

## **Patterns of and factors associated with polysubstance use among community-engaged lesbian, bisexual, and queer women in Sydney, Australia: A latent class analysis**

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**Introduction:** Lesbian, bisexual, and queer (LBQ) women use tobacco, alcohol, and illicit drugs at higher rates than heterosexual women with a disproportionate health burden associated with this elevated use.

**Methods:** We examined self-reported patterns of polysubstance use in the past six months among community engaged LBQ women from in and around Sydney, using data from the biennial SWASH Survey collected during the 2020 Mardi Gras Festival (n=1558; mean age: 35 years). Latent class analysis was performed using nine indicators of tobacco, alcohol, and drug use frequency in the preceding six months. We examined associations between class profiles and demographic characteristics, community connectedness, health-related factors, and concerns around drug use and help seeking behaviours with the best fitting class solution.

**Key Findings:** A three-class solution was identified in our sample: non-users of illicit drugs or tobacco (62% of the sample); occasional party drug with regular alcohol users (29%); and frequent multi-substance users (9%). Members of the frequent multi-substance class were more likely to dwell in inner-city suburbs, not have a postgraduate level of education, be concerned about their drug and alcohol usage, and to have sought assistance for their drug use in the past relative to the non-user class. A curvilinear association between age and membership of the occasional use class was observed, however this was not seen in multi-substance use class.

**Discussions and Conclusions:** Polysubstance use is prevalent in LBQ women. Concurrent use of alcohol, cannabis, ecstasy, and cocaine were common in occasional and frequent multi-substance users. LBQ women did not “age out” of frequent multi-substance use. Multi-substance users were more likely to report higher psychological distress and have a history of help-seeking. Understanding polysubstance use among this population has implications for the development and delivery of interventions and health promotion efforts.

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