

MENTAL HEALTH AMONG SELF-IDENTIFIED LGBQQ COLLEGE STUDENTS

Partners in Prevention has been awarded a Garrett Lee Smith Suicide Prevention Grant from the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). This federal grant was designated to address suicide prevention on college campuses across the state of Missouri, especially among identified at-risk populations, such as members of the LGBQQ community. For the purposes of this brief, members of the LGBQQ community are students who reported their sexual orientation as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Queer or Questioning on the Missouri College Health Behavior Survey (MCHBS). Students who identified their gender as transgender were not included in this grouping, unless they identified their sexual orientation as LGBQQ on the MCHBS. The MCHBS is implemented online at 21 institutions of higher education across the state of Missouri in order to measure students' health behaviors.

PAST YEAR EXPERIENCES	LGBQQ-Identified Students 2011 n=534	Non-LGBQQ Identified Students 2011 n=7970	LGBQQ-Identified Students 2012 n=585	Non-LGBQQ Identified Students 2012 n=8151
Experienced any mental health issue/stressor	61%	44%	62%	44%
Experienced major depression	26%	12%	28%	12%
Had suicidal thoughts	32%	12%	36%	12%
Were in an abusive relationship	7%	3%	6%	3%
Reported self-injury (not suicidal behavior)	11%	4%	8%	3%
Experienced alcohol abuse or dependency	7%	3%	6%	3%
Attempted suicide	3%	1%	5%	1%
Reported bipolar disorder	7%	2%	7%	2%
Experienced a sexual assault	4%	1%	3%	1%

DISCUSSION

Across the board, students who identify as LGBQQ are more likely to experience a mental health issue or stressor. Nearly 3 out of every 4 have experienced at least one stressor listed above in the past year. These issues include personal issues (depression, suicide ideation), interpersonal issues (sexual assault, abusive relationships) and issues with acute risk of danger (self-injury, suicide attempts).

Correlation, however, is not the same as causation. It is important to critically examine the circumstances within LGBQQ students lives to better understand why they are experiencing higher rates of mental health concerns. Some of these concerns can stem from community-specific issues, such as media misrepresentation, family of origin stress, social discrimination and oppression, coming out issues, stereotyping and general

misunderstanding. Many LGBQQ students feel a lack of support in their communities, which can result in the increase of mental health concerns.

SUMMARY

As the table shows, the percentages within subpopulations has stayed relatively steady in the past two years, however, the differences between populations is a cause for concern. The data indicates a population of college students in mental health distress. LGBQQ students are in need of effective interventions, referral services and promotion of positive mental health on all of Missouri's college campuses.

*Report prepared by Partners in Prevention Research & Evaluation Staff in consultation with Struby Struble, LGBTQ Resource Center Coordinator at the University of Missouri
Funded by the Missouri Department of Mental Health's Division of Alcohol and Drug Abuse*