

Tobacco and Nicotine Use among LGBTQ+ Students

Partners in Prevention (PIP) is Missouri's higher education substance misuse consortium dedicated to creating healthy and safe college campuses. The coalition is comprised of 24 public and private colleges and universities in the state. The campuses in the coalition work to prevent high-risk behaviors by implementing evidence-based strategies. To measure progress and obtain data needed for the implementation of programs, PIP created the Missouri Assessment of College Health Behaviors (MACHB) survey. The MACHB is an annual, online survey that has been implemented each spring since 2007. The survey assesses the roles that alcohol, drugs (illegal and prescription), tobacco/nicotine, interpersonal violence, and mental health concerns have on student health and well-being. This brief will focus on tobacco and nicotine use among both LGBQQAP (lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, questioning, asexual, or pansexual) and TGQN (transgender, genderqueer, gender non-binary, or other gender identity) students. While gender identity and sexual orientation are potentially related, they are not the same, so this brief will separate out the two identities. However, it's important to note that some students may be represented in both groups.

Background

According to Johnson et al., (2019), ever-in-lifetime tobacco use among a large sample of U.S. youth demonstrated significant differences among sexual minority and transgender youth, with LGBTQ+ youth using at higher rates than their nonminority peers¹. There are several reasons that may account for tobacco use differences, for instance, stressors related to discrimination, anti-LGBTQ+ violence, and lack of social support may influence higher rates of tobacco use.

Additionally, there may be barriers to receiving cessation services including limited access to culturally informed tobacco cessation programs and quality health care that can properly address LGBTQ+-specific concerns². Other identities that LGBTQ+ students may hold such as socio-economic

status, racial/ethnic background, residing in rural residential areas, and/or being younger in age, can also create heightened risk of use and increase cessation barriers.

Prevalence

A higher percentage of LGBQQAP students report first using tobacco or nicotine products at or before age 18 than TGQN students and the PIP statewide average, shown in Table 1.

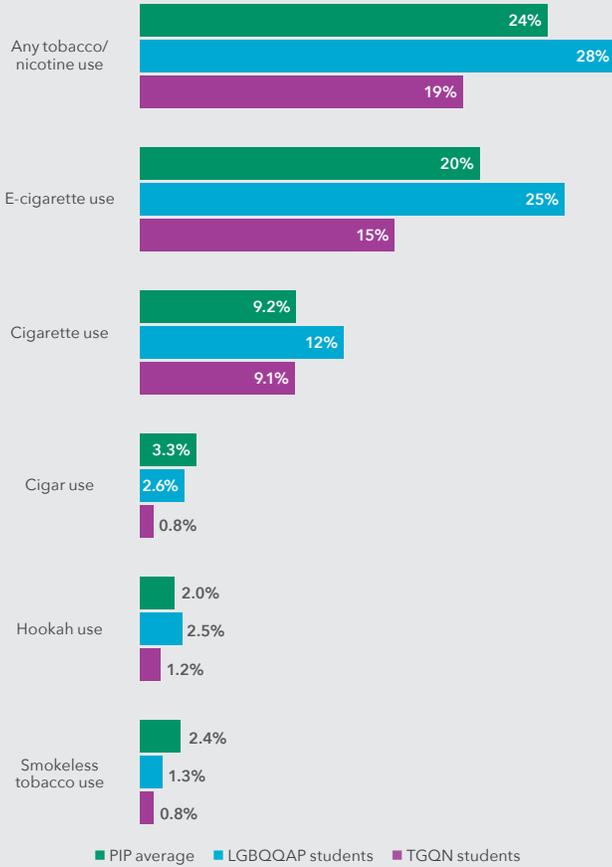
Table 1: Age of First Use

% Started using at or before age 18		
PIP Average	LGBQQAP	TGQN
27%	31%	26%

LGBQQAP students also had the highest rate of any past 12-month tobacco/nicotine product use compared to TGQN students and the statewide

average. However, individual product type usage varied, though LGBQQAP students had the highest rates of cigarette and e-cigarette use in the past year, the 2 most frequently used products among Missouri college students (shown in Chart 1).

Chart 1: Past Year Tobacco/Nicotine Product Use



Consequences of Tobacco/Nicotine Use

Related to consequences of tobacco/nicotine use in the past 12 months, both LGBQQAP and TGQN students reported higher rates than the PIP statewide average in almost all categories, as shown in Table 2. In particular, needing to take a tobacco/nicotine break to make it through academic events (e.g., class, webinar, meeting, training), feeling restless without access to nicotine, and experiencing irritability, frustration, or anger without access to tobacco/nicotine were higher among one or both of these populations.

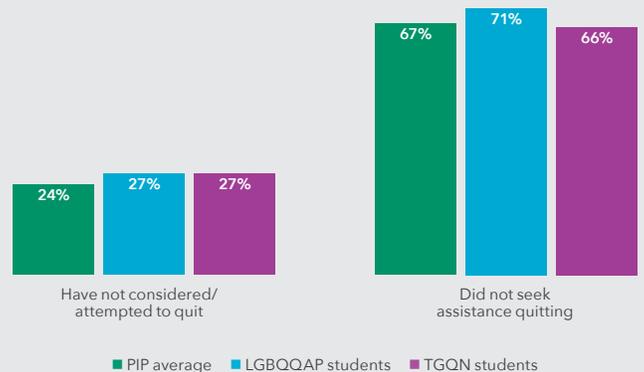
Table 2: Consequences of Tobacco Use

	PIP Average	LGBQQAP	TGQN
Experienced irritability, frustration, or anger without access to tobacco/nicotine	17%	21%	15%
Needed to take a tobacco/nicotine break to make it through academic events (e.g. class, webinar, meeting, training)	15%	18%	23%
Felt restless without access to tobacco/nicotine	17%	20%	19%
Experienced physical health consequences because of withdrawal	12%	14%	23%

Quit Attempts and Help-Seeking

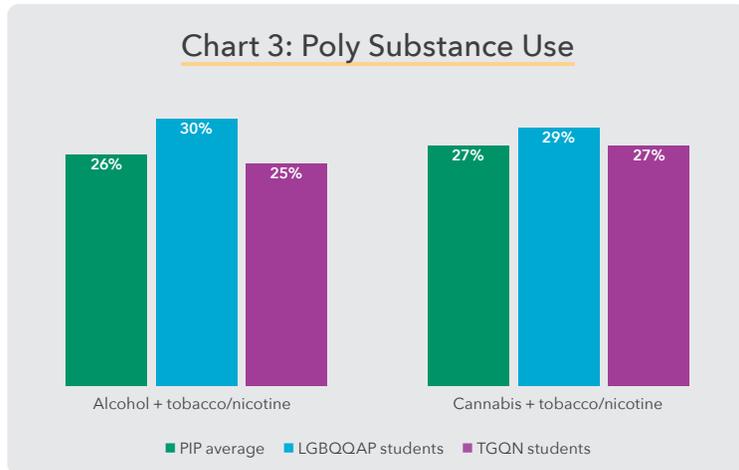
Students are asked to report if they have considered or attempted to quit using tobacco/nicotine products since entering college and if they had utilized resources to help them quit. A higher percentage of both LGBQQAP and TGQN students had not considered or tried quitting since entering college. Additionally, among those who had tried to quit, a higher percentage of LGBQQAP students had not sought assistance for their quit attempt compared to the statewide average and TGQN students (shown in chart 2).

Chart 2: Quit Attempts and Help Seeking



Poly Substance Use

Missouri college students are asked to report if they engage in poly substance use, using more than one drug at once, in the past 12 months. LGBTQAP students reported the highest rates of using tobacco/nicotine products both when using alcohol and when using cannabis (shown in Chart 3) compared to the statewide average and TGQN students.



Summary

Overall, Missouri LGBTQAP college students appear to be at particular risk for developing tobacco/nicotine dependence. Higher percentages of LGBTQAP students report first using tobacco/nicotine products at or before age 18, using any tobacco/nicotine products in the past year, experiencing consequences of use, and engaging in poly substance use with tobacco/nicotine products. Additionally, LGBTQAP students were less likely to attempt quitting or seek assistance to quit or cut back.

PIP Resources

Delivering Tobacco Cessation Services on College Campuses: Evidence-Based Approaches & Best Practices

PIP provides training for those wishing to offer tobacco/nicotine cessation coaching on campus. The training covers dosing of nicotine replacement

therapy, coaching strategies, and resources for clients. Visit mopiptraining.org to view training dates and register. PIP also provides free nicotine replacement therapy, quit kit items, and educational materials like brochures to campuses implementing cessation programs. Reach out to our staff at pip@missouri.edu for more details.

Time to Change? Assess Your Substance Use

PIP also provides a website for Missouri college students to assess their tobacco/nicotine and marijuana/cannabis use at mopip.org/change. The website includes a brief assessment and feedback tool, information about the benefits of quitting or cutting back, and resources to help students quit or cut back.

Other Resources

The National LGBT Cancer Network works to educate the LGBT community about the increased risk of cancer and the importance of screening and early detection, provide training to health care providers to offer more culturally competent, safe and welcoming care, and advocating for LGBT survivors in mainstream cancer organizations, the media, and research. Learn more at cancer-network.org/about

The Truth Initiative has great resources for individuals looking to quit, and also includes information on their website about [tobacco as a social justice issue](#), and specifically [tobacco use in LGBT communities](#).

Contact Partners in Prevention at (573) 884-7551.

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References

1. Johnson SE, O'Brien EK, Coleman B, et al. Sexual and gender minority US youth tobacco use: Population Assessment of Tobacco and Health (PATH) Study Wave 3, 2015-2016. 2019;57(2):256-61.
2. Sell, R. L., & Dunn, P. M. (2008). Inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people in tobacco use-related surveillance and epidemiological research. Journal of LGBT Health Research, 4(1), 27-42.