

Substance Use among Missouri LGBTQQAP College Students

Partners in Prevention (PIP) is Missouri's higher education substance misuse consortium dedicated to creating healthy and safe college campuses. This year, the coalition comprises 26 public and private colleges and universities throughout Missouri, 24 of whom have data included in the 2023 Missouri Assessment of College Health Behaviors (MACHB) survey. PIP member campuses 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 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 have on student health and wellness. This brief will focus on substance use among Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Queer, Questioning, Asexual, and Pansexual (LGBQQAP) Missouri college students. Students who identify as transgender are not included in this data set. Data about Transgender, genderqueer, nonbinary, or otherwise gender nonconforming (TGQN) students will be discussed in a later brief.

Background

Substance use has significant impacts on people, families, and communities. A higher prevalence of substance use has been well documented among people who identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual than among those who identify as heterosexual or straight^{1,2,3}. This brief will focus on alcohol use, illicit drug use, marijuana/cannabis, and tobacco/nicotine use among students from the sample who identified as LGBQQAP in comparison to the PIP 24 overall average.

Alcohol Use

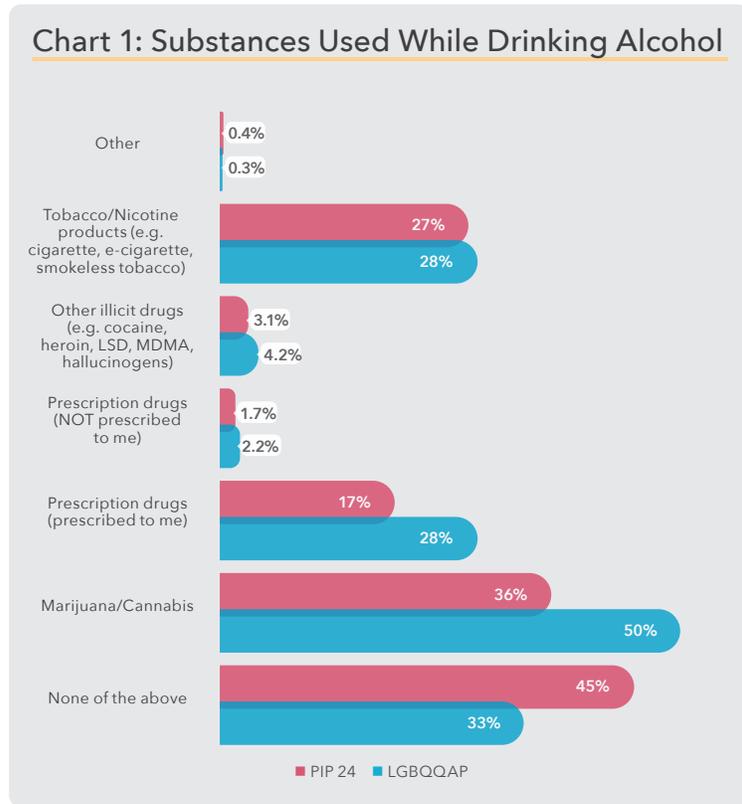
When looking at the 2023 MACHB data, a series of questions are asked regarding alcohol and binge drinking behaviors. Students were asked if they have consumed alcohol in the past 12 months. In 2023, 64% of PIP 24 students reported consuming alcohol in the past 12 months, and 70% of students who identified as LGBQQAP reported consuming alcohol in the past 12 months.

Table 1 illustrates contributing factors when making the decision to consume alcohol. Among the top two reasons for both PIP 24 and LGBQQAP students were to relax and to have fun with friends.

Table 1: Contributing Factors to Alcohol Use

	PIP 24	LGBQQAP
To relax	42%	45%
To have fun with friends	82%	82%
To get drunk	32%	38%
To try it	11%	13%
Because my friends are drinking	18%	20%
The consequences of my drinking are minimal	13%	17%
To feel more confident in a social situation	26%	32%
I like the taste	31%	33%
I like how it feels	29%	37%
To escape/so I can forget my problems	12%	16%

Chart 2 highlights substances used while drinking alcohol. While 45% of the PIP 24 and 33% of the LGBQQAP reported not using any other substances when drinking, 50% of LGBQQAP students reported marijuana/cannabis use while drinking in the past 12 months, which is much higher than the 36% of the PIP 24. LGBQQAP students also reported higher rates of tobacco use (28%) and prescription drugs that were prescribed to them (28%) while consuming alcohol.



Marijuana/Cannabis Use

A series of questions are asked regarding cannabis use. This includes edibles, derivatives, and ALL other types of marijuana/cannabis products. 51% of students who identified as LGBQQAP reported using cannabis in the past 12 months. In comparison, 33% of the PIP 24 reported use in the past 12 months. Another question is asked regarding use of cannabis in the past 30 days. This includes any type of marijuana/cannabis product. 23% of the PIP 24 reported use in the past 30 days and 37% of LGBQQAP students reported past 30-day use.

Contributing factors associated with use are also important to assess when looking at substance use behaviors. Table 2 looks at contributing factors

associated with the student's decision to use marijuana/cannabis. Among the top reasons for both groups of students include to relax, to help with anxiety and other mental health concerns, and to have fun with friends.

Table 2: Contributing Factors to Use Cannabis

	PIP 24	LGBQQAP
To relax	78%	80%
To have fun with friends	59%	59%
To get high	51%	55%
The consequences of my cannabis use are minimal	26%	30%
I like how it feels	51%	55%
To escape/so I can forget my problems	20%	24%
It helps me to relieve pain	28%	34%
To help with anxiety and other mental health concerns	48%	59%
To help me sleep	43%	49%
I feel like it is safer to use than alcohol/other substances	32%	38%

Illicit Drug Use

A series of questions are asked regarding use of any other types of drugs in the past 12 months. Students who reported other drug use are included below in Chart 2. Delta 8 THC had the highest reported use for both the PIP 24 and LGBQQAP students.

Tobacco/Nicotine

When asked about tobacco/nicotine use in the past 12 months, 23% of PIP 24 students reported use in comparison to 26% of LGBQQAP students who reported tobacco/nicotine use.

Chart 3 highlights the reported type of product used in the past 12 months. Among both groups of students, e-cigarettes, which included JULL, Puff bar, MarkTen Elite, etc., and cigarettes were among the top two reported products used. LGBQQAP students reported higher use of cigarettes, e-cigarettes/vaporizers, and any tobacco products.

Chart 2: Other Drug Use

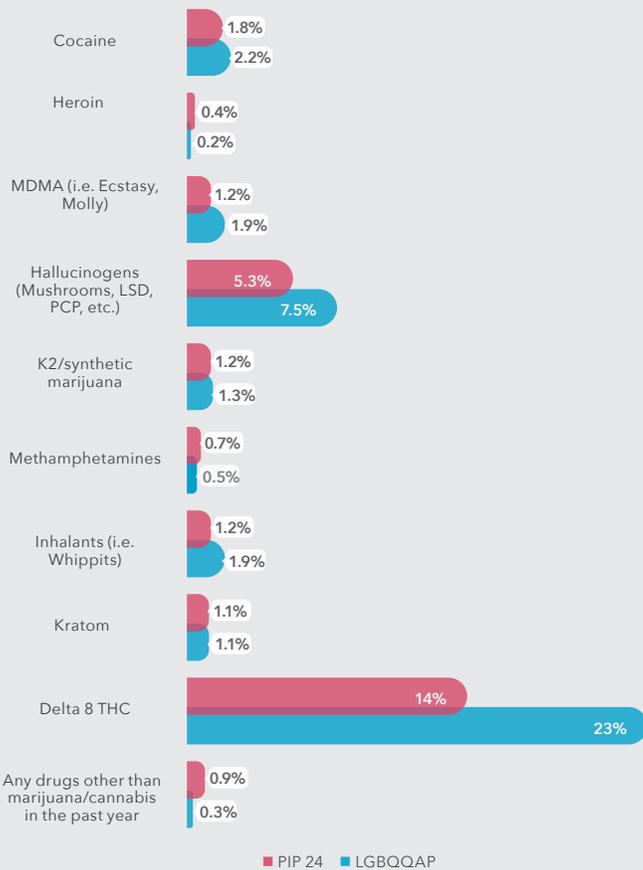
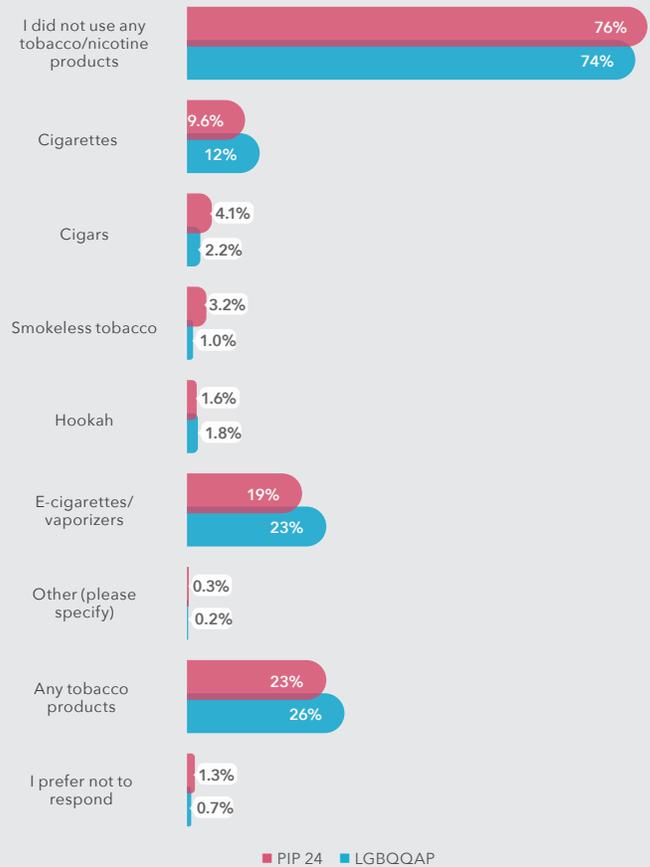


Chart 3: Type of Product Used in the Past 12 Months



Summary

Results from the 2023 MACHB demonstrates the importance of tracking substance use and use within certain subpopulations. This data suggests that students who identified as LGBQQAP report significantly higher rates of cannabis use overall, other drug use including delta-8 THC, and higher rates of polysubstance use when drinking. At the national level, we see these same trends related to the LGBTQ+ population reporting higher use rates of substances. It will be important to continue to monitor these trends over time. For more information about Partners in Prevention and to explore our research, visit mopip.org.

Resources

Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Behavioral Health: Results from the 2021 and 2022 National Surveys on Drug Use and Health

- [samhsa.gov](https://www.samhsa.gov)

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

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Citations

1. Medley, G., Lipari, R. N., Bose, J., Cribb, D. S., Kroutil, L. A., & McHenry, G. (2016, October). Sexual orientation and estimates of adult substance use and mental health: Results from the 2015 National Survey on Drug Use and Health. NSDUH Data Review. <https://www.samhsa.gov/data/report/sexual-orientation-and-estimates-adult-substance-use-and-mental-health-results-2015-national>
2. Plöderl, M., & Tremblay, P. (2015). Mental health of sexual minorities. Asystematic review. *International Review of Psychiatry*, 27(5), 367-385. <https://doi.org/10.3109/09540261.2015.1083949>
3. Jones, C. M., Clayton, H. B., Deputy, N. P., Roehler, D. R., Ko, J. Y., Esser, M. B., Brookmeyer, K. A., & Hertz, M. F. (2020). Prescription opioid misuse and use of alcohol and other substances among high school students — Youth Risk Behavior Survey, United States, 2019. *MMWR Supplement*, 69(1), 38-46. <https://doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.su6901a5>

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