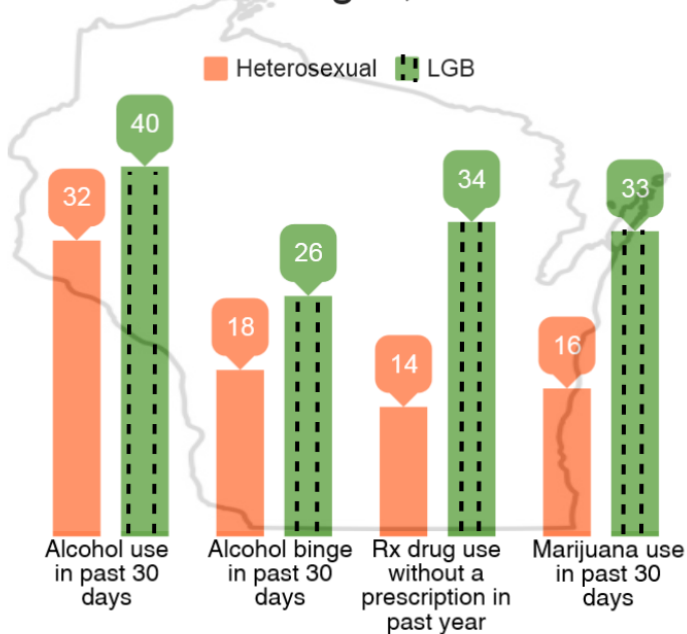


Substance Use in Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Populations

Substance Use in Wisconsin Youth: Percentages, 2013



Risk Factors

LGB youth are at greater risk of developing a substance use disorder. Risk factors include:

- Fear of violence or negative reaction by family and friends to disclosure of sexual orientation.
- Lower self-esteem, depression, and anxiety due to the internalization of the effects of discrimination.
- Lack of social support from peers, family, religious, and cultural organizations.
- Increase in stress from frequent and multiple forms of discrimination especially in individuals with multiple minority statuses (race, gender, sexual orientation, and religion).
- Mental health conditions such as anxiety, depression, and trauma-related disorders.

Healthy Living is Possible



The presence of positive family support, caring adult(s), and safe school(s) has been shown to be a protective factor against LGB teens using substances. Other factors that protect against substance use in LGB youth and adults include: social programs that are targeted towards LGB individuals, access to health and social services, and service providers that are sensitive to LGB needs. For more information, visit: dhs.wisconsin.gov/lgbthealth.

Fast Facts

- LGB individuals have a higher rate of drug use throughout their lifetime compared to their heterosexual peers. Some of these drugs include heroin, inhalants, steroids, cocaine, and ecstasy.
- LGB youths have a higher prevalence of drug and alcohol use compared to LGB adults.
- In the LGB population, women (lesbians and female bisexuals) have higher rates of alcohol use disorder compared to the men in this population, while men (gay and male bisexuals) have higher rates of illicit drug use disorder compared to the women in the LGB population.
- In 2015, 37.4 percent of persons aged 18 or older in the LGB population had a mental illness compared to 17.1 percent in the heterosexual population.

Substance Use Disorder in U.S. Adults 18 or Older: Percentages, 2015

