

Exposure to violence and sexual minority status as indicators of increased risk of drug use and sex work in adolescence

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Drug use and sex work among sexual minority adults has been linked to higher rates of risk-taking behaviors, exposure to STDs, and judicial involvement. Data collected by the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health was analyzed by exposure to violence and subsequent drug use and sex work. Data also analyzed by biological sex and sexual attraction. In unweighted analysis, as exposure to violence increased, as did cocaine and other drug use. Those born male were 3 times more likely than born females to engage in sex work, and those born male attracted to males were at an increased risk of sex work. Attraction to females, in both biological males and females was protective against sex work. Attraction to males, regardless of sex, was a risk factor for sex work. Notably, there was significant interaction among biological males, sexual attraction to males and physical violence, and significant interactions between physical violence, drug use and sex work among males. Data indicated biologically male sexual minority youth are at greater risk of physical violence, cocaine and other drug use, and sex work.

This data can be used to better understand pathways and risk factors for sexual minority youth, inform schools, medical and mental health providers, as well as policy makers to create more targeted interventions, and inclusive care for sex minority youth that experience violence.