

COVID-19, Mental Health and Nicotine Usage Among Eastern Students

By: Kit Andersen, Kayla Mechlin and Katherine Sojo

Since the beginning of the Covid-19 Pandemic, my nicotine usage has increased significantly

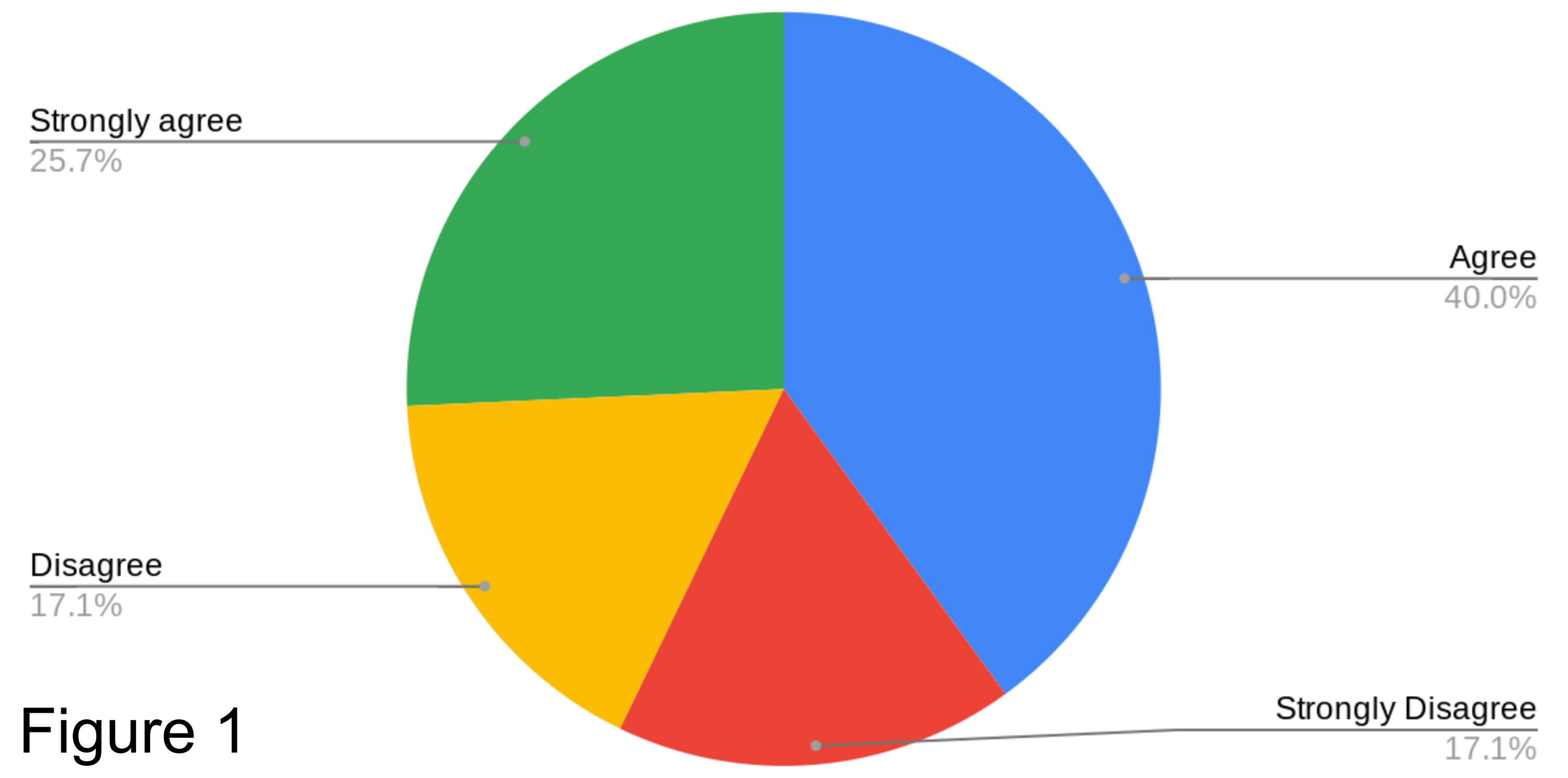


Figure 1

Limitations

- The major limitation we had on the survey was that the majority of students who took the survey were Juniors.
- Another limitation was that we didn't ask more specific questions in the survey to compare gender and age

Figure 3

Introduction

The purpose of our study is to explore relationships between COVID-19, mental health and nicotine usage among college students. We are interested in whether mental health is related to nicotine use broadly as well as during the COVID-19 pandemic specifically. Previous research in the overall population has shown that there has been an overall increase in nicotine product use since 2000, as well as the amount of nicotine related products have increased throughout time (Butler 2015). There has also previously been research indicating a connection between mental health and nicotine use (Bandiera 2016). However, these studies were pre-pandemic.

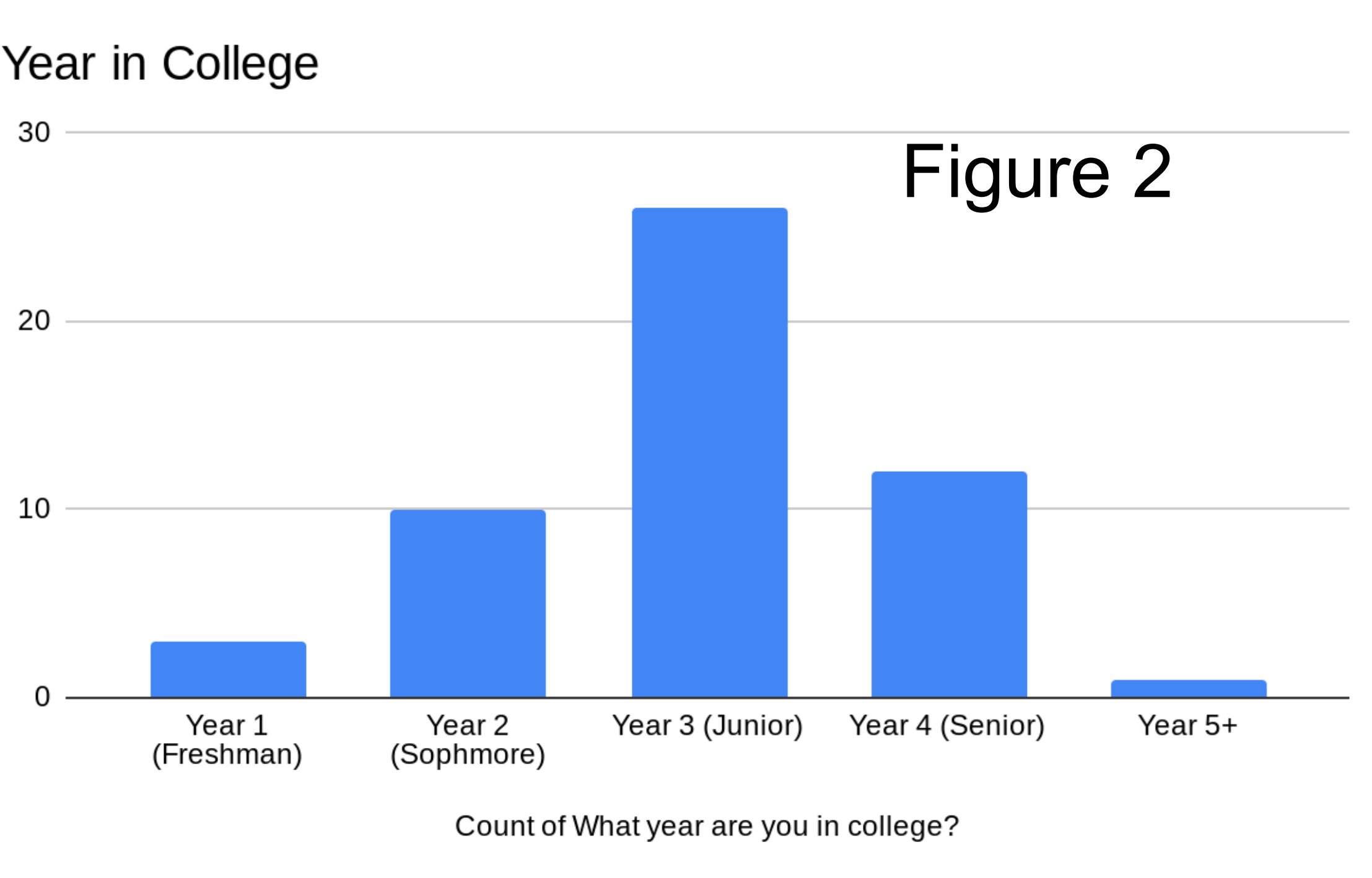


Figure 2

Nicotine use and Mental health Crosstab

| Nicotine_use | | Mental_health | | Total |
|--------------|-----------------------|---------------|----------|--------|
| | | Agree | Disagree | |
| Agree | Count | 33 | 2 | 35 |
| | % within Nicotine_use | 94.3% | 5.7% | 100.0% |
| Disagree | Count | 11 | 6 | 17 |
| | % within Nicotine_use | 64.7% | 35.3% | 100.0% |
| Total | Count | 44 | 8 | 52 |
| | % within Nicotine_use | 84.6% | 15.4% | 100.0% |

Nicotine increase since pandemic and Mental health Crosstab

| Pandemic nicotine increase | | Mental health | | Total |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------|----------|--------|
| | | Agree | Disagree | |
| Agree | Count | 11 | 6 | 17 |
| | % within Pandemic_nicotine_increase | 64.7% | 35.3% | 100.0% |
| Disagree | Count | 21 | 2 | 23 |
| | % within Pandemic_nicotine_increase | 91.3% | 8.7% | 100.0% |
| Total | Count | 44 | 8 | 52 |
| | % within Pandemic_nicotine_increase | 84.6% | 15.4% | 100.0% |

Figure 4

Methods

We conducted an online survey with a convenience sample of college students at Eastern Connecticut State University. Students were recruited through posted flyers with a QR code. A total of 52 students consented and participated in the survey.

- Measure:**
- The Survey asked about our key variables
 - Nicotine use
 - Mental Health
 - Stress Related to COVID-19

Participants: (N=52)
 50% commuter 50% resident
 Most students were 18-25
 See Figure 2 for further information

Analysis
 Data were analyzed through frequency distributions and chi square test of differences between groups.

Results

- 67% of respondents have used nicotine on a regular basis
- 84% has struggled with mental health
- 73% say COVID has affected their mental health
- 75% of those with mental health issues reported nicotine use compared to 25% of those without reported nicotine use. This difference was significant at the $p < 0.05$ level (figure 3).
- 63% of participants who struggled with mental health increased their nicotine use during the pandemic, compared to 35% who did not struggle with mental health. This difference was significant at the $p < 0.05$ level (figure 4)

Discussion & Conclusions

Discussion:

- Data indicates a relationship between mental health and nicotine use among ECSU students
- Data also shows the mental health struggles are related to increased nicotine use during the pandemic specifically.

Conclusion:

- Our study has supported existing research on mental health and nicotine found by others
- Our data suggests that Covid-19 may intensify this relationship.

Implications

- findings suggest an chance for eastern to provide support for students experiencing challenges related to the interconnectedness of mental health, COVID 19 and nicotine usage