



# SEPTEMBER 2020 COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT:

Youth Substance Abuse & Mental Health  
Alachua County, FL



Hippodrome Theater (Source: Sweetwater Branch Inn)

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

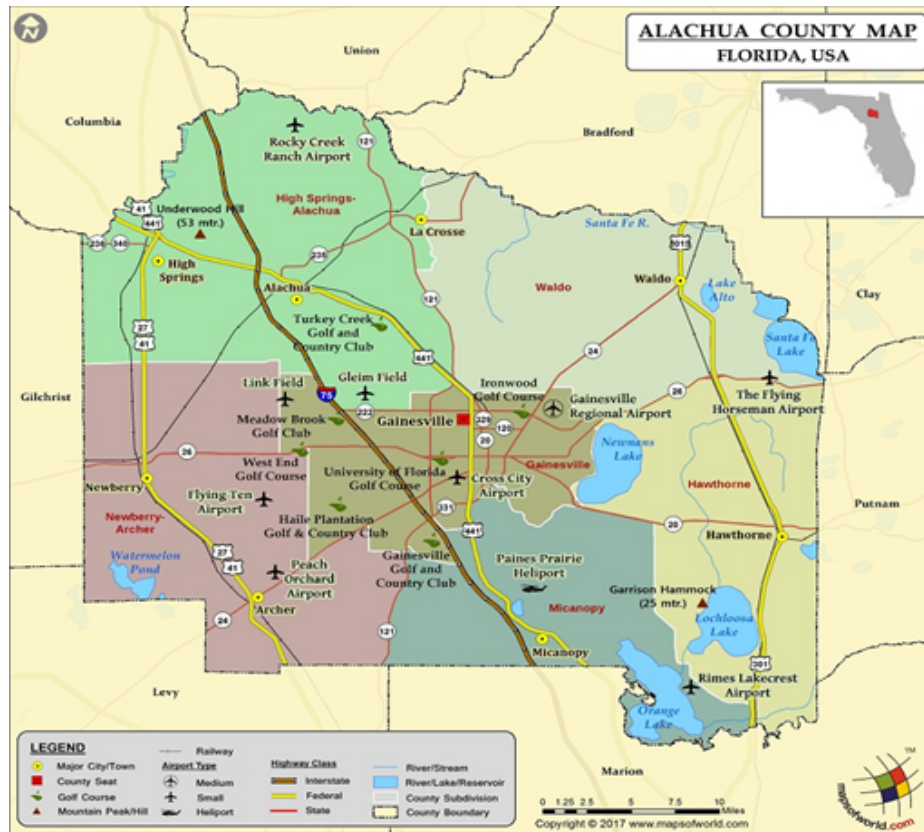
For the purpose of this community assessment, the primary interest group is youth under the age of 18 in Alachua County, FL, and the main issues of concern are substance abuse, mental health, treatment services, and local health and economic disparities. Much of the research involved analyzing existing local county and state level data for current trends with various populations and geographical areas evaluated for the highest levels of risk. This assessment takes a multifaceted approach to substance abuse among youth with research on demographics, mental health co-morbidity, socioeconomic status, risk, and protective factors as well as available treatment resources.

Within Alachua County, a number of groups are vulnerable to substance abuse. This includes economically disadvantaged youth, minorities, homeless individuals, members of the LGBTQ+ community and those with mental health conditions. Among those who have experienced overdoses and substance related arrests, African American males are over-represented compared to other groups. For those in lower socioeconomic areas such as East Gainesville and select zip codes, the risk of substance abuse is elevated while homeless individuals have some of the highest rates of substance abuse compared to other groups. For the LGBTQ+ community, stressors such as discrimination and prejudice have contributed to extremely high rates of alcohol abuse. Furthermore, individuals with mental health conditions such as depression or anxiety are significantly more likely to use substances and experience co-morbidity. Currently, there are treatment resources in the community but often times people in rural communities struggle to access them and those in poverty cannot afford treatment. Within Alachua County, treatment centers are located exclusively in central Gainesville which reduces access for those living in small communities such as Hawthorne and Waldo.

This community assessment was conducted by the Alachua County Health Promotion and Wellness Coalition using local resources such as the Florida Youth Substance Abuse Survey, FL Department of Juvenile Justice, WellFlorida and the FL Department of Health as well as national resources such as the US Census Bureau and the Centers for Disease Control.

# ALACHUA COUNTY DESCRIPTION AND DEMOGRAPHICS

## Area Overview



Alachua County is situated in north-central Florida and neighbors rural counties such as Marion, Levy, Bradford, and Putnam. Its current population is 269,043 according to the US Census Bureau with a total area of 969 square miles. While much of the county is rural, there are a number of urban areas such as Alachua, Archer, Gainesville, Hawthorne, High Springs, Lacrosse, Newberry, and Waldo. In addition to being the largest urban area with the highest population and the county seat, Gainesville is home to both the University of Florida and Santa Fe College as well as the main regional airport. Combined, the University of Florida and Santa Fe College have an annual enrollment of about 70,000 students which comprises roughly 25% of the county's population. These well-known academic institutions significantly influence much of the region's economy, business, culture, and arts.

In addition to the urban area of Gainesville, there are a significant number of smaller towns such as Micanopy, which is a tourist attraction popular for its antique shopping, that attract visitors. Various outdoor activities in Alachua County include Devils Millhopper State Park, Paynes Prairie State Park as well as both Ichetucknee Springs and O'Leno State Park near High Springs which provides significant tourism revenue. Overall, Alachua County is an urban county which provides a wide range of cultural experiences and activities due to its unique combination of tourist attractions, state parks and academic institutions such as the University of Florida.

# Achua County Demographics and Socioeconomic Factors

The majority of Achua County residents live in Gainesville, while the remainder live in smaller cities such as Archer or in rural segments of the county. Overall, the Achua County has a less diverse population than more densely populated counties such as Miami-Dade and has a higher poverty rate than most Florida counties. The poverty level is partly due to a large college student population and lower-income residents in several areas. In terms of housing, there is a discrepancy in home values and gross rent between Achua County and the state of Florida. More Achua County residents live in lower income properties with a monthly value of less than \$1,000 than the state average. This may be due to the large number of college students in the area.

Furthermore, due to the influx of college students, the population age distributions are also different from the Florida averages with more residents ages 18-24 than other counties. In terms of health, there are a also number of racial health disparities and many residents still don't have insurance. There is also a significant homeless population, including runaway youth.

## Diversity:

Achua County has a smaller range of racial diversity compared to the rest of the state. Nearly 70% of residents are White, 20.6% Black, 6.3% Asian, and 10.3% Hispanic or Latino.

At the University of Florida, the percentages of students by race are slightly different. The percentages of various races for the class of 2023 are as follows: White (50%), African American (7%), Hispanic (19%), Asian (9%), multiracial (4%) and American Indian (<1%) (The Alligator, 2019). Additionally, 7.9% of students belong to the LGBTQ+ community as 0.8% are gay, 0.8% are lesbian, 5% are bisexual/pansexual and 1.3% are questioning (UF GatorWell Survey, 2016).

Table 1. Overview of Achua County Demographics, 2018

Achua County		
Total Population	269,956	
Female	139,567	51.7%
Male	130,389	48.3%
Population by Race	Estimated Number	Percent
White	188,699	69.9%
Black	55,611	20.6%
American Indian or Alaskan Native	1,080	0.4%
Asian	17,007	6.3%
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	270	0.1%
Two or more races	7,829	2.9%
Hispanic or Latino	27,805	10.3%
White, not Hispanic or Latino	164,133	60.8%

Source: US Census Bureau

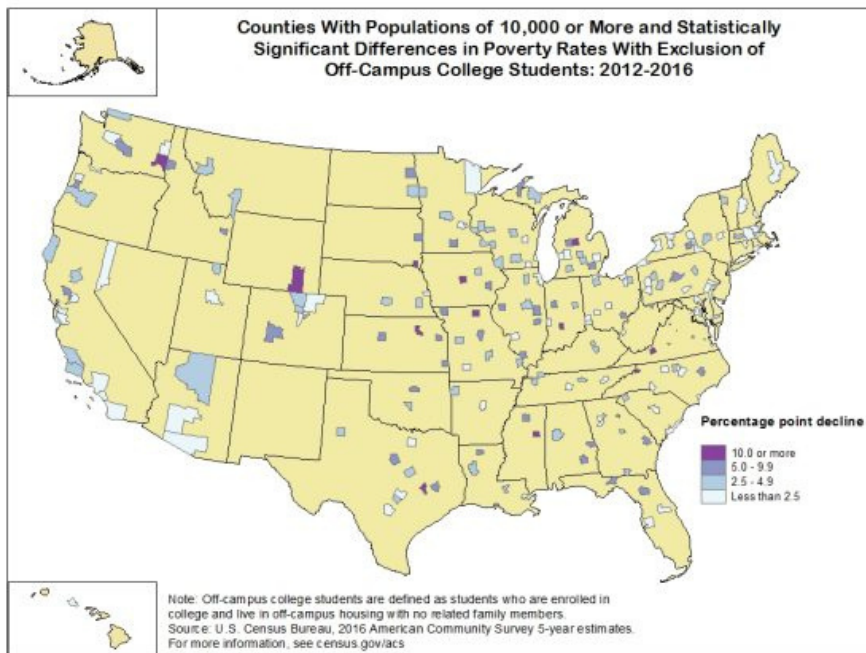
### Poverty Rates:

Alachua County has a large percentage of residents in poverty compared to the Florida state average. For example, in 2018, 21.2% of Alachua County residents lived in poverty compared to only 14% statewide. While the overall rates dropped from 23.8% in 2012 to 21.2% in 2017, this poverty rate is still significantly higher than the state average (US Census Bureau). This may be attributed to the large population of college students who live below the poverty line because they are only working part-time or not at all. One key statistic is that for those adults 25 and over, Alachua County's poverty rate is only 13.5%, just a little higher than the FL average of 12.2%. This indicates that college students are likely skewing the results.

Table 2. Alachua County Poverty Rates Compared to FL Averages 2018

Year	Alachua County			State of Florida
	Total Population	Number in Poverty	Percent in Poverty	Percent in Poverty
2012	251,513	59,860	23.8%	17.0%
2018	269,956	57,231	21.2%	14.0%

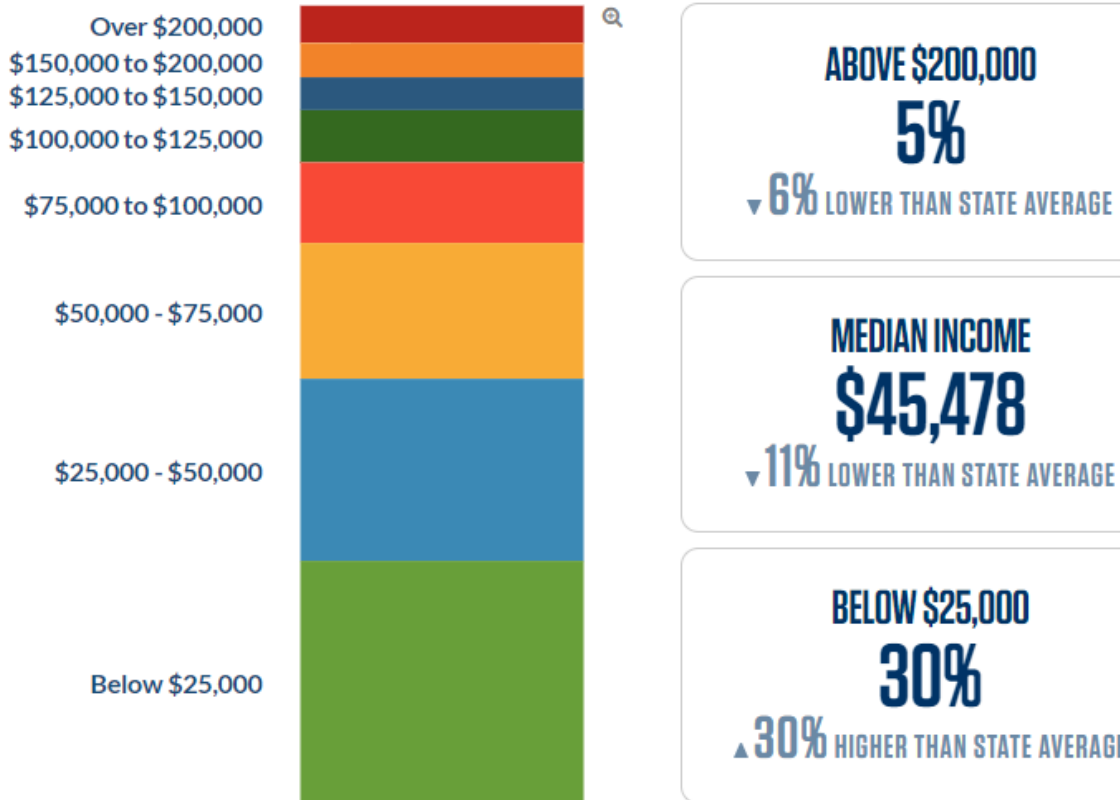
Source: US Census Bureau



Source: US Census Bureau

Some zip codes are significantly more affected by poverty than others. For instance, in the 32616 zip code in the city of Alachua, there is a 40% poverty rate. Zip codes 32601 and 32603 in the city of Gainesville are also disproportionately affected with poverty rates upwards of 50% in some areas. However, for those over 25 years of age, the poverty rate drops back down into the 20–30% range which indicates that college students living in these areas are affecting poverty rates.

## HOUSEHOLD INCOME

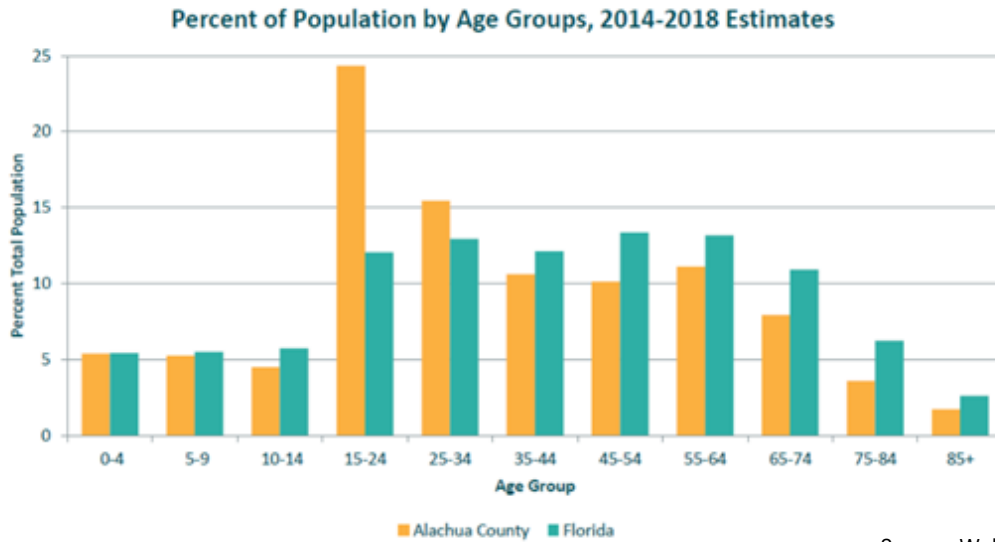


Source: ClearGov

Across almost every household income level, Alachua County performs worse than the Florida state average. For instance, the highest income level (above \$200,000) was 6% lower than the state average while the lowest income level (below \$25,000) was 30% higher than the state average. This indicates that Alachua County has a higher level of poverty in addition to a smaller number of wealthy individuals. Again, these numbers are likely skewed by the larger number of undergraduate and graduate students at the University of Florida and Santa Fe College but represent a systemic problem.

### Age Groups:

For most age groups, regardless of gender, Alachua County tends to have population levels similar to the rest of Florida. However, this does not hold true for ages 18–24. In Alachua County, those aged 20–21 alone accounted for over 8% of the population, while the state average is around 3%. This is most likely due to the increased number of young people who live in the city of Gainesville to attend Santa Fe College and the University of Florida. On the contrary, older age groups in the county are slightly below the state average which may indicate that they choose to live in outlying counties such as Marion county to avoid college towns such as Gainesville.



### ***Housing:***

In regards to housing, the majority of Alachua County residents are centered in the median range for values and gross rent while the statewide average is more diverse. For instance, there is a higher percentage of people living in homes with values between \$50,000 and \$299,000 compared to the state average. In addition, 52.5% of residents in the county live in a rental range between \$500 and \$999 compared to only 37% for the state average. This may be due to the high number of college students residing within the county who typically live in median-pricing residential areas such as student housing and apartment complexes.

Table 4. Alachua County Housing Data as Compared to the State of Florida, 2017

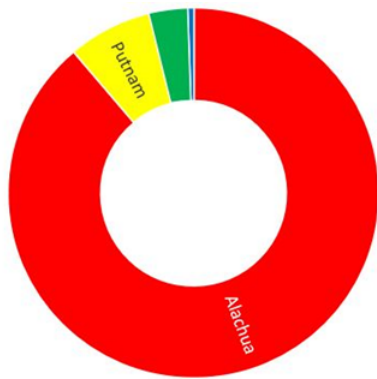
	Alachua County	State of Florida
<b>Gross Rent</b>		
Less than \$500	7.4%	5.9%
<b>\$500 to \$999</b>	<b>52.5%</b>	<b>37.0%</b>
\$1,000 to \$1,499	30.0%	37.3%
\$1,500 to \$1,999	7.2%	13.4%
\$2,000 to \$2,499	1.6%	3.9%
\$2,500 to \$2,999	0.8%	1.3%
\$3,000 or More	0.5%	1.2%

Source: US Census Bureau

### ***Homelessness:***

In a January 2019 survey, there were 773 homeless individuals in Alachua County, which is the majority of all homeless individuals within Alachua, Bradford, Levy and Putnam counties. Clearly, there is a discrepancy between counties with Alachua County having most of the homeless individuals but this trend may also just be due to the population sizes for each county.





■ Alachua ■ Bradford ■ Levy ■ Putnam

Source: Gainesville Sun

Sadly, the National Coalition for the Homeless has found that 38% of homeless people are alcohol dependent and 26% are dependent on other harmful substances. This is especially concerning for youth who may have been kicked out or are runaways and may develop substance abuse issues.

**Educational Attainment:**

The high rates of academic achievement within Alachua County are likely related to the local presence of the University of Florida and Santa Fe College. However, for those over 25 years old, at least 30% of the population only has a High School Diploma or less. This may be more common in outlying cities such as Archer or Hawthorne, away from the influence of the University of Florida and Santa Fe College in Gainesville.

Overall, over 51% of the population in Alachua County has at least an Associate’s degree or higher.

Table 5: Alachua County Education Attainment Levels, 2017

	Total Percent	Male	Female
<b>Population 25 Years or Older</b>			
Less than 9th Grade	2.8%	3.4%	2.2%
9th to 12th Grade, No Diploma	5.1%	5.7%	4.5%
High School Graduate	22.1%	23.2%	21.2%
Some College, No Degree	18.4%	17.7%	19.0%
Associate’s Degree	10.3%	8.6%	11.7%
Bachelor’s Degree	21.1%	20.5%	21.7%
Graduate or Professional Degree	20.3%	20.9%	19.7%

Source: US Census Bureau

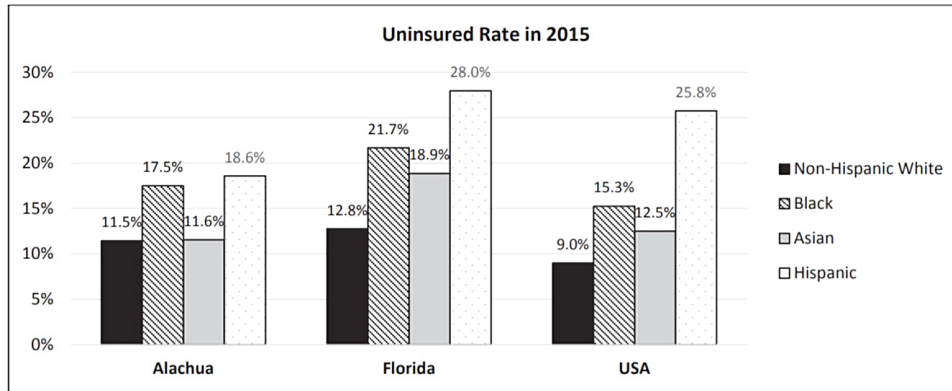
**Health Insurance Coverage:**

The number of Alachua County residents with health insurance coverage has been steadily increasing over the last decade, with a roughly 6% increase in coverage between the years of 2012 and 2017. Expanding public health insurance has accounted for 3.9% of newly covered individuals, and expanding private insurance has contributed another 2.1%. However, 10.7% still did not have health insurance coverage as of 2017. There is a clear disparity as Hispanics had the highest uninsured rates followed by Blacks, then Asians and Whites with the lowest rates.

Table 6. Alachua County Health Insurance Rates, 2012-2017

	With Health Insurance Coverage	With Private Health Insurance	With Public Health Insurance	No Health Insurance Coverage
2012 Percent	83.8%	70.7%	22.9%	16.2%
2017 Percent	89.3%	72.8%	26.8%	10.7%

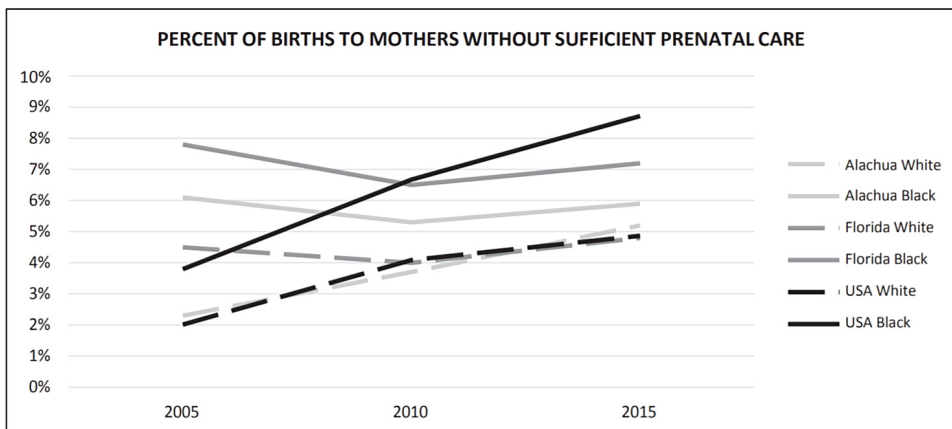
Source: US Census



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimates.

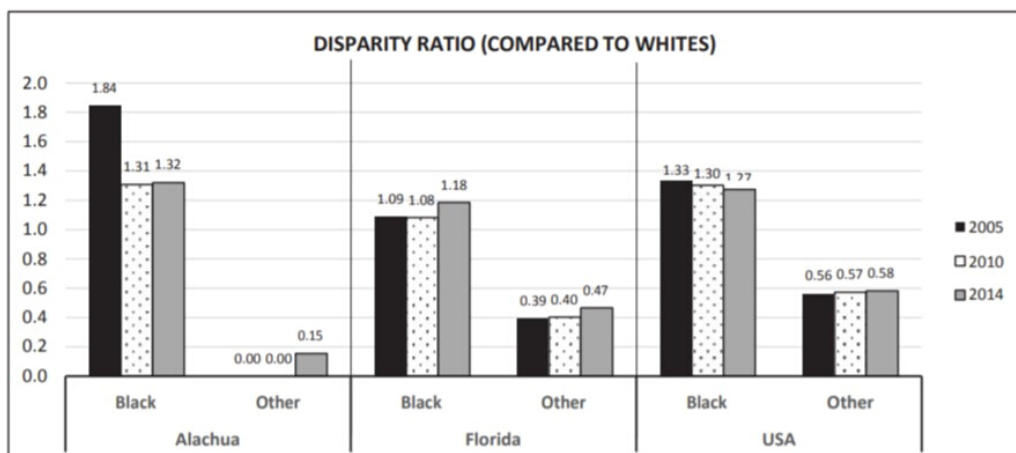
### Racial Health Disparities

There are a number of racially based health disparities in Alachua County. For example, there is a lower birth weight and a higher infant mortality rate among black babies than white babies. This is partly due to the higher level of prenatal care among white mothers than black mothers. Additionally, the burden of diseases such as diabetes, lung cancer, stroke, hypertension and HIV are also much higher among black residents compared to all the other races and ethnicities.

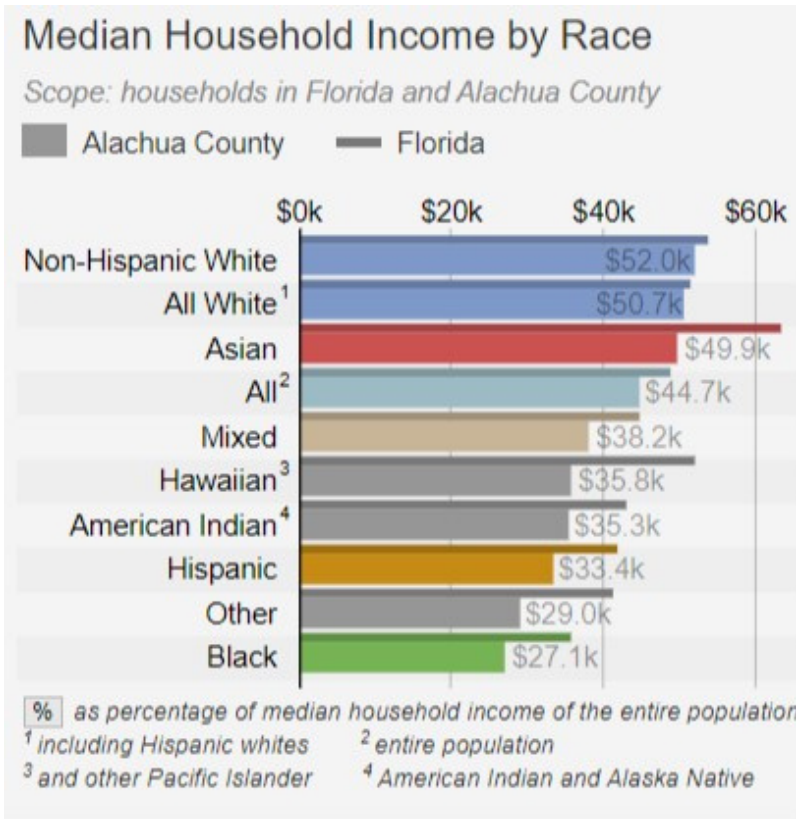


Source: UF, Bureau of Economic and Business Research

### Diabetes Death Rates



### Median Income Levels by Race:



Source: Statistical Atlas

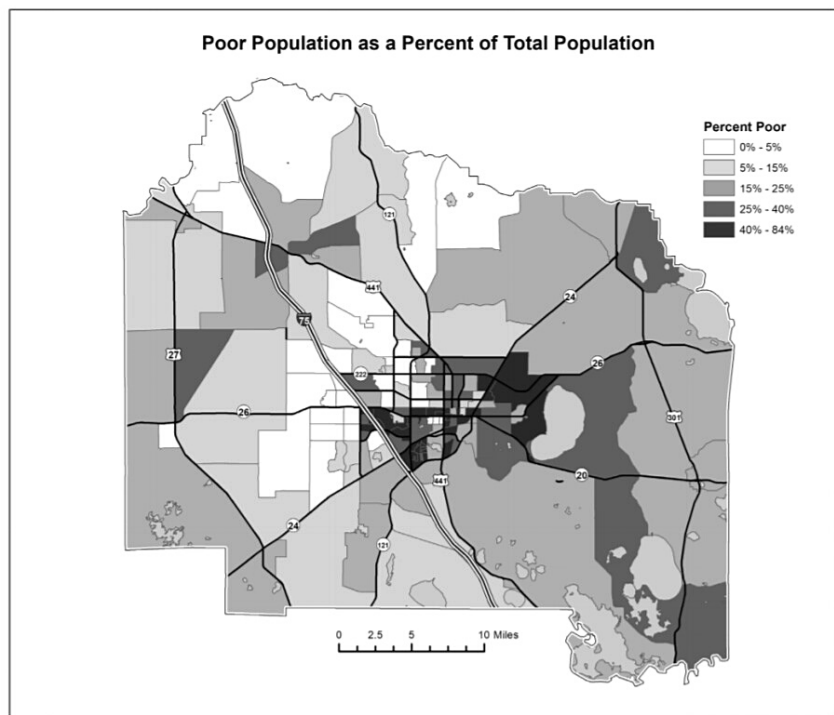
Within Alachua County, there is a racial disparity between median household incomes. White residents earn \$50,700 a year and African Americans earn only \$27,000 per year which is well below the Florida average income. Asians actually earn \$49,900 a year which also is below the Florida average of over \$60,000 a year for Asians. Additionally, Hispanics, Hawaiians, American Indian and Mixed Races earned in the \$30,000 - \$40,000 range.

In all, it's clear that there is a racial income divide which only contributes to local health disparities.

### Populations in Poverty:

In Alachua County, there are some areas that are significantly more impoverished than others such as east Gainesville and areas immediately west of the University of Florida campus which has many college students and low-income families.

More affluent areas are in the west side of Gainesville and smaller towns such as Newberry as represented on this map. Overall, the county has a significant poverty rate as some areas have up to 84% of residents in poverty.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimates.

# Demographics and Socioeconomic Factors by City

## Three rural definitions based on Census Places

Rural locations are those outside Census Places with a population...

...greater than or equal to 2,500

Outside Census Places >= 2,500 people

...greater than or equal to 10,000

Outside Census Places >= 2,500 people

Census Places: 2,500 - 9,999

...greater than or equal to 50,000

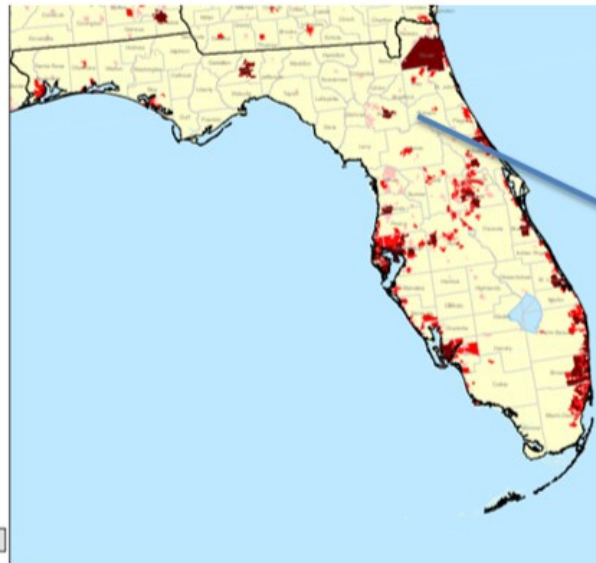
Outside Census Places >= 2,500 people

Census Places: 2,500 - 9,999

Census Places: 10,000 - 49,999

Urban locations under all three definitions:

Census Places: >= 50,000 people

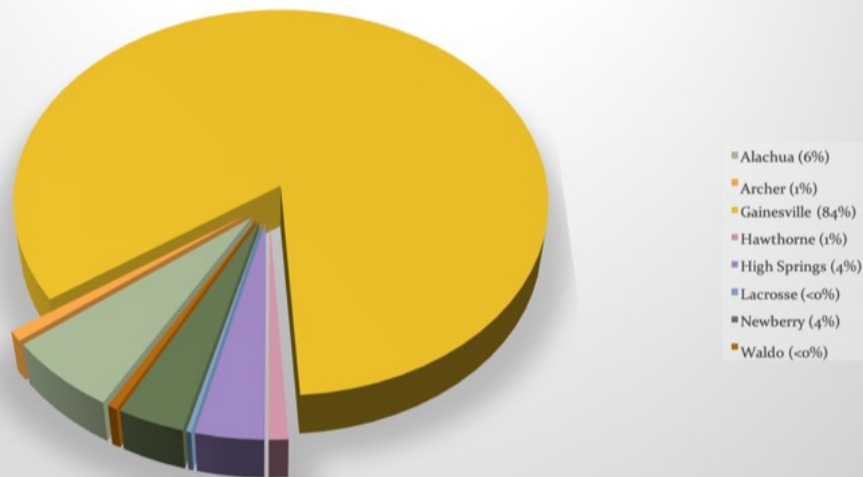


Source: USDA

## Rural vs. Urban Populations:

In Alachua County, an estimated 194,917 people live in urban areas which accounts for 78.8% of the county's total population. Less than a quarter of residents live in rural designations. Therefore, Alachua County is classified as a urban county with rural areas as demonstrated above. Gainesville takes up a considerable amount of the county's population with 84% of Alachua County's total urban population. The next largest city is Alachua, at a mere 6% of the urban population, followed by High Springs and Newberry at 4%. Meanwhile, towns such as Waldo and Lacrosse represent less than 1% of Alachua County's urban population.

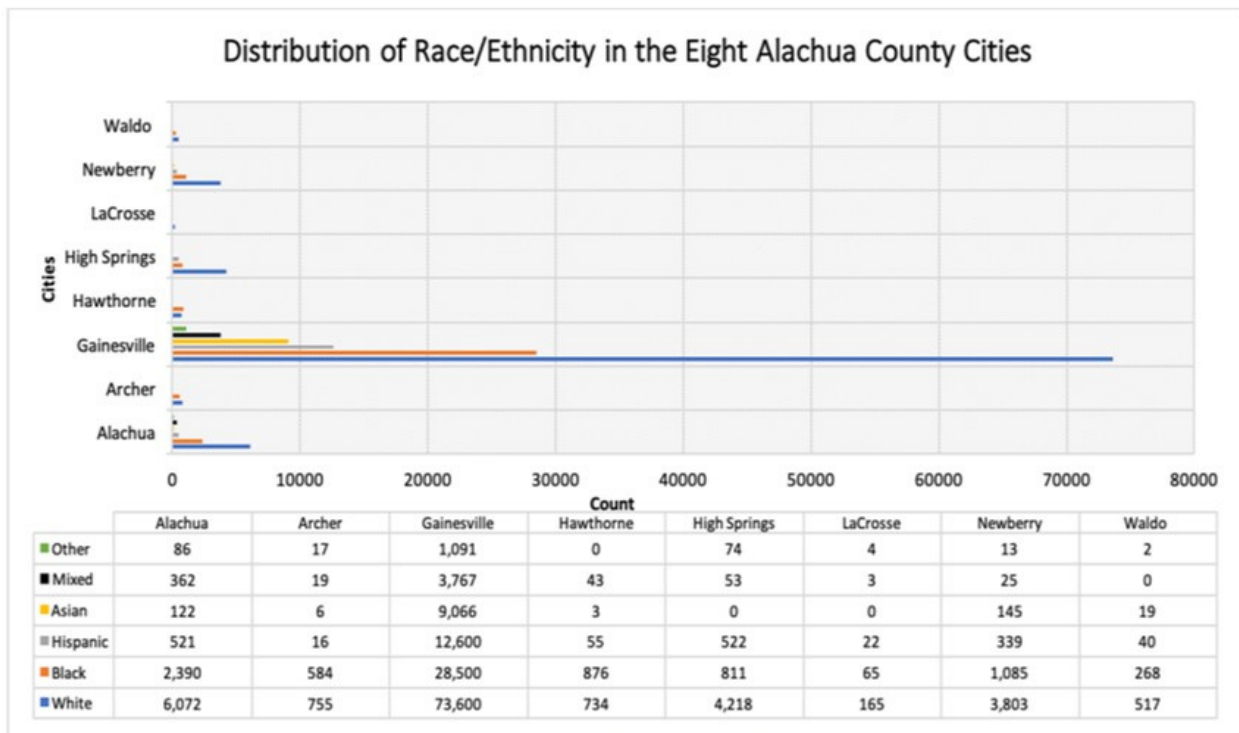
## Population Percent for Cities in Alachua County



Data Source: ClearGov (<https://www.cleargov.com/>)

## **Racial Diversity by City:**

Gainesville is the most diverse city compared to other urban and rural areas in Alachua County. This is likely due to the presence of a large college population, including students and faculty from all over the United States and the rest of the world. The population categories for Asians, Mixed, and Others were the smallest across all eight cities. Meanwhile, Whites make up the most significant percentage of the racial groups followed by African Americans and then Hispanics. In every city, Whites made up the the majority of the population with the exception of Hawthorne, which had more African Americans than Whites.

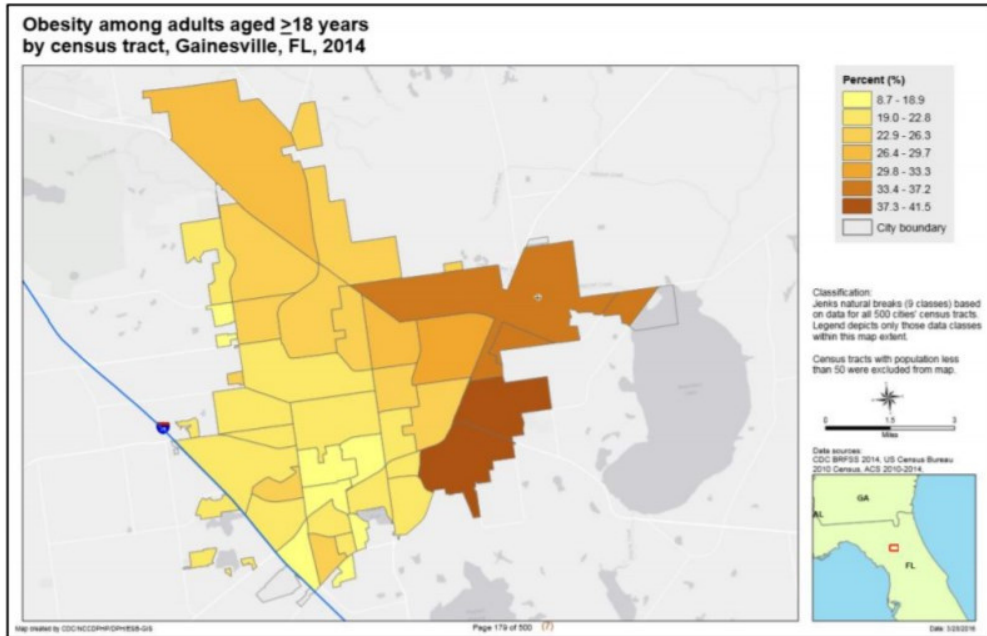


Data Source: Statistical Atlas (<https://statisticalatlas.com/United-States/Overview>)

One noticeable trend is that while Gainesville clearly has a white majority population, there are still a number of minority groups with a strong showing within the community. Meanwhile, in other towns such as Newberry or High Springs (which are more affluent areas), the diversity falls significantly and there is primarily a white majority in town. While minority groups exist in other towns such as Alachua and Hawthorne, there is a clear pattern of decreasing diversity in towns outlying the main metropolitan area of Gainesville. This is likely due to the influence of the University of Florida which attracts greater levels of diversity and includes a continuously changing population while outlying areas have a more steady demographic.

## Geographic Health Disparities

In the city of Gainesville, there is a large disparity between East Gainesville and more affluent regions, typically on the western side of the city. The map below covering obesity rates helps illustrate that some zip codes experience negative health factors more often than other zip codes in Alachua County. This may be due in part to lower income levels and limited access to health care.



Source: CDC 500 Cities Project 2014

### Median Income Levels:

The city of Newberry has the highest median income at \$64,831, followed by High Springs at \$58,189. Meanwhile, the city of Waldo has the lowest median income at \$35,515, and Archer, Gainesville, and Hawthorne all have similar median incomes at about \$36,000. Gainesville’s lower median income is likely due to the high number of college students present, as well as the pockets of communities that are of lower socioeconomic status, such as the Southwest Advocacy Group (SWAG). The overall median income for Alachua County is \$46,901.80.

Table 1: Population and Median Income of cities in Alachua County

Cities in Alachua County	Population (2018)	Median Income (2018)
Alachua	9,794	\$59,816
Archer	1,336	\$36,172
Gainesville	130,790	\$36,389
Hawthorne	1,670	\$38,521
High Springs	5,881	\$58,189
<del>LaCrosse</del>	435	\$45,781
Newberry	5,789	\$64,831
Waldo	840	\$35,515

Source: ClearGov (<https://www.cleargov.com/>)

# Substance Abuse Among Youth Overview

**Table 1. Percentages of Alachua and Florida Statewide youth who reported having used various drugs in the past 30 days, 2018**

	Alachua							Florida Statewide						
	Middle School	High School	Female	Male	Ages 10-14	Ages 15-17	Total	Middle School	High School	Female	Male	Ages 10-14	Ages 15-17	Total
Alcohol	4.4	21.3	16.0	12.6	4.6	20.2	14.1	7.3	21.2	16.8	13.8	8.1	20.9	15.3
Binge Drinking	1.9	12.1	8.4	7.4	1.7	9.5	7.8	3.1	9.6	6.7	6.9	3.2	9.4	6.8
Cigarettes	0.4	1.3	0.9	1.0	0.4	1.7	0.9	1.2	3.5	2.6	2.4	1.2	3.3	2.5
Vaporizer / E-Cigarette	3.4	19.1	11.6	13.5	4.0	19.0	12.4	6.4	19.2	13.5	14.0	7.5	19.1	13.7
Marijuana or Hashish	4.4	16.2	12.7	9.6	4.8	17.0	11.2	3.7	16.3	11.0	10.7	4.2	16.2	10.9
Synthetic Marijuana	--	1.9	3.1	0.7	--	1.0	--	--	1.1	1.1	1.1	--	1.1	--
Inhalants	1.9	0.6	1.4	1.0	2.0	0.5	1.2	2.8	1.1	2.1	1.6	2.6	1.1	1.8
Flakka	--	1.1	1.9	0.3	--	0.6	--	--	0.4	0.3	0.4	--	0.3	--
Club Drugs	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.0	0.1	0.2	0.5	0.3	0.5	0.2	0.5	0.4
LSD, PCP or Mushrooms	0.1	0.4	0.5	0.1	0.1	0.5	0.3	0.4	1.1	0.7	0.9	0.4	1.2	0.8
Methamphetamine	0.1	0.5	0.5	0.2	0.2	0.4	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.3	0.5	0.4	0.4	0.4
Cocaine or Crack Cocaine	0.2	0.9	0.6	0.7	0.2	1.2	0.6	0.3	0.5	0.4	0.5	0.3	0.4	0.4
Heroin	0.0	0.5	0.2	0.3	0.0	0.6	0.3	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.1
Prescription Depressants	0.7	1.4	2.0	0.3	0.6	1.9	1.1	0.9	1.6	1.4	1.2	0.9	1.6	1.3
Prescription Pain Relievers	1.4	1.0	1.5	1.0	1.4	1.2	1.2	1.0	1.4	1.5	0.9	1.0	1.5	1.2
Prescription Amphetamines	0.1	0.9	0.7	0.4	0.3	0.7	0.5	0.5	1.0	0.8	0.7	0.5	1.0	0.8
Steroids (without a doctor's order)	0.2	0.5	0.6	0.2	0.2	0.7	0.4	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2
Over-the-Counter Drugs	1.0	2.0	1.9	1.3	0.8	2.2	1.6	1.4	1.8	1.7	1.5	1.5	1.8	1.6
Any illicit drug	7.8	19.8	18.0	11.4	8.0	20.1	14.7	7.9	19.0	15.0	13.4	8.3	19.1	14.3
Any illicit drug other than marijuana	4.7	5.8	7.6	3.2	4.5	6.0	5.3	5.5	6.0	6.5	5.1	5.5	6.1	5.8
Alcohol only	2.0	10.7	7.0	7.2	2.0	10.2	7.0	4.3	11.1	9.0	7.4	4.8	10.9	8.2
Alcohol or any illicit drug	10.1	29.5	24.5	18.3	10.1	29.3	21.2	12.1	29.5	23.7	20.4	12.9	29.4	22.0
Any illicit drug, but no alcohol	5.9	8.6	9.2	5.7	5.7	9.5	7.5	4.9	8.6	7.2	6.9	5.1	8.8	7.1

In regards to the past 30 day data, both the Alachua County and Florida statewide data indicate that alcohol was the most commonly used drug among youth, with 14% of respondents indicating that they had used the substance recently. Additionally, the rate of binge drinking was higher at the county level (7.8%) than the state level (6.8%). Prevalence of alcohol use was closely followed by vaporizer/e-cigarette and marijuana use, with 12% of respondents indicating that they had used these substances. However, the rate of cigarette use was much lower at the county level than the state by 1.6%.

Surprisingly, prescription depressants (1.1%) such as Xanax and pain relievers such as OxyContin (1.2%) were both abused as frequently as over-the-counter medications (1.6%), which shows that it's relatively easy for youth to obtain these controlled pharmaceuticals. According to the survey results, a total of 5.3% of Alachua County youth use illicit substances other than marijuana. The most common of those includes inhalants (1.2%), cocaine (.6%), meth (.3%) and heroin (.3%). Overall, the use of meth, club drugs and LSD are lower than state averages but Alachua County has higher rates of use with cocaine and heroin than the state average.

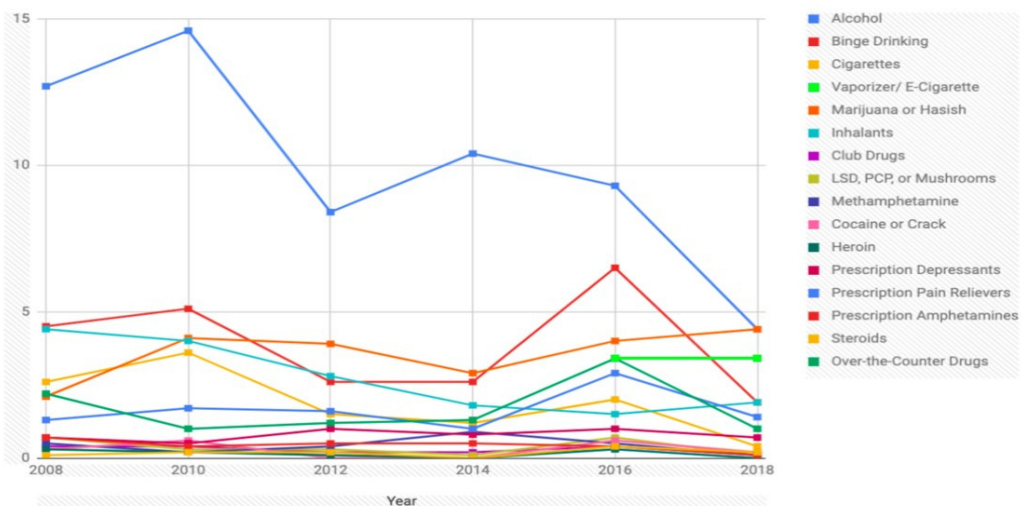
**Table 2. Percentages of Alachua and Florida Statewide Youth who reported having used various drugs in their lifetimes, 2018**

	Alachua							Florida Statewide						
	Middle School	High School	Female	Male	Ages 10-14	Ages 15-17	Total	Middle School	High School	Female	Male	Ages 10-14	Ages 15-17	Total
Alcohol	16.8	45.7	36.3	30.7	17.3	46.3	33.4	20.8	48.0	38.9	34.1	22.9	48.1	36.5
Blacking Out	--	14.4	15.6	13.6	--	14.3	--	--	14.2	15.0	13.5	--	14.0	--
Cigarettes	6.3	12.8	9.3	10.8	5.7	14.5	10.0	6.7	14.7	11.1	11.4	6.7	14.7	11.3
Vaporizer / E-Cigarette	9.4	32.3	22.6	22.5	11.0	33.1	22.4	15.1	36.0	26.5	27.6	16.7	36.4	27.1
Marijuana or Hashish	8.4	29.5	23.6	17.8	8.7	30.6	20.6	7.6	29.7	21.0	19.4	8.7	29.8	20.2
Synthetic Marijuana	--	3.3	2.6	4.1	--	2.7	--	--	3.5	3.7	3.3	--	3.5	--
Inhalants	6.1	2.8	5.2	3.5	6.0	2.6	4.3	7.8	4.3	6.7	4.9	7.6	4.3	5.8
Flakka	--	0.1	0.2	0.0	--	0.1	--	--	0.8	0.7	0.8	--	0.7	--
Club Drugs	0.3	3.8	2.2	2.5	0.3	2.9	2.3	0.7	1.8	1.2	1.4	0.7	1.7	1.3
LSD, PCP or Mushrooms	1.1	4.7	2.8	3.6	1.0	4.7	3.1	1.0	4.0	2.3	3.1	1.1	3.9	2.7
Methamphetamine	0.0	0.8	0.6	0.3	0.0	0.3	0.5	0.7	0.7	0.6	0.8	0.7	0.6	0.7
Cocaine or Crack Cocaine	0.1	3.0	1.0	2.7	0.1	2.4	1.8	0.8	1.9	1.3	1.6	0.8	1.7	1.4
Heroin	0.0	0.8	0.6	0.3	0.0	1.0	0.4	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.3	0.4
Prescription Depressants	1.9	7.5	5.9	4.4	1.8	7.8	5.1	2.3	5.9	4.4	4.3	2.5	5.9	4.4
Prescription Pain Relievers	3.1	5.2	4.4	4.3	3.4	6.0	4.3	2.6	5.0	4.4	3.6	2.8	4.9	4.0
Prescription Amphetamines	0.7	4.9	3.8	2.5	1.0	4.1	3.1	1.2	3.6	2.6	2.6	1.4	3.4	2.6
Steroids (without a doctor's order)	0.3	1.3	1.1	0.7	0.2	1.7	0.9	0.7	0.4	0.5	0.6	0.7	0.4	0.5
Over-the-Counter Drugs	2.1	4.4	3.5	3.5	2.1	4.2	3.4	3.2	4.9	4.3	4.1	3.4	4.9	4.2
Needle to Inject Illegal Drugs	--	1.6	2.2	1.0	--	1.6	--	--	0.6	0.5	0.8	--	0.6	--
Any illicit drug	15.6	34.5	30.2	23.1	16.6	35.2	26.4	16.5	34.8	28.7	25.2	17.4	34.9	26.9
Any illicit drug other than marijuana	10.7	15.4	16.0	11.2	11.1	15.3	13.3	12.6	16.2	15.5	13.7	12.8	16.2	14.6
Alcohol only	8.6	18.5	13.9	14.5	8.9	17.3	14.3	11.3	19.8	16.8	15.6	12.4	19.7	16.2
Alcohol or any illicit drug	24.1	53.0	44.2	37.3	25.5	52.5	40.6	27.5	54.4	45.2	40.5	29.5	54.5	42.9
Any illicit drug, but no alcohol	7.4	7.5	8.3	6.8	8.3	6.4	7.4	6.9	6.6	6.7	6.7	6.9	6.7	6.7

Both Alachua County and Florida statewide lifetime data indicate that despite declining use, alcohol was still the most commonly encountered drug among underage individuals, with 33.4% of Alachua County respondents indicating that they had used the substance in their lifetime. Even more concerning is that 14.4% of high school students in Alachua County have blacked out from alcohol. Prevalence of alcohol use was closely followed by vaporizer/e-cigarette and marijuana use, with 22.4% and 20.6% of respondents indicating that they had used these substances at some point.

Fortunately, these statistics are equal to the state average or lower. However, the use of prescription depressants, pain relievers, amphetamines, cocaine, LSD or mushrooms, and club drugs were all higher than the Florida average. It's possible that the use of amphetamines such as Ritalin can be attributed with youth struggling to manage academic pressure.

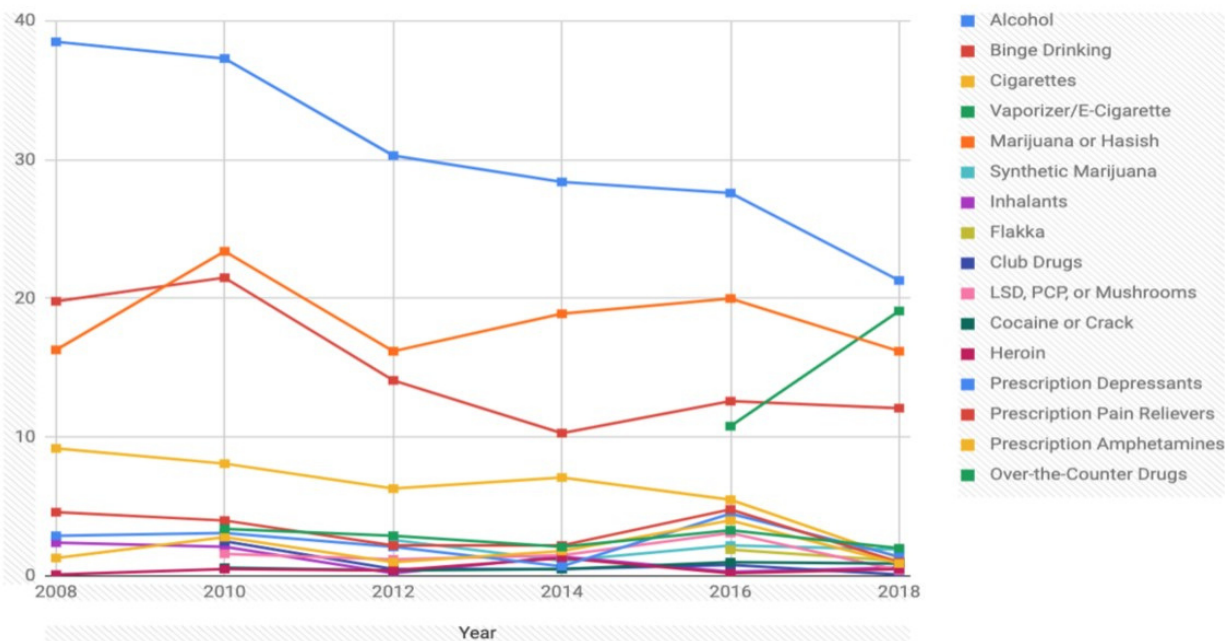
**Past 30 Day Drug Use (%) Trends for Local Middle Schoolers for Years 2008–2018**





Since 2008, the percentage of middle schoolers in Alachua County who report drinking alcohol within 30 days of the survey date has dropped from 13% to 5% of respondents. However, the rate of other substance abuse among middle schoolers such as marijuana, e-cigarette, or prescription drug use has remained constant.

### Past 30 Day Drug Use (%) Trends for Local High Schoolers for Years 2008–2018



While the number of high school respondents who indicated they drank alcohol in the last 30 days declined from about 40% to 20% from 2008 to 2018, levels of marijuana use have remained roughly constant over this period. Traditional cigarette use has declined to almost negligible rates from 2016 to 2018, but has been replaced by skyrocketing use of e-cigarettes. As of 2018, almost 20% of respondents indicated that they used e-cigarette products, double the rate in 2016.

### Youth Substance Use Overview Summary

Although we have seen a decline in underage alcohol consumption among middle and high school students in Alachua County and the state of Florida over the last decade, the rate of other substance abuse among these populations has remained constant or increased. In particular, marijuana use among youth has remained a serious issue, and the use of tobacco products has been revitalized by the expansion of the e-cigarette industry. Abuse of prescription medications lingers at a low rate, which continues to threaten the lives of young adults and children in our community.

# Alcohol

**Table 3. Usual source of alcohol within the past 30 days among high schoolers: Alachua County and Florida statewide youth, 2018**

	Alachua						Florida Statewide							
	Middle School	High School	Female	Male	Ages 10-14	Ages 15-17	Total	Middle School	High School	Female	Male	Ages 10-14	Ages 15-17	Total
Bought in a store	--	15.1	15.2	14.9	--	16.5	--	--	7.9	4.9	11.3	--	7.0	--
Bought in a restaurant, bar, or club	--	1.0	1.8	0.0	--	1.3	--	--	1.7	2.1	1.2	--	1.6	--
Bought at a public event	--	0.0	0.0	0.0	--	0.0	--	--	1.1	1.2	1.1	--	1.1	--
Someone bought it for me	--	18.5	11.2	28.4	--	14.0	--	--	15.2	15.4	15.2	--	15.1	--
Someone gave it to me	--	33.0	43.0	19.4	--	33.0	--	--	41.9	45.7	37.4	--	42.3	--
Took it from a store	--	1.4	0.0	3.4	--	1.8	--	--	0.6	0.4	0.7	--	0.5	--
Took it from a family member	--	17.7	16.0	20.1	--	19.2	--	--	13.8	16.1	10.9	--	14.6	--
Some other way	--	13.2	12.8	13.8	--	14.2	--	--	17.8	14.3	22.2	--	17.9	--

Note: The symbol "--" indicates that data are not available.

The most common source of alcohol for underage youth in both Alachua County and the state of Florida is receiving it from another member of the community who is presumably of legal drinking age. This method of obtaining alcohol, including both the "Someone gave it to me" and "Someone bought it for me" options on this survey, account for 51% to 56% of incidents of underage consumption among high school respondents in Alachua County. The other most common methods are stealing it from a family member, or surprisingly, buying it directly from a store (15.1% of Alachua County high schoolers). These methods of obtaining alcohol account for roughly 85% of all incidents of underage drinking in Alachua County.

**Table 4. Among high school drinkers, number of drinks usually consumed per day, on the days students drank in the past 30 days, Alachua and Florida statewide youth, 2018**

	Alachua						Florida Statewide							
	Middle School	High School	Female	Male	Ages 10-14	Ages 15-17	Total	Middle School	High School	Female	Male	Ages 10-14	Ages 15-17	Total
1	--	26.7	30.6	20.9	--	34.1	--	--	30.0	33.1	26.0	--	30.5	--
2	--	18.8	23.7	11.2	--	18.0	--	--	23.5	24.0	22.7	--	23.8	--
3	--	14.8	13.4	16.9	--	14.4	--	--	14.9	15.9	13.9	--	14.7	--
4	--	10.6	9.6	12.1	--	9.4	--	--	10.7	10.9	10.5	--	10.6	--
5 or more	--	29.1	22.7	38.9	--	24.1	--	--	20.9	16.1	26.8	--	20.4	--

Note: The symbol "--" indicates that data are not available.

A majority of high school respondents most commonly reported drinking either one drink or 5 or more drinks during the recent occasions that they consumed alcohol. This indicates that binge drinking becomes more likely as underage individuals become more inebriated, in which state they may be more susceptible to peer pressure that ultimately leads them to dangerous levels of alcohol consumption.

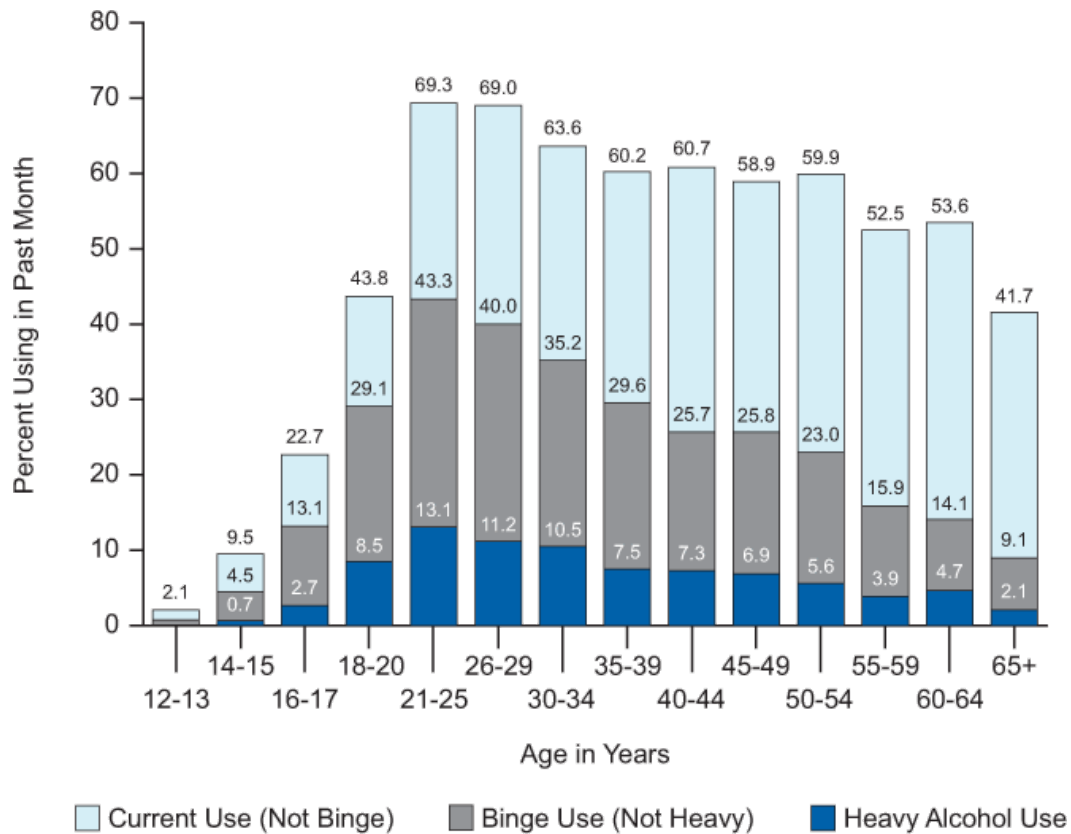
**Table 6. Percentages of Alachua and Florida Statewide youth who reported early ATOD use, perceived risk of harm, personal disapproval, parental disapproval and peer disapproval, 2018**

	Alachua						Florida Statewide							
	Middle School	High School	Female	Male	Ages 10-14	Ages 15-17	Total	Middle School	High School	Female	Male	Ages 10-14	Ages 15-17	Total
<b>Early ATOD use</b>														
More than a sip of alcohol	--	14.8	13.1	16.8	--	14.3	--	--	17.6	17.1	18.1	--	17.1	--
Drinking at least once a month	--	2.7	2.6	2.9	--	3.5	--	--	2.5	2.4	2.5	--	2.5	--
Smoke cigarettes	--	7.2	6.6	8.0	--	8.0	--	--	7.4	6.9	7.9	--	7.6	--
Smoke marijuana	--	9.9	6.4	13.8	--	8.7	--	--	9.3	8.0	10.6	--	9.1	--
<b>Great risk of harm</b>														
1 or 2 drinks nearly every day	54.3	41.1	47.9	45.6	52.4	42.9	46.7	49.3	43.3	49.1	42.8	48.7	43.6	45.9
5+ drinks once or twice a week	68.4	53.5	64.0	55.8	66.2	55.2	59.9	62.1	55.0	61.3	54.9	61.9	55.3	58.0
1+ packs of cigarettes per day	70.1	67.7	69.1	68.5	69.0	69.1	68.7	66.8	67.1	67.6	66.6	67.3	67.2	67.0
Marijuana once or twice a week	53.9	21.5	34.4	36.3	51.0	21.1	35.3	49.1	23.3	35.2	33.7	47.1	23.1	34.4
Try marijuana once or twice	34.8	12.7	22.2	22.3	32.2	13.4	22.2	33.2	15.8	22.8	23.6	31.5	15.7	23.2
Use prescription drugs	75.7	61.7	68.4	67.0	73.9	61.6	67.7	68.2	67.1	69.5	65.9	68.2	67.0	67.6
<b>Think it would be wrong to...</b>														
Smoke cigarettes	97.1	88.1	92.6	91.2	97.5	87.3	92.0	95.6	89.8	92.6	92.1	95.6	90.8	92.3
Drink alcohol regularly	91.5	65.7	76.2	77.1	90.8	66.6	77.0	88.4	67.2	75.9	76.7	87.1	67.7	76.3
Smoke marijuana	88.2	60.3	69.6	75.3	86.6	59.8	72.4	88.5	60.9	72.9	72.8	86.7	61.1	72.8
Smoke synthetic marijuana	93.3	86.4	87.9	90.8	93.4	86.5	89.4	92.3	88.3	90.0	90.1	91.9	88.4	90.0
Use other illicit drugs	97.6	93.3	95.3	95.0	98.1	93.6	95.2	97.3	94.3	96.2	95.1	97.2	94.6	95.6
<b>Parents think it would be wrong to...</b>														
1 or 2 drinks nearly every day	98.3	94.8	97.0	95.5	98.4	94.8	96.2	97.6	94.2	95.7	95.5	97.3	94.4	95.6
Smoke cigarettes	99.7	97.7	98.9	98.2	99.7	97.9	98.5	98.8	97.4	98.1	97.9	98.8	97.7	98.0
Smoke marijuana	97.4	88.6	90.9	93.5	97.4	88.5	92.3	96.4	87.9	91.8	91.2	96.0	88.2	91.5
Use prescription drugs	98.6	96.4	97.1	97.9	98.2	96.6	97.4	98.1	97.1	97.3	97.8	98.0	97.1	97.5
<b>Friends think it would be wrong to...</b>														
1 or 2 drinks nearly every day	93.0	83.3	90.1	84.9	92.9	83.3	87.5	90.9	81.2	87.1	83.7	90.0	81.3	85.3
Smoke tobacco	94.4	89.2	93.3	89.8	93.8	88.5	91.4	94.4	88.7	92.1	90.2	94.1	89.3	91.1
Smoke marijuana	87.1	58.6	68.9	72.5	85.3	58.0	70.9	87.0	59.1	71.5	70.6	84.7	59.3	71.0
Use prescription drugs	95.5	90.2	93.0	91.8	95.6	90.8	92.5	95.0	91.8	94.1	92.3	94.7	91.9	93.2

Note: Early ATOD use is defined as the percentage of high school students who started using at age 13 or younger. The symbol "--" indicates that data are not available.

In Alachua County, there are a number of concerning trends regarding alcohol use, especially in regards to perception of risk. Only 55.2% of high school students in Alachua County think there is a great risk in having five drinks or more once or twice a week and 41.1% of high school students don't believe there is a great risk in 1 or 2 drinks every day. Surprisingly, this statistic changes drastically when considering whether friends think it would be wrong to drink almost every day as 83.3% claim their friends think it is risky. Therefore, it seems that there are some social norms or beliefs that affect these students. They may believe it isn't dangerous to drink everyday but they believe their friends and parents feel it is harmful to drink regularly.

Additionally, these beliefs vary between middle school and high school students. For those in middle school, more students believe binge drinking or regular drinking is dangerous. For example, only 65.7% of high school students believe drinking alcohol regularly is risky while 91.5% of middle school students feel it is dangerous to their health. Therefore, there is a clear transition between middle and high school where youth lower their perception of risk surrounding alcohol.



Source: National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH)

According to the Florida Youth Substance Abuse Survey (FYSAS) in 2018, 12.1% of high school students in Alachua County reported binge drinking in the last 30 days compared to the Florida average of 9.6%. One interesting trend is that in Alachua County, 5.1% of student drank on school property compared to the Florida average of 1.2% which indicates that high school students might be partying on University of Florida or Santa Fe campuses along with college students. In Alachua County, many high school students are friends with college students or have older siblings which makes drinking, especially at college house parties, more accessible and appealing for high school students.

Between the ages of 14-15 and 21-25, there is a significant uptake in alcohol use, binge drinking and heavy alcohol use. This is associated with high school and college years which introduces alcohol use to many youths. Unfortunately, a significant number turn to frequent binge drinking or heavy alcohol use, particularly during the college years of 21-25. Therefore, it's vital to reach youth in Alachua County early to teach them moderation skills and educate them on the potential dangers of excessive alcohol use in preparation for the future.

## Underage Drinking: Vulnerable Groups

In regards to higher education, both Santa Fe and the University of Florida (UF) have students who are at a higher risk of not just alcohol use but are also prone to binge drinking, dependence, and unintended consequences such as injuries or car accidents. According to the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIH), in 2019, almost 55% of college students ages 18–22 drank alcohol in the past month, and more than 1 out of 3 of them engaged in binge drinking during the same time. Currently, about 20% of college students meet the criteria for Alcohol Use Disorder, and an estimated 1,825 students die each year from alcohol-related unintended injuries, including motor vehicle accidents (National Institute of Health).

This heavy use is due to several factors, including the popularity of Greek systems, large athletic programs, abundant access to alcohol, and under-enforced underage drinking regulations. Another prominent cause is academic stress since students are the most vulnerable to heavy drinking and alcohol-related accidents during the first six weeks of their freshman year (NIH). Like other university systems across the United States, the University of Florida (UF) has a strong athletic program and a significant Greek system. As a result, UF has high rates of alcohol use and abuse, as seen above in the 2016 UF Health Gators Survey. At the University of Florida, male students continually participated in heavy drinking and risky behaviors more frequently than their female counterparts such as hazing.

### FREQUENCY OF HIGH RISK DRINKING

“Within the last two weeks, how many times have you had five or more drinks of alcohol at a sitting?” Refer to Form A, Question 48 in 2016 survey.

	TOTAL %	MALE %	FEMALE %
NONE	68.8	60.9	71.8
1-4 DAYS	29.6	35.4	27.4
≥5 DAYS	1.5	3.7	0.9

### CONSEQUENCES OF DRINKING ALCOHOL

“Within the last 12 months, have you experienced any of the following as a consequence of your drinking?” Excludes “non-drinkers.” Refer to Form A, Questions 60-63 of the 2016 survey.

	TOTAL %	MALE %	FEMALE %
HAD UNPROTECTED SEX	16.5	19.5	14.5
PHYSICALLY INJURED YOURSELF	19.4	23.2	17.5
PHYSICALLY INJURED ANOTHER PERSON	3.6	4.0	3.3
BEEN INVOLVED IN A FIGHT	2.4	7.2	0.8

Source: UF GatorWell Survey, 2016



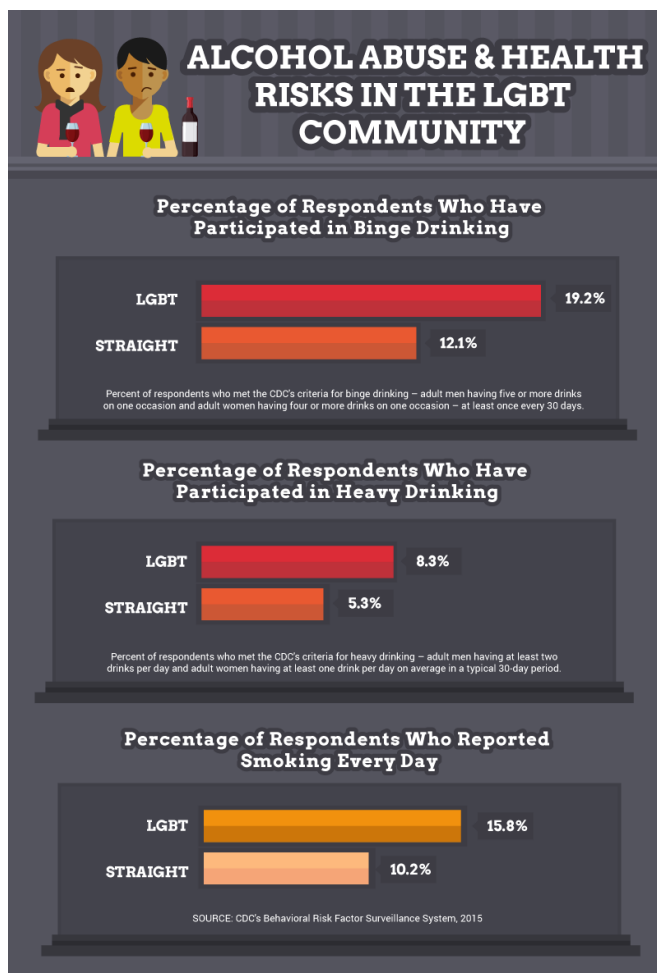
Source: National Institute of Health (NIH)

Up to 25% of the LGBTQ+ community across the country has moderate alcohol dependency in comparison to the general population, which ranges from 5% to 10% (National Center for Biotechnology Information). Within the LGBTQ community, those most at risk for alcohol use and dependence are bisexual women and lesbians. According to the UF Gatorwell Survey in 2016, an estimated 7.9% of students belong in the LGBTQ+ community. Of UF students, 0.8% are gay, 0.8% are lesbian, 5% are bisexual/pansexual/queer and 1.3% are unsure or questioning. Furthermore, 4.4% of the population identify as straight but have same sex experience.

DESCRIPTOR	CATEGORY	TOTAL %	MALE %	FEMALE %
FRATERNITY OR SORORITY		17.5	14.4	18.9
LIVING SITUATION	CAMPUS RESIDENCE HALL	30.5	31.3	30.5
	FRATERNITY OR SORORITY HOUSE	2.6	3.7	2.2
	OTHER COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY HOUSING	1.4	0.8	1.7
	PARENT/GUARDIAN'S HOME	2.3	2.5	2.2
	OTHER OFF-CAMPUS HOUSING	62.7	60.8	63.1
	OTHER	0.5	0.8	0.3
SEXUAL ORIENTATION	HETEROSEXUAL/STRAIGHT	87.3	88.5	87.6
	HETEROSEXUAL/STRAIGHT WITH SOME SAME SEX EXPERIENCE	4.4	3.4	4.9
	GAY	0.8	2.8	0.0
	GAY WITH SOME OPPOSITE SEX EXPERIENCE	0.3	0.8	0.1
	LESBIAN	0.8	0.0	0.9
	LESBIAN WITH SOME OPPOSITE SEX EXPERIENCE	0.2	0.0	0.2
	BISEXUAL/PANSEXUAL/QUEER	5.0	3.1	5.2
	UNSURE	1.3	1.4	0

\*Three respondents identified as transgender, and eight respondents indicated that their identity was not listed.

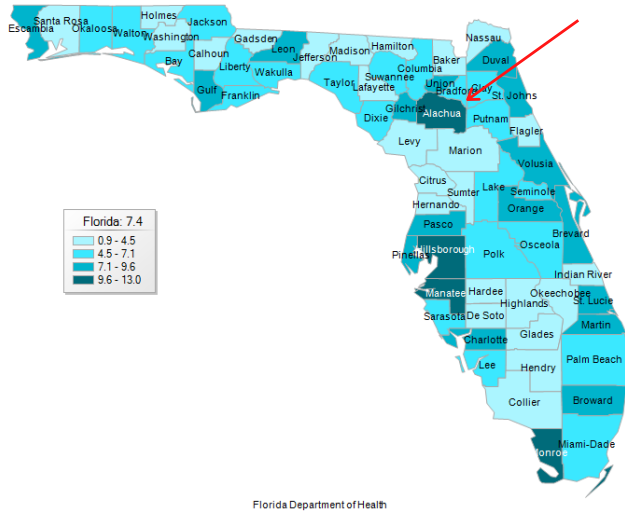
Source: UF GatorWell Survey, 2016



The higher rates of alcohol dependence among LGBTQ individuals are due in part to discrimination and bigotry, which creates emotional stress, including anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem. Some people turn to alcohol to cope with these feelings, and places like gay bars are positive social institutions that normalize frequent alcohol use (Alcohol Rehab Guide). Compared to other groups, LGBTQ individuals often have more limited access to treatment programs because of their sexual orientation which can prevent them from accessing faith-based assistance or family support.

# Marijuana

Percent of Adults who used marijuana or hashish during the past 30 days, Overall, 2016



Marijuana use is much more prevalent in Alachua County than in the general state of Florida. In particular, the percent of surveyed adults who used marijuana in the last 30 days is nearly double the statewide average. Among high schoolers, the lifetime prevalence rates of marijuana use is 30.6% and past 30-day use is over 19% which are both higher than the Florida state average among youth. This could be attributed to the large college student population in the county which may also influence high schoolers.

## Percentages of high school students who reported riding in a vehicle within the past 30 days driven by someone who had been drinking alcohol or using marijuana, or driving a vehicle within the past 30 days after drinking alcohol or using marijuana, 2018

	Alachua							Florida Statewide						
	Middle School	High School	Female	Male	Ages 10-14	Ages 15-17	Total	Middle School	High School	Female	Male	Ages 10-14	Ages 15-17	Total
<b>Riding in a vehicle</b>														
Alcohol	--	14.9	13.8	16.4	--	13.8	--	--	14.3	15.1	13.4	--	14.3	--
Marijuana	--	29.2	31.6	27.2	--	28.9	--	--	22.9	24.4	21.5	--	22.8	--
<b>Driving a vehicle</b>														
Alcohol	--	6.8	5.8	8.1	--	5.7	--	--	4.4	3.8	4.9	--	4.3	--
Marijuana	--	12.2	15.1	9.1	--	11.6	--	--	9.5	8.7	10.1	--	9.2	--

Source: Florida Youth Substance Abuse Survey (FYSAS), 2018

The number of high schoolers who reported riding in (29.2%) or driving a vehicle while under the influence of marijuana (12.2%) is double the number who reported similar incidents involving alcohol use (14.9% of high school students reported riding in a vehicle with someone who had been drinking). In most cases, the rate of frequency was higher among Alachua County students than Florida students.

For youth, many of them don't perceive marijuana as a dangerous drug, especially compared to the risks that alcohol or other illicit drugs can bring. In fact, some believe marijuana may even make them a better driver despite statistics that prove otherwise. Driving under the influence of marijuana is risky but with low perceived risks and positive social norms, marijuana is viewed as harmless and this contributes to a high level of marijuana use.

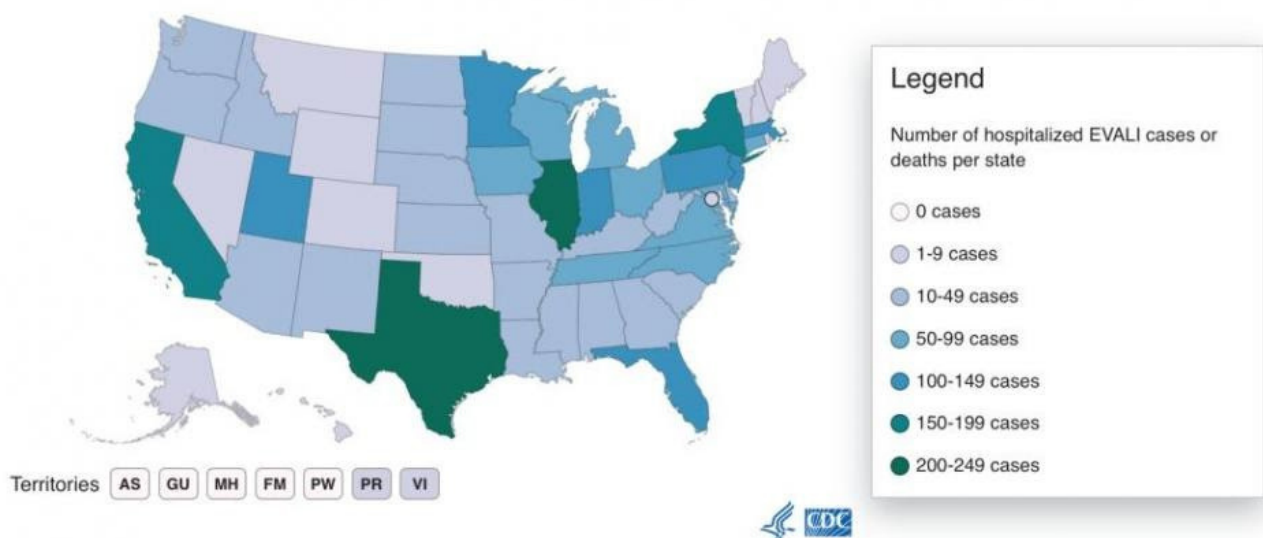
**The percentage of surveyed Alachua County youths, between the ages of 11 and 17, who currently use electronic vaping has increased from 9.5% in 2016 to 15.1% in 2018.**

When it comes to vaping marijuana, increasing rates are highly concerning as there are a number of negative outcomes to consider. Marijuana concentrates have an increased risk of schizophrenia, psychosis, depression and anxiety while overall marijuana use is associated with lower life satisfaction, a higher likelihood of dropping out of school and developmental issues in memory or attention. EVALI (E-cigarette, or Vaping, product use-Associated Lung Injury) has caused a dramatic increase of 2,807 hospitalizations or deaths reported to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) in 2019.

Furthermore, marijuana users are 3 to 7 times more likely to have a car crash and many have turned to concentrates which are highly potent THC products. This can include shatter, oil, dab and edibles. The concentration in these products rose from an average of 6.7% in 2008 to 55.7% in 2017 with some reaching levels of 99% THC which only increases the chances of mental health conditions such as schizophrenia. Roughly 1 in 10 marijuana users will become addicted but for people who began using before the age of 16, 1 in 6 will become addicted.

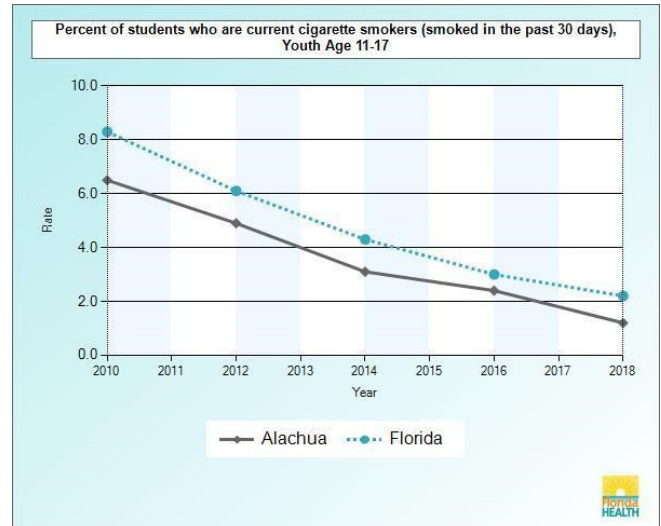
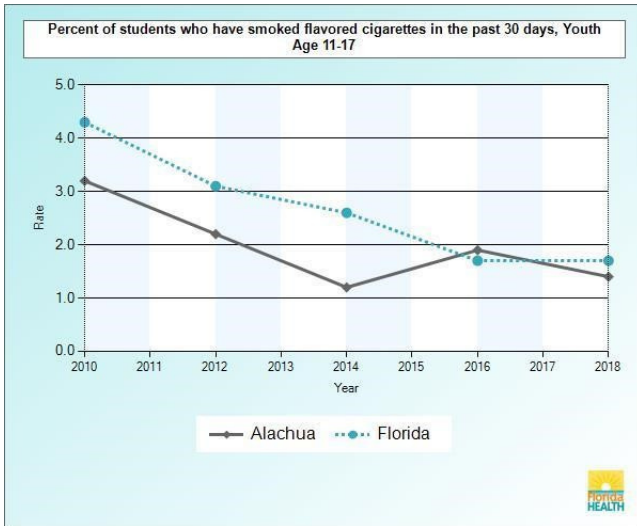
As demonstrated in the visual below, Florida had a higher rate of EVALI compared to other states such as Georgia and South Carolina. Between August of 2019 and February of 2020, there were between 100 and 149 hospitalized cases or deaths reported to the CDC.

Number of Hospitalized EVALI Cases or Deaths Reported to CDC as of February 18, 2020

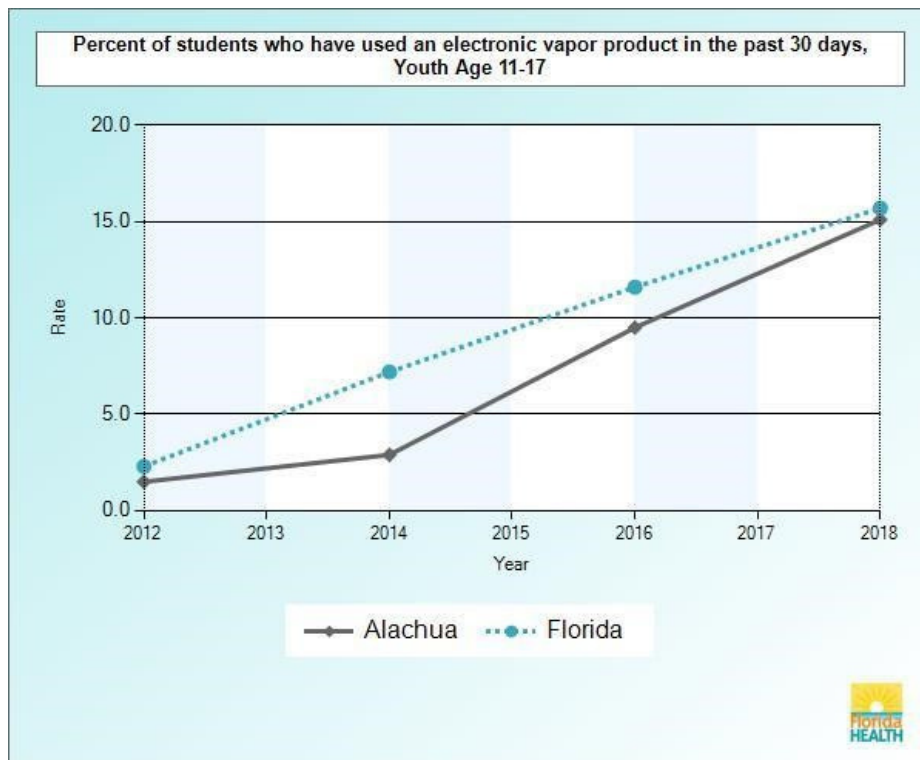




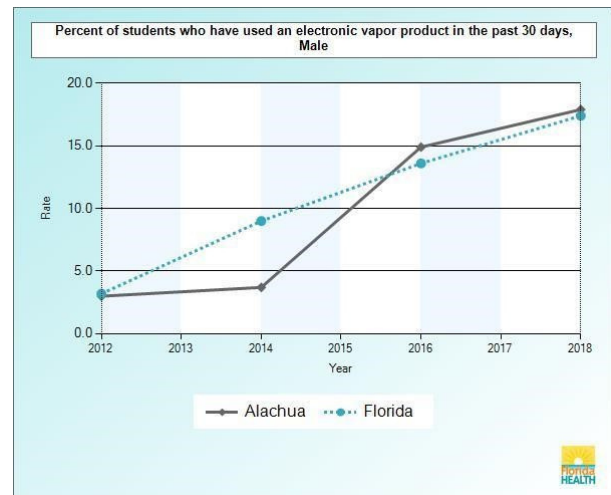
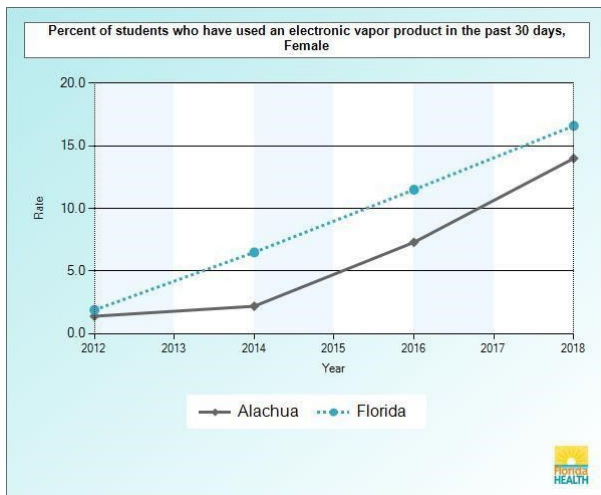
# Tobacco and E-Cigarettes



Over the period from 2010 to 2018, there has been a steady decline in smoking rates of traditional cigarettes among Alachua County and Florida youth. This decline has been dramatic, from 8% to 2% over this 8 year period. Flavored cigarette use by Alachua County and statewide youth has also been decreasing from 2010 to 2018. Because flavored cigarettes are often preferred by new smokers and are frequently marketed towards kids, declines in the use of flavored cigarettes indicate a decline in the recruitment rate of new smokers by tobacco companies.



Meanwhile, the percentage of students using electronic vapor products has certainly made up the difference as the use of e-cigarettes skyrocketed among youth from 1.5% in 2012 to 15.1% in 2018. In the past 30 days, Alachua County (15.1%) use rates have been consistently lower than the percentage for Florida (15.7%). However, the data trend shows Alachua County could soon catch up to Florida's percentage. The prevalence of e-cigarettes use among Alachua County and statewide youth has more than tripled over the period from 2012 to 2018. According to the data, vape use rates are significantly higher among male students than female students in Alachua County and beginning in 2016, male Alachua County students used vapes at a higher rate than the Florida average.



## Prescription Drugs

Since 2008, the rate of past 30-day use for prescription has been falling from 2% to 1.1%, with a significant spike in 2016 of 3.1% for depressants. Prescription pain relievers and amphetamines followed the same trend with spikes in 2016 of 4% and 2.5%, respectively. It's likely that extensive media coverage and prevention campaigns on the dangers of prescription drug abuse were successful in curbing youth prescription drug abuse. However, it is still a concerning problem, especially considering how addictive opioids are and the possibility of youth moving on to heroin or synthetic opioids once prescription pain relievers are no longer available.

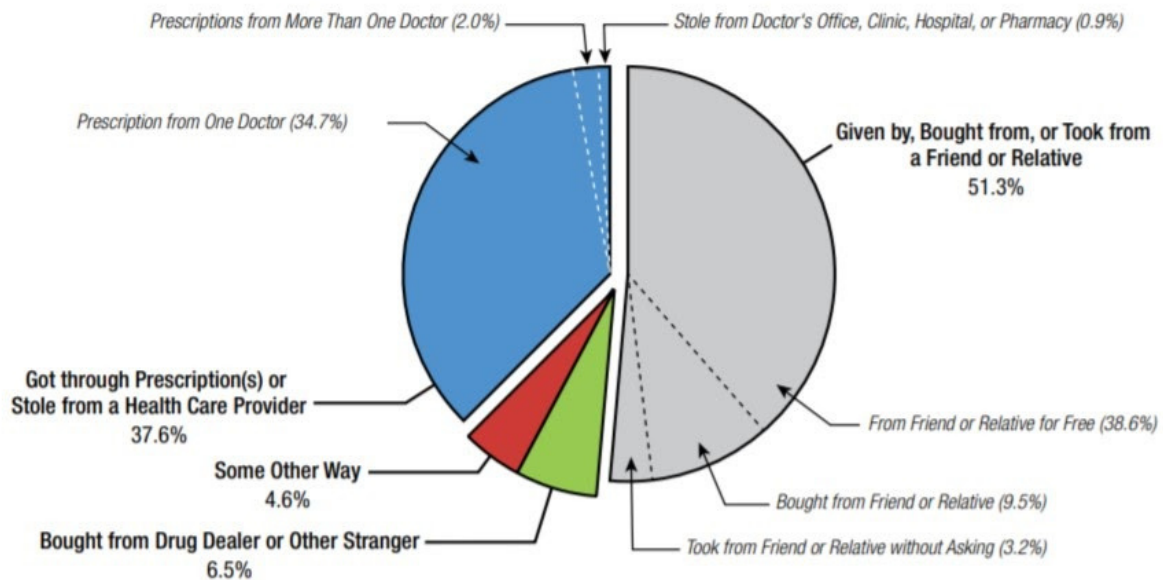
In addition to usage rates, it is also important to consider where youth accessed these drugs. According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), individuals aged 12 and older most frequently access prescription medications from a relative or a friend for free (38.6%) and are also accessing these medications by stealing them from medicine cabinets or other locations (3.2%). Others still are purchasing them from dealers (6.5%) or friends and relatives (9.5%). It's clear that accessing these medications is too easy for youth as 9.9 million people 12 years and older abused prescription medication in 2018 so it's vital to securely store medications at home in a lockbox, educate the community on the dangers of sharing medications and provide safe disposal methods.

In Alachua County, these steps may not have been taken as often as they should have and as a result there have been a number of fatalities or overdoses due to opioids such as morphine, heroin and fentanyl.

**Table 5. Past-30-day trend in alcohol, tobacco and other drug use for Alachua, 2008 to 2018**

	2008			2010			2012			2014			2016			2018		
	Middle School	High School	Total	Middle School	High School	Total	Middle School	High School	Total	Middle School	High School	Total	Middle School	High School	Total	Middle School	High School	Total
Alcohol	12.7	38.5	27.7	14.6	37.3	27.7	8.4	30.3	21.0	10.4	28.4	20.6	9.3	27.6	20.2	4.4	21.3	14.1
Binge Drinking	4.5	19.8	13.4	5.1	21.5	14.5	2.6	14.1	9.2	2.6	10.3	6.9	6.5	12.6	10.1	1.9	12.1	7.8
Cigarettes	2.6	9.2	6.4	3.6	8.1	6.2	1.5	6.3	4.2	1.2	7.1	4.5	2.0	5.5	4.1	0.4	1.3	0.9
Vaporizer / E-Cigarette	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	3.4	10.8	7.7	3.4	19.1	12.4
Marijuana or Hashish	2.1	16.3	10.4	4.1	23.4	15.2	3.9	16.2	11.0	2.9	18.9	12.0	4.0	20.0	13.5	4.4	16.2	11.2
Synthetic Marijuana	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	2.6	--	--	1.1	--	--	2.2	--	--	1.9	--
Inhalants	4.4	2.4	3.2	4.0	2.1	2.9	2.8	0.2	1.3	1.8	1.4	1.6	1.5	0.3	0.7	1.9	0.6	1.2
Flakka	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	1.9	--	--	1.1	--	--
Club Drugs	0.4	--	--	0.4	2.5	1.6	0.2	0.5	0.4	0.2	0.5	0.4	0.4	0.8	0.7	0.1	0.1	0.1
LSD, PCP or Mushrooms	0.7	--	--	0.3	1.6	1.0	0.3	1.2	0.8	0.1	1.5	0.9	0.7	3.1	2.1	0.1	0.4	0.3
Methamphetamine	0.5	0.2	0.3	0.2	0.7	0.5	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.9	0.7	0.8	0.5	0.7	0.6	0.1	0.5	0.3
Cocaine or Crack	0.3	--	--	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.0	0.4	0.2	0.0	0.5	0.3	0.6	1.0	0.9	0.2	0.9	0.6
Heroin	0.3	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.5	0.4	0.1	0.4	0.3	0.0	1.3	0.7	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.0	0.5	0.3
Prescription Depressants	0.7	2.9	2.0	0.5	3.1	2.0	1.0	2.1	1.7	0.8	0.7	0.7	1.0	4.5	3.1	0.7	1.4	1.1
Prescription Pain Relievers	1.3	4.6	3.2	1.7	4.0	3.0	1.6	2.2	1.9	1.0	2.2	1.7	2.9	4.8	4.0	1.4	1.0	1.2
Prescription Amphetamines	0.7	1.3	1.1	0.4	2.8	1.8	0.5	1.0	0.8	0.5	1.8	1.2	0.4	4.0	2.5	0.1	0.9	0.5
Steroids (without a doctor's order)	0.1	0.6	0.4	0.2	0.4	0.3	0.2	0.5	0.4	0.0	0.5	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.2	0.5	0.4
Over-the-Counter Drugs	2.2	--	--	1.0	3.4	2.4	1.2	2.9	2.2	1.3	2.1	1.7	3.4	3.3	3.3	1.0	2.0	1.6
Any illicit drug	7.3	21.4	15.5	9.7	25.7	18.9	8.5	20.7	15.5	7.1	22.9	16.0	9.9	23.8	18.1	7.8	19.8	14.7
Any illicit drug other than marijuana	6.0	10.1	8.4	7.1	11.2	9.4	5.7	7.7	6.9	5.0	8.1	6.7	6.9	10.1	8.8	4.7	5.8	5.3
Alcohol only	8.7	21.7	16.3	9.6	16.8	13.7	5.1	17.7	12.4	8.2	15.0	12.1	5.3	11.3	8.9	2.0	10.7	7.0
Alcohol or any illicit drug	16.0	42.6	31.5	18.9	42.0	32.1	13.7	37.9	27.5	14.9	37.3	27.6	15.0	35.3	26.9	10.1	29.5	21.2
Any illicit drug, but no alcohol	3.5	4.7	4.2	4.4	5.2	4.8	5.2	7.9	6.7	4.8	9.1	7.2	6.0	7.9	7.1	5.9	8.6	7.5

**Figure 23. Source Where Pain Relievers Were Obtained for Most Recent Misuse among People Aged 12 or Older Who Misused Pain Relievers in the Past Year: 2018**

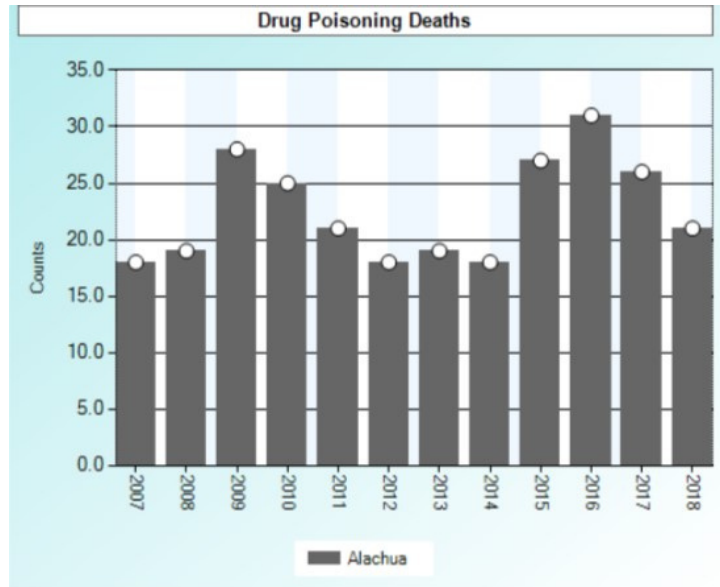


**9.9 Million People Aged 12 or Older Who Misused Pain Relievers in the Past Year**

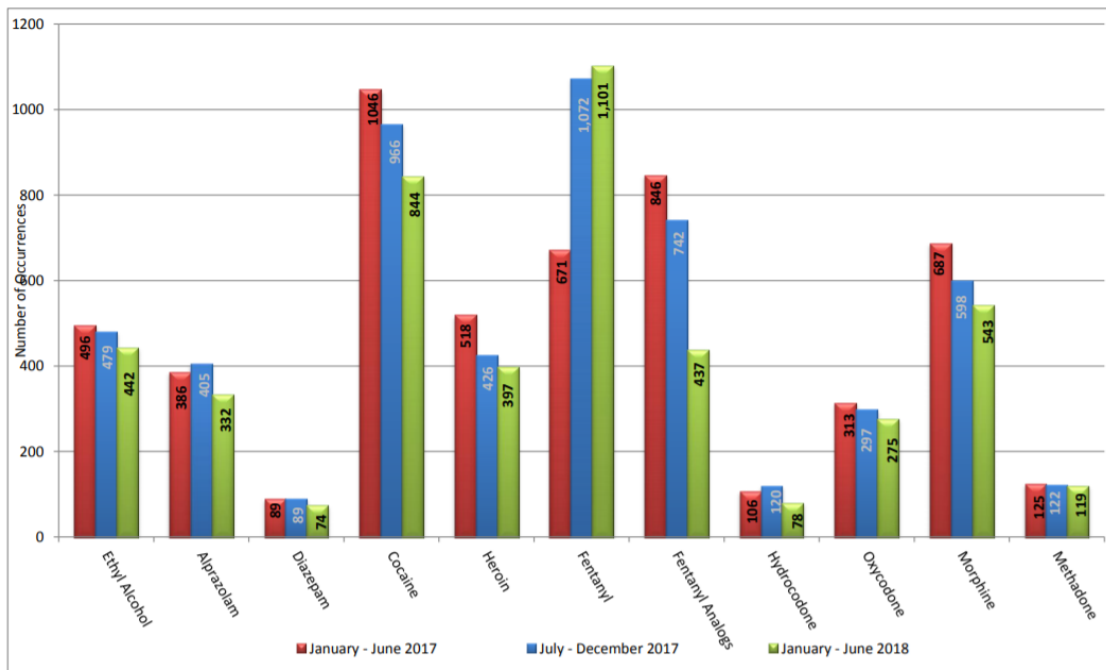
# Substance Use Consequences

Between January 2017 and June 2018, thousands of people died from drug overdoses in the state of Florida. The primary substances included cocaine, fentanyl and morphine but alcohol and heroin were also significant causes as well. The Florida average for 2018 drug overdose deaths was 22.9 deaths per 100,000 population compared to only 9.9 deaths per 100,000 population for Alachua County.

Clearly, Alachua County's overdose death rate was much lower than the Florida average but still significant. There were 21 deaths recorded in Alachua County during 2018 (FL Health Charts). This is part of a downward trend as the number of deaths in Alachua County was 31 individuals in 2016 and 27 individuals in 2017.

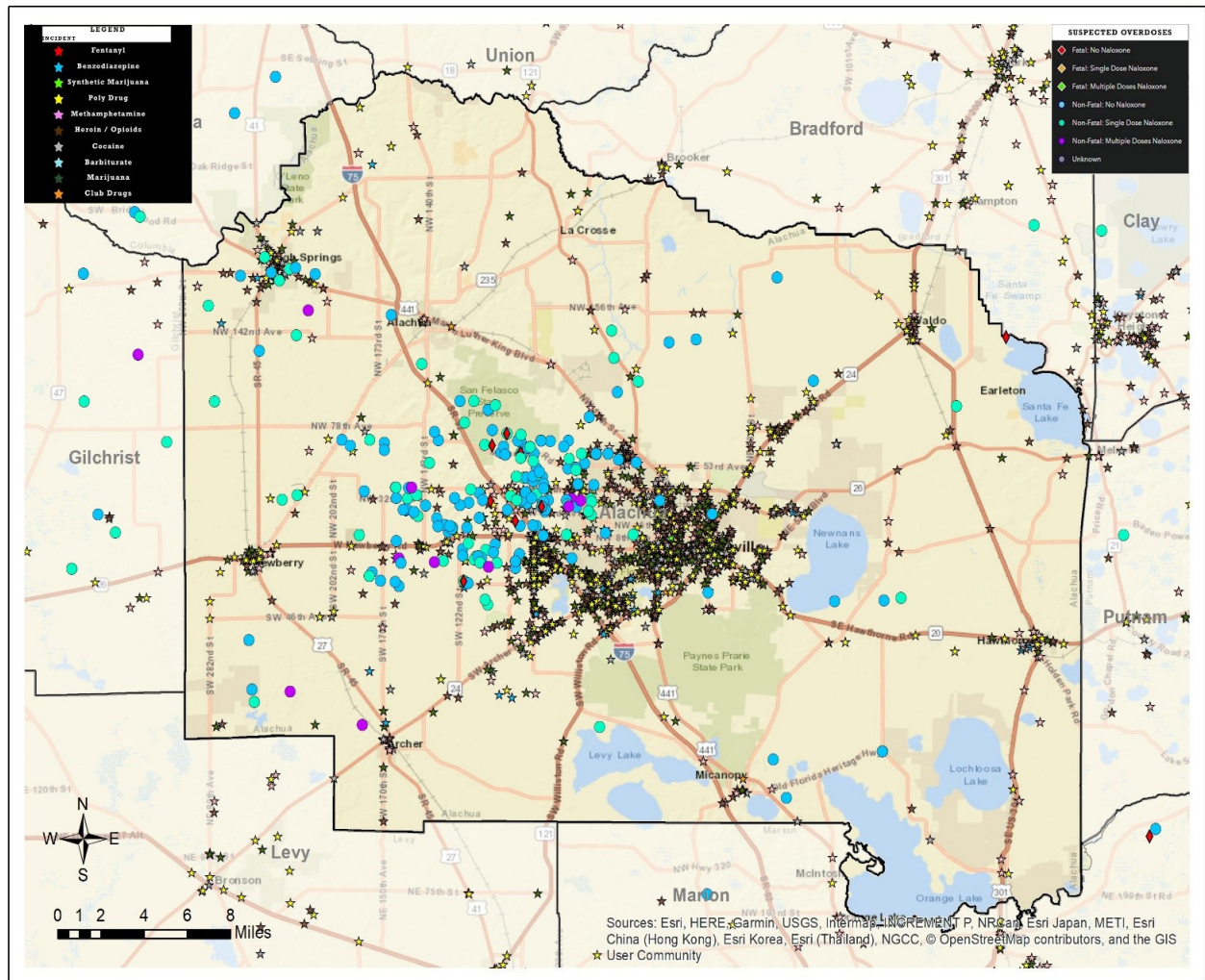


**Comparison of Drug Caused Deaths**  
January 2017 to June 2018





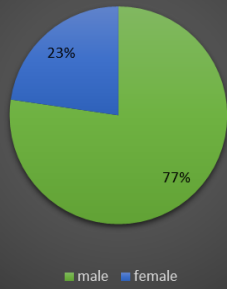
## Alachua Drug Events & Suspected OD incidents 2019



In the above ODMAP created by North Florida HIDTA, there were a number of overdose incidents in Alachua County during 2019. The vast majority are poly substance instances where more than one drug is used and an overwhelming amount occurred in Gainesville, especially near the University of Florida campus. Many of these instances were non-fatal cases and narcan was sometimes used to save lives during opioid overdoses. While most cases occurred in the city of Gainesville, a number of towns such as Newberry, High Springs and Waldo had their own clusters of overdoses.

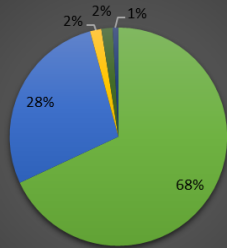
While drug use overdoses occurred all over Alachua County, overdose calls with the use of naloxone occurred primarily in West Gainesville and High Springs. These are areas where there is a wealthier demographic which might indicate a health disparity to access medical care and first response teams with appropriate resources. Surprisingly, opioid deaths with no naloxone occurred most commonly in West Gainesville despite the larger number of overdoses in East Gainesville.

2018 Drug Deaths (Alachua) by gender



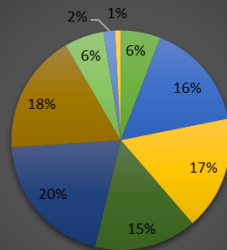
n=119

2018 Drug Deaths (Alachua) by race



n=119

2018 Drug Deaths (Alachua) by age

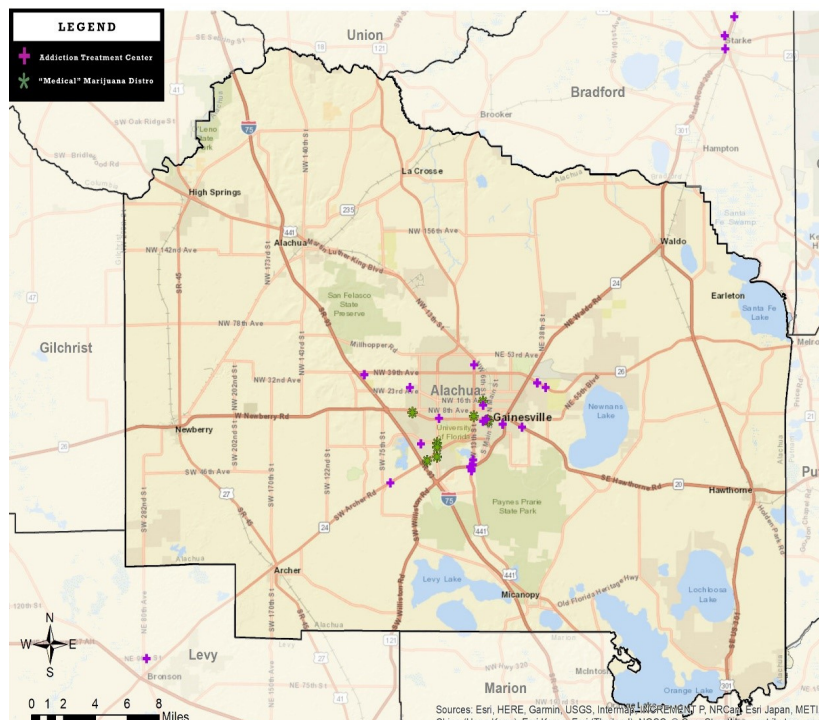


n=119

According to HIDTA data, males (77%) are more likely to experience a drug related death than females (23%) in Alachua County. Furthermore, the most common drug deaths by race were whites (68%), followed by African Americans (28%), hispanics (2%) and asians (1%). While whites are the majority population, African Americans are over represented in drug related deaths.

When it comes to age groups, those in their 30s were the most frequent to experience a drug death (17%) followed shortly behind people in their 20s (16%) and those in their 40s (15%). Clearly, the younger age groups experience more drug related deaths in Alachua County compared to older populations.

It is also important to note that overdoses have been reported in every town and city in Alachua County. However, treatment centers are focused almost exclusively in Gainesville as demonstrated in the map below (purple dots). There is a clear disparity in accessing treatment for those in rural or small town areas compared to those who live in Gainesville.

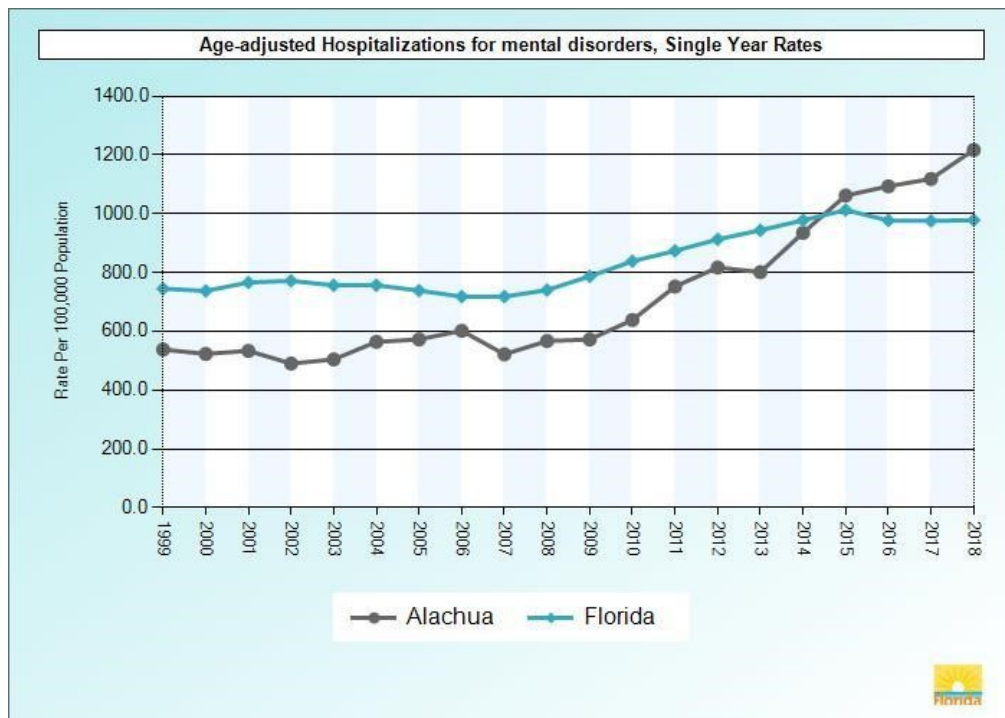


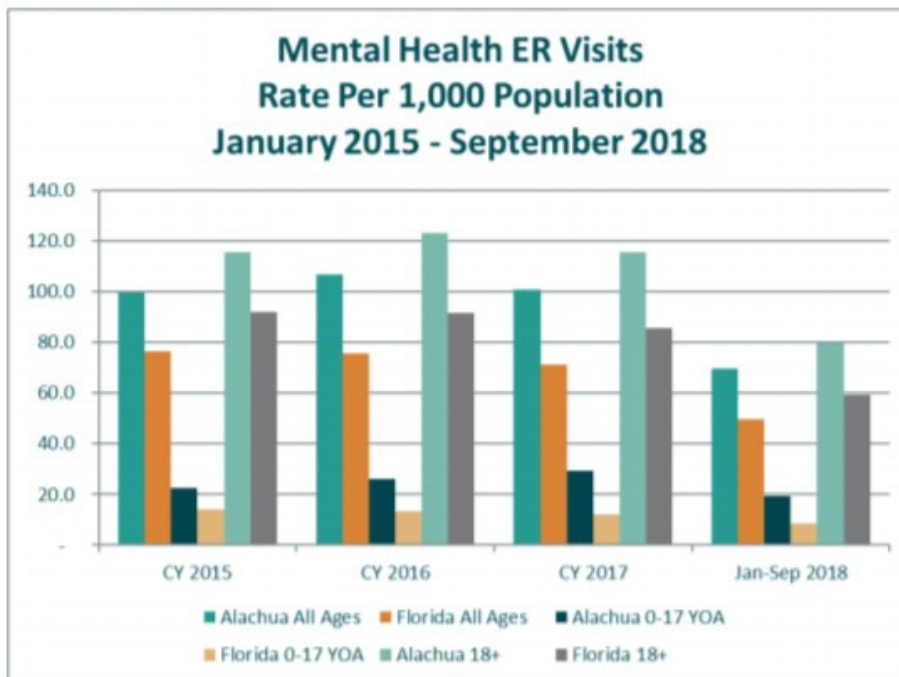
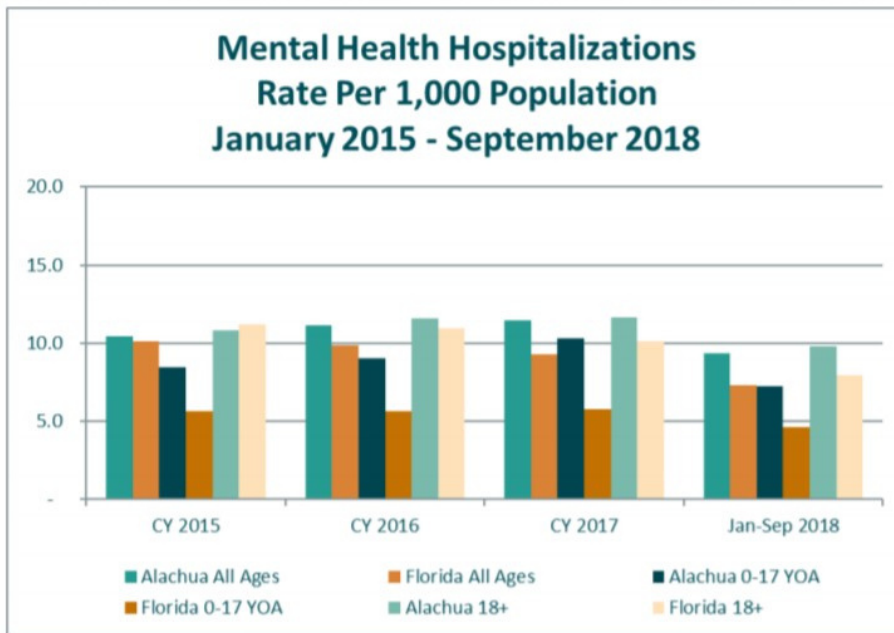
# Mental Health in Alachua County

The counts of emotionally disturbed youth in Alachua County has remained steady since 2011 at 1,993 youth and the Florida state numbers have also remained even. However, the number of people admitted to the hospital for mental disorders has risen dramatically. In 1999, less than 600 people were admitted per 100,000 population in Alachua County but that rate has overtaken the Florida average with 1,200 people admitted per 100,000 in 2018. Comparatively, the Florida average is less than 1,000 per 100,000 people. There is a possibility that Alachua County has an elevated rate of admission due to nearby medical facilities such as UF Health Psychiatric Hospital. Surrounded by rural counties with limited medical care, a number of patients are likely from outside the county and admitted in Gainesville, FL. In all however, it appears that statewide mental health issues are diagnosed more often and treated more frequently.

**Estimated counts of seriously emotionally disturbed youth age 9-17 (2011-2018)**

Estimated Seriously Emotionally Disturbed Youth 9-17		
	Alachua	Florida
Year	Count	Count
2018	1,993	191,546
2017	1,976	188,528
2016	1,949	187,075
2015	1,941	186,124
2014	1,926	185,811
2013	1,910	185,498
2012	1,945	186,747
2011	1,993	188,453

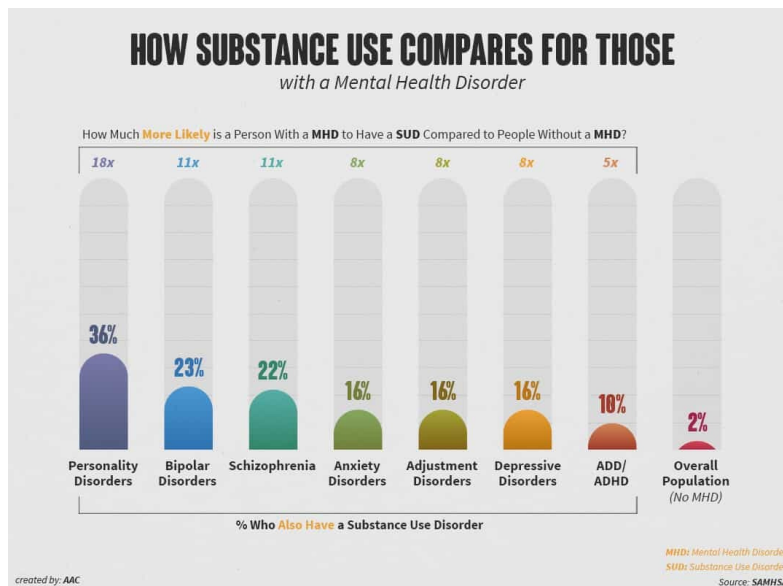




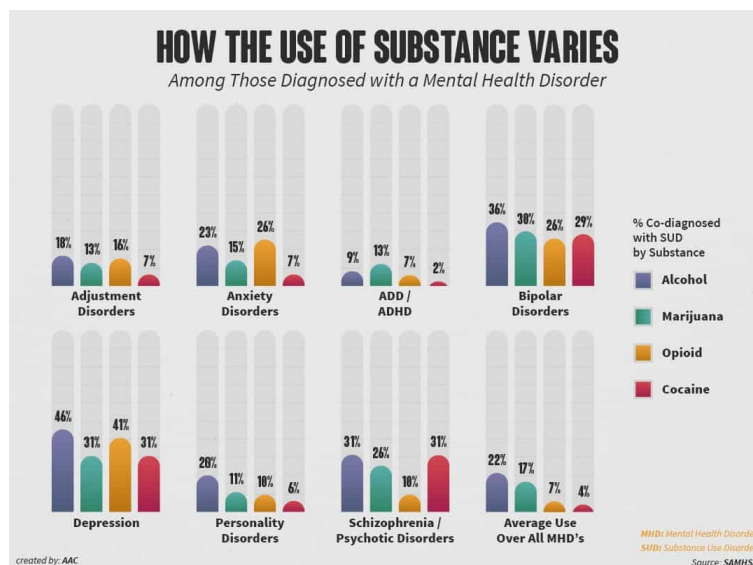
As demonstrated in the above graphs, Alachua County youths ages 0-17 had higher rates per 1,000 population of Mental Health ER Visits and Hospitalizations compared to the Florida state average for those ages 0-17. Again, this may be due to a larger number of medical facilities compared to nearby counties such as Gilchrist who do not have the same resources and may turn to Alachua County for treatment.

It is also interesting to note that for the most part, rates have remained steady from 2015 through 2017 with a slight decline starting in 2018. This may be due to several months being left out at the end of the year or improved early treatment for mental health conditions.



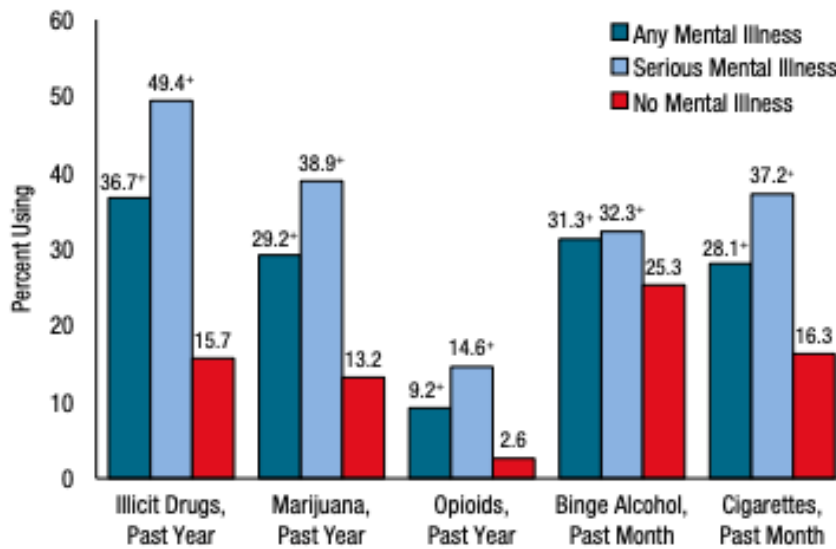


Mental health disorders increase the likelihood of someone having a substance use disorder as it is a risk factor and co-morbidity is common. This diagram shows seven different types of mental health disorders and each one increases the likelihood of developing substance use disorders. ADD/ADHD has the lowest percent difference compared to the other mental health disorders but still accounts for an 8% increase when compared to the overall population without a mental health disorder. Personality disorder accounts for the highest increase in likelihood with 18x greater chance of a substance use disorder.



The above diagram shows the prevalence of different substances used among people who have different mental health disorders (MHD). Overall, alcohol seems to be of high prevalence across all the MHDs suggesting that alcohol abuse is a big issue among people with MHDs. Additionally, marijuana use is high compared to the other forms of substances among people who have bipolar disorder, depression and schizophrenia/psychotic disorders. Lastly, cocaine use is of high prevalence among people with bipolar disorder, depression and schizophrenia/psychotic disorders. However, when taking all MHDs into account, alcohol and marijuana abuse seems to be the most prevalent. This suggests that these two substances should be targeted in interventions created to limit substance use among people with MHDs.

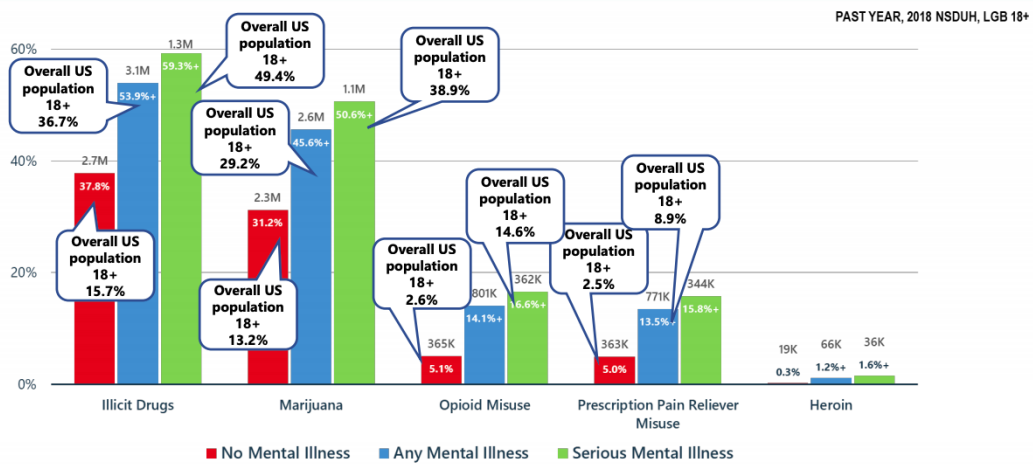
**Figure 56. Substance Use among Adults Aged 18 or Older, by Mental Illness Status: 2018**



\* Difference between this estimate and the estimate for adults without mental illness is statistically significant at the .05 level.

Compared to the overall U.S. population and those who don't have mental illnesses, those with any serious mental illness use substances at a substantially higher rate. This could be attributed to individuals with mental health conditions that are using substances to cope with stress or trauma, environmental influences and other risk factors such as genetic predisposition. Those who have substance issues may develop mental health conditions or addiction as a result of their use, and ultimately, increase the co-morbidity of these diseases. Of particular concern are LGBTQ+ individuals who have a mental illness which increases their risk of substance use which is already considerably high compared to the heterosexual population.

**Co-Occurring Issues: Substance Use Is More Frequent among LGB Adults with Mental Illness**



\* Difference between this estimate and the estimate for adults without mental illness is statistically significant at the .05 level.



## Risk and Protective Factors

**Table 1. Protective factor prevalence rates for Alachua County, Florida Statewide youth and the national normative database, 2018**

Domain	Scale	Alachua		Florida Statewide		National Norms	
		Middle School	High School	Middle School	High School	Middle School	High School
Family	Family Opportunities for Prosocial Involvement	62	60	58	57	59	54
	Family Rewards for Prosocial Involvement	56	55	50	51	54	55
School	School Opportunities for Prosocial Involvement	56	68	54	64	57	60
	School Rewards for Prosocial Involvement	48	60	45	55	53	58
Peer and Individual	Religiosity	47	62	46	54	56	62
<b>Average Prevalence Rate</b>		<b>54</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>58</b>

Note: Because risk is associated with negative behavioral outcomes, it is better to have lower risk factor scale scores, not higher. Conversely, because protective factors are associated with better student behavioral outcomes, it is better to have protective factor scale scores with high values.

For middle and high school respondents in Alachua County and Florida Statewide groups, family and school opportunities/rewards for social engagement were present for roughly half of the population. School opportunities/rewards as well as religiosity were also prevalent at a range from (45%–68%) but more so for high school than middle school students. These prosocial influences can provide protection against the initiation of drug abusing behaviors.

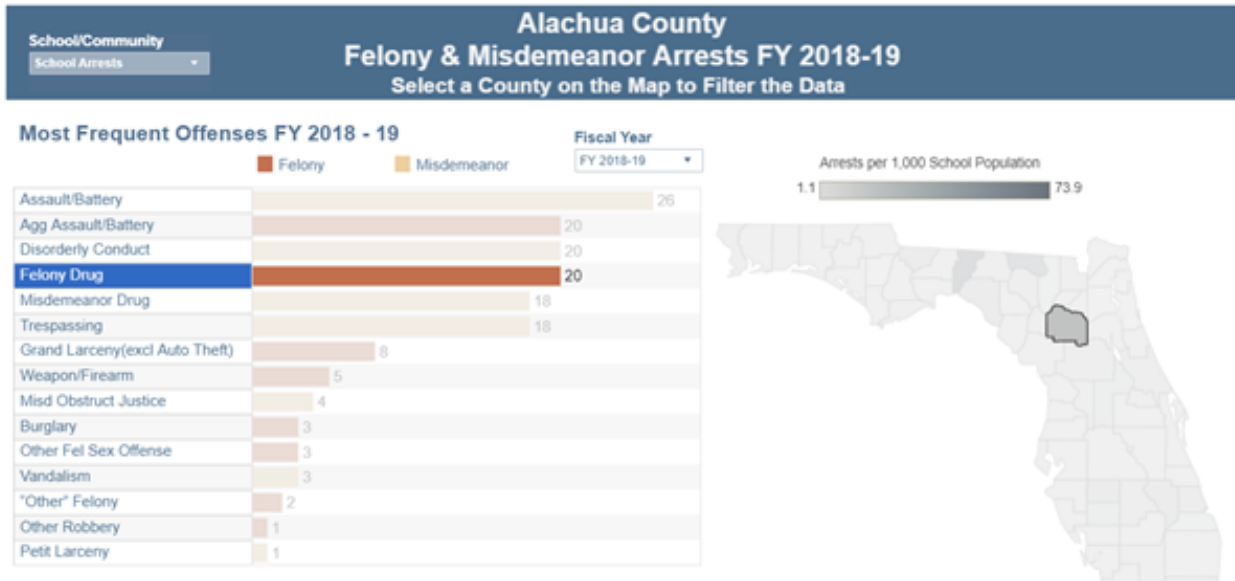
**Table 2. Risk factor prevalence rates for Alachua County, Florida Statewide youth and the national normative database, 2018**

Domain	Scale	Alachua		Florida Statewide		National Norms	
		Middle School	High School	Middle School	High School	Middle School	High School
Community	Community Disorganization	32	32	38	40	47	47
	Transitions and Mobility	56	59	59	61	47	46
	Laws and Norms Favorable to Drug Use	32	30	38	32	42	42
	Perceived Availability of Drugs	30	25	35	24	45	45
	Perceived Availability of Handguns	23	37	24	34	25	42
Family	Poor Family Management	33	33	43	37	44	45
	Family Conflict	38	34	39	34	42	37
School	Poor Academic Performance	38	39	43	43	45	48
	Lack of Commitment to School	50	53	60	57	47	46
Peer and Individual	Favorable Attitudes toward Antisocial Behavior	38	37	43	36	40	46
	Favorable Attitudes toward ATOD Use	31	34	35	34	39	45
	Early Initiation of Drug Use	19	17	24	19	41	46
<b>Average Prevalence Rate</b>		<b>35</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>45</b>

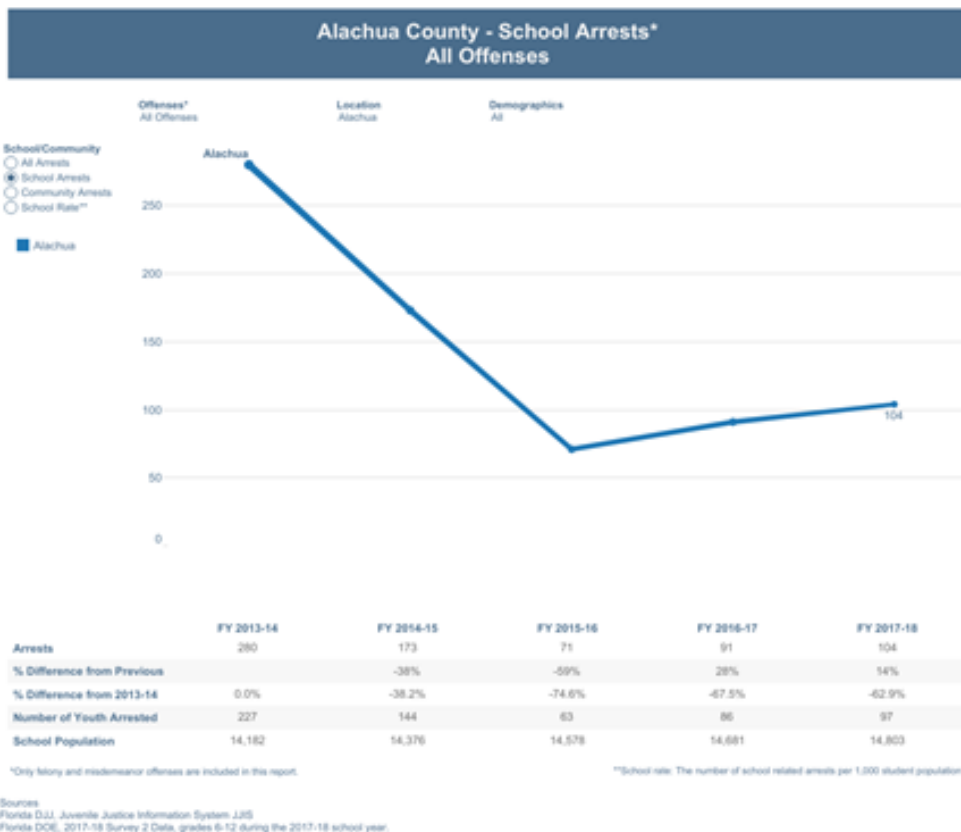
Note: Because risk is associated with negative behavioral outcomes, it is better to have lower risk factor scale scores, not higher. Conversely, because protective factors are associated with better student behavioral outcomes, it is better to have protective factor scale scores with high values.

Among middle and high school respondents in Alachua County and Florida Statewide, the most common risk factor was “Transitions and Mobility”, which refers to low environmental stability in a young person’s life. Low environmental stability can include frequent family moves and/or frequent changes in the school they attend. The second most prevalent risk factor was a lack of commitment to school, which can also result in the development of risk-taking behavior. Some of the lowest risk factor prevalence rates included perceived availability of drugs and early initiation of drug use.

# Law Enforcement and Juvenile Justice



In Alachua County, there were 152 student arrests in the 2018–2019 academic year with 20 cases related to felony drug cases and 18 related to misdemeanor drug cases. Currently, the most commonly arrestable offenses at Alachua County schools remains Assault and Battery rather than drug offenses. Since the 2013–2014 academic year, there was a steady decline in youth arrests from a high of 280 in 2014 to a low in 71 in 2016 but that number has since gone back up to 106 in 2018.



# Delinquency Profile 2019

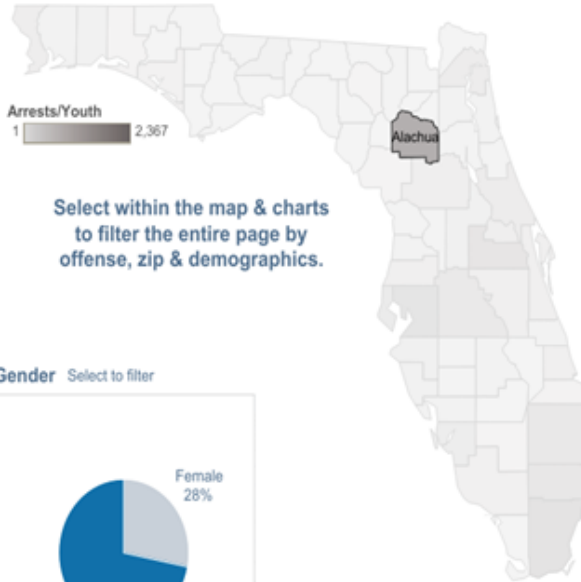
■ Felony   
 ■ Misdemeanor   
 ■ Other

### Offenses

Burglary	99
Agg Assault/Battery	69
Assault/Battery	62
Felony Drug	30
Misdemeanor Drug	30
Petit Larceny	23
Disorderly Conduct	21
Auto Theft	16
Grand Larceny(excl auto)	16
Sexual Battery	16
Violation of Probation Non-Law	14
Weapon/Firearm	14
Misd Obstruct Justice	11
Trespassing	11
Prosecution Previously Deferred	7
Obstruct Justice	6
Other Fel Sex Offense	6
Vandalism	6
Alcohol Offenses	5
Loitering Prowling	5
Other Robbery	5
Violation of Probation New-Law	5
"Other" Felony	3
Felony Vandalism	3
Violation of Probation LEO	3
Fraud Forgery Counterfeit	2
Kidnapping	2
Murder/Manslaughter	2
Obstruct Justice Violent	2
Stolen Property	2
Armed Robbery	1
Arson	1
Other Misdemeanors	1

## Statewide Intake Youth

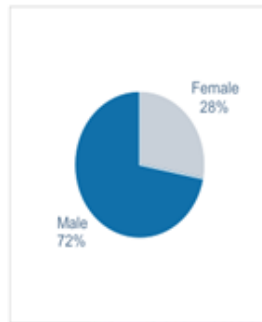
Stage Intake      Arrests/Youth      Fiscal Year  
FY 2018-19



### Highest Volume Zip Codes

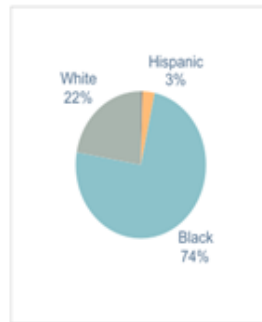
32607	Alachua	104
32641	Alachua	83
32609	Alachua	67
32608	Alachua	37
32615	Alachua	51
32601	Alachua	21
32605	Alachua	23
32643	Alachua	26
32618	Alachua	15
32606	Alachua	16
32653	Alachua	14
32669	Alachua	18
32640	Alachua	13
32694	Alachua	7
32603	Alachua	3
32604	Alachua	1

### Gender

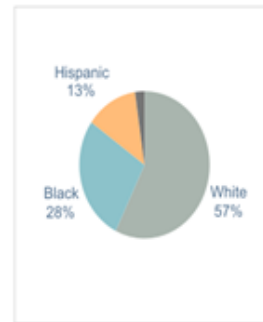


FY 2018-19  
Age 10 - 17 Population  
29,190

### Race/Ethnicity



### Age 10 - 17 Population



Zip Code totals may differ from county totals due to missing or conflicting zip code data.

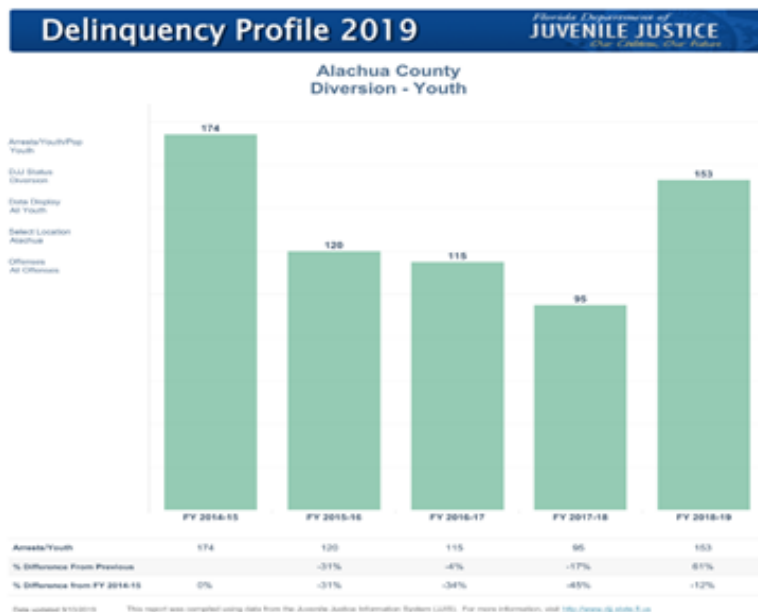
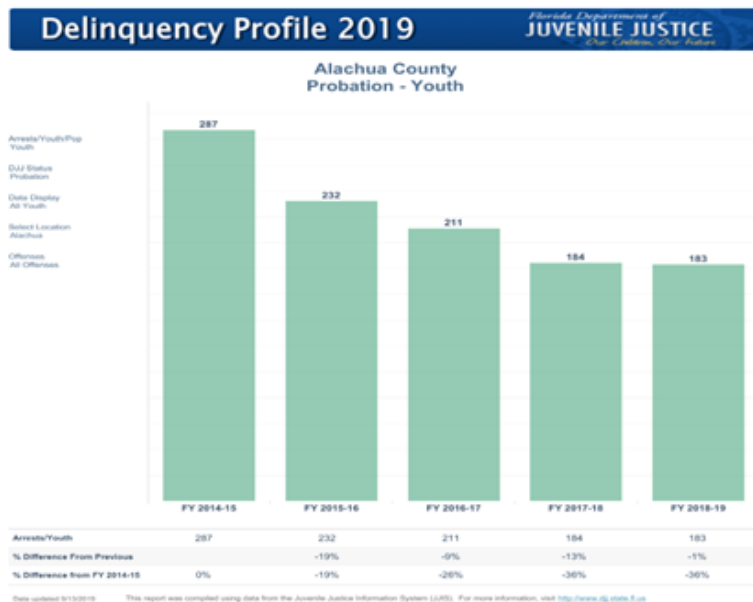
Among all of the youth arrested or charged in Alachua County during 2019, 72% of them were male, and 74% of them were African American despite the fact that only 28% of students ages 10-17 are African American in Alachua County. This shows a huge disparity among African American males for arrests compared to their peers. For example, only 22% of arrested youth were white even though they represent 57% of the youth population in schools.

Furthermore, the zip codes with the most arrests were 32607, 32641 and 32609 and the 4th most common charge was felony drug followed by misdemeanor drug. In 2019, a total of 60 youth were arrested on drug-related charges in Alachua County.

Currently, the number of youth who have been arrested and are on probation has steadily declined since 2014–2015 with 287 youth on probation compared to 2018–2019 with only 183 youth on probation. Comparatively, the number of youth who participate in Diversion programs has begun to climb with 153 youth in 2018–2019. One of the most common examples includes:

*Teen Court* – a diversion program for first-time youth offenders that have committed certain crimes which can allow them to keep a clean record. This service is provided by the Alachua County Sheriff’s Office, and it offers children throughout Alachua County an opportunity to earn an important second chance while teaching them the value of personal integrity and responsibility to their community. Youth can volunteer to serve as jurors, attorneys, clerks, etc during mock trials for those in the program.

Additional diversion programs from the Department of Juvenile Justice include Community Arbitration, Alternative Schools, Intensive Delinquency Diversion Services, Drug Court, and programs with organizations such as the Boys and Girls club.



## Inpatient Care

- **UF Health Florida Recovery Center:**
  - Call: (855) 265-4372 or visit: [www.floridarecoverycenter.ufhealth.org](http://www.floridarecoverycenter.ufhealth.org)
  - 4001 SW 13th Street, Gainesville, FL, 32608
  - Provides medical consults, comprehensive labs, psychological testing, inpatient and outpatient treatment for those suffering from substance addiction and/or mental illness.
- **North Florida Regional Behavioral Health Center:**
  - Call (352)-332-4470 or visit [www.nfrmc.org](http://www.nfrmc.org)
  - 6500 W Newberry Rd, Gainesville, FL, 32605
  - A Baker Act Facility which provides inpatient and outpatient care for behavioral health patients who may need monitoring or simply treatment programs
- **Meridian Behavioral Healthcare:**
  - Call: (800) 330-5615 or visit: <https://www.mbhci.org/>
  - 4300 SW 13th St Gainesville, FL 32614
  - Offers crisis management, inpatient rehabilitation, outpatient programs, and prevention services to alleviate the burden of mental illness and substance abuse in our community.
- **UF Shands Psychiatric Hospital:**
  - Call: (352) 265-5481 or visit: <https://ufhealth.org/shands-vista>
  - 4101 NW 89th Blvd, Gainesville, FL, 32606
  - Provides a full range of effective services including hospital inpatient services for those with substance abuse disorders and mental health disorders. There are inpatient services for detox, psychosis and anxiety etc.

## Outpatient Care

- **Diversified Program Services:**
  - Call: (352) 332-9960 or visit: <https://www.drug-rehab-headquarters.com>
  - 7003 NW 11th Place, Gainesville, FL, 32605
  - Offers substance abuse and mental health treatment services which are available on a sliding fee scale. DPS offers 12 Step Program support groups for individuals recovering from any kind of substance abuse, as well as targeted treatment plans for a variety of alcohol, narcotic, and prescription drug addictions.

- **Metamorphosis Alachua County Substance Abuse Program:**
  - Call: (352) 381-0150 or visit <https://www.transitionalhousing.org>
  - 4201 SW 21st Place, Gainesville, FL, 32607
  - Local rehabilitation service that offers individual, group, and family counseling for substance addictions. Their rehabilitation service, targeted to men and women ages 18 or older, consists of a six to twelve month multi-step treatment plan in which participants have their health monitored by licensed clinicians.
- **ITM Group Treatment Center**
  - Call: (352) 379-2829 or visit: <https://www.itmflorida.com/>
  - 1208 NW 6th, Gainesville, FL, 32601
  - Offers individual, family and marriage counseling in a friendly, private environment. Also offers a substance abuse recovery program that teaches relapse prevention strategies, crisis management and healthy communication skills.
- **FL Department of Health: Tobacco Cessation/Tobacco Free:**
  - Call: 850-245-4144 or visit: <http://www.floridahealth.gov/programs-and-services/prevention/tobacco-free-florida/index.html>
  - Working to protect all Floridians from the dangers of inhaled nicotine and secondhand smoke exposure through evidence-based tobacco prevention and cessation programs, with an emphasis on youth and other vulnerable populations.

## Counseling

- **Gainesville Peer Respite:**
  - Call: 352-559-4559
  - 728 East University Ave Gainesville, FL 32601
  - Supports those who experience mental distress by promoting empowerment, recovery, and wellness. Provides wellness activities, support groups, brief overnight stays in non-clinical, home-like environments.
- **Alcoholics Anonymous**
  - Call: (352) 372-8091 or visit: <https://www.steptorehab.com/AAMeetings>
  - Group counseling program for individuals who are suffering from alcohol addiction. They utilize group discussions about members' experiences with alcohol addiction and a 12 Step Program to provide individuals with the necessary motivation and tools to pursue sobriety and to better the quality of their lives.



- **Narcotics Anonymous**

- Call: (352) 376-8008 or visit: <http://www.uncoastna.org/>
- Group counseling program that meets at several different locations around the city of Gainesville to help individuals struggling with narcotics addictions to share their experiences and learn new strategies to avoid relapsing in their addictive behaviors.

- **UF Counseling and Wellness Center**

- Offers mental health services to UF students with a variety of programs. Call to make an appointment.
- Call: 352-392-1575
- 3190 Radio Rd Gainesville, FL 3261

- **Free Therapy Night (UF Equal Access Clinic)**

- Sessions take place Mondays 5:30-7:30 pm. Walk-ins are available before 6:30 but appointments are preferred.
- Call: 352-325-1775
- 2401 SE Archer Rd Gainesville, FL 32608

- **Alachua County Crisis Center**

- 24/7 crisis and suicide intervention phone counseling
- Call: 352-264-6789
- 218 SE 24th, Gainesville, FL, 32641
- National Suicide Hotline: 1-800-784-2433

- **Grace Ministry of Florida**

- Call: (352) 260-7020 or visit: <https://www.facebook.com/graceministryofflorida/>
- Provides substance abuse and addiction counseling as well as courses for anger management, drug abuse and sex addiction.

## Behavioral and Mental Health

- **CDS Family and Behavioral Healthcare**

- Call: (352) 244-0628 or visit: <https://www.cdsfl.org/>
- 3615 SW 13th St Gainesville, Florida 32608
- Operates three youth shelters in the Gainesville area, as well as offers family counseling and youth programs such as SNAP ("Stop Now and Plan") which are designed to have a positive impact on the mental and behavioral well-being of children in the Gainesville community.

- **Behavior Analysis Support Services**

- Call: (877) 823-4283 or visit: <https://behavioralsupports.com/>
- 1000 NE 16th Avenue, Gainesville, FL, 32601
- Ensures that the children it serves reach their potential. Offers comprehensive ABA therapy services specifically arranged to serve the needs of families.

- **NAMI Gainesville**

- Call: (352)-320-0457 or visit: [namigainesville.org](http://namigainesville.org)
- 1624 NW 5th Avenue, Gainesville, FL, 32603
- A non-profit organization dedicated to providing education, support, and advocacy with the goal to empower individuals living with mental illness and their families, and to eliminate the stigma associated with mental illness. Elimination of the stigma attached to mental illness is essential to achieve the goals of empowerment, social inclusion, and recovery

- **Step-by-Step Behavioral Health Services**

- Call: (352) 225-3710 or visit: <http://step-by-stepbehaviorhealth.com/>
- 901 NW 8th Avenue, Gainesville, FL, 32601
- Provides support services for those through mental health targeted case management. Some of the mental health services that are provided are : Psychiatric evaluation, individual/family counseling, psychosocial rehabilitation and couples therapy.

- **Gainesville Opportunity Center**

- Call: 352-224-5523 or Visit: [goclubhouse.org](http://goclubhouse.org)
- 102 NE 10th Ave, Unit 2 Gainesville, FL 32601
- Provides support to people whose lives have been interrupted by mental illness.

- **Azalea Mental Health Clinic**

- Call: (352) 481-2700 or visit: [https://freeclinicdirectory.org/detail/hawthorne\\_family\\_medical\\_center\\_hawthorne\\_fl.html](https://freeclinicdirectory.org/detail/hawthorne_family_medical_center_hawthorne_fl.html)
- 22066 SE 7th Avenue, Hawthorne, FL, 32640
- Provides mental health assessments and evaluations as well as individual, group and family counseling services.

# Recommendations

While prevention programs and activities are extremely important in lowering substance abuse rates among youth in Alachua County, it's important to remember that there are certain groups that are most vulnerable to substance abuse. These groups face disparities in the community, have experienced traumas and may live in economic situations that push them in substance use. If substance abuse is going to be addressed, it is vital that these groups are given special consideration and targeted in intervention programs.

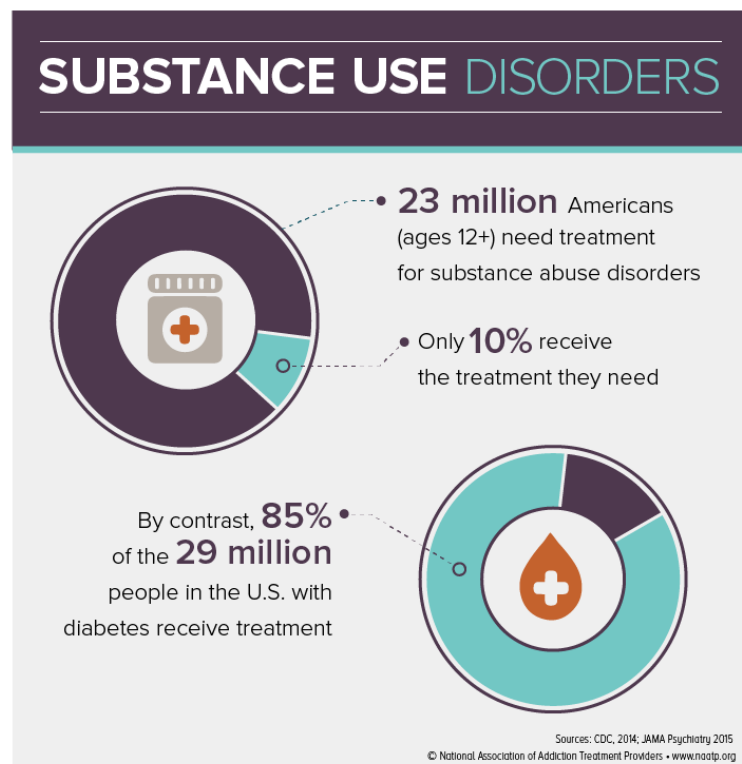
Some of these vulnerable populations include those with mental health conditions, members of the homeless population, LGBTQ+ individuals, those in poverty and minority groups. These groups often face the highest rates of substance abuse, have the least access to treatment programs and have the worst outcomes. As a result, individuals in these groups will likely need programs designed specifically for them or at least strategies tailored towards their needs and concerns.

As a substance abuse prevention agency, we know there are a number of activities or programs that can lower the rates of substance use among youth. The following are several recommendations:

- Enroll youth in Diversion Programs to prevent jail sentences from drug charges or other misconduct and provide opportunities to educate youth
- Know the Law: A course for middle and high school students that teaches them important laws as well as the dangers of substance use
- Stress Management: For many youth, one reason they use substances is to reduce stress, cope with trauma and handle mental illnesses so stress management may lower substance use rates
- Health Education on the dangers of substances such as opioids, marijuana and alcohol can provide youth with the right information to make the right decisions
- Partner with youth-serving organizations such as Boys and Girls club to reach all youth, especially those at risk to provide resources or education outside of schools
- Parental Education: Teaching parents about how to discuss substances with their children and recognizing warning signs of substance abuse can enable parents to assist their children or intervene if necessary
- Peer-to-Peer Strategies: Often youth don't trust adults to discuss substance use issues but peers their age can make a much larger impact on their opinions. Utilizing Youth Coalitions is an effective way to teach youth as they respect their peers.

Ultimately, while these programs may improve substance abuse prevention and reduce substance use rates in the community, systemic changes are necessary as well. Substance use is often a result of environmental factors and stress that need to be addressed if substance abuse is really going to be reduced. Some of these include poverty, trauma, family issues, genetic predisposition, ease of access, social pressure and norms, media, etc. Without addressing policies, environmental and physical factors along with family dynamics, prevention efforts won't reach the entire youth population.

Furthermore, those in outlying areas of Alachua County don't have the same level of physical access as those in Gainesville since all of the treatment facilities are localized in Gainesville. Many youth don't have transportation, funds or a support system needed to ensure a successful treatment program. While our aim is on substance abuse prevention, we must understand that the lack of treatment access has enormous implications for the well-being of our community.



At the moment, the areas of most need include youth on the east side of Gainesville and outlying communities within the county such as Hawthorne due to higher rates of poverty and limited to local resources. Overall, the most important factor is stopping substance use before it even begins. If youth make it to their early twenties without using serious substances such as cocaine or heroin, then their likelihood of addiction or dependence is severely reduced. By lowering youth substance abuse, we can reduce drinking and driving, have fewer overdoses, support more youth in pursuing higher education and careers, and have a safer community for all Alachua County residents.

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