

Sexual Health among LGBQQAP College 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 26 public and private colleges and universities in the state working to prevent high-risk behaviors by implementing evidence-based strategies, including education, social norming campaigns, policy review and enforcement, and more. This brief includes data for the 23 4-year institutions in the coalition; 2-year campuses participate in a separate version of the survey, and their data is not included in this statewide aggregate. 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 have on student health and wellness. This brief will focus on data related to sexual health among LGBQQAP college students collected from the 2024 Missouri Assessment of College Health Behaviors (sample size, N = 4,956).

Introduction

In the 2024 MACHB, 24% of survey respondents self-identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, questioning, asexual, or pansexual (LGBQQAP). This year's survey revealed differences between sexual health-related behaviors among LGBQQAP students as compared to non-LGBQQAP students.

Sexual Health Behaviors

In terms of sexual protective behaviors, including barrier method or contraceptive use, the 2024 MACHB revealed discrepancies between heterosexual and LGBQQAP-identifying students. 17% of sexually active LGBQQAP students reported not using any protective methods in the past year, compared to 12% of non-LGBQQAP students. However, sexually active LGBQQAP students were more likely to report use of barrier methods in the past year (55%) compared to their heterosexual counterparts (51%). These

differences in sexual protective behaviors are further explored in Chart 1.

In addition to differences in use of barrier methods or contraceptives, LGBQQAP and non-LGBQQAP students also reported differences in STI testing behaviors. The 2024 survey revealed that LGBQQAP students were more likely to report being tested for an STI than non-LGBQQAP students (24% vs 16%). Furthermore, 32% of LGBQQAP-identifying students reported not having been tested in the past 12 months, compared to 39% of heterosexual respondents. Students are also able to report that they have not been tested because they are not sexually active; among LGBQQAP students, 43% indicated that this was the case, while 42% of non-LGBQQAP students endorsed this option. Results pictured in Chart 2.

The MACHB also asks students about barriers to testing, with the 2024 results suggesting that LGBQQAP students experience differences in barriers

Chart 1: "In the past 12 months, have you/your sexual partner(s) used any of the following?"
(Check all that apply)

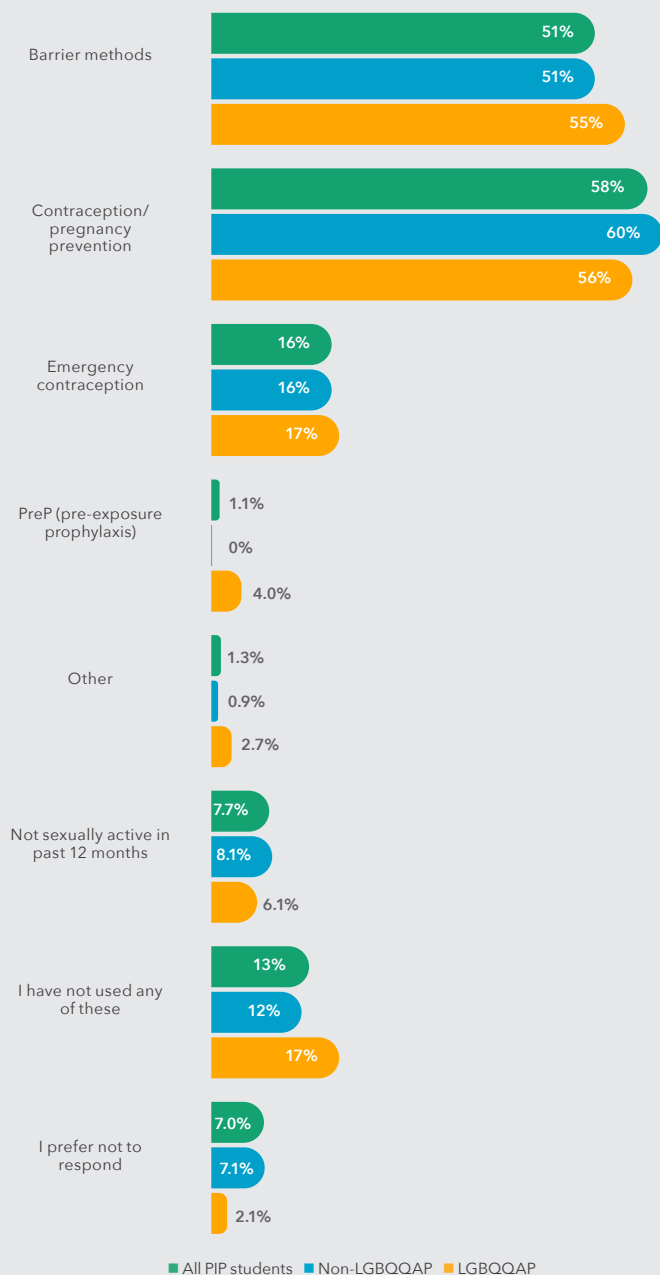


Chart 3: "What are the barriers that have ever stopped you from getting tested for an STI?"
(Check all that apply)

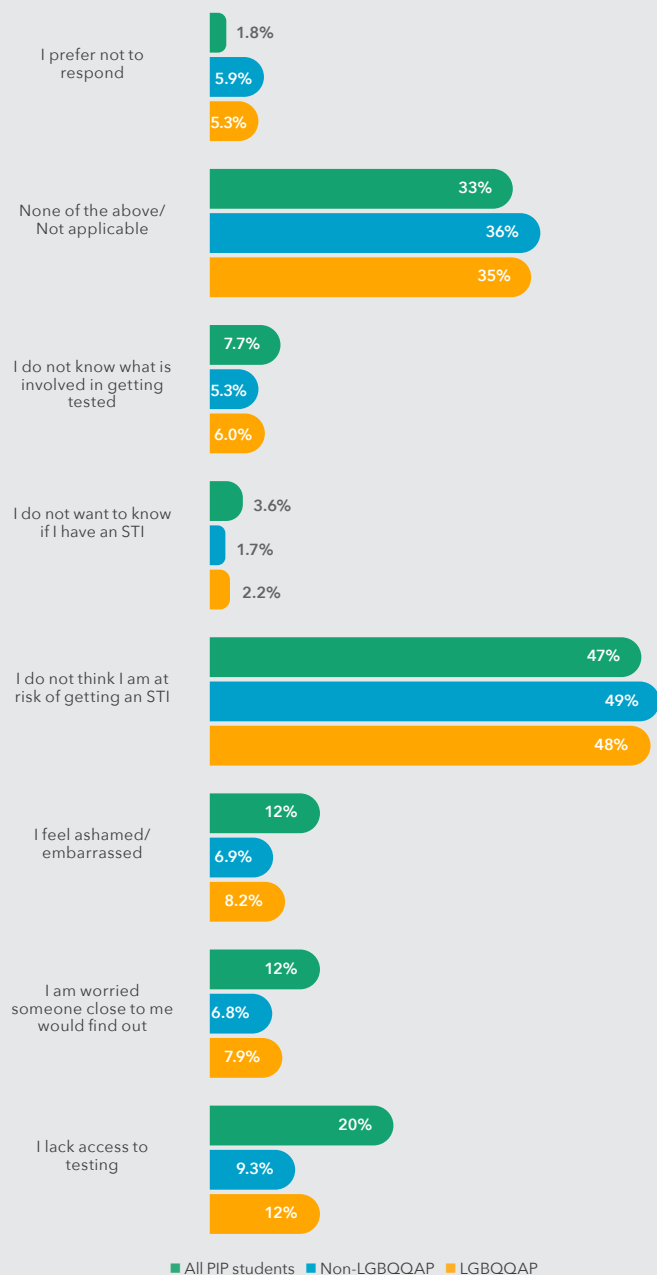
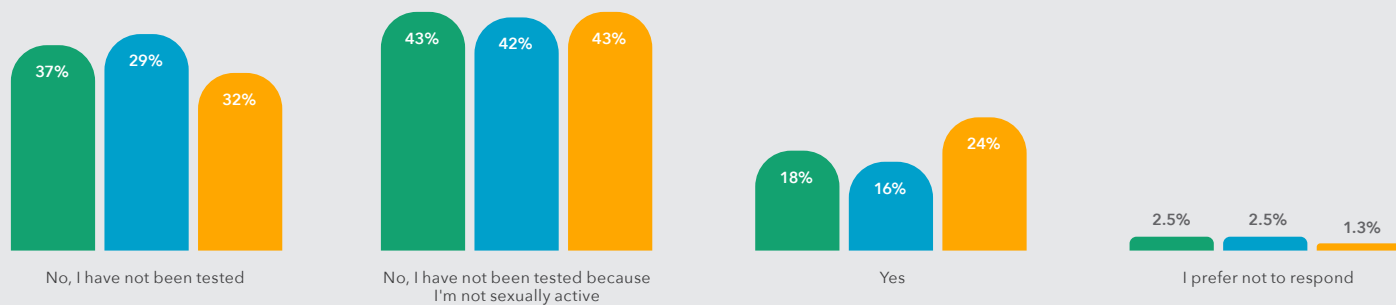


Chart 2: "In the past year have you been tested for an STI?"



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to STI testing as compared to their heterosexual peers. Among LGBQQAP students, 20% report lacking access to testing, compared to 9.3% of non-LGBQQAP students. These students were also more likely to report feeling ashamed or embarrassed (12% of LGBQQAP students) than heterosexual students (6.9%) and were more likely to report fearing that someone close to them would find out as a barrier to testing. Further differences between LGBQQAP and non-LGBQQAP-identifying students in reported barriers to STI testing are displayed in Chart 3.

Summary and Moving Forward

Overall, LGBQQAP and non-LGBQQAP college students in Missouri report some similar behaviors related to sexual health; similar percentages of LGBQQAP and non-LGBQQAP students had not been tested for STIs in the past year because they were not sexually active. However, higher percentages

of LGBQQAP students did report being tested for STIs in the past year than non-LGBQQAP students and LGBQAAP students were more likely to report using barrier methods, emergency contraception, PreP, and other sexual health safety products in the past year than non-LGBQQAP students. However, related to barriers of testing, LGBQQAP students were much more likely to report feelings of shame/embarrassment, being worried about someone close to them finding out, and lacking access to testing than their non-LGBQQAP peers. It is critical that campuses offer sexual health education and services that are inclusive, non-judgmental, and accessible for students of all sexual orientations.

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