

Johnston, L. D., & O'Malley, P. M. (1986). Why do the nation's students use drugs and alcohol? Self-reported reasons from nine national surveys. *The Journal of Drug Issues*, 16(1), 29-66.

Abstract

The reasons that high school students give for their use of each of nine classes of licit and illicit substances are examined cross sectionally and over time. The data derive from the Monitoring the Future project, which involves annual surveys of large, nationally representative samples of American high school seniors. Reasons for use are found to vary substantially by drug, and also by degree of involvement with the drug; but reasons vary only to a rather limited degree by sex. An analysis of trends between 1976 and 1984 shows only a modest degree of change in the reasons given for using the various substances, despite the fact that prevalence rates for some drugs have changed substantially. Among the most commonly mentioned reasons for substance use are experimentation, social/recreational reasons, and relaxation.