



STIs on the rise for fourth year in Arkansas

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As national STI rates continue to climb, Arkansas remains in the top 15 states with steadily increasing rates of chlamydia and gonorrhea infections. Arkansas ranked 11th and 8th in the U.S. for the

highest numbers of reported chlamydia and gonorrhea cases in 2018, surpassing national rates for the fourth consecutive year, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. There were 17,663 cases of chlamydia reported in 2018, a 2% increase from 2017 and a 5.3% increase from 2016, according to the Arkansas Department of Health's annual surveillance report.

The ADH recorded 7,300 cases of gonorrhea in 2018, an 8.6% increase from 2017 and a 26.6% jump from 2016, according to the ADH. Between 2015 and 2018, chlamydia cases increased 11.6% and gonorrhea cases increased 54.4%, according to the ADH. Of 74,390 female patients under 26 years old tested for chlamydia at 113 health centers across the U.S. in

2017, 5,151 (6.92%) tested positive, according to the most recent American College Health Association Sexual Health Services Survey. For male patients, the positivity rate was 9.36%, or 3,485 of 37,215 patients. Of 17,389 female patients tested for gonorrhea in 2017, 73 (less than 1%) were positive, according to the survey. For male patients, the

positivity rate was 2.08%, or 130 of 6,241 patients tested. STI screenings for chlamydia, gonorrhea, HIV and syphilis are available for free at all local ADH units in Arkansas, including Washington County Health Unit in Fayetteville. The UofA's student health fee does not cover STI screenings. Rates for these infections trend higher among Arkansas youth aged 15-19, according to the most recent state profile

from the Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States. Arkansas had the 4th highest rate of chlamydia cases among 15- to 19-year-olds in the U.S. in 2016, with a total of 5,304 cases reported, according to SIECUS. Gonorrhea rates were even higher among that age group, with 1,320 reported cases ranking Arkansas third highest in the U.S. in 2016.

'A last resort:' some users find LGBTQ dating apps too sexual

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While Nick Lange was looking for friends on Grindr, he never expected to receive a message from the older man across the room asking him to meet up and have sex. Lange was unsettled and uncomfortable, so he left the building. Lange, a junior and an officer for the PRIDE Registered Student Organization, has used Tinder and Grindr. Having been on Grindr since 2017, Lange thinks sex drives many of the other users on the app. Dating apps for LGBTQ people differ greatly from dating apps for all sexualities and genders like Tinder and Bumble. Users on LGBTQ dating apps like HER, Zoe and Grindr find that encounters are more focused on casual sex, unlike other apps that typically lead to finding friends or romantic relationships. Dating apps for the LGBTQ community, like Grindr and HER, appear to be full of unsolicited pictures of genitalia, unwanted interactions and many anonymous profiles. Kaliyah Jackson, a freshman who identifies as bisexual, said she encountered many cisgender men while using HER, a dating app with 4 million users that is geared toward lesbian and non-binary people. Cisgender men are prohibited from creating profiles on this platform. Jackson said using HER and Zoe, dating apps for lesbians, made her feel uncomfortable at times because of some users' sexual tone in messages and the limited number of accounts.

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- Freshman Kaliyah Jackson

Compared to HER, Tinder has 7.86 million users, according to Statista. “Using HER felt like being on a seesaw,” Jackson said. “My conversations with people just went back and forth, leading to absolutely nothing.” Jackson was explicit in her bio about strictly looking for possible relationships or friends, the majority of people Jackson matched with were solely looking for casual sex, she said. Almost to the point of giving up, Jackson said she matched with her current boyfriend on Tinder just before deleting her dating app profiles. Justin Barnum, a UA visiting assistant professor in sociology, said that dating apps change the entire nature of meeting a potential partner. Barnum said when individuals use a dating app, the act of quickly judging someone off their appearance is heightened. “The potential to meet someone that doesn't immediately catch your eye disappears greatly when using dating apps,” Barnum

said. Barnum said HER and Grindr have shifted the location where LGBTQ people meet from a physical location to a now digital space. “Historically, the gay community had a physical location, whether that be a gay bar or someone's house,” Barnum said. “Before, being gay wasn't something you were out and proud about, so in order to meet someone you had to go to these safe spaces. I think with these LGBTQ+ dating apps, the need for that physical safe space has greatly decreased.” Grindr, released in 2009, is the world's largest social network geared toward gay, bisexual and transgender people, according to Grindr.

“Recommending my friends to dating apps like Grindr would be a last resort,” Lange said. After using Grindr, 77% of users were unhappy, while 56% of Tinder users were unhappy after using the app, according to a 2018 study of 200,000 iPhone users by the Center for Humane Technology. Lange said he thinks he felt unsafe Grindr at times because other users can see how far away you are from them. Grindr allows users to block profiles, disable location settings and set a preferred age range. Lange said he thinks users on Grindr are older men looking for younger partners a lot of the time. The lack of privacy settings on Grindr, such as not being able to block other age ranges from viewing your account,

has been a challenge for Ryan Glover, a junior, who has been using dating apps since he turned 18. “There are older men who I am not necessarily interested in who can see my profile on Grindr at any time and can message me,” Glover said.

Lange said Tinder and MeetMe are more about finding actual relationships than Grindr. He said he prefers these apps over Grindr because they do not allow users to send photos to each other. While Tinder does not allow users to send pictures, Grindr and Bumble do. “It's really hard to find someone on LGBTQ dating apps that are not only interested in sex,” Lange said. “Finding someone who wants to be your partner is extremely challenging.”



Sadie Rucker Staff Photographer
Nick Lange, a junior, browses Tinder profiles on his phone Feb. 3.