

Bachman, J. G., Wallace, J. M., Jr., O'Malley, P. M., Johnston, L. D., Kurth, C. L., & Neighbors, H. W. (1991). Racial/ethnic differences in smoking, drinking, and illicit drug use among American high school seniors, 1976-1989. *American Journal of Public Health, 81*, 372-377.

Abstract

This paper reports racial/ethnic differences in the use of licit and illicit drugs, using data from fourteen nationally representative surveys of high school seniors from 1976 through 1989.

Throughout the period, Native Americans had the highest prevalence rates for use of illicit drugs except cocaine, for frequent use of alcohol, and for use of cigarettes; White students had the next highest prevalence rates for most drugs. Asian Americans had the lowest prevalence rates, and Black students had prevalence levels nearly as low, except for marijuana. Prevalence rates for the Hispanic groups were mostly in the intermediate ranges, except for a relatively high prevalence of cocaine use among the males.

Trend patterns for most forms of drug use have been similar across subgroups, with two notable exceptions: (1) cocaine use increased somewhat more than average among Hispanic seniors and less than average among Black seniors, (2) the proportions smoking cigarettes have declined more sharply among Black than among White seniors, resulting in greater Black-White differences in recent years. Multivariate analyses indicate that subgroup differences in drug use cannot be attributed to background factors such as family composition, parents' education, region, or rural-urban distinctions.