

# Substance Use Trend

# Alert

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## Substance Use among Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual (LGB) Youth in the U.S. and Florida

Substance use affects those who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer/questioning (LGBTQ) at higher rates than their heterosexual counterparts.<sup>1,3</sup> Little is known about the risk for substance use in LGB adolescents, however, survey data suggests LGBTQ adults are twice as likely than their heterosexual counterparts to use illicit drugs and twice as likely to suffer from a substance use disorder.<sup>1-3</sup> There are several contributing factors that may cause an increase in substance use among LGBTQ individuals including discrimination, social stigma, internalized homophobia, lack of social support and co-occurring disorders.<sup>1,3</sup> Data collection for transgender and queer/questioning individuals is extremely limited and will not be discussed among data sets in further sections.

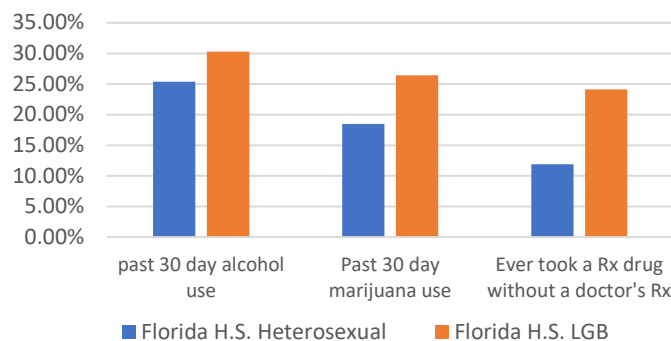
### Substance Use among LGB Youth in the U.S.

According to 2019 Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) data, significant differences in substance use prevalence rates were found among U.S. LGB high school students, compared to their heterosexual counterparts. Nationally, LGB high school students were more likely than their heterosexual counterparts to have their first drink before age 13 (20% vs. 13.9%), use alcohol in the past month (33.9% vs. 28.8%), ever use marijuana (49.6% vs. 36%), use marijuana in the past month (31.1% vs. 20.9%), and ever use synthetic marijuana (11.6% vs. 6.7%).<sup>4</sup>

### Substance Use among LGB Youth in Florida

Survey data also suggests that Florida high school students who identify as LGB report higher rates of substance use than their heterosexual counterparts. For instance, LGB high school youth in Florida were more likely to have their first drink before age 13

(19% vs. 14.3%), use alcohol in the past month (30.3% vs. 25.4%), ever use marijuana (45.7% vs. 33.3%), try marijuana before age 13 (9.8% vs. 5.2%), use marijuana in the past month (26.4% vs. 18.5%), ever take a prescription drug without a doctor's prescription (24.1% vs. 11.9%), and ever use cocaine (9.1% vs. 2.9%).<sup>4</sup> Some of the significant differences in substance use is shown in Figure 1.



**Figure 1:** Florida High School Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2019. Source: [YRBS](#)

### Recommendations

Transgender data is very limited. Data collection methods and surveys should include transgender individuals to help inform efforts to address their behavioral health needs. Specialized treatment options are important for sexual minorities when facing substance use problems.<sup>1,3</sup> Many treatment facilities may not be adequately prepared to address the specific needs of LGBTQ individuals such as learning successful coping methods for dealing with social isolation, family problems, homophobia and violence.<sup>1,3</sup> For more information, please visit the following websites:

**Additional Information Sources:**

[Your Guide to LGBTQIAPK Addiction Treatment](#)

[SAMHSA Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender \(LGBT\) Behavioral Health Equity Resources](#)

**References**

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3. Medley, G., Lipari, R.N., Bose, J., Cribb, D.S., Kroutil, L.A., & McHenry, G. (2016). [Sexual Orientation and Estimates of Adult Substance Use and Mental Health: Results from the 2015 National Survey on Drug Use and Health](#).
4. Youth Online: High School YRBS - United States 2019 Results | DASH | Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2020). Retrieved (05-02-2021) from <https://nccd.cdc.gov/Youthonline/App/Results.aspx?TT=A&OUT=0&SID=HS&QID=QQ&LID=XX&YID=2017&LID2=&YID2=&COL=S&ROW1=N&ROW2=N&HT=QQ&LCT=LL&FS=S1&FR=R1&FG=G1&FA=A1&FI=I1&FP=P1&FSL=S1&FRL=R1&FGL=G1&FAL=A1&FIL=I1&FPL=P1&PV=&TST=False&C1=&C2=&QP=G&DP=1&VA=CI&CS=Y&SYID=&EYID=&SC=DEFAULT&SO=ASC>