

Alcohol Use Amongst the LGBQQ Population

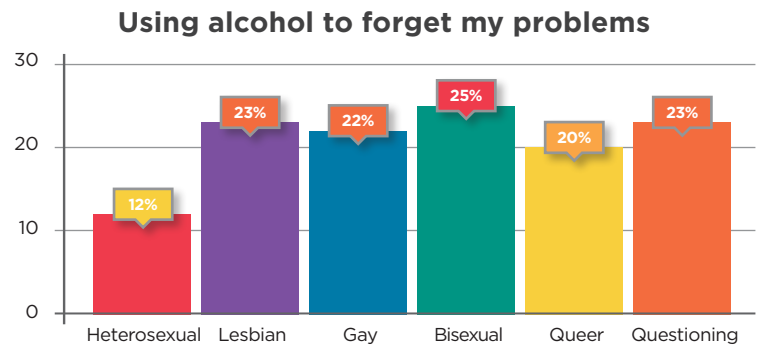
As Missouri's consortium in preventing higher education substance abuse, Partners in Prevention (PIP) promotes healthy behaviors on college campuses. PIP implements the Missouri Assessment of College Health Behaviors (MACHB), previously referred to as the Missouri College Health and Behavior Survey, in order to gain a better understanding of health behaviors and experiences on campuses across Missouri. This brief will focus on alcohol use of students, primarily those whom identify as LGBQQ. Students who identified as transgender are not included in this brief, unless they also reported their sexual orientation as LGBQQ. As sexual orientation and gender are different constructs, the stressors and experiences of the transgender student population cannot be conflated with those of LGBQQ student population.

Discussion

It is commonly recognized that marginalized groups, such as LGBQQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Queer, and Questioning) individuals, tend to have a high rate of substance use and abuse.¹ This may be due to chronic stress from discrimination that lead to substance use and other mental and physical health consequences.¹ Utilizing data from the MACHB, significant differences amongst alcohol and drug consumption between the LGBQQ population and heteronormative individuals on college campuses are visible. For example, 8% of heterosexual college students across Missouri began drinking at age 14 or before, whereas the rate for LGBQQ individuals is much higher. Individuals that identify as lesbian and bisexual reported 17%, gay individuals reported 11%, and queer students indicated 15%. Further, the MACHB allows students to indicate their reasoning for consuming alcohol on a regular basis. One selection is, "In order to forget my problems", which is significantly higher in individuals whom are LGBQQ. 12% of heterosexual students reported this as their reasoning, while it is nearly double for all LGBQQ populations (lesbian-23%, gay-22%, bisexual-25%, queer-20%, and questioning-23%).

As seen in the August PIP brief, students in recovery account for approximately 7% of the Missouri college campus population. When considering LGBQQ individuals, this number is higher for bisexual (10%), questioning (9%), and queer (8%) individuals. The number for gay and lesbian students is around 6%, which is still slightly higher than heterosexual (5%) college students in Missouri. This information allows campuses to recognize the importance of providing

treatment options for students in recovery, with a special focus on marginalized groups on campus.



Summary

Due to the consistently higher rates of alcohol consumption from individuals who identify as LGBQQ, campuses across Missouri should develop programs that address responsible drinking behaviors. Further, based on the sense of belonging questions on the MACHB, LGBQQ students indicated that they do not feel like a member of the campus at the same level as heterosexual individuals. For instance, 65% of heterosexual students reported feeling as though they are a member of campus, whereas lesbian (54%), bisexual (60%), and questioning (50%) students reported far lower rates of belonging. In response to the large number of students who report drinking in order to forget their problems, programs could focus on appropriate coping skills and other ways to allow LGBQQ individuals to feel a higher sense of belonging on campus.

¹ Ahern, J., Stuber, J., & Galea, S. (2007). Stigma, discrimination and the health of illicit drug users. *Drug and alcohol dependence*, 88(2), 188-196.

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