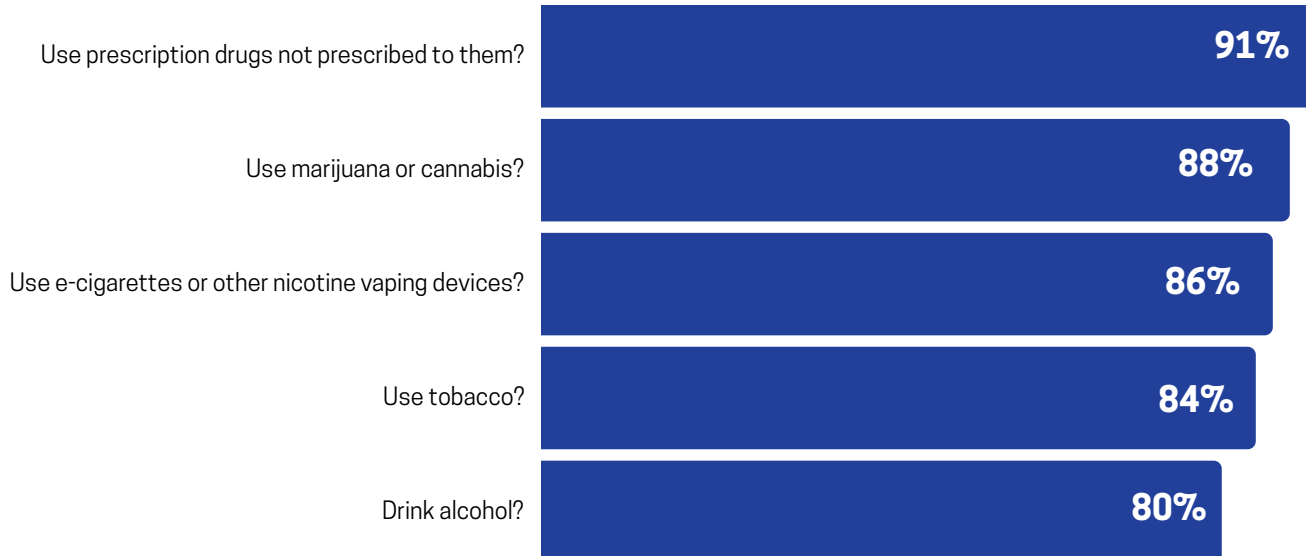
Risk



The majority of ACS respondents “Agree” and “Strongly Agree” that substance use among youth is a concern in their community.

The majority of ACS participants perceived moderate to great risk for youth use of any of the substances, with the highest perception of risk associated with using prescription drugs not prescribed to them (91%), followed by use of marijuana or cannabis (88%), e-cigarettes or vaping device use (86%), and tobacco use (84%). While more than three-quarters of respondents associate risk with youth alcohol use (80%), it was the last-ranking substance.

Moderate/Great Risk



TANEY COUNTY

SUBSTANCE USE IN YOUTH

Students reported that people their age believe that e-cigarettes were safer because of the marketing claims that water vapor is not harmful. Youth focus group participants shared that students vape because it gives them a sense of getting away from things, relaxing, and it is habitual. Further, nicotine is a stimulant and because a lot of students are low on energy, it helps them feel better in a way. Participants reported that a lot of students use it as coping, even though they know it's bad for them. They believe some youths do it to blend in and follow the crowd, encouraged by peer pressure and seeing it on social media. It was shared that there is a common perception that it is becoming normalized, and people think it is better than smoking and the flavoring makes it attractive, but people do not know what is in vapes. Students believed it used to be the same with cigarettes that people used to think smoking was good for them until the research came out.

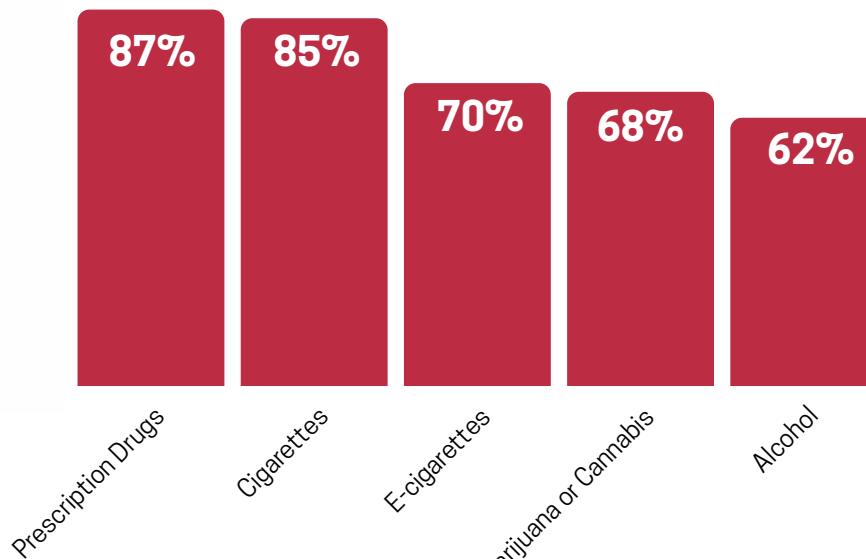
"People put it [vaping] on a high pedestal - think it helps you and don't focus on how it affects you."

- High School Student

In February 2023, it became legal to sell recreational marijuana in Missouri, leading to a shift in perceptions and availability. It was reported by key informants that most parents say that vaping and marijuana among their children is uncontrollable, and parents are confused about what to think about marijuana use since legalization. Another key informant reported the legalization of marijuana has spread the ideology that it is "safe", and there is a lack of educational material to show youth the impact of marijuana on development.

The 2022 MSS highlighted that many local youths perceive substance use as having low or no risk. Alcohol is viewed as the lowest risk, followed by marijuana and e-cigarettes.⁷

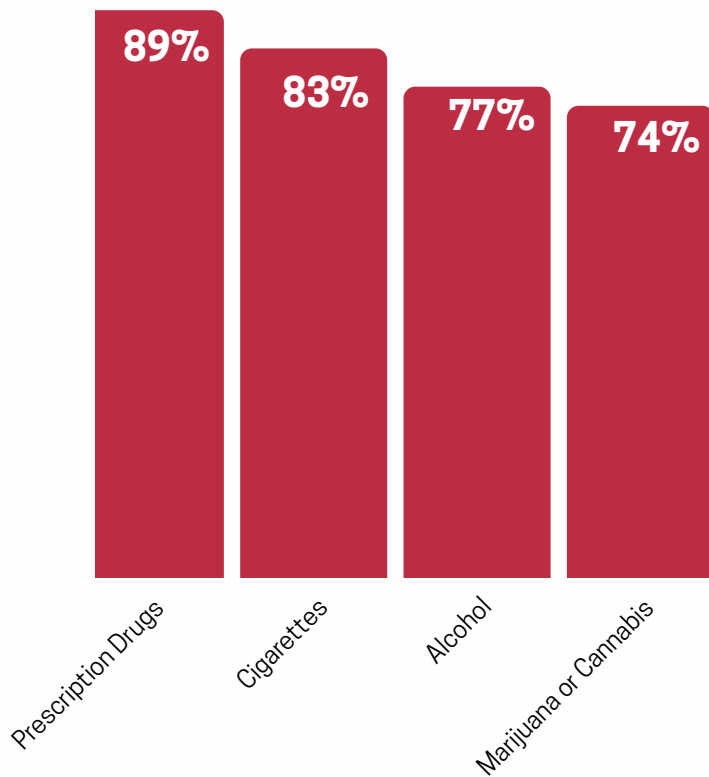
Moderate/Great Risk, 2022 MSS



TANEY COUNTY

SUBSTANCE USE IN YOUTH

Perception of Peer Disapproval, 2022 MSS



When asked about their friends' perception of wrongness for substance use in the 2022 MSS, prescription drugs amassed the highest disapproval.

A quarter of students in the 2022 MSS reported their peers believe someone their age would be 'pretty cool' or 'very cool' if they used e-cigarettes, drank alcohol, or smoked marijuana.⁷

Availability

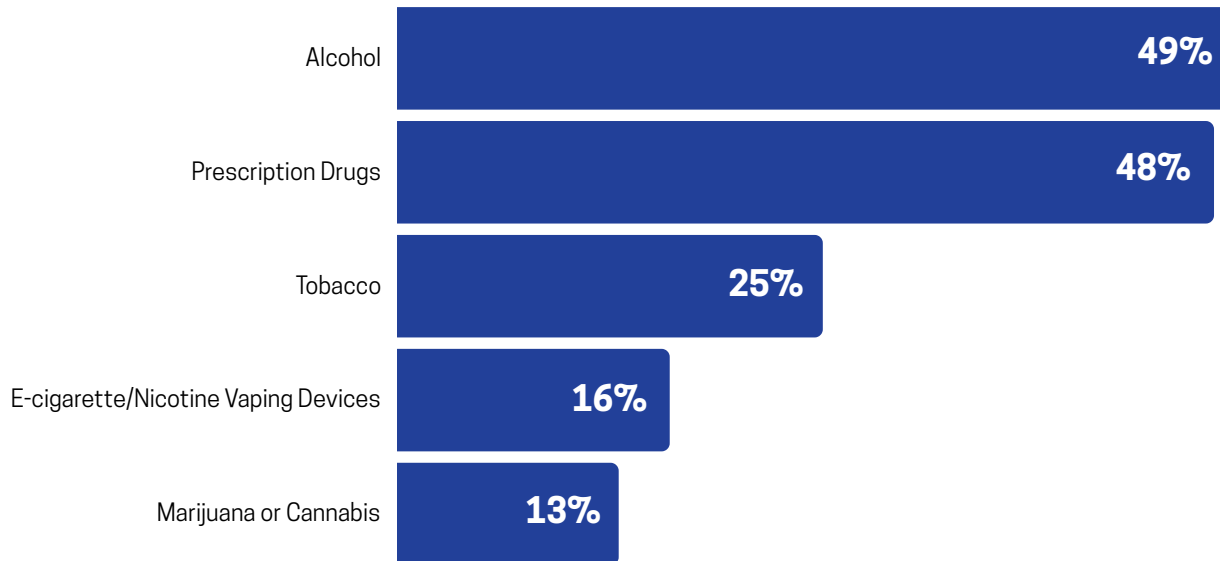
When youth in focus groups were asked about how people their age learn about substances, it was mentioned that they learn from friends, older people and family members, and social media. When they were asked about where people their age access substances, the most commonly mentioned sources were their peers/friends and older adults in their lives (parents, siblings of age, friends of age, etc.). E-cigarette/vaping devices were mentioned to be accessible through other sources such as online shopping and connections at gas stations. Youth also mentioned people their age access alcohol by stealing single-serve bottles from Walmart or at gas stations (gas stations don't ID, youth use fake IDs, or connections with clerks). As for marijuana or cannabis, youth access dispensaries where they know people who work there. It was mentioned that youth also sell each other all the substances mentioned above.

Adults were asked about storage practices of alcohol within their households in the ACS, and nearly half of the respondents reported keeping alcohol (49%) and prescription drugs (48%) in an unlocked location within their homes, making it easily accessible for households members. A quarter stored tobacco in unlocked locations (25%). More than two-thirds did not have e-cigarettes/nicotine vaping devices or marijuana or cannabis stored in their homes.

TANEY COUNTY

SUBSTANCE USE IN YOUTH

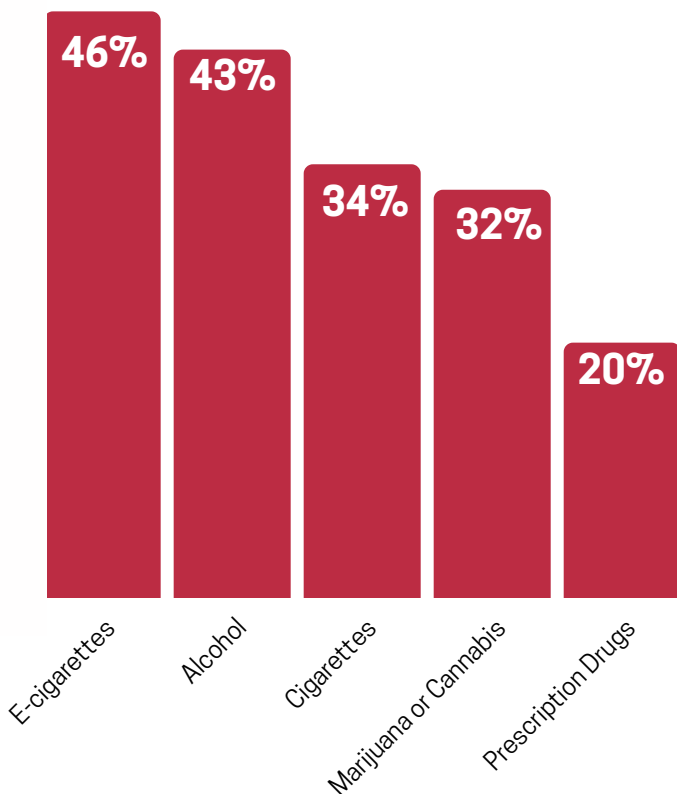
% of ACS Respondents who Keep Substances in Unlocked Locations



Findings on substance monitoring at home to prevent theft reveal a range of behaviors among ACS respondents, where 18% indicated that they rarely or never monitor alcohol. Only 5% rarely or never monitor marijuana or cannabis.

In the 2022 MSS, youth reported having easy access to substances.⁷

Perception of Availability, 2022 MSS



The 2022 MSS highlighted that students in Taney County report the most common source of alcohol is family members, followed by friends. The most common source of marijuana for Taney County youth is friends (56% of lifetime users), followed by a dealer (23%). In addition, alcohol and tobacco/nicotine compliance checks have not been conducted since 2019, and there were 17 reported alcohol compliance check failures that year. Retail environmental scans conducted by the Branson ADAPT youth in 2022 resulted in four stores falling into the “high-risk” range and 14 stores receiving “moderate-risk” level scores, illustrating a potential opportunity to reduce youth exposure to alcohol products and marketing. Online and “to-go” alcohol sales laws have also been loosened considerably since the pandemic, potentially easing access for youth.

TANEY COUNTY

SUBSTANCE USE IN YOUTH

Protective Factors

When youth in focus groups were asked what would help people their age say “no” to using substances, participants mentioned the following:

- Seeing the long-term effects and how it affects others around them
- Teaching others how to quit if they are using and benefits of quitting
- Engaging in extracurriculars
- Having a safe person for mental health concerns so that they don't resort to substances

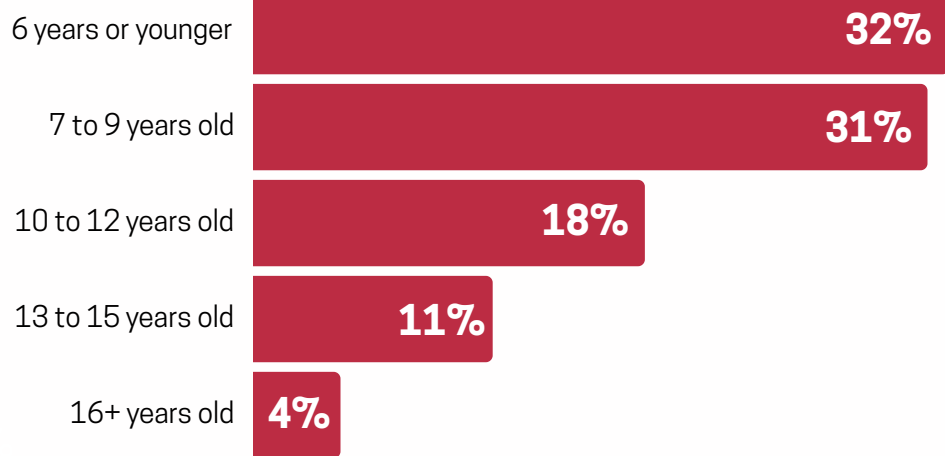
Other things mentioned that help youth say “no” to substances included education at school and at home, and other support systems such as the Boys and Girls Club or churches. It was highlighted that there needs to be open conversations about how to respond to peer pressure for youth ages 11 and up. Youth shared that it would be helpful to see someone who has suffered from repercussions of substances. Youth shared that they need to learn about the long-term effects on health and family – people explain that it is bad all the time but the actual effects can't be seen. It would be useful to have someone who survived to share their story.



PARENTING BEHAVIORS

Almost half of ACS respondents (53%) reported being the parent or guardian of children under the age of 18. Majority of ACS adults (81%) reported first talking to children about risks of alcohol and drugs before age 13.

Age of Child When First Talking to Them About Risks of Alcohol and Drugs

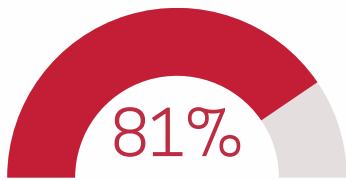


I have not talked to them about the risks of alcohol and drugs. 4%

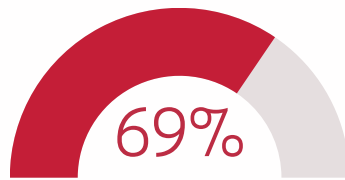
TANEY COUNTY

SUBSTANCE USE IN YOUTH

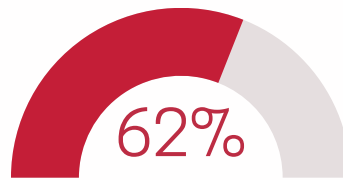
When asked about their parenting behaviors, the majority of ACS parents (80%) often or always know who their child is with and what they are doing, indicating a strong emphasis on supervision. A substantial number of parents (69%) often or always set and enforce clear rules regarding alcohol and drug use, and a significant portion of parents (61%) often or always engage in discussions about the risks of alcohol and drug use with their children. While a notable portion (54%) of parents often or always talk with other parents about youth alcohol and drug use, there's still a proportion who do so only sometimes or rarely.



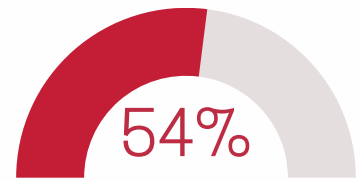
Know who their child is with and what they are doing.



Set and enforce clear rules regarding use of alcohol and/or other drugs with their child.



Talk to their child about the risks of alcohol and drug use.



Talk with other parents about youth alcohol and drug use.

Findings from focus group participants show that overall parental perception of vaping is that a lot of parents don't know that their kids vape, and a lot think it's better than cigarettes. Some parents do not set good examples and when they use substances; they are normalizing it for their children. It was also shared that some parents are aware that their children drink and they do not care as they want to be perceived as cool parents. There is a common perception that youth using substances (marijuana, alcohol) under parental supervision is better than using and driving. Participants highlighted the need to encourage parents to talk directly to their children about risks, be aware of what substances are present at home, and know who their children spend time with.

In the 2022 MSS, parental disapproval for youth substance use was the highest for prescription drug misuse⁷.

Perception of Parental Disapproval, 2022 MSS



TANEY COUNTY

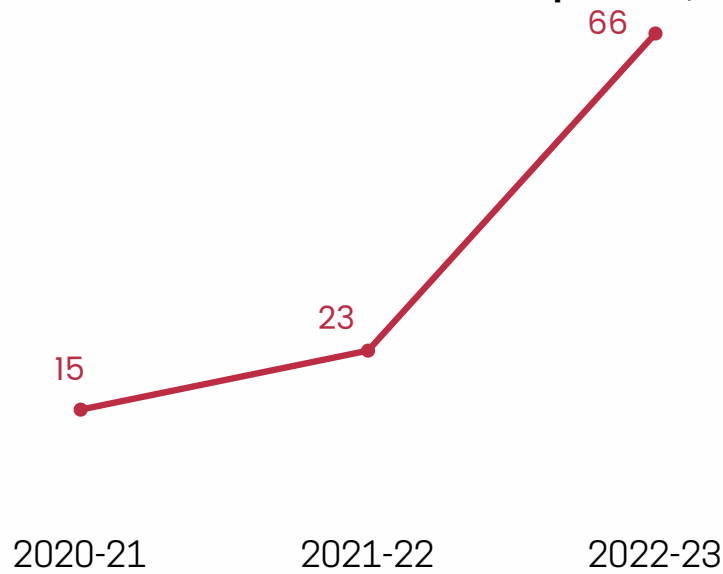
SUBSTANCE USE IN YOUTH

Consequences

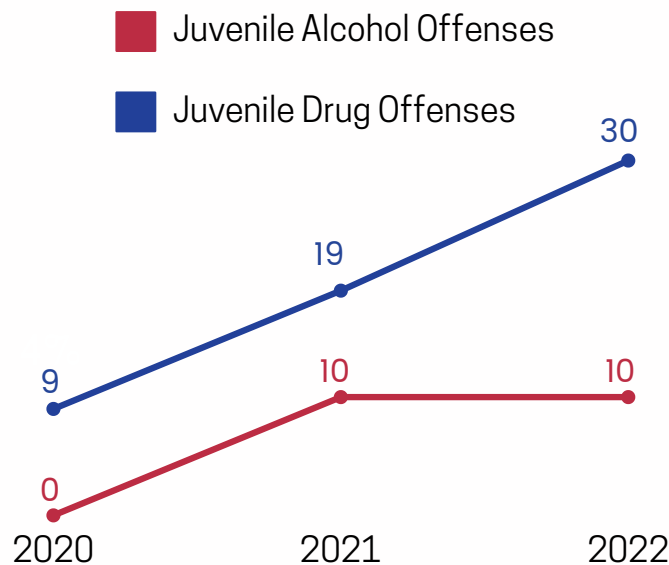
Generally, focus group youth shared that people their age believe that adults cannot be trusted at school to help with quitting substances because youth get in trouble for it. Youth shared that they feel there are more resources for older people than younger people.

In the 2022-2023 school year, there were 66 substance-use related school suspensions, a dramatic increase from the previous year.⁶

3-Year Trend of Substance-Related School Suspensions, MO DMH 2023



In 2022, there were 10 juvenile alcohol offenses similar to the previous year, and 30 juvenile drug offenses, increasing from the previous year.⁶

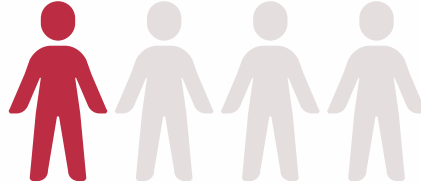


TANEY COUNTY

LGBTQ+ HEALTH DISPARITIES

Key Findings

Of the sample of ACS respondents for Taney County, **9% of individuals** reported being part of the LGBTQ+ community. When comparing responses between disparity-vulnerable populations such as LGBTQ+ with non-LGBTQ+ counterparts, the sample size of the former may be too small, making it challenging to draw meaningful conclusions about the extent of the disparities.



Almost a quarter of LGBTQ+ ACS respondents feel uncomfortable (23%) expressing their sexual orientation in their local community.

FOCUS GROUP FINDINGS

- There are no readily available services for LGBTQ+ populations.
- There is a lack of affirming and accepting care in Branson, and transportation and finances further compound access to affirming care outside of Branson.
- There is a perception that it is easier and cheaper to access substances and self-medicate than it is to talk to a doctor due to lack of affirming care.
- There is a lack of knowledge and information about places to go to build community for the LGBTQ+ population.
- LGBTQ+ youth experience hate, and they are shunned by loved ones and experience parental violence threats if they express their sexual orientation or gender identities.
- There is a need for hosting safe spaces for diversity nights, bowling nights, youth nights, an affirming clinic, monthly group meetings, and Pride Month celebrations.

ACS FINDINGS

- More than half of ACS LGBTQ+ individuals express concern toward alcohol and drug use in the community.
- LGBTQ+ ACS respondents consistently reported higher levels of substance use in the past month, with tobacco use being the highest substance.
- Tobacco was the highest-ranking substance used on all 30 days in the past month for LGBTQ+ ACS respondents.
- More than half of LGBTQ+ individuals who use tobacco/nicotine indicated that they stopped for one day or longer because they were trying to quit in the past year.
- LGBTQ+ ACS respondents had lower perception of risk toward youth substance use, and alcohol was perceived to be the least risky behavior.
- E-cigarettes/nicotine vaping devices were the highest kept substance in unlocked locations by LGBTQ+ ACS respondents.

Key Findings

FOCUS GROUP FINDINGS

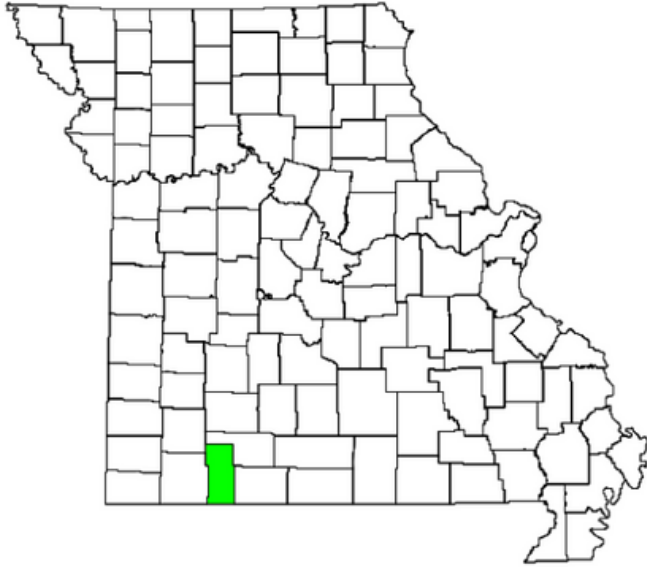
- Focus group participants shared that various factors such as socioeconomic conditions, culture, stress and trauma that could be tied to immigration status and acculturation, language barriers, and discrimination exacerbate mental health and substance misuse in the Hispanic community.
- Hispanic community members emphasized burnout among healthcare professionals and limited access to culturally competent mental health services, further hindered by language barriers.
- Focus group and key informant interview participants shared that initiatives focusing on cultural sensitivity and language accessibility require sustained support and expansion for mental health and substance use services for the Hispanic community.

ACS FINDINGS

- Hispanic ACS respondents had lower levels of concern across all substance categories compared to their non-Hispanic counterparts.
- Hispanic and non-Hispanic ACS respondents expressed the lowest level of concern toward marijuana or cannabis use.
- Hispanic ACS respondents reported slightly lower concern toward youth mental health in the community compared to non-Hispanic counterparts.
- Hispanic ACS respondents had higher levels of substance use in the past month, with binge drinking being the highest substance.
- Three-quarters of Hispanic ACS respondents who use tobacco/nicotine indicated that they stopped for one day or longer because they were trying to quit during the past year.
- Hispanic ACS respondents had lower perception of risk toward youth substance use compared to their non-Hispanic counterparts for prescription drugs not prescribed to them and tobacco use.
- Hispanic ACS respondents are more likely to store e-cigarettes/nicotine vaping devices in unlocked locations.
- A quarter of Hispanic ACS respondents closely monitor the levels of marijuana or cannabis in their homes to prevent theft at least sometimes.

STONE COUNTY

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

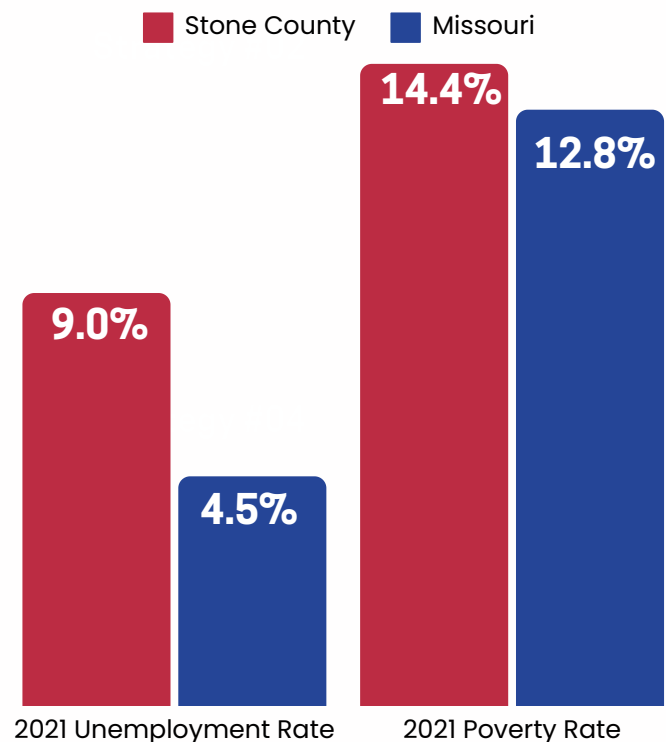


Stone County is located in Southwest Missouri and has a population estimate of 32,136 as of 2022. It ranks 37th in population size among Missouri's 115 counties including St. Louis City.

The region's economy is driven by seasonal tourism and Branson, one of the most populated cities in the region (12,638 residents), hosts more than 9 million visitors each year. About 45% of local jobs are in tourism and there is high demand for low pay/skilled workers. The seasonal nature of tourism means that the unemployment rate varies significantly throughout the year, peaking in the first quarter and returning to a more normal rate by August.

In 2022, the median household income was \$56,418, compared to the statewide value of \$71,520.

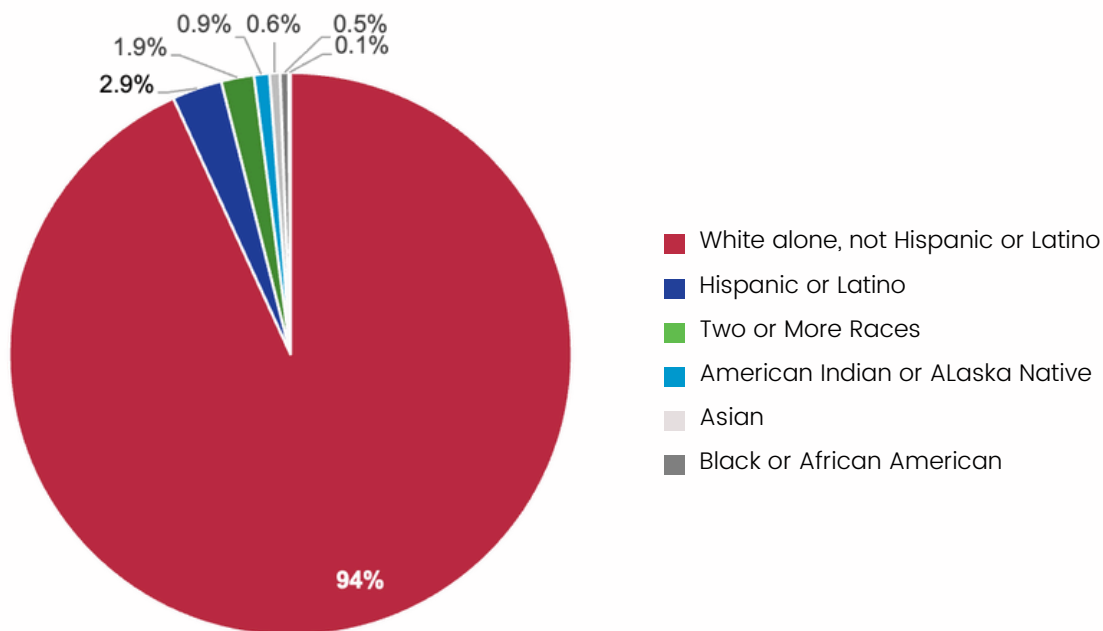
The 2021 unemployment rate in the county was 9%, which was greater than the statewide unemployment rate of 4.5%. In 2021, the poverty rate was 14.4%, compared to the statewide poverty rate of 12.8%. According to County Health Rankings, 24% of youth (under 18) in Stone County live in poverty, compared to a state rate of 17%. There are significant disparities related to race, with 48% of Hispanic youth living in poverty.



STONE COUNTY

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

The population is primarily Caucasian working class (94%), and approximately 10–12% of the population have not graduated from high school. Two percent of Stone County residents over age five speak a language other than English at home.



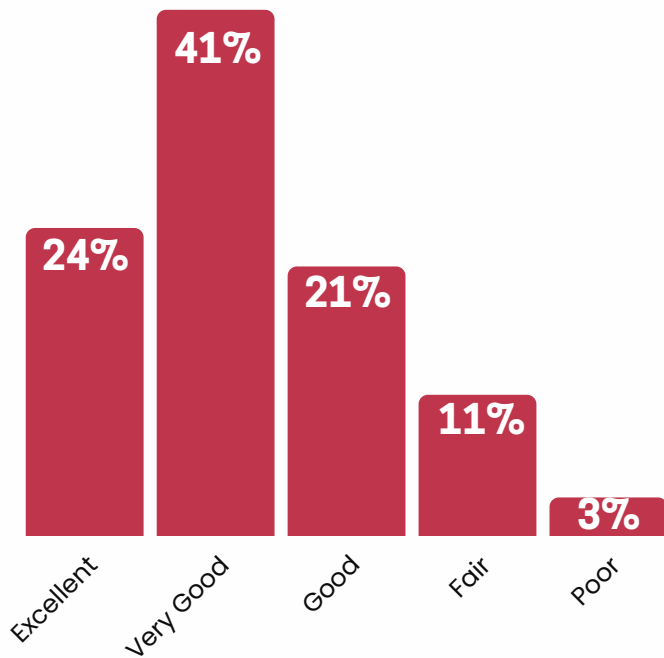
Stone County has 51% female residents and more older adults and disabled people than the state average. Local data on sexual orientation and gender identity has not been collected but according to the 2019 Gallup Daily Tracking Survey, 3.8% of adults in Missouri identify as LGBTQ+. The Youth Risk Behavior Survey from the same year reports that 12.7% of Missouri youth identify as either gay, lesbian, or bisexual.

STONE COUNTY

MENTAL HEALTH IN ADULTS

Prevalence

Majority of ACS Respondents Positively Rate Their Own Mental Health



The majority of ACS respondents “Agree” and “Strongly Agree” (91%) that mental/emotional health among adults is a concern in their community.

When respondents were asked to rate their own mental/emotional health, the majority rated their mental/emotional health positively, with 86% rating it as excellent, very good, or good. A smaller percentage (14%) rated their mental/emotional health as fair or poor.

When asked about the most common mental health concerns facing adults in the community, the focus group participants shared the following mental health concerns:

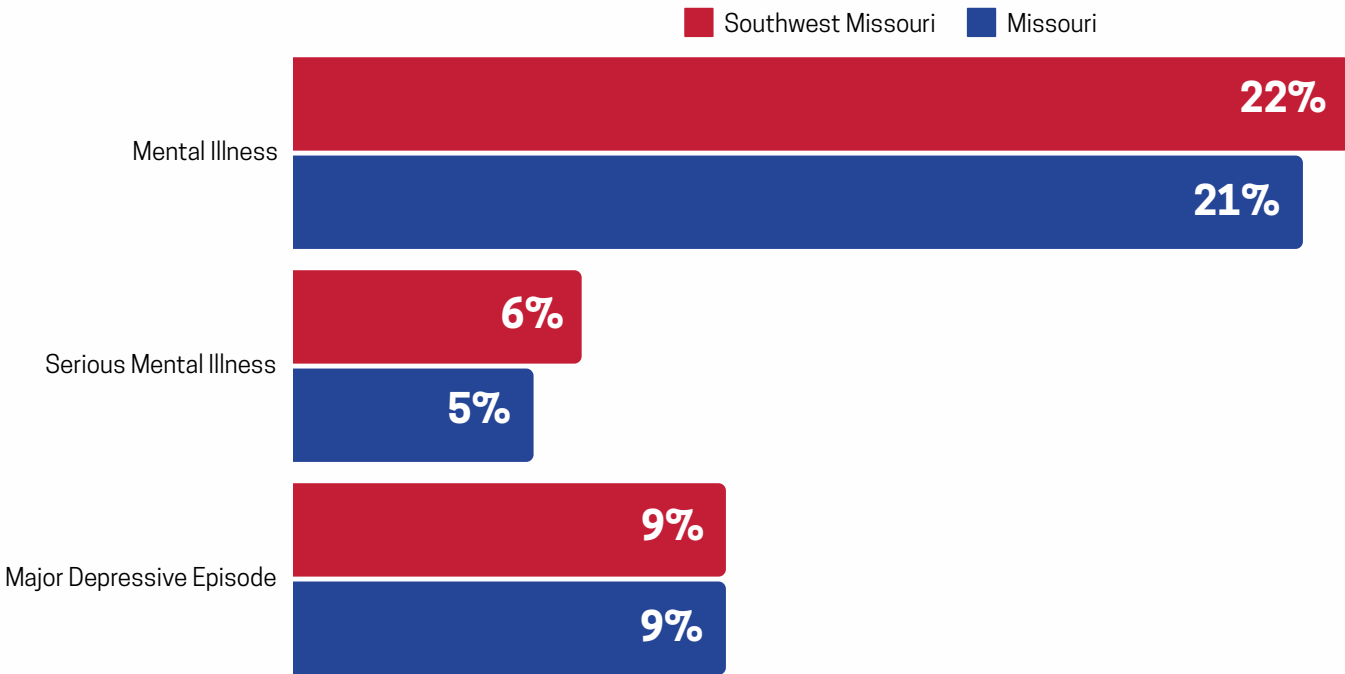
- Childhood trauma
- Lack of coping skills
- COVID-19 lingering effects
- Dissociation
- Isolation
- Stress
- Hopelessness
- Drug and alcohol addiction

STONE COUNTY

MENTAL HEALTH IN ADULTS

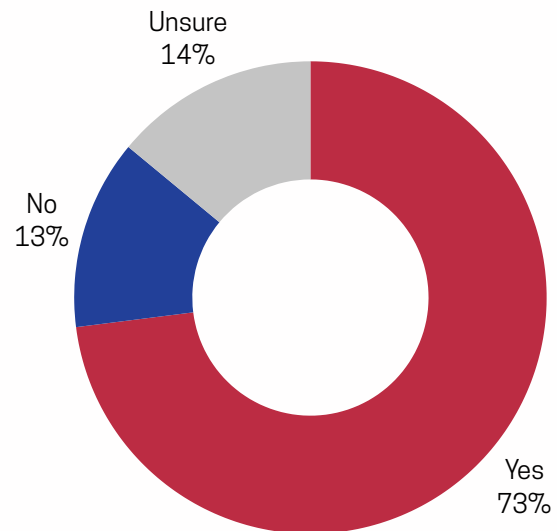
According to the Missouri Department of Mental Health 2023 Community Profile for Stone County, 15.1% of adults aged 18 years and older did not have good mental health for 14 days or more.¹⁸ According to the Missouri 2016 County-Level Study (CLS), the average poor mentally healthy days per month for Stone County residents was 3.8.¹⁸ The 2016-2018 National Survey on Drug Use and Health reported 22% of Southwest Missouri residents ages 18 and over have a mental illness, 6% have a serious mental illness, and approximately 9% had at least one major depressive episode in the past year.¹⁸ In 2022, 384 Stone County residents received treatment for serious mental illness at publicly funded facilities.¹⁸

Mental Health for Ages 18+, NSDUH 2016-18



Access

While a significant majority of ACS respondents (73%) reported being aware of services in their community that could help with mental/emotional health or substance use-related problems, more than a quarter of respondents (27%) either indicated being unaware (13%) or unsure (14%) of such services.

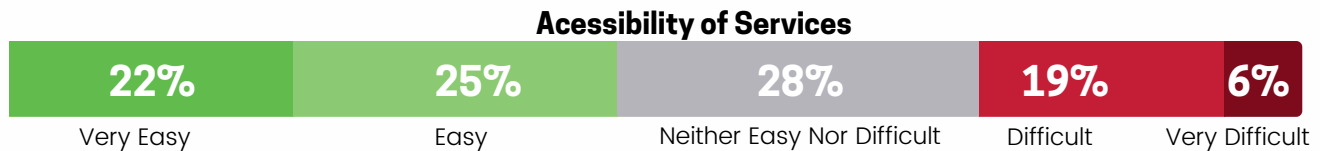


Awareness of Services

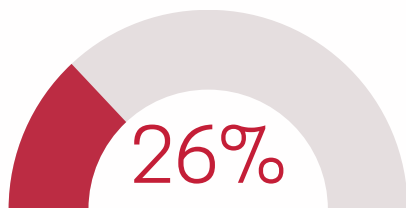
STONE COUNTY

MENTAL HEALTH IN ADULTS

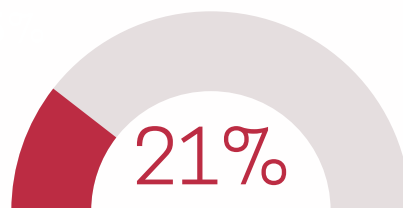
There was a mixed perception of the accessibility of mental health and substance use-related treatment services within the community. A quarter of respondents considered it difficult or very difficult to access such services (25%), and 28% of respondents felt that it was neither easy nor difficult.



When ACS respondents were asked about mental health access barriers, the most commonly reported factors making it difficult to access and receive local mental health and/or substance use-related treatment services included the availability of services, knowledge of available services, and cost.



Reported that there are few or no services available.



Reported that they don't know what services are available.



Reported that it is too expensive to use the services.

Other significant barriers identified include figuring out how to use the service (18%). ACS respondents also expressed concerns about fear of judgment related to seeking services for mental health or substance use (15%). Participants had the option to add any other mental health access barriers as an option to the survey, and length of waiting times, reliability of services, and insurance coverage were highlighted.

Some barriers highlighted include:

- Lots of hand-offs
- Lack of safe spaces and community ebelonging
- Resources not being close to the area
- Generational and community stigma
- Self-acceptance
- People not admitting when they need help, especially among men
- Clinic open times

STONE COUNTY

MENTAL HEALTH IN ADULTS

The resources were mentioned by focus group participants to be so limited that even when someone goes to a crisis center, they are not able to receive immediate help at that point and sometimes they must wait one week for it. Participants shared that the waiting times negatively impact access, as participants felt that people get help when they are ready to get help and so it must be provided immediately, or they may revert to bad coping skills.

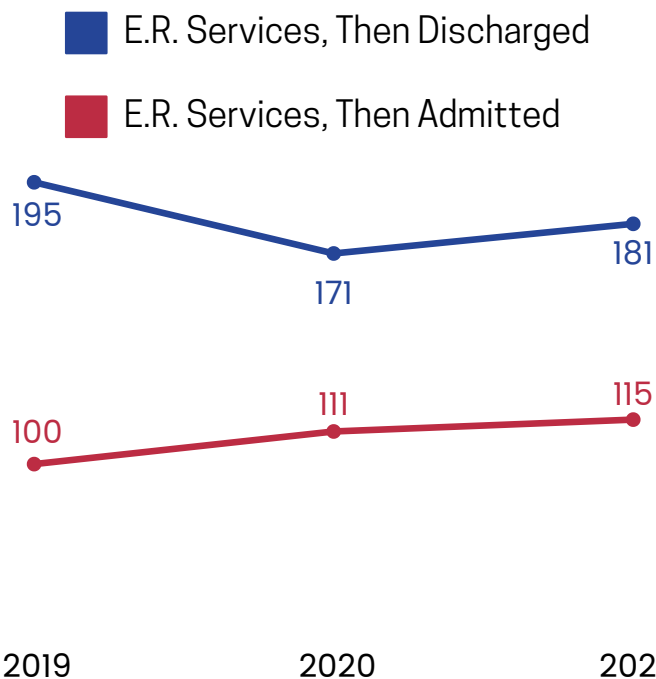
Stone County is a HRSA designated medically underserved area (MUA); and medical, dental, and mental health professional shortage area (HPSA). The ratio of mental health providers at 16.1 providers per 100,000 residents is 71.9% lower than the state rate of 57.2 providers which means fewer people have access to services and longer waiting times for appointments.⁵

“People automatically shut down when they are seeking help reluctantly and they are told they must wait or can’t receive immediate help. Resources are not there for those who truly need them, leading to feelings of hopelessness, substance use disorders, and potentially suicidal thoughts.”

-Stone County Adult

Consequences

3-Year Trend of Receiving Mental Health Services, MO DMH 2023



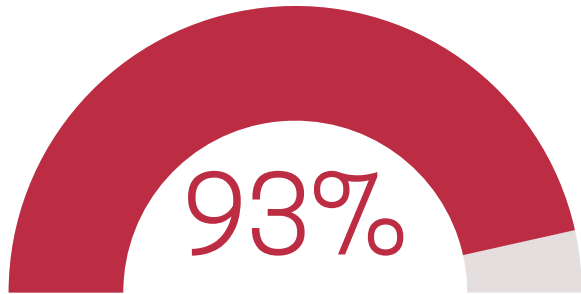
The limited access to behavioral health services leads to higher emergency department visits, as a total of 296 individuals received emergency room services for mental health being the principal disorder in 2021, as reported by the Missouri Department of Mental Health 2023 Stone County Community Profile.¹⁹ Individuals struggling with serious mental illnesses are at higher risk for homicide, suicide, accidents, and chronic conditions such as cardiovascular and respiratory diseases, and substance use disorders.

Suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death for ages 10–34 in Missouri, and in 2021, 7 Stone County residents died by suicide.¹⁸

STONE COUNTY

MENTAL HEALTH IN YOUTH

Prevalence



The majority of ACS respondents “Agree” and “Strongly Agree” that mental/emotional health among youth is a concern in their community.

When parents were asked to rate their child’s mental health, more than half (59%) reported that their child struggles with emotional or stress-related issues at least sometimes. Among those, the most common frequency reported was rarely (27%), followed by usually (23%), sometimes (22%), never (15%), and always (14%).

ACS Parent Respondents Ratings of Their Child’s Mental Health



When youth in focus groups were asked about the most common mental health concerns that face people their age, stress, depression, and alcohol and substance use were mentioned. Some students feel supported by others such as parents, some teachers, and friends. Students shared that they have adults they can go to if they feel that they can look up to them. Students in focus groups felt that they needed more people to confide in when it is difficult to receive help at home. Overall, students do not feel that the school is supportive of mental health and healthier coping skills are needed.

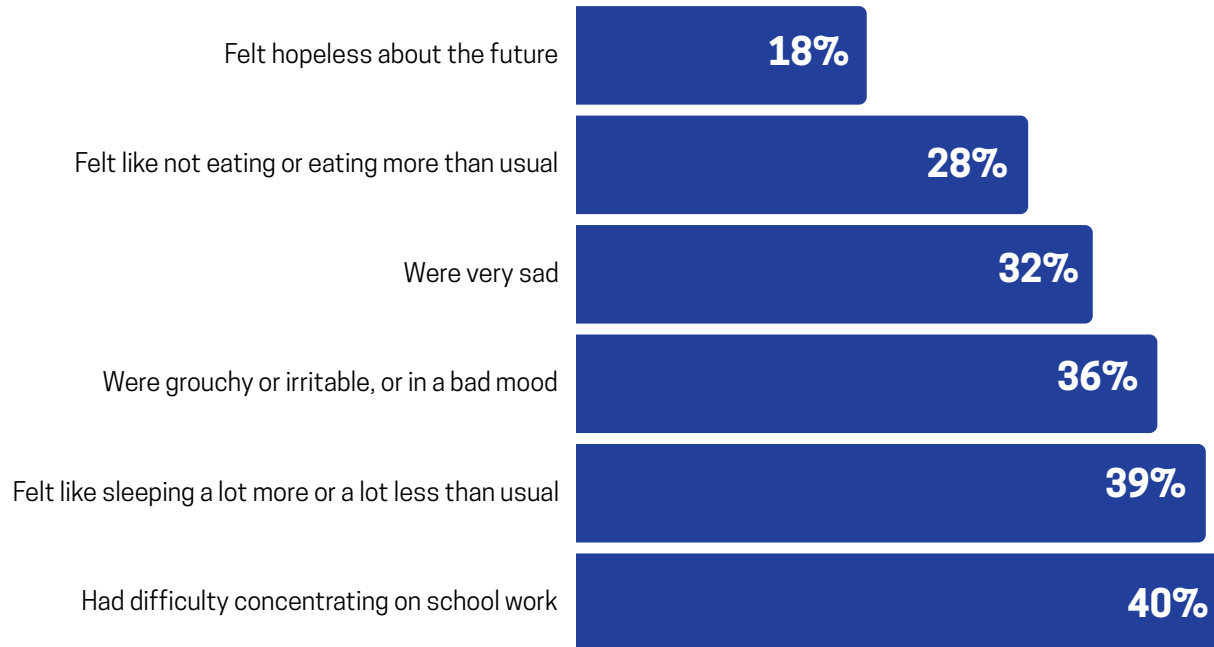
In the 2022 MSS, almost three-quarters (70%) of Stone County students (grades 6-12) reported that they have adults in their lives to turn to when things feel overwhelming.²⁰ Youth in the 2022 MSS reported that they are experiencing symptoms of depression and do not always use healthy coping mechanisms. Half (52%) of youth (grades 6-12) in the 2022 MSS agree/strongly agree that they handle stress in a healthy way. Similar to Taney County, females reported significantly more symptoms of depression, suicide ideation, self-harm, and poor coping skills compared to their male counterparts.²⁰

In the 2022 MSS, one in three Stone County students (grades 6-12) report “often” or “always” feeling very sad in the past month.²⁰

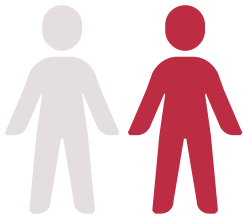
STONE COUNTY

MENTAL HEALTH IN YOUTH

Depression Scale (% Often or Always in the Past Month), 2022 MSS



Access



More than one in two of parent respondents in the ACS reported that their child has received counseling or treatment for emotional or stress-related issues.

Youth's perception of mental health resources were described as "few and far between", and students share a general sentiment of fear of being reported by counselors if they seek help. Similar to Taney County, adult focus group participants mentioned waiting times as a barrier to receive help for mental health problems as an issue for youth. Further, there is stigma for youth receiving mental health services depending on the parental perspective and lack of support.

In the 2022 MSS, two in three Stone County students (grades 6-12) reported that they know where to go in their community to get help.²⁰

STONE COUNTY

MENTAL HEALTH IN YOUTH

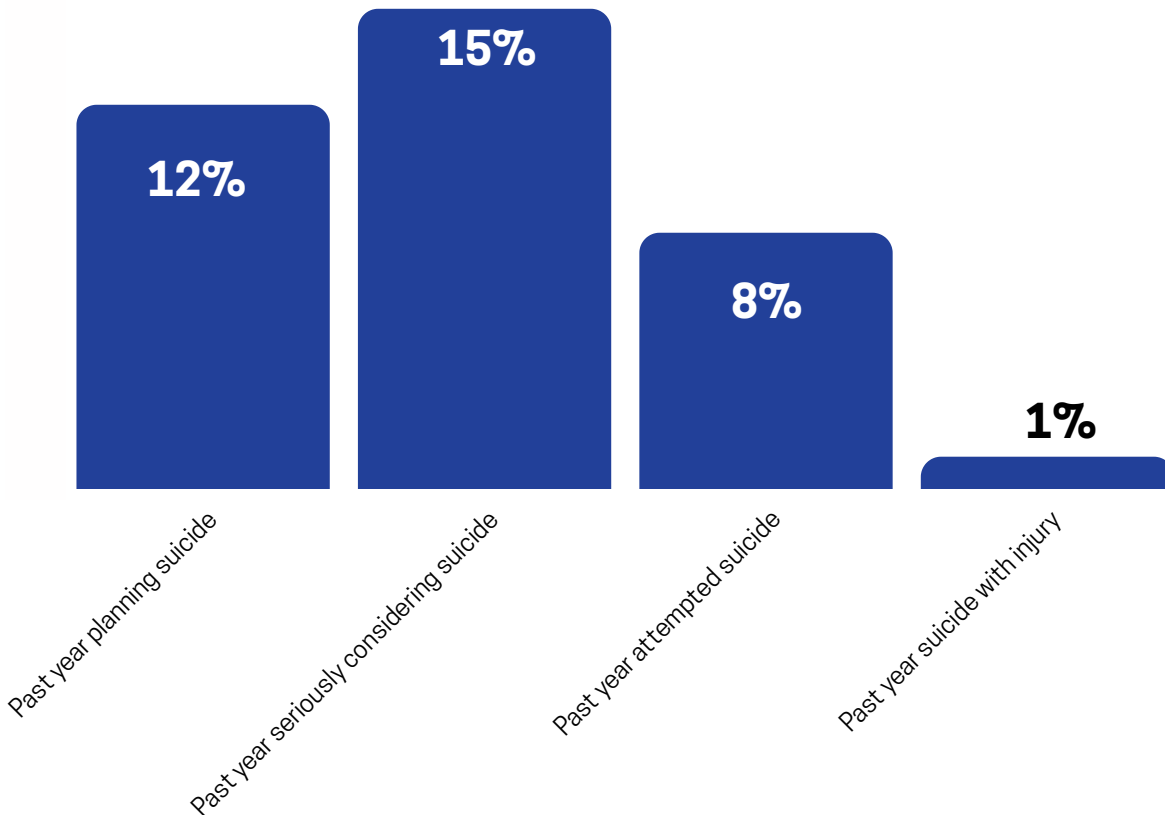
Consequences

Adult focus group participants mentioned that youth get mental health diagnoses and there are instances where they sell their medications, leading to more mental health problems.

Similar to Taney County, young people in Stone County had the highest rates of receiving clinical services from the Division of Behavioral Health; more than doubling between 2019 and 2021.⁸ Between 2011 to 2015, the rate of mental/behavioral hospitalizations (not substance abuse) for youth ages 1-19 was 101.14 per 10,000 people.⁹

In the 2022 MSS, 15% of students said they had seriously considered suicide in the past year.²⁰

Last 12 months (% reflects "1+" answer), 2022 MSS



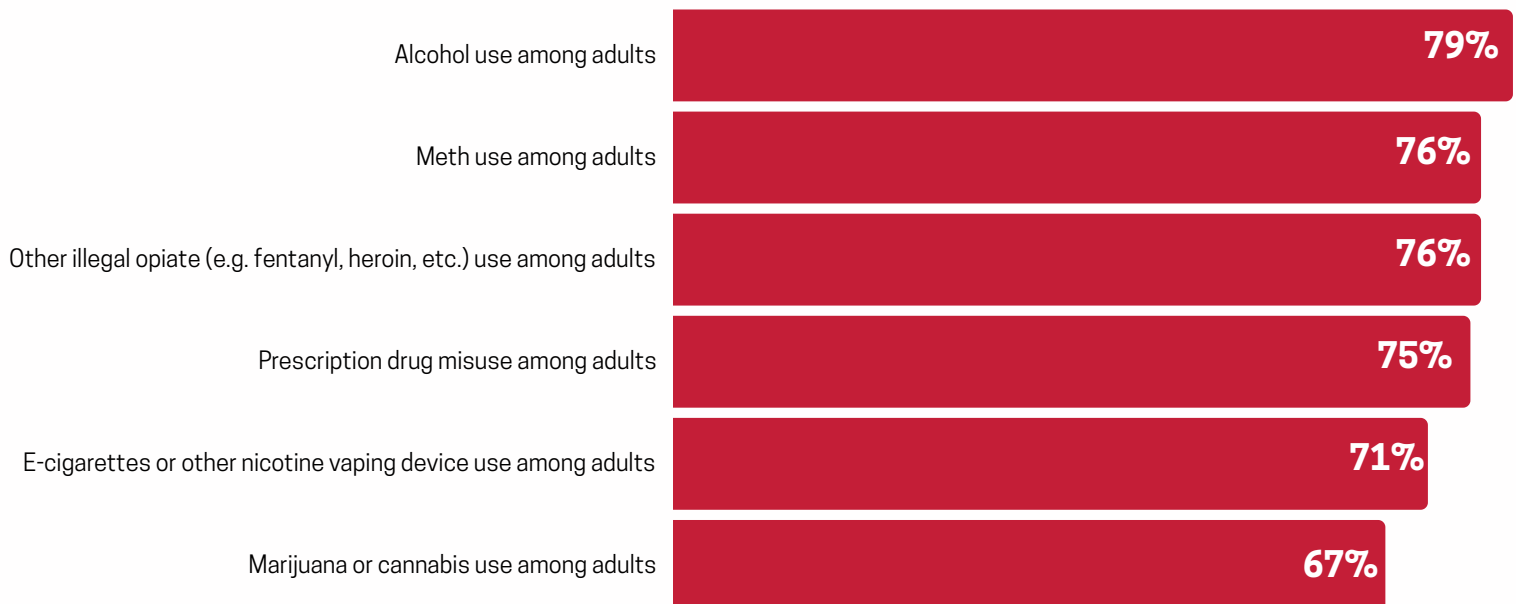
STONE COUNTY

SUBSTANCE USE IN ADULTS

Community Attitudes

Alcohol was perceived as the greatest concern among adults in the community among the majority of ACS respondents (79%). Meth use among adults was perceived as the second biggest problem in the community, amassing more than three-quarters (76%) of total responses. Other illegal opiate (fentanyl, heroin, etc.) use was the third-ranking behavior in the community where respondents “Agree / Strongly Agree” that it is a problem (75%).

Three-quarters of respondents (75%) “Agree / Strongly Agree” that prescription drug misuse among adults is a problem in the community, and almost three-quarters of respondents (71%) reported that about e-cigarette or other nicotine vaping device use. Marijuana or cannabis use was perceived as the least concerning behavior in the community, amassing two-thirds of responses (67%). Participants shared that due to the legalization of marijuana, it is becoming more normalized in the community.



Similar to Taney County, meth was mentioned as a problem by almost every sector representative in the key informant interviews. Examples of substances mentioned by key informants include taking prescription medications not prescribed to individuals, excessive alcohol consumption/binge drinking, marijuana (especially since legalization), and other street drugs such as cocaine and heroin. All key informants agreed that alcohol, tobacco, vaping, and marijuana are very common in the community.

Among Stone County residents admitted to Missouri's Division of Behavioral Health substance use disorder treatment programs in 2021, the two most common primary substances were methamphetamine followed by alcohol.¹¹

“Marijuana, vaping, and alcohol is everywhere and pretty much accepted. I think that’s a challenge.”

-Stone County Adult

STONE COUNTY

SUBSTANCE USE IN ADULTS

Risk

The highest level of perceived moderate to great risk (85%) is associated with adults using prescription drugs not prescribed to them in the ACS. The majority perceive moderate to great risk (78%) in using e-cigarettes or other nicotine vaping devices. Moderate to great risk are observed for cannabis and marijuana use (74%), and tobacco use (72%). Respondents perceive drinking 4 or 5 alcoholic drinks on one occasion as moderately or greatly risky. Less than half of all ACS respondents perceive great levels of risk associated with alcohol, tobacco, and e-cigarettes or vaping devices.

“Agree / Strongly Agree” that Substance Use is a Concern

Use a prescription drug not prescribed to them? **85%**

Use e-cigarettes or other nicotine vaping devices? **78%**

Use marijuana or cannabis? **74%**

Use tobacco? **72%**

Drink 4 (for women) or 5 (for men) or more alcoholic drinks on one occasion? **65%**

Alcohol

Prevalence

The majority of ACS respondents (70%) reported consuming at least one alcoholic drink in the past 30 days. Almost half of respondents (44%) reported engaging in binge drinking (defined as 4 (women) or 5 (men) or more drinks on one occasion) in the past 30 days. Similar to Taney County, driving and working under the influence was mentioned as a problem by key informants and focus group participants.

Past 30-Day Behaviors

Have at least one alcoholic drink? **70%**

Drink 4 (for women) or 5 (for men) or more alcoholic drinks on one occasion? **44%**

STONE COUNTY

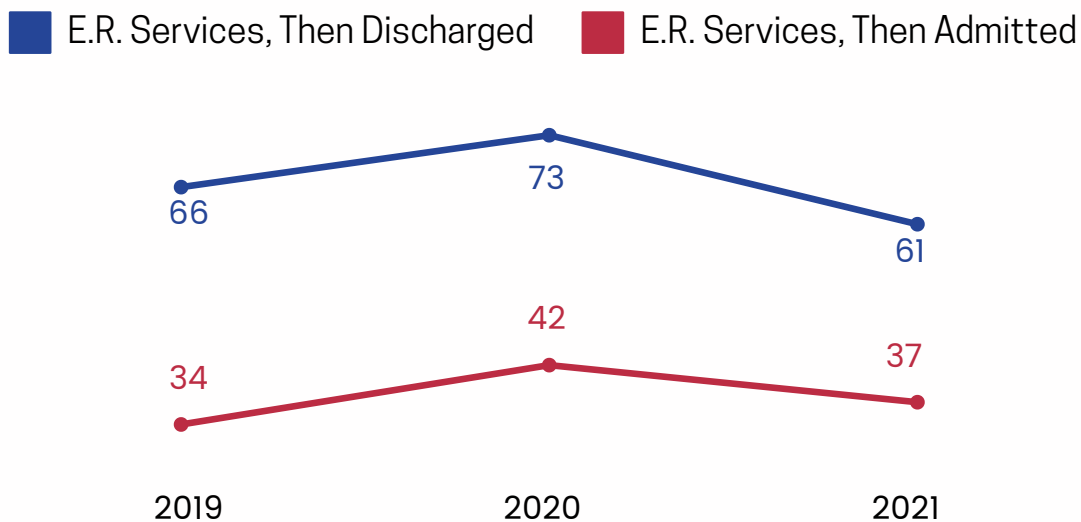
SUBSTANCE USE IN ADULTS

Alcohol is the most commonly used substance in Missouri adults.¹² According to the 2020 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS), 18% of Taney County adults report engaging in binge drinking within the past 30 days, slightly higher than the national rate of 17%. Excessive drinking (binge or heavy drinking) is at 19%, similar to state and national levels.¹²

Alcohol

Consequences

In 2022, 29% of individuals were admitted into public treatment programs due to alcohol.¹⁸ In 2021, Stone County residents had a total of 115 alcohol-related hospital/emergency room visits.¹⁹

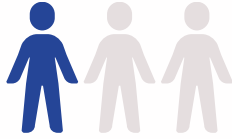


In 2021, Stone County had 109 DWI arrests, and 1 liquor law violation.¹⁸ From 2019 to 2021, alcohol-related traffic crashes decreased from 44 to 40 in Stone County.¹⁸ According to the County Health Rankings Report 2017 - 2021, 33% of motor vehicle crash deaths were alcohol-related driving deaths.¹³

STONE COUNTY

SUBSTANCE USE IN ADULTS

Tobacco



One in three ACS respondents reported using tobacco in the past 30 days.

Among those who did use tobacco, 9% reported use on all 30 days. Of those who used tobacco/nicotine in the past year, 67% reported stopping the use of tobacco or nicotine vaping products for one day or longer in an attempt to quit within the past 12 months.

In the Southwest region of Missouri, 24% of adults currently use cigarettes.¹⁸ According to the CDC PLACES data in Stone County, the prevalence of current smoking among adults aged 18 years or older is 20%.¹⁸

E-cigarettes/Nicotine Vaping Devices



One in three ACS respondents reported using e-cigarettes/nicotine vaping devices in the past 30 days.

Among those who did use vaping devices, 5% reported use on all 30 days.

In general, the 2018 BRFSS reported that Missouri adults report lower levels of current use of e-cigarettes (6%), with a quarter of adults reported having ever used an e-cigarette in their lifetime.¹²

Marijuana/Cannabis



More than one in five ACS respondents reported using marijuana/cannabis in the past 30 days.

Similar to Taney County, focus group participants and key informants noted that smoking cigarettes has decreased over the last couple of decades and marijuana is taking the place of cigarette smoking. Marijuana is becoming more acceptable in the community and easily accessible through dispensaries due to legalization and medical marijuana sales in Missouri since October 2020, however, some people still access it from dealers due to cheaper costs.

In the Southwest region of Missouri, 8% of adults currently used marijuana in the past month.¹⁸ In 2022, 8% of Stone County residents admitted into public treatment programs were due to marijuana.¹⁸

Prescription Drugs



Almost one in five ACS respondents reported using prescription drugs not prescribed to them in the past 30 days.

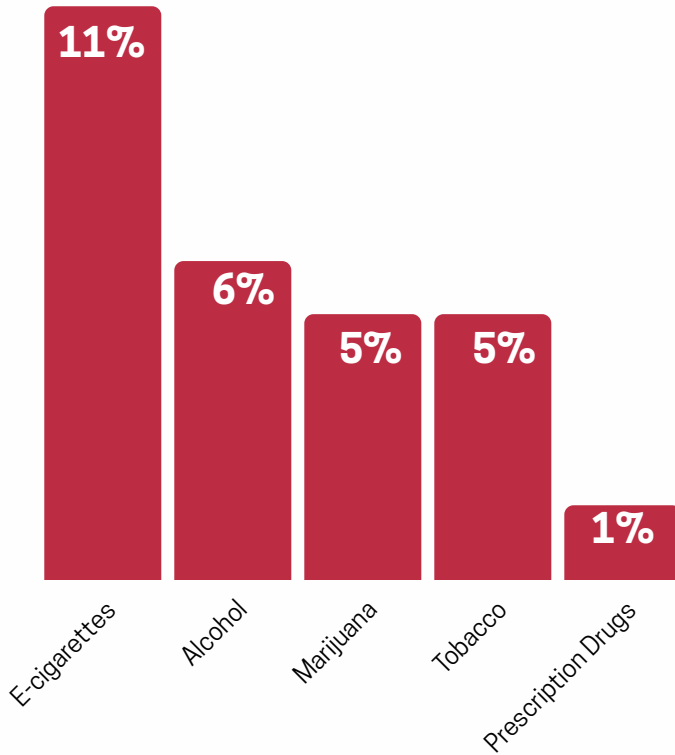
In 2022, 7% of people were admitted into public treatment programs due to prescription drugs.¹⁸ The 2021-2022 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (SAMHSA) reported that 4% of Missourians 18 or older misused prescription pain medications in the past year.¹⁴ According to the MO DMH 2023 Stone County Community Profile, misuse of prescription pain medication in the past year was reported by 5.1% of adults in the Southwest region of Missouri.¹⁸

STONE COUNTY

SUBSTANCE USE IN YOUTH

Prevalence

Past 30-Day Use (Grades 6-12), 2022 MSS



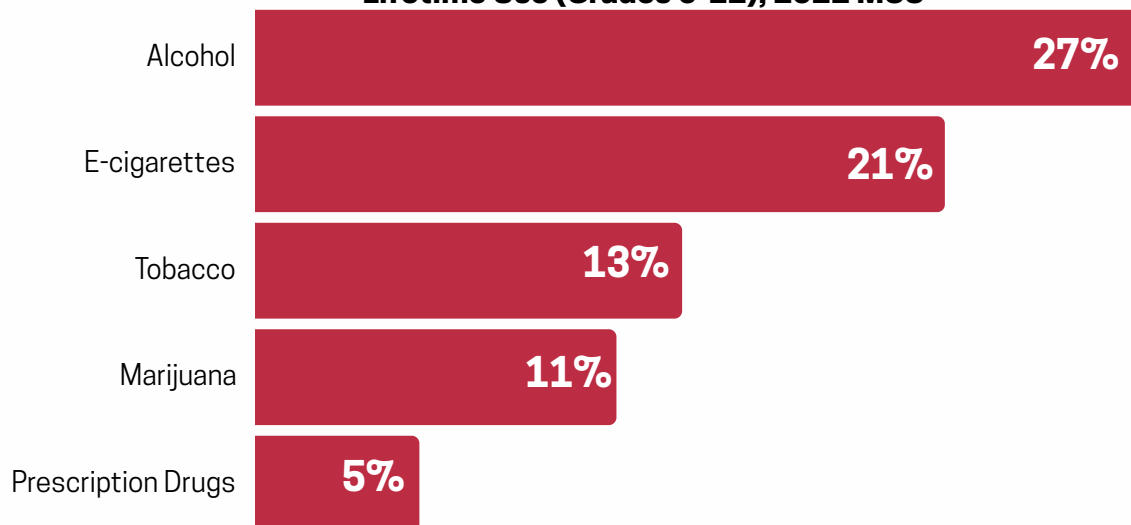
The 2022 MSS for Taney County indicates that e-cigarettes, alcohol, and marijuana are the three most commonly used substances by local youth, with e-cigarettes being the highest (alcohol at the state level). MSS results also indicate Stone County youth have increased use of some substances, particularly cannabis and e-cigarettes, since 2020²⁰

Youth focus group participants mentioned substances they see people their age using including:

- Tobacco/Nicotine/Vaping
- Alcohol
- Marijuana
- Other Drugs

For lifetime substance use among youth in Stone County (grades 6-12), the 2022 MSS highlighted that alcohol was the highest, followed by e-cigarettes²⁰

Lifetime Use (Grades 6-12), 2022 MSS

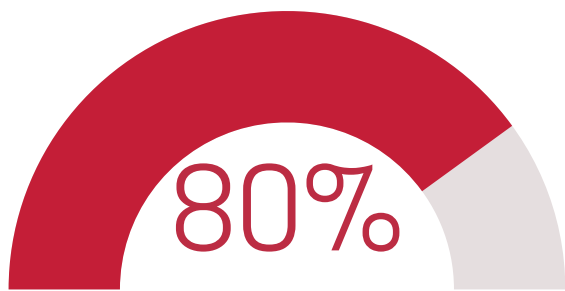


STONE COUNTY

SUBSTANCE USE IN YOUTH

Participants mentioned that e-cigarette use is very common among youth, in addition to marijuana use and alcohol use. There are instances where students are impaired at school. Students identified secluded areas as locations of use, and that vaping commonly occurs everywhere and is not location-specific. Further, Adderall and ecstasy were reported as a problem among youth.

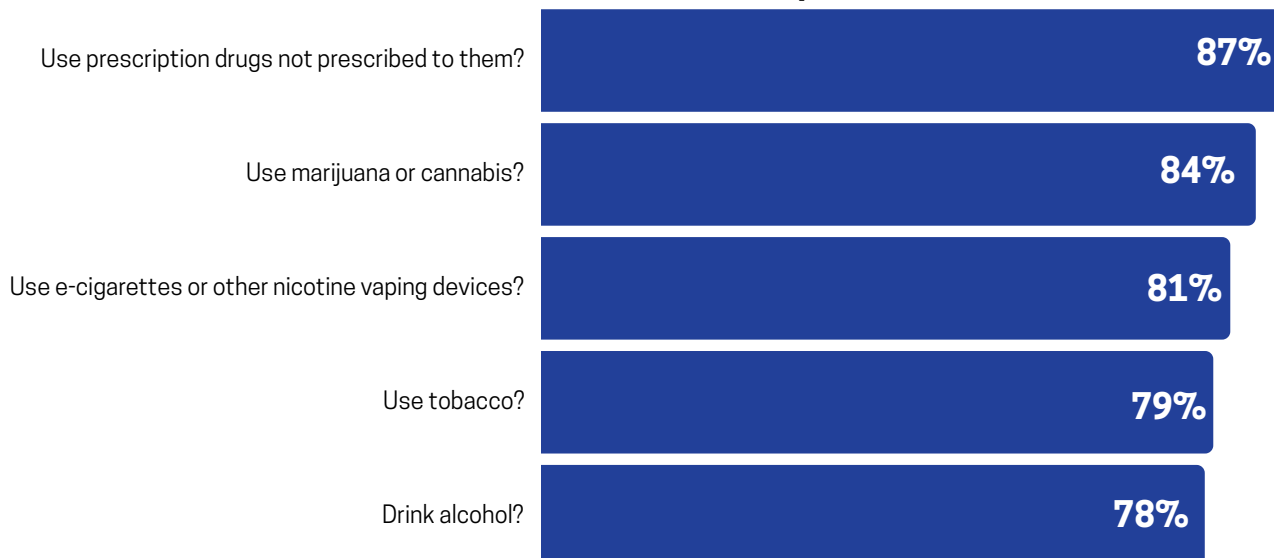
Risk



The majority of ACS respondents “Agree” and “Strongly Agree” that substance use among youth is a concern in their community.

The majority of participants perceive moderate to great risk for youth use of any of the substances, with the highest perception of risk associated with using prescription drugs not prescribed to them (87%), followed by use of marijuana or cannabis (84%), e-cigarettes or vaping device use (81%), and tobacco use (79%). While more than three-quarters of respondents associate risk with youth alcohol use (78%), it was the last-ranking substance.

Moderate/Great Risk



STONE COUNTY

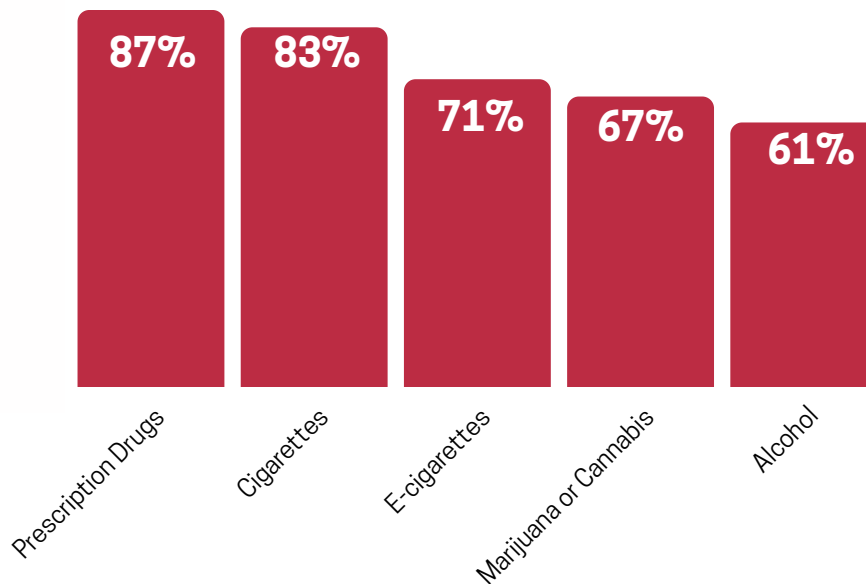
SUBSTANCE USE IN YOUTH

Youth focus group participants shared that students vape because it helps with suppressing emotions and dealing with family issues. A lot of students use it as coping, even though they know it's bad for them. Some youths do it to fit in and follow the crowd, encouraged by peer pressure and seeing it on social media as "cool".

In February 2023, it became legal to sell recreational marijuana in Missouri, leading to a shift in perceptions and availability. It was reported that the legalization of marijuana has spread the ideology that it is "safe", and there is a lack of educational material to show youth the impact of marijuana on development.

The 2022 MSS highlighted that many local youths perceive substance use as having low or no risk. Alcohol is viewed as the lowest risk, followed by marijuana and e-cigarettes. In Stone County, students who see marijuana use as no or slight risk have increased by almost 70% since 2020.²⁰

Moderate/Great Risk, 2022 MSS



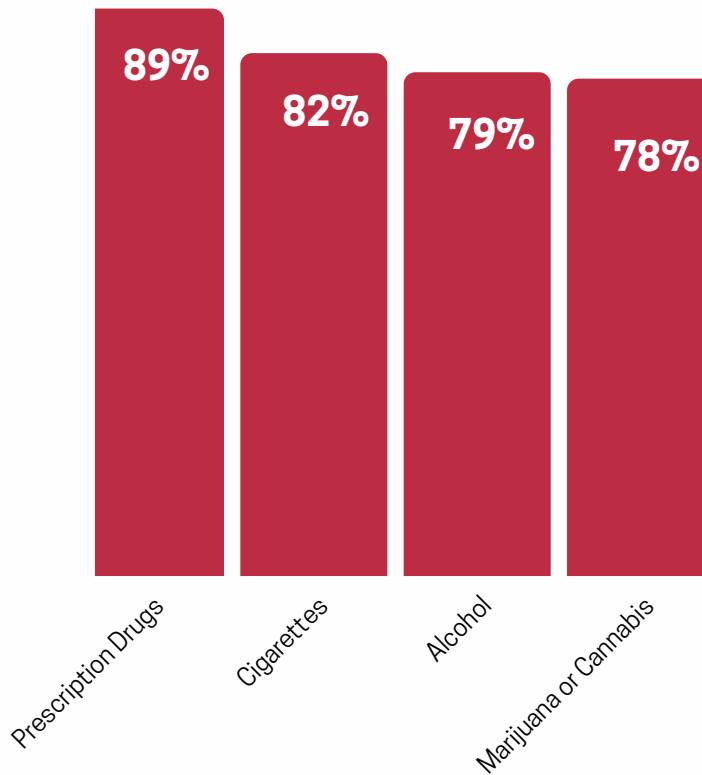
When asked about their friends' perception of wrongness for substance use in the 2022 MSS, prescription drugs amassed the highest disapproval.²⁰

A quarter of students in the 2022 MSS reported their peers believe someone their age would be 'pretty cool' or 'very cool' if they used e-cigarettes, drank alcohol, or smoked marijuana.²⁰

STONE COUNTY

SUBSTANCE USE IN YOUTH

Perception of Peer Disapproval, 2022 MSS



Availability

When youth in focus groups were asked about how people their age learn about substances, focus group participants mentioned that they learn mainly from family members, friends, older people, social media, the public health class they were involved in, DARE in the 4th or 5th grade, Google, and Truth Ads.

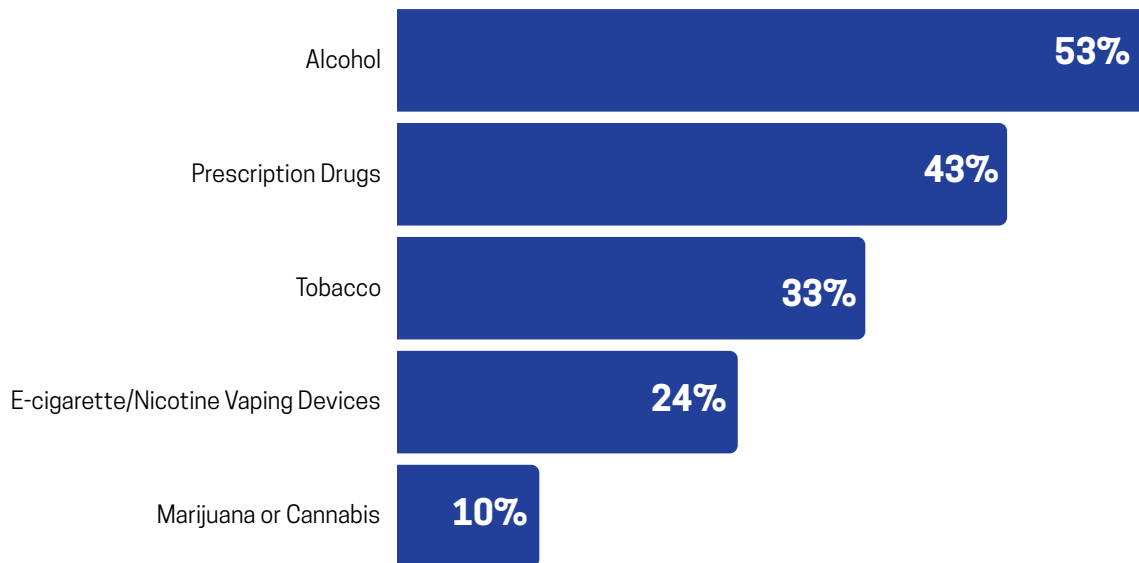
When youth in focus groups were asked about where people their age access substances, the most commonly mentioned sources were their peers/friends and older adults in their lives (parents, siblings of age, friends of age, etc.).

ACS adults were asked about storage practices of alcohol within their households, and more than half of the respondents reported keeping alcohol (53%) in unlocked locations within their homes, making it easily accessible for household members. Almost half kept prescription drugs (47%) in an unlocked location within their homes, two-thirds for tobacco (33%), and a quarter for e-cigarettes/nicotine vaping devices (24%). More than two-thirds did not have e-cigarettes/nicotine vaping devices or marijuana or cannabis stored in their homes.

STONE COUNTY

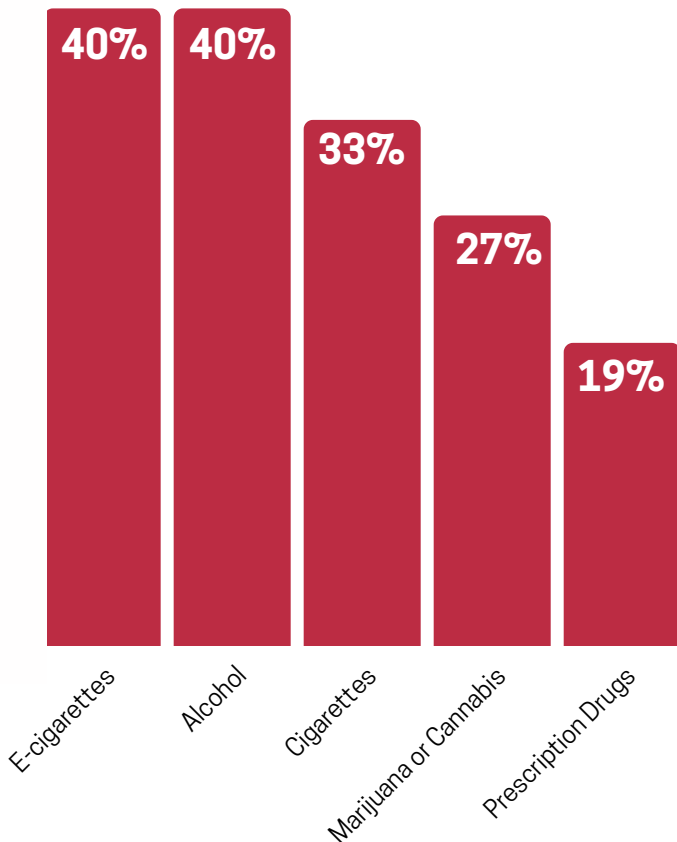
SUBSTANCE USE IN YOUTH

% of ACS Respondents who Keep Substances in Unlocked Locations



Findings on substance monitoring at home to prevent theft reveal a range of behaviors among respondents, where 18% indicated that they rarely or never monitor alcohol, and 6% rarely or never monitor marijuana or cannabis.

Perception of Availability, 2022 MSS



In the 2022 MSS, Youth reported having easy access to substances.²⁰ Students in Stone County who say substances are easy to get increased significantly for every substance from 2020 to 2022.²⁰ In the 2022 MSS, approximately 50% of students (8-10th graders) who have used e-cigarettes say they typically get them from friends or family members.²⁰

STONE COUNTY

SUBSTANCE USE IN YOUTH

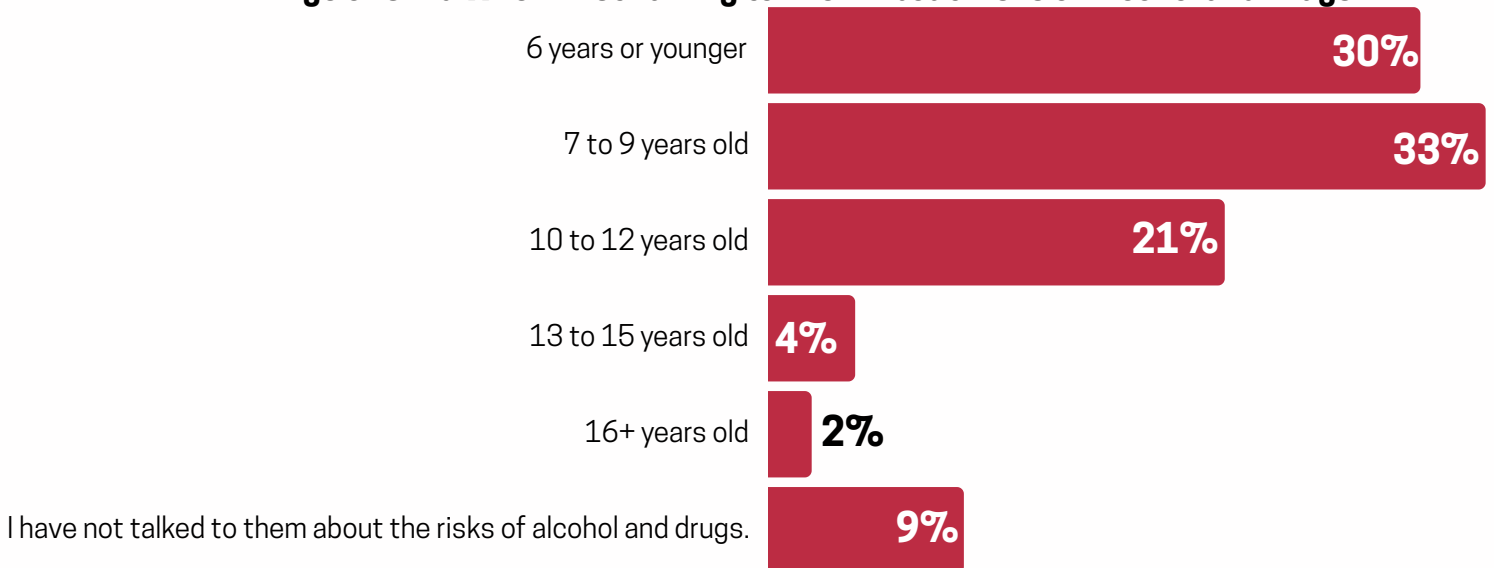
Protective Factors

Youth in focus groups mentioned things that help people their age avoid substances including jobs, being involved in sports, and fear of getting tested for substances. Further, having trusted adults in their lives was identified as a factor that helps prevent substance use.

PARENTING BEHAVIORS

Over half of total ACS respondents (58%) report being the parent or guardian of children under the age of 18. Majority of adults (84%) report first talking to children about risks of alcohol and drugs before age 13.

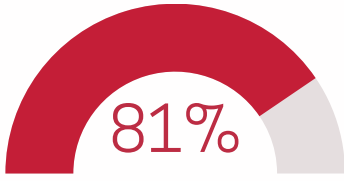
Age of Child When First Talking to Them About Risks of Alcohol and Drugs



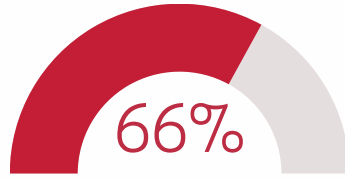
When asked about their parenting behaviors, the majority of parents (81%) often or always know who their child is with and what they are doing, indicating a strong emphasis on supervision. Two-thirds of parents (66%) often or always set and enforce clear rules regarding alcohol and drug use, and a significant portion of parents (64%) often or always engage in discussions about the risks of alcohol and drug use with their children. While a notable portion (54%) of parents often or always talk with other parents about youth alcohol and drug use, there's still a proportion who do so only sometimes or rarely.

STONE COUNTY

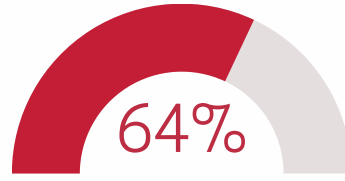
SUBSTANCE USE IN YOUTH



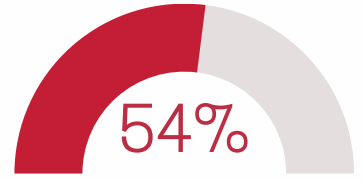
Know who their child is with and what they are doing.



Set and enforce clear rules regarding use of alcohol and/or other drugs with their child.



Talk to their child about the risks of alcohol and drug use.



Talk with other parents about youth alcohol and drug use.

In the 2022 MSS, parental disapproval for youth substance use was the highest for prescription drug misuse.²⁰

Perception of Parental Disapproval, 2022 MSS

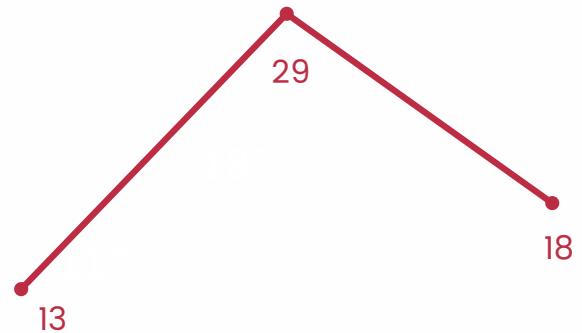


Consequences

Generally, youth in focus groups believe that adults cannot be trusted at school to help with quitting substances because youth get in trouble for it.

In the 2022-2023 school year, there were 18 substance-use related school suspensions, decreasing from the previous year.¹⁹

3-Year Trend of Substance-Related School Suspensions, MO DMH 2023



2020-21

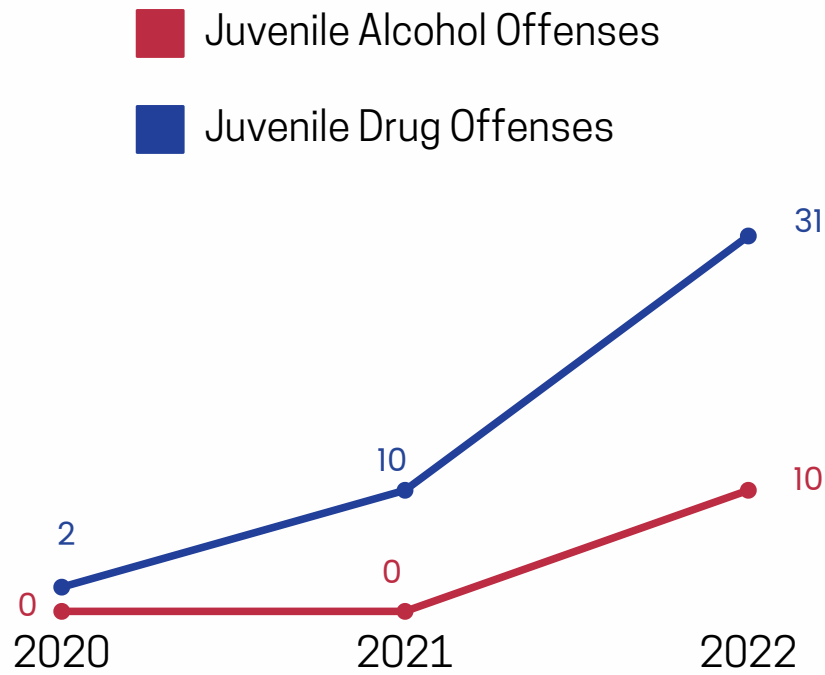
2021-22

2022-23

STONE COUNTY

SUBSTANCE USE IN YOUTH

In 2022, there were 10 juvenile alcohol offenses and 31 juvenile drug offenses, increasing from the previous year.¹⁹

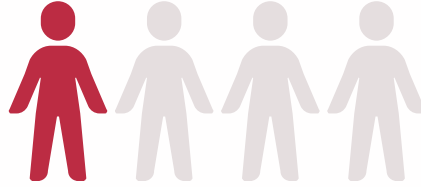


STONE COUNTY

LGBTQ+ HEALTH DISPARITIES

Key Findings

Of the sample of respondents for Stone County, **11% of individuals** reported being part of the LGBTQ+ community. When comparing responses between disparity-vulnerable populations such as LGBTQ+ with non-LGBTQ+ counterparts, the sample size of the former may be too small, making it challenging to draw meaningful conclusions about the extent of the disparities.



Almost a quarter of LGBTQ+ ACS respondents feel uncomfortable (22%) expressing their sexual orientation in their local community.



ACS FINDINGS

- LGBTQ+ ACS respondents had lower levels of concern toward mental health in youth and adults in Stone County.
- LGBTQ+ ACS respondents had lower levels of concern across all substance categories compared to their non-LGBTQ+ counterparts.
- Similar to non-LGBTQ+ counterparts, LGBTQ+ individuals expressed the lowest level of concern toward marijuana or cannabis use in the ACS.
- LGBTQ+ ACS respondents had higher levels of substance use in the past month between 1 to all 30 days, with e-cigarette or other nicotine vaping devices use being the highest substance.
- Marijuana or cannabis use and e-cigarette or other nicotine vaping device use on all 30 days was higher in LGBTQ+ ACS respondents.
- More than three-quarters of LGBTQ+ individuals who use nicotine/tobacco indicated that they stopped for one day or longer because they were trying to quit during the past year.
- LGBTQ+ ACS respondents had higher perception of risk toward youth use of e-cigarette or other nicotine vaping device use.
- Tobacco products were the highest kept substance in unlocked locations by LGBTQ+ respondents, followed by e-cigarettes/nicotine vaping products, and marijuana or cannabis.

Key Findings

ACS FINDINGS

- Hispanic ACS respondents had lower levels of concern toward mental health in youth, and higher concerns toward adult mental health in Stone County compared to their non-Hispanic counterparts.
- When asked about ease of access of mental health and substance use services in the community, Hispanic ACS respondents report easier access to services compared to non-Hispanic respondents.
- Hispanic ACS respondents had lower levels of concern across all substance categories compared to their non-Hispanic counterparts except for adult e-cigarette or other nicotine vaping device use.
- Hispanic ACS respondents had higher levels of substance use in the past month between 1 to all 30 days, with having at least one alcoholic drink being the highest substance.
- Most of Hispanic ACS individuals who use tobacco/nicotine indicated that they stopped for one day or longer because they were trying to quit during the past year.
- Hispanic ACS respondents had higher perception of risk toward adult substance use and lower perception of risk toward youth substance use compared to their non-Hispanic counterparts.
- Using e-cigarette or other vaping devices was perceived as the most risky behavior for youth under 18 by Hispanic ACS respondents.
- Tobacco products were the highest kept substance in unlocked locations by Hispanic ACS respondents, followed by alcohol, and e-cigarettes/nicotine vaping products.
- Three-quarters of Hispanic ACS respondents closely monitor the levels of alcohol in their homes to prevent theft at least sometimes.
- More than half of Hispanic ACS respondents closely monitor the levels of marijuana or cannabis in their homes to prevent theft at least sometimes.

CONCLUSION

The ADAPT 2024 Community Assessment of Taney and Stone County is a comprehensive assessment of substance use attitudes, usage, and social norms. A total of 583 community members participated in the ADAPT Community Survey (385 respondents for Taney County, and 198 respondents for Stone County), which was conducted online via Survey Monkey in February and March of 2024. ADAPT also hosted 6 in-person one-hour long focus groups, and a combination of 10 in-person and virtual 30-minute interviews in the months of February and March 2024. Overall, this success sets a strong foundation for the start of the 5-year assessment project which was well-received by the community. Conducting this community assessment brought unique challenges, such as data collection limitations, which were overcome with creative solutions.

Overall, the Majority of ACS respondents believe that mental health is a concern among adults and youth in Taney and Stone County. More than a quarter of Taney and Stone County ACS respondents are unaware or unsure of services in their communities. Cost, availability of services, and knowledge of services were reported to be the top barriers to accessing services in Taney and Stone County. Other reported barriers to accessing services include transportation, fear of judgment for seeking services, waiting times, and providers being at capacity and unreliable. Lack of healthy mental health coping skills were reported as a problem among adults and youth in Taney and Stone County. It was shared that parents and teachers lack sufficient mental health resources and tools, and students expressed a need for more accessible mental health resources.

ACS respondents reported alcohol as the top substance of concern in Taney and Stone County, followed by meth use and illegal opiate use. Most ACS respondents have had at least one alcoholic drink in the past month. Generally, a higher percentage of past 30-day use is observed in Stone County compared to Taney County. Marijuana or cannabis use among adults was perceived as the least concerning behavior in Taney and Stone County, possibly due to the legalization and normalization of marijuana in the community. Two-thirds of those who use tobacco/nicotine products attempted to quit in the past year in Taney and Stone County.

The highest perception of risk among ACS survey respondents was associated with unprescribed prescription drug use for both youth and adults. The majority of ACS respondents reported that alcohol and drug use among youth is a concern in Taney and Stone County. E-cigarette/nicotine vaping device use was mentioned by focus group participants as the most common substance use concern among youth. Youth reported accessing substances primarily through peers and older adults in their lives (family members, friends of age), with e-cigarettes obtained from online sources and gas stations. Alcohol is also acquired through theft at retail stores and gas stations, fake IDs, or some gas stations not IDing. Marijuana is accessed through connections at dispensaries, and youth also engage in selling these substances among themselves. Between a quarter to half of ACS respondents store e-cigarettes/nicotine vaping devices, tobacco, prescription drugs, and alcohol in unlocked locations, creating ease of access for household members.

CONCLUSION

The majority of parents reported strong parental supervision and engagement in alcohol and drug education, but more consistent parental communication about youth substance use is needed. Participants highlighted the need to encourage parents to talk directly to their children about risks, be aware of what substances are present at home, and know who their children spend time with. Youth advocated for long-term effect awareness, education on how to quit, involvement in extracurriculars, and access to mental health support to deter substance use.

The 2022 Regional Health Assessment identified significant limitations in data collection, especially regarding substance use/misuse and mental health for disparity-vulnerable populations.⁵ In the ADAPT Community Assessment, disparity-vulnerable populations (LGBTQ+ with non-LGBTQ+ counterparts) and (Hispanic with non-Hispanic counterparts) were compared. Some limitations included the disparity-vulnerable population sample size being too small, making it challenging to draw meaningful conclusions about the extent of the disparities.

For the LGBTQ+ ACS and focus group participants, it was reported that almost a quarter feel uncomfortable expressing their sexual orientation in their local community. LGBTQ+ participants reported lower levels of concern and higher past 30-day use of all substances compared to non-LGBTQ+ counterparts. It was shared that there is a lack of affirming and accepting care in Taney and Stone County, and transportation and finances further compound access to affirming care outside of both counties, and there is lack of knowledge and information about places to go to build community for the LGBTQ+ population. LGBTQ+ participants expressed the need for hosting safe spaces.

For the Hispanic ACS and focus group participants, they reported lower levels of concern and highest past 30-day use of all substances compared to non-Hispanic counterparts. Alcohol was the highest used substance in the past month in the Hispanic community in both counties. When asked about awareness of and ease of access of mental health and substance use services in the community, Hispanic ACS respondents reported more awareness and less difficulty in accessing services compared to non-Hispanic respondents. Various factors such as socioeconomic conditions, culture, stress and trauma that could be tied to immigration status and acculturation, language barriers, and discrimination exacerbate mental health and substance misuse in the Hispanic community. Hispanic focus group participants also emphasized burnout among healthcare professionals and limited access to culturally competent mental health services, further hindered by language barriers. Initiatives focusing on cultural sensitivity and language accessibility require sustained support and expansion for mental health and substance use services for the Hispanic community.

The ADAPT 2024 Community Assessment sets a solid foundation for the future assessments of Taney and Stone County. The community responded positively to the initiative and willingly offered their perspectives. A summary of this report will be made available to the community.

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