




# ADDRESSING DRUG USE ON DATING APPS

**2023 Report of Findings from NiceAF, an anti-stigma  
project from Building Healthy Online Communities**



BACKGROUND...03

PARTICIPANT DETAILS...07

KEY THEMES...11

PROPOSED FEATURES...13

- COMMUNICATION...14
- CONNECTION...27
- SAFETY + PRIVACY...29
- RESOURCES + PLATFORM MODERATION...31

WRAPPING UP...35

APPENDIX...38





## HERE'S WHAT WE ASKED

NiceAF, an anti-stigma project of Building Healthy Online Communities (BHOC), spent 2023 focusing specifically on how to best address the realities of drug use on dating platforms.

BHOC undertook this effort with a number of factors in mind. We are aware that whether dating app users are using drugs or not, this issue is relevant. We also understand that regardless of our opinions on drug use, legal factors play a factor in potential risks and liability of communicating about substance use; that being said, we kept these issues front and center when thinking about possible solutions. We also considered the complexities of safety, stigma, and emotional reactions to drug use and communication about drug use.

- 1. HOW CAN THE REALITIES OF DRUG USE LEAD TO THE FEWEST ISSUES FOR ALL PARTIES: APP USERS, THEIR POTENTIAL PARTNERS, APP OWNERS?**
- 2. HOW DOES DRUG USE CURRENTLY AFFECT USERS' EXPERIENCE ON DATING APPS?**
- 3. WHAT FEATURES RELATING TO DRUG USE WOULD USERS LIKE TO SEE ON DATING APPS?**

# DATING PLATFORM USERS WANT TO ADDRESS DRUG USE

Our research and that of our colleagues supports giving dating app users the option to share information about substance use. In our prior work, we found that over 50% of dating app users (in a sample of over 3000 gay and bi men) reported wanting to share their drug use preferences on the apps. In our [2021 NiceAF survey](#), 44% of participants wanted to be able to filter partners by drug/alcohol use. In the 2023 cohort, that almost doubled—80% of participants in this report wanted to filter their partners by substance use.

Our partners at Emory University collect data annually on a variety of gay and bi cis men's behaviors, and found that more than 20% report using drugs (not including marijuana), making this an issue for a large number of dating app users.

From a public health standpoint (and also from a user satisfaction standpoint), the matches that create the biggest potential risk are those in which there is a mismatch between people who want to use drugs as part of their sexual experience and those who do not.

Many years ago we worked with a website to find a way to minimize unknowing partnerships between non-drug users and drug users by creating a “No PnP” (“party and play,” also called chemsex) profile option. This protected the website from liability, while also allowing both drug users and those who didn't use drugs to be more likely to find what they were looking for. In a focus group held with meth users, we heard from many of the participants that they didn't want to be with individuals who didn't use as it was a “buzz kill” for their high.

**1 in 4** deleted a dating app  
specifically because of  
an issue with drug use



# OVERVIEW

Between June and October 2023, BHOC worked with 25 leaders in public health—including national organizations, harm reduction providers, drug user health activists, as well as sobriety and substance use treatment professionals. BHOC developed a focus group based on this guidance and worked with our colleagues and partnering dating apps to recruit 270 dating app users from across the US. Participants represented a range of substance use practices including being sober/in recovery, never having used, using regularly, and specifically looking for PnP on dating apps.

The following report summarizes key findings, proposed new features, and recommendations from public health experts to give dating platform owners confidence to address drug use head on.



# 270

dating app users gave  
feedback on drug use-  
related features

# METHODOLOGY

25

experts in drug use health & harm reduction, legal, public health, and technology interviewed & convened for two think tanks

9

dating platform partners pledged to recruit dating app users for a focus group session

270

dating app users participated in an anonymous, text-based focus group



ADAM  ADAM

 Grindr™

GROWLR 



MANHUNT

MOTTO

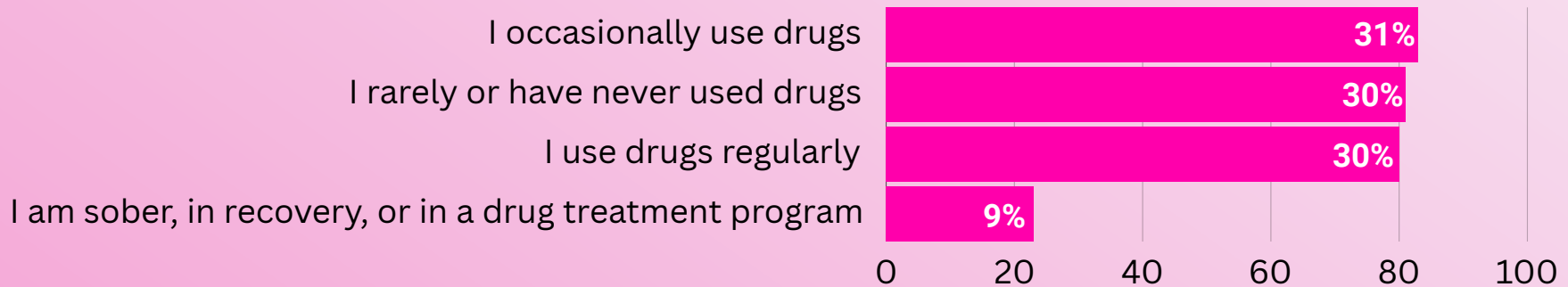
POZ™ *personals*

SCRUFF

 sniffies

# WHO SHOWED UP?

## DRUG USE\* PRACTICES

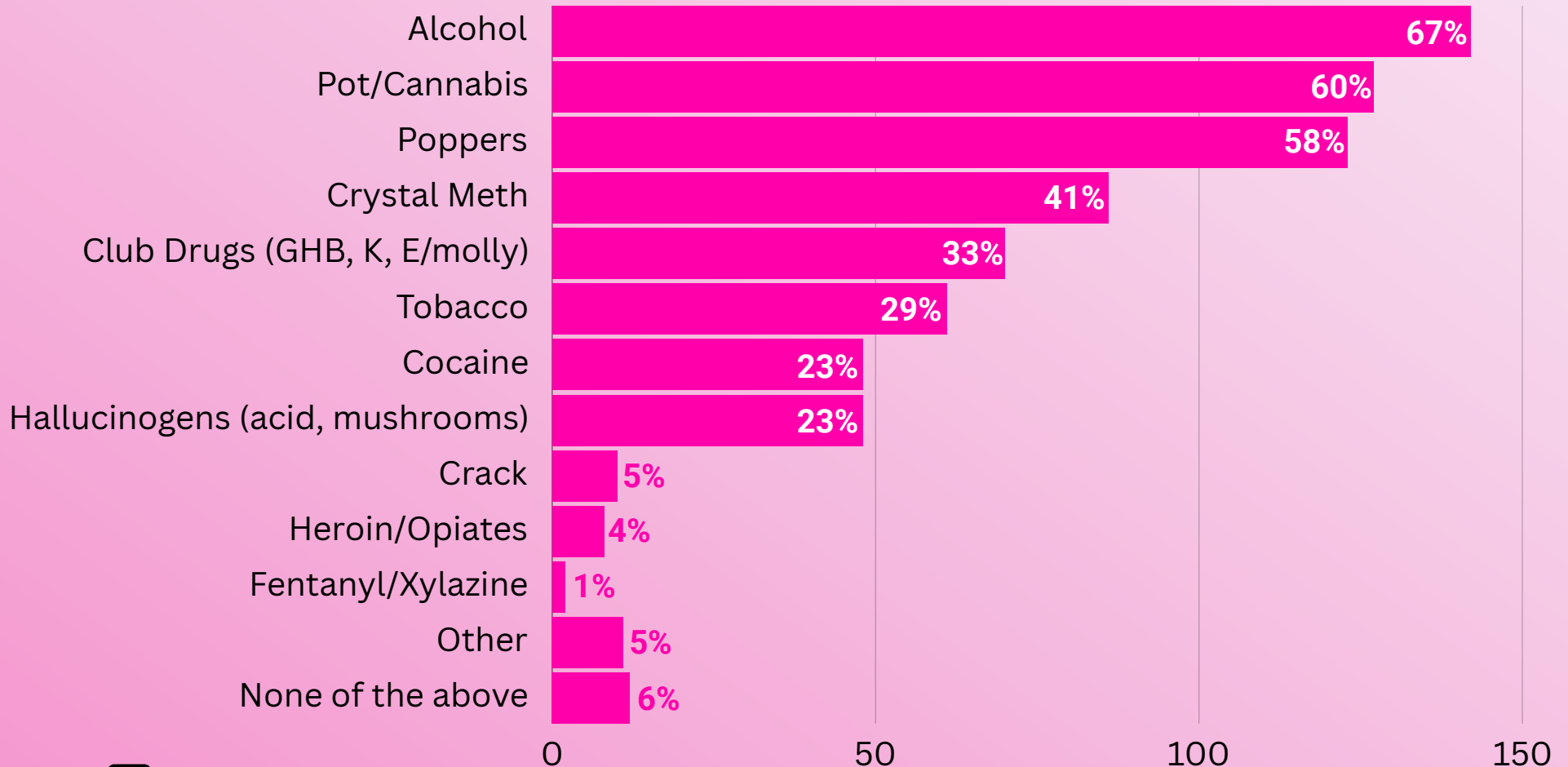


*\*Does not include alcohol, cannabis, tobacco, or prescription drugs prescribed by a healthcare provider.*



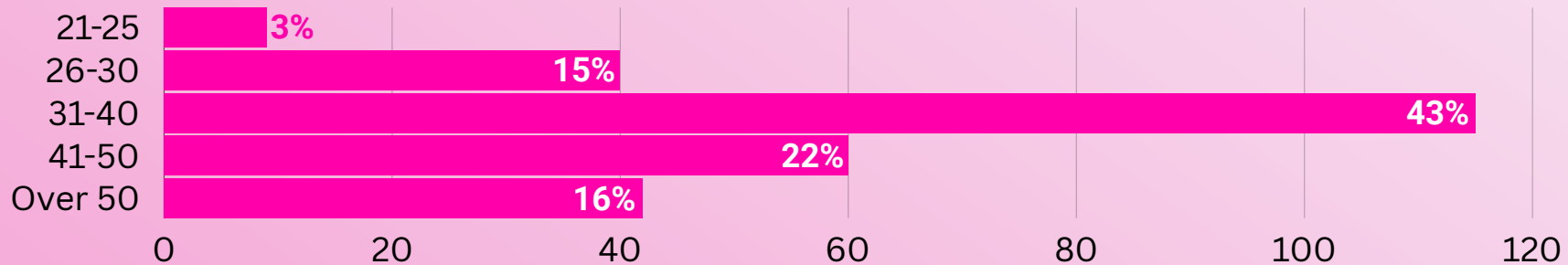
# WHO SHOWED UP?

## SUBSTANCES USED IN LAST 12 MONTHS

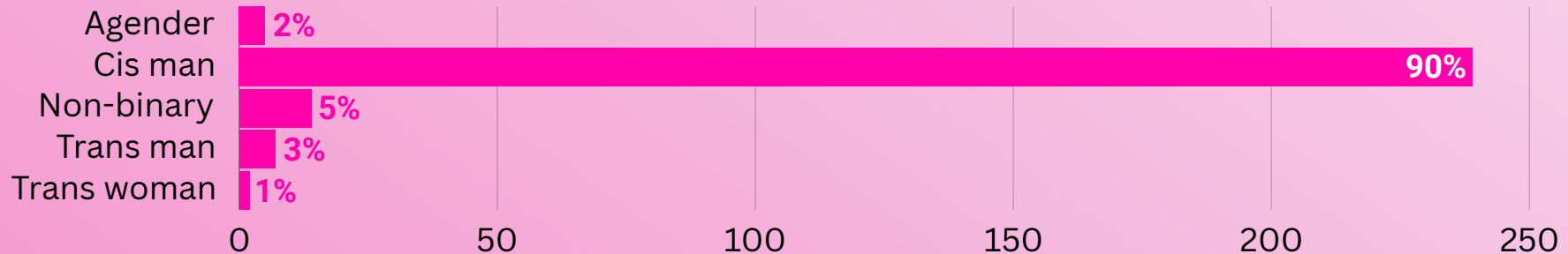


# WHO SHOWED UP?

## AGE

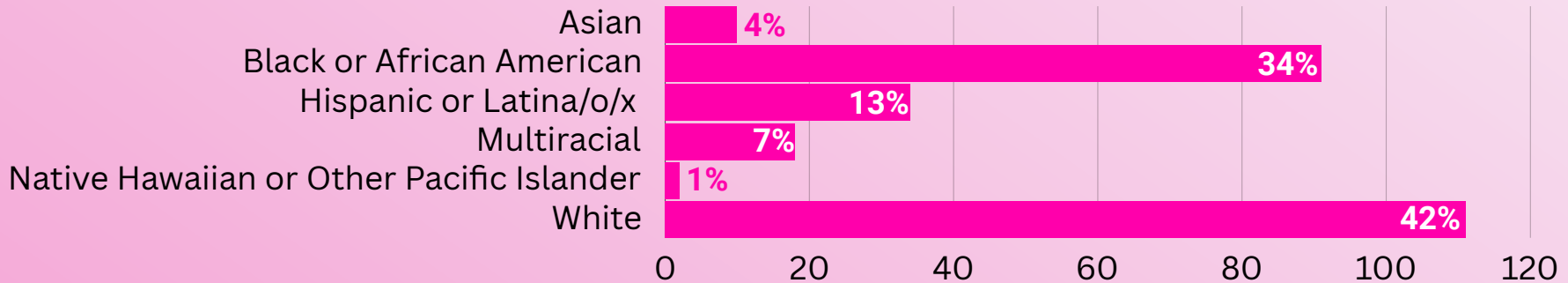


## GENDER

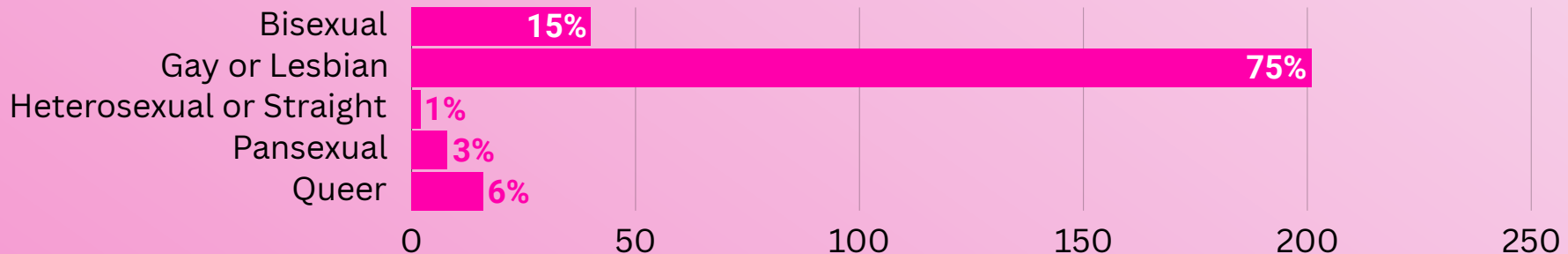


# WHO SHOWED UP?

## RACE



## SEXUAL ORIENTATION





# NO ONE IS HAVING A GOOD TIME

The default experience on dating apps—regardless of personal drug use—is a negative one. The most common negative experiences were:

- Experiencing stigma, being ghosted/blocked/reported online, or having the police called on them for their drug use practices
- Non-consensual drug use by hook ups
- Drugging or coercion to use drugs even when not wanting to
- Sexual violence
- Being used as a plug (someone only meeting up to take someone's drugs)
- Robbery
- Performance issues due to drug sexual side effects
- Challenges to sobriety or recovery
- "Outing" drug use practices to friends and family
- Dealing with bad highs/trips

**91%**

reported at least one negative experience specific to drug use

**1 in 4**

deleted a dating app specifically because of an issue with drug use

***"I'll sometimes get guys asking me for 'T' or other drugs after we've been flirting over chat, pretty much making the sharing of drugs a condition to meeting up. [That] can be disappointing."***

*–Latino queer cis man, Illinois, occasionally uses drugs*



***"A man gave me crystal meth, and I didn't even know what it was. I thought it was something cannabis-related, and he did not correct me when I made that clear. He raped me once I was high."***

*–Asian gay cis man, Maryland, looking for PnP*

# LIVING IN THE LEGAL GRAY

Drug use—particularly of non-legal substances—in the U.S. is highly criminalized and stigmatized from the policy level all the way to individual attitudes. This comes as no surprise especially to people using drugs that have legal and societal stigmas attached to them. While legal concerns are an issue for participants in this cohort, few were aware of the legal vulnerabilities they may face for openly and affirmatively discussing drug use practices on dating platforms.

However, legal concerns specifically related to how law enforcement may use a dating app user's information were the most common concern. Participants would like to change how compliant dating apps are with law enforcement and have apps better address police entrapment. These concerns were tied with questions about how user data is stored, protected, and otherwise shared. We will detail more on this in the digital security and privacy section.

**1 in 5** wanted dating apps to provide information on legal protections for if they call 911 in a drug emergency

***“[We need] openness, honesty, and safety for people who share drug use information with others. No entrapment on the app.”***

*–White gay cis man, New Mexico, looking for PnP*



***“I think secrecy makes things less safe [and] puts people in situations they don't know about. We can't change that with the legal reality.”***

*–White queer trans man, Illinois, sober*

# HERE'S WHAT USERS RECOMMEND

In the focus group, we asked dating platform users to vote on nine specific features, which they supported as follows:

1. **Profile Field: "I'm not comfortable with..." (86%)**
2. **Profile Field: "Drug & alcohol practices" (84%)**
3. **Filtering (80%)**
4. **Profile Field/Tag: "No PnP" (74%)**
5. **Profile Highlight (73%)**
6. **Drug use matching (65%)**
7. **Screenshot blocking (64%)**
8. **Profile Field: "I carry..." (63%)**
9. **Disappearing messages (55%)**

In addition to these specific proposed features, participants provided feedback on broader topics related to security, privacy, health resources, and content moderation on dating platforms. While these specific components could not be voted on in the same way as the above features, the need for culture shifts and systems changes are equally important to improving the reality of drug use on dating platforms.

## FOUR KEY AREAS

- COMMUNICATION
- CONNECTION
- PRIVACY + SECURITY
- RESOURCES + SUPPORT





# USERS ARE COMMUNICATING ABOUT DRUG USE PRACTICES BUT WITH MIXED SUCCESS

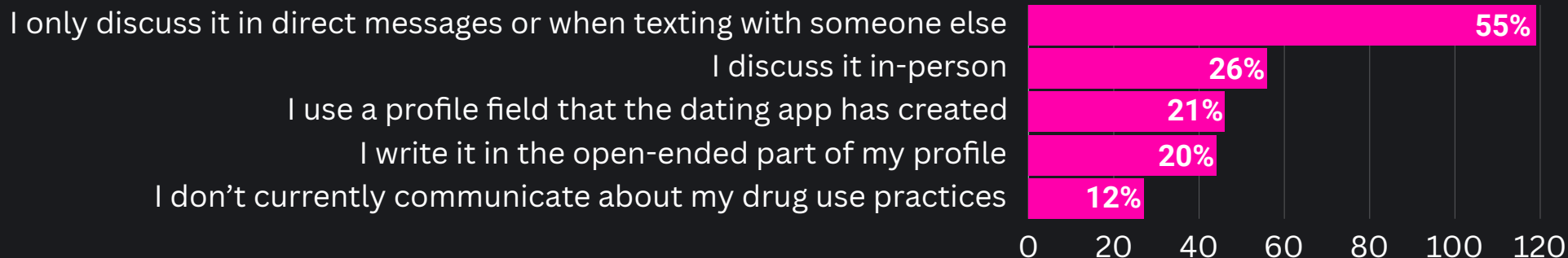
sry it's not a match



The reality is that drug use is part of gay, bi, queer, and trans communities, both online and off. Participants want to better communicate about drug use expectations for meeting up but face incredible barriers and vulnerabilities to harm. **“Visibility, transparency, communication, and compatibility,”** were at the core of what users want. Almost all participants wanted affirmative, explicit profile field options stating exactly what people were looking for and into when it came to substances. While we know this poses legal vulnerabilities to all involved—including dating app owners—being able to share substance use was an overwhelmingly common theme throughout the session. With over 83% having blocked someone specifically because of a mismatch in drug use practices, users want a better way to find compatible partners.

- ***“I want the ability to indicate if I am using drugs and expect my date to do the same.”***  
–White gay cis man, Over 50, New Jersey, occasionally uses drugs
- ***“[I want to see] greater transparency upfront - and not just around drug use but alcohol as well.”*** – White queer cis man, 30s, Virginia, sober
- ***“Make it more obvious who is on the app for chemsex vs chatting, flirting, dating, more social reasons.”*** – White gay cis man, 40s, Pennsylvania, White, rarely uses or never used drugs

# HOW DO YOU COMMUNICATE YOUR DRUG USE PRACTICES?



Dating platform content moderators and dating app users alike are aware of the coded language to describe substance use online, especially for substances that are under legal scrutiny. Sober participants and people who were not looking to use drugs were the most able to share in their profiles about their practices. However, people who were looking for chemsex/PnP described having to be put in an “awkward situation” by having to lie, use coded language, or drop hints about their drug use.

More than half of people are discussing substance use directly either in direct messages or texting offline. About one in four (26%) are only discussing drug use expectations once they meet up offline.

## 4 out of 5

are not openly discussing or mentioning substance use practices on dating platforms

# PROFILE FIELD: “I’M NOT COMFORTABLE WITH...”

86% overall support

SOBER



RARELY OR NEVER USE



REGULAR USE



OCCASIONAL USE

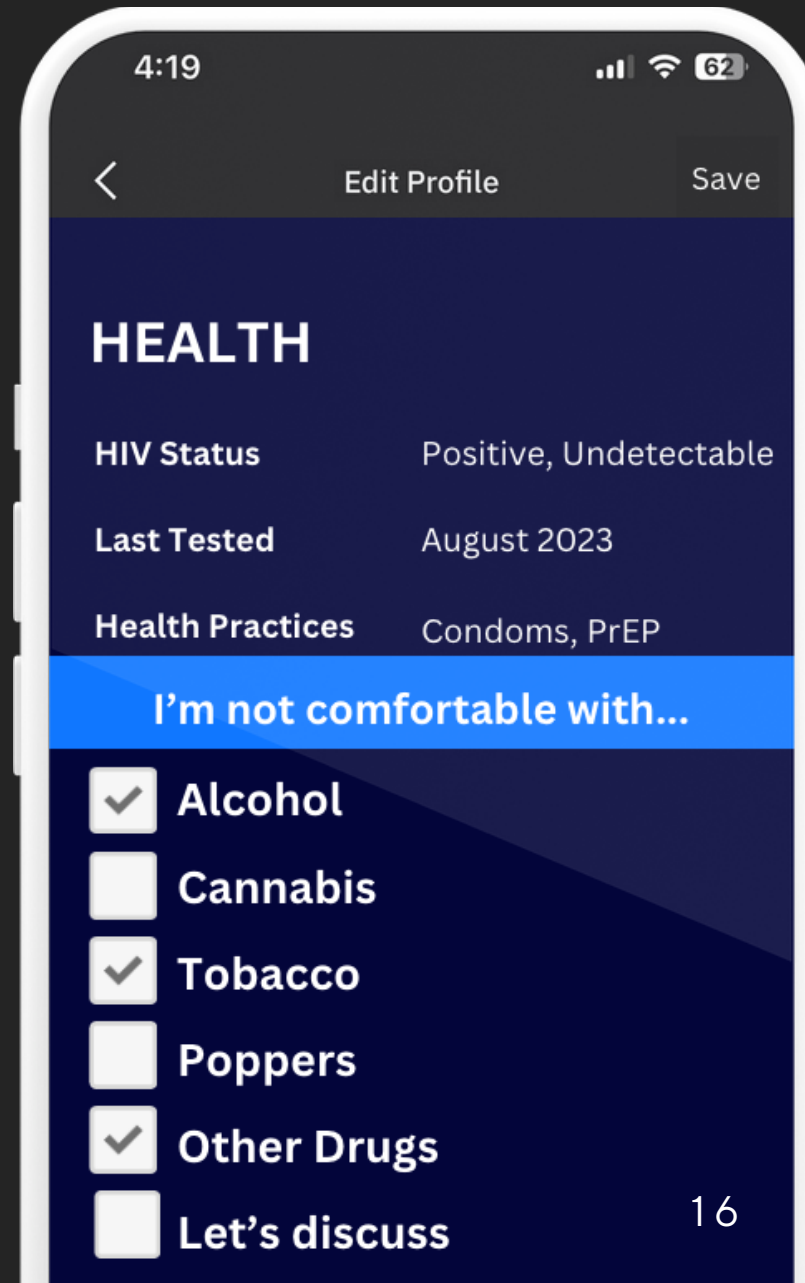


*“I would love this feature a lot and then people can know what I’m not into before even messaging me.”*

–Indigenous queer non-binary person, Georgia, rarely uses or never used drugs

*“I like it it filters out those who I wouldn’t want to hook up with.”*

–Black gay trans man, Illinois, looking for PnP





# PROFILE FIELD: “I’M NOT COMFORTABLE WITH...”

This was the highest ranked feature across the board among participants regardless of substance use practices. Publicly listing drug use practices on a profile can be at great risk to the user even if it would result in more connections with like-minded people; thus, our recommendation is to state this in the negative. However, this cost-benefit analysis has important nuances.

## Considerations

- Participants would like to distinguish how often and in what scenarios they are looking to use substances. Users wanted to differentiate between “social use” and “use during sex.”
- Overall, participants liked having a “Let’s Discuss” option both for privacy and nuance. Participants also wanted a place to include freeform text.
- Many described not wanting it publicly listed where anyone on the app could view and asked if could be accompanied with a matching function or “unlocking” function (so they could control when someone could see their substance use practices).
- Some were concerned about entrapment, though it’s carefully set up to avoid this – we weren’t able to give all that context, and apps might have to educate users about this aspect of the feature.

# PROFILE FIELD: “I’M NOT COMFORTABLE WITH...”

We presented this feature to dating app users, as **not comfortable with**. Despite the legal issues presented, users desired affirmative options for listing their drug use comforts. There are two options to consider:

NOT COMFORTABLE WITH	COMFORTABLE WITH
Able to provide specific options	Less specific options for substances
Not using it could imply user is okay with drug use	Using it may imply they use the substances
Reduces legal vulnerabilities for owners & users	Increases legal vulnerabilities for owners & users
Contributes to drug use stigma & confusion	Reduces drug use stigma & provides clarity

**If in the negative (not comfortable with),** there may be reduced harm in offering a specific array of options specific to queer and trans communities, especially specific drugs—like meth (a common dealbreaker), ecstasy, or poppers— or categories—such as stimulants or psychedelics.

**If in the affirmative (I am comfortable with),** illegal substances would be best considered lumped under “Other Drugs” or a “Let’s Discuss” option. Accompanying education about user legal risks is required.

# PROFILE FIELD: DRUG + ALCOHOL PRACTICES

## HEALTH

⌘ HIV status Negative, on PrEP ⓘ

🕒 Last tested July 2023

💉 Vaccinated for COVID-19

🍷 Drugs & alcohol **Sober, Doesn't use drugs**

## EXPECTATIONS

👤 Looking for Dates, Friends, Relationship

🏠 Meet at My Place, Your Place, Bar, Coffee Shop, Restaurant

84% overall support

SOBER

100%

OCCASSIONAL USE

85%

RARELY OR NEVER USE

85%

REGULAR USE

75%

***“I like it. There are a lot of people in and around the recovery community I think would appreciate it.”***

*–Black gay cis man, Texas, rarely uses or never used drugs*

***“That’s an amazing option. Being a person who uses drugs, that would save [me] time.”***

*–Black gay cis man, Georgia, regularly uses drugs*

***“[It’s] too general. Like sober from what? Which drugs don't you use? I think that's important. Maybe I just need to see how else it could look if someone was to drink or smoke weed etc.”***

*–Black gay cis man, Maryland, sober*

# PROFILE FIELD: DRUG + ALCOHOL PRACTICES

With full support from sober participants, and ranking second highest across the entire spectrum of drug use habits, most people appreciate the ability to share and have insight into practices such as “Sober” and “Doesn’t use drugs”. However, this left some users wanting more - more options, better separation between alcohol and drug use, and the ability to be more specific.

## Considerations

- Many pointed out the lack of nuance with the presented option - many in recovery, that don’t drink, or lighter drinkers may not identify as “Sober”, and some people don’t use certain drugs but do use others with varying frequency.
- Participants often emphasized that the type of drug and method of use were important to them in determining comfort and compatibility.





# PROFILE FIELD/TAG: NO PNP

74% overall support

SOBER



RARELY OR NEVER USE



OCCASIONAL USE



REGULAR USE

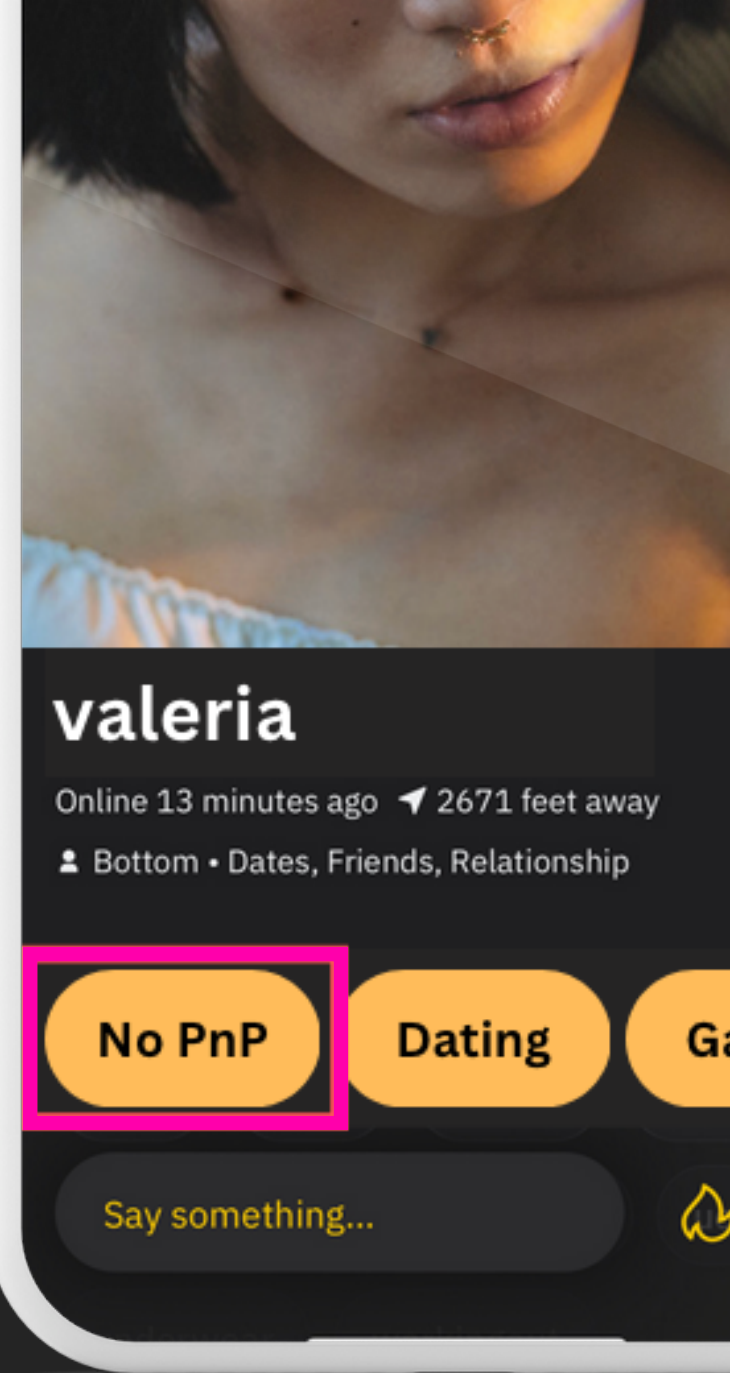


***“I think it’s very helpful and will also be good for people who don’t know what PnP is to be educated on it. The first time I found myself in a PnP situation I had no idea what parTying even meant.”***

*–White gay cis man, Maryland, looking for PnP*

***“It seems pretty judgmental. Why not say PnP friendly?”***

*–Black bisexual cis man, Texas, regularly uses drugs*



# PROFILE FIELD/TAG: NO PNP

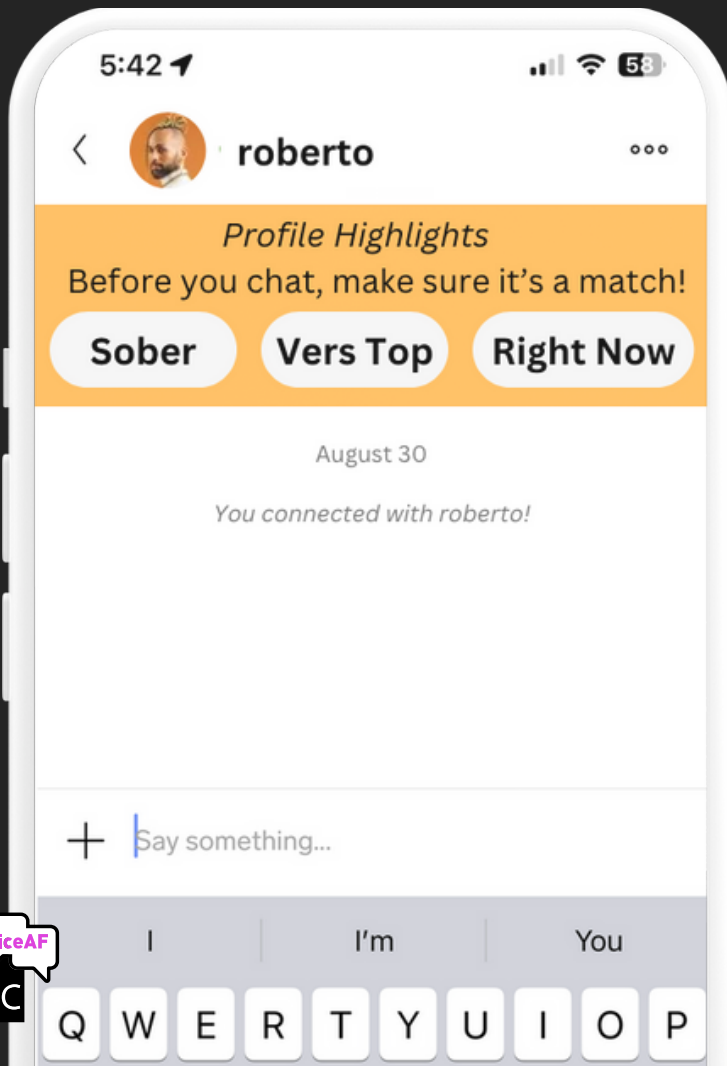
When we asked about an option to tag your profile as ‘No PnP,’ unsurprisingly it resonated mostly with people who never or rarely use drugs. While it can be used by people looking for chemsex to know who to absolutely avoid, it doesn’t provide the best use case for all parties according to the feedback.

## Considerations

- Using a **matching** and/or **filtering** function with this tag is essential. Users describe platform limits on number of tags you can select to be featured on your profile.
- Participants were confused if they chose not to use the tag “No PnP” incidentally implied they were looking for PnP.
- We shouldn’t assume everyone knows what the acronym means. There would be **in-app education** required as to what “counts” as PnP.
- **Highly stigmatizes certain types of drug use**, as meth is being put front and center in the negative.
- People want the affirmative “Yes, PnP” in addition to the negative. Again, this can provide legal and safety issues for users.



# PROFILE HIGHLIGHT



73% support

RARELY OR NEVER USE



OCCASSIONAL USE



REGULAR USE



SOBER



***“LOVE IT! Forces all of us to actually read the pertinent info instead of potentially wasting each other's time.”***

*–White gay cis man, Maryland, occasionally uses drugs*

***“Let the person decide on their own whether I’m a match. That just makes it easier to be discounted for something that might be more flexible.”***

*–Multiracial gay cis man, U.S. Virgin Islands, occasionally uses drugs*

# PROFILE HIGHLIGHT

Let's face it—not everyone reads the profile of the person they message. Participants ranked this feature as a way to place their substance use practices—or anything else essential to their experience—front and center in the direct message screen.

## Considerations

- Profile fields for substance use are a prerequisite for this feature.
- Users should be able to customize which profile fields are highlighted, which for some may be their substance use practices or sobriety/recovery.
- Allow users to turn it on or off, or allow easy process to make updates based on what the user is looking for at any particular time.





# PROFILE FIELD/TAG: “I CARRY”

63% overall support

SOBER



RARELY OR NEVER USE



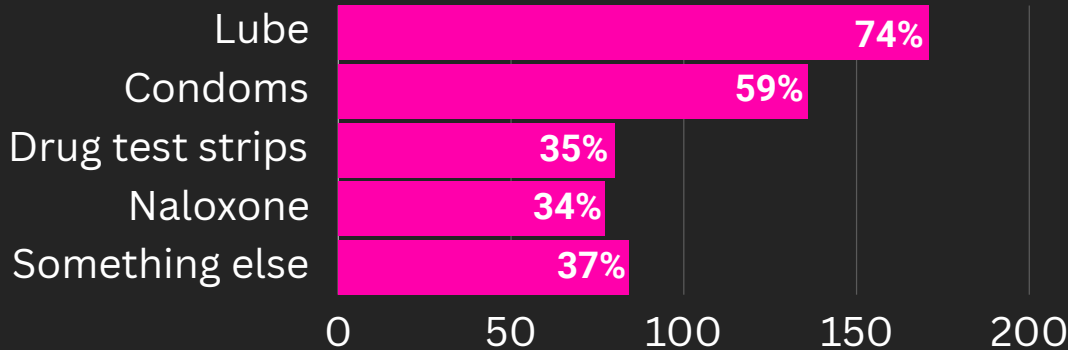
OCCASIONAL USE



REGULAR USE



## USER SUPPORT FOR “I CARRY...” OPTIONS



4:19 62%

< Edit Profile Save

### HEALTH

HIV Status Negative, on PrEP

Last Tested July 2023

Health Practices Testing, PrEP

**I carry...**

- ☒ Condoms
- ☒ Lube
- ☒ Naloxone
- ☐ Drug test strips
- ☐ Let's discuss

# PROFILE FIELD/TAG: “I CARRY”

In the heat of the moment, it's no wonder that STI prevention tools like condoms aren't necessarily on everyone's mind. This is what led to the creation of a broad-but inclusive of drug use-feature that users can list what health supplies they are able to provide when meeting up. The list includes both sexual health supplies (condoms & lube) as well as drug test strips (to test for substances that may cause a bad reaction in your drugs) and naloxone (a medication that can reverse an opioid overdose).



## Considerations

- This would go far to help destigmatize drug use and educate about naloxone as we have seen with sexual health supplies, vaccines, and HIV/PrEP statuses on dating apps.
- Allow users to turn it on or off, or allow easy process to make updates based on what the user has at the moment.
- Allow for custom fields or a “Let’s Discuss” option. Dating platform owners may consider polling their users about what they typically are missing when hooking up.
- It may be yet another way of potentially communicating comfort with substance use and start a discussion on expectations and boundaries. An example of this type of flagging can be seen for some trans & non-binary users feeling more comfortable approaching someone who lists their pronouns on their profile.
- **Drug test strips are not legal in every U.S. state.**

into??? host??

# USERS WANT TO FIND WHO & WHAT THEY WANT MORE EFFECTIVELY

wanna 🥰 ?

In 2021, BHOC asked dating app users broadly what attributes they'd like to be able to filter others by. Within that group, 44% wanted to filter others by their drug and alcohol use practices. In 2023, among participants in our focus group about substance use, we found that 80% want to be able to filter others by their substance use practices. This speaks to a need for all users to find what they are looking for without endlessly staying on the apps. It's important to sober people and people in recovery to not be triggered by propositions of drug use. It's important to people looking for chemsex to find partners they can vet to see if it's a match.

- ***"I don't want to be uncomfortable or make the other person uncomfortable. I also don't like the sacrifice what makes me feel good during sex."*** –Multiracial gay cis man, Louisiana, looking for PnP
- ***"I am not comfortable around people who are high. Not relatable. Doesn't make for good conversation. Awkward sex."*** –White bisexual cis man, Louisiana, rarely uses or never used drugs
- ***"If someone is high, I can't risk [my recovery] being around them right now."*** –White queer trans man, Illinois, sober

60%

expressed that a mismatch in drug use practices was definitely or potentially a **dealbreaker**

# FILTERING

80% overall support

SOBER



RARELY OR NEVER USE



REGULAR USE



OCCASIONAL USE



Filtering ranked as the third most popular feature for participants. Four out of five participants wanted to be able to filter by drug use practices. When deciding if to offer a filtering feature, note that it may require an ‘affirmative’ selection for substance use (“I’m comfortable with,” or “I use X”) and could be confusing if offered with a negative (“I don’t use X” or “I’m not comfortable with.”) Like any feature that could isolate users to make them easier to find, filtering could be misused for community policing or entrapment.

# MATCHING

65% overall support

REGULAR USE



OCCASIONAL USE



RARELY OR NEVER USE



SOBER



Drug use matching (as we defined it) means that someone can only see your drug use practices if theirs match yours. People **specifically looking for chemsex** ranked this feature the highest by far with **83% supporting it**. A potential different function for a feature that may have more support is drug use “**unlocking**,” so that people can choose to share their full profile including drug use practices with trusted app users (like unlocking a private photo album).



# DRUG USE IS HIGHLY CRIMINALIZED & STIGMATIZED ONLINE + OFF

Participants brought up an array of concerns regarding their privacy, digital & data security, and overall discretion. People who are using drugs specifically have urgent concerns.

- There was low awareness of how dating apps comply with law enforcement (ex: subpoenas, police presence on the platform).
- Reporting from other users was a common experience, especially for people who discussed illegal drug use. Users wanted education on what happens to the data in their profiles as well as their DMs (direct messages).
  - Ex: Grindr allows users to attach the last few direct messages (DMs) when reporting a profile. Therefore, it wouldn't be safe to include substance use in DMs in this case.
- Community policing is also a factor. Participants were worried that their substance use on the apps could be outed to their workplace, friends, family, and community. Additionally, some participants had experienced police involvement while meeting up in person.
- Users suggested a number of other features to improve discretion and offer legal protection (encryption, passwords, not sharing or selling data to third parties, user verification, 24 hour deletion of content, controlling the bots, surveillance/security education to users.)

**2x**

People looking for PnP were twice as likely to request security and privacy features

# SCREENSHOT BLOCK

64% overall support

## OCCASIONAL USE



## SOBER



## REGULAR USE



## RARELY OR NEVER USE



Users felt that screenshot blocking could support their privacy on dating platforms, including when discussing substance use. Participants described wanting more privacy for the messages and images they share with other users, ensuring that what is shared and said on the app can stay on the app. There were fears of this information being used as blackmail or “outing” their substance use. People looking for chemsex ranked this 10% higher than all other participants (74%).

# DISAPPEARING MESSAGES

55% overall support

## OCCASIONAL USE



## RARELY OR NEVER USE



## REGULAR USE



## SOBER



While this was the lowest ranked of all features; however, it still merits consideration given that over half of participants supported it. Providing details on message encryption and overall data security had support from many users when we asked directly about other ways their information could be kept private. People who occasionally or regularly use drugs supported this feature more than those who do not.

# PLATFORM OWNERS HAVE THE POWER TO SHIFT THE NARRATIVE AND REALITIES OF DRUG USE

Participants felt that both app users and platform owners need to reduce the stigma of drug use that runs rampant on dating apps. This sentiment was shared primarily by people who occasionally or frequently use drugs and predominantly by Black and Latino participants. Content moderation overlapped with concerns of legal issues or law enforcement engagement. Participants had a strong desire for dating apps to focus response on profiles that explicitly discuss drug sales instead of targeting drug users.

Additionally, participants wanted to offer more support to people who they might not just want to punish by

reporting them to the customer service team. ***“[I’d like the] ability to report a profile not to be blocked but to have someone reach out of concern,”*** said one participant who occasionally uses drugs. Participants suggested more educational resources and connections to support related to substance use. Many supported expanding or adding non-stigmatizing, honest information about drug use.

Finally, participants felt that dating app owners have a social responsibility to improve the health of their users and support harm reduction and substance use treatment efforts, through campaigns and funding.

***“There’s a stigma of being a drug user. So many profiles have such hatred for people who use, it’s disgusting.”***

*–Black gay cis man, New York, regularly uses drugs*

***“When you do report a profile [for] advertising drugs for sale, [we] need active [support] very quickly. Sometimes [the apps] take up to 3 to 4 days to respond. A lot of damage can be done in three or four days.”***

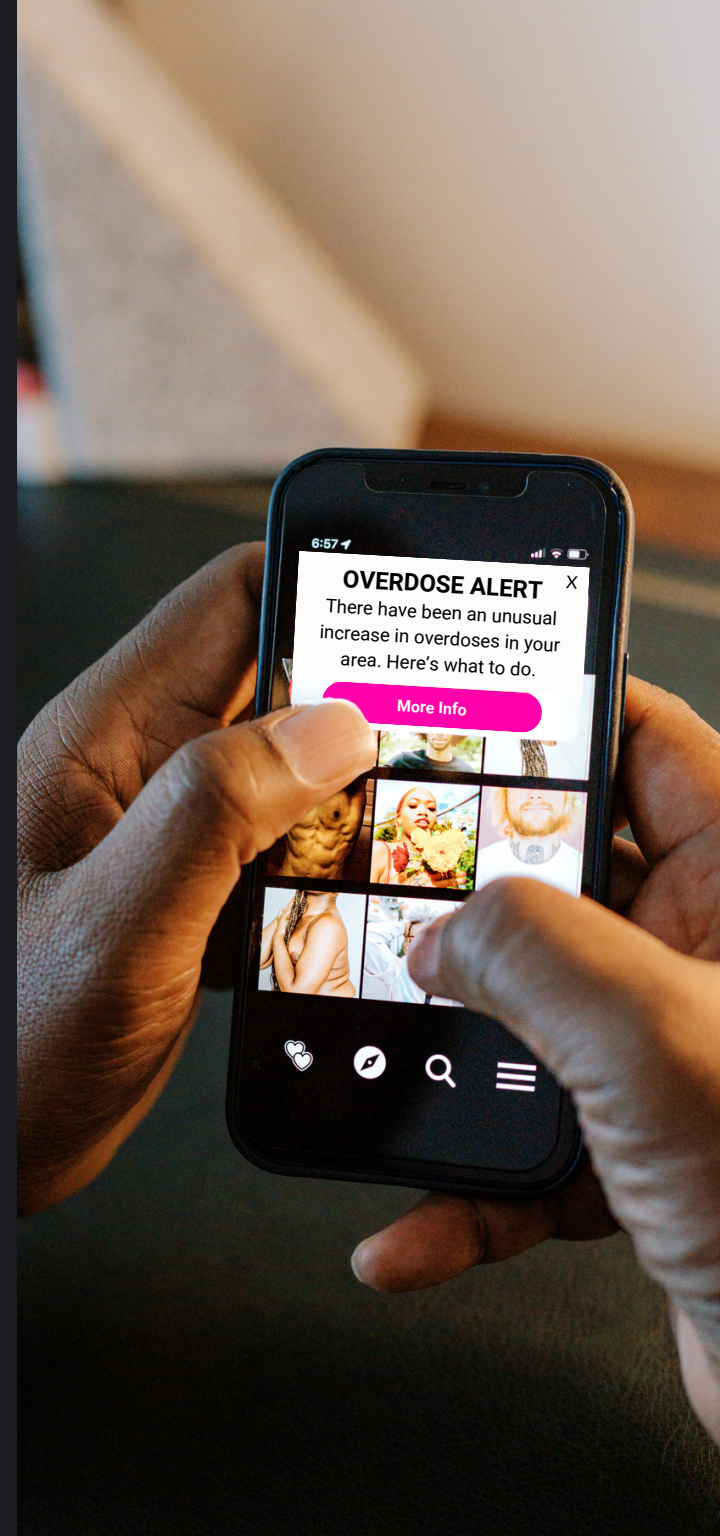
*–Multiracial gay cis man, Kansas, looking for PnP*



# IMPROVING USER SUPPORT + PLATFORM CONTENT MODERATION

While it's important to acknowledge that apps have an obligation to prohibit illegal activity, like drug sales, there is still a lot that can be done to improve content moderation:

- Differentiating drug **sales** from drug **use** in content moderation
  - Not banning mentions of overdose, naloxone, injection/snort in flagged terms as these could be shadow banned inadvertently (these are terms used to describe health)
- Customer support & content moderators can take a less punitive approach to drug use (ex: "1 strike rule" where flagged users receive information on harm reduction/substance use treatment, rather than banning)
- Offering a list of harm reduction, drug use health, and sobriety/recovery resources for people who reach out
- Training content moderators and customer service staff on harm reduction and drug use health
- Creating features that actively connect app users to local support services (e.g. links to harm reduction supplies/services locator tools as platforms do for HIV & STI testing, PrEP, etc.)
  - This may include overdose/"bad batch" advisories on the local level, similar to mpox or STI advisories.





# ANYONE WHO WANTS INFO OR SUPPORT SHOULD BE ABLE TO ACCESS IT

There is a noticeable lack of health information about drug use on dating platforms, especially compared to the presence of broader sexual health information. Providing information on harm reduction and drug user health is not promoting drug use. Rather, it’s doing the same thing that platforms are doing for sexual health: providing science-based, proven strategies so that people can have more control over their bodies without sacrificing their pleasure.

Below is information participants requested be made available in some way from dating platforms. Additionally, our colleagues recommend adding Hepatitis C information to sexual health resources and messaging. People injecting or slamming meth are at the highest risk from their drug use, but are vulnerable to Hep C since they may be having bareback sex for extended periods of time or not taking frequent enough breaks.

1	Where to access drug use treatment	5	Where to access mental health support
2	What to do in a drug use emergency (overdosing, overamping, cardiac arrest, etc.)	6	Safer alcohol or drug use info
3	What happens to data that you put on dating apps	7	What kinds of laws protect people who call 911 in a drug emergency
4	Where to access drug use safety supplies	8	Where to access alcohol use treatment

# HERE'S WHAT WE RECOMMEND

There are many ways platform owners can link their users to substance use resources, including:

- In FAQs or written sexual health resources
- Embedded info links in the app related to Profile Fields (i.e. a link out on a No PnP tag to explain what PnP is)
- Using in-app messaging, especially for awareness days and for public health emergencies (ex: location-based overdose/“bad batch” alerts)
- Through customer support and content moderators (as noted previously)

## RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

### Safer Use

- **HarmReduction.org** (national info on drug use/resources)
- **DanceSafe.org** (drug-specific information & drug checking)
- **Tweaker.org** (Chemsex/PnP safety resources like [Chemsex First-Aid](#))

### Supplies & Services

- **[NextDistro.org](#)** (free naloxone and safer use supplies in some states)
- **EndOverdose.net** (free naloxone and fentanyl test strips in most states)
- **NASEN.org** (local harm reduction programs)

### Recovery/Sobriety Resources

- **FindTreatment.gov** (directory of local treatment providers and hotlines for substance and mental health)
- **SmartRecovery.org** (free online support groups)
- **[WorkitHealth.com](#)** (online medication assisted treatment for opioids and alcohol)

### Drug Laws

- **DrugPolicy.org** (Criminalization information by state)

# LIMITATIONS

Many limitations of our recommendations are beyond our control. The overwhelming anti-drug use(r) stigma, criminalization, and associated stigmas (racism, classism, ableism, etc.) are far beyond anything we can repair within the confines of this project. Rather, as our intention was at the beginning, we are hoping to improve the realities of drug use; not looking for “success” but for making dating platforms safer, kinder, and more useful to their users of all drug use practices and experiences.

The principal limitation of this report is that the participants who choose to join a focus group on this topic may not be representative of all dating app users. Other limitations include:

- Single select options for identities and experiences within online focus group platform limit full descriptive information
- Equal distribution of drug use practices except for people who are sober/in recovery/in drug treatment programs
- Definitions of drug use frequency are different for everyone
- Weren't able to assess what “other” options users wanted (i.e. for FAQs needed related to substance use)

# THE LAST WORD

To close out this report, here are some sentiments that participants shared throughout our session. We look forward to working with our dating platform partners to change the culture of addressing substance use on the apps and improving connections for all users.

*I ended up meeting my boyfriend [for] a PnP hookup. Ended up connecting on a much deeper level. Been in a relationship with him since 2017.*

*I'm a former drug user who no longer indulges. For this reason I use the apps far less.*

*[Apps should] focus on creating an environment where using is ok. We judge ourselves enough, please don't judge us too.*

*The burden to say we do not use drugs shouldn't fall on us. On dating apps, we should be able to state what we do rather than what we don't.*

*Dating apps should promote an environment of freedom and no judgment.*






niceAF

BHOC

NICEAF.ORG

  @bhocpartners

# PROPOSED CHANGES

1	Profile Field: "I'm not comfortable with..."	86%
2	Profile Field: "Drug & alcohol practices"	84%
3	Filtering	80%
4	Profile Field/Tag: "No PnP"	74%
5	Profile Highlight	73%
6	Drug Use Matching	65%
7	Screenshot Block	64%
8	Profile Field: "I carry..."	63%
9	Disappearing Messages	55%

- Offering resources & support
- Customer service resources & processes
- Content moderation improvements
- In-app substance use resources

# LOOKING TO PARTY

About 1 in 3 participants we spoke to are on dating apps specifically to find chemsex partners. People looking for chemsex/PnP ranked all filtering & privacy features higher than everyone else. Similar to other participants, people looking for PnP also experienced negative interactions on the apps, but theirs included the stigma of openly sharing about their substance use.

*I don't engage with sex and with drugs with people I don't know, so I only have a few close friends in which those two worlds come together, and they have been people I've known and trusted for many years*

*—White gay cis man, Illinois, occasionally uses drugs*

**62%** of users people looking for PnP had a similar experience

**TOP 3**

1. Profile Field: "I'm not comfortable with..."
2. Drug Use Matching
3. Filtering



# STAYING SOBER

While people who identified as sober, in recovery, or currently in drug treatment were the smallest group interviewed, they made very clear requests for how dating platform owners could better support their sobriety/recovery online. People who had this experience had a range of comfort with meeting up with people who did use substances, some feeling it threatened their well being and others feeling that it wouldn't be an issue.

*I've found some other sober people and had some good sober sex, but also even tho my profile explicitly states I don't PNP anymore people still try to hit me up for it a lot.*

*—White queer trans man, Illinois, sober*

**71%** of users sober users had a similar experience

## TOP 3

1. Profile Field: Drug & Alcohol Practices
2. Profile Field: "I'm not comfortable with..."
3. Profile Field/Tag: "No PnP" & Filtering (tied)





# TOP 3 FEATURES: RANKED BY SUBSTANCE USE PRACTICES

Overall	Looking for PnP	Regular Use	Occasional Use	Rarely/Never Use	Sober/In Recovery
Profile Field: "I'm not comfortable with..."	Profile Field: "I'm not comfortable with..."	Profile Field: "I'm not comfortable with..."	Profile Field: "Drug & alcohol practices"	Profile Field: "I'm not comfortable with..."	Profile Field: "Drug & alcohol practices"
Profile Field: "Drug & alcohol practices"	Drug Use Matching	Filtering	Profile Field: "I'm not comfortable with..."	Profile Field: "Drug & alcohol practices"	Profile Field: "I'm not comfortable with..."
Filtering	Filtering	Profile Field: "Drug & alcohol practices"	Profile Highlight	Filtering	Filtering & Profile Field/Tag: "No PnP" (tied)

# TOP 3 FEATURES: RANKED BY RACE + ETHNICITY

Overall	Asian	Black	Latinx	Multiracial	White
Profile Field: "I'm not comfortable with..."	Profile Field: "Drug & alcohol practices"	Profile Field: "I'm not comfortable with..."	Profile Field: "I'm not comfortable with..."	Filtering & Profile Field: "Drug & alcohol practices" (tied)	Profile Field: "Drug & alcohol practices"
Profile Field: "Drug & alcohol practices"	Profile Field: "I'm not comfortable with..."	Profile Field: "Drug & alcohol practices"	Filtering	Profile Highlight	Profile Field: "I'm not comfortable with..."
Filtering	Filtering	Profile Highlight	Profile Field: "Drug & alcohol practices"	Profile Field: "I'm not comfortable with..."	Filtering