

Wallace, J. M., Jr., Forman, T. A., Guthrie, B. J., Bachman, J. G., O'Malley, P. M., & Johnston, L. D. (1999). The epidemiology of alcohol, tobacco and other drug use among black youth. *Journal of Studies on Alcohol*, 60(6), 800-809.

## Abstract

*Objective.* Although there is a growing literature on racial/ethnic differences in alcohol, tobacco and other drug use among adolescents, relatively little is known about the social epidemiology of drug use *within* the black youth population. The purpose of this article is to address this knowledge gap.

*Method.* Data from the Monitoring the Future project are used to examine empirically the prevalence, trends and sociodemographic correlates of drug use among nationally representative samples of black eighth, tenth and twelfth graders (approximately N = 25,000).

*Results.* Alcohol is the drug most widely used by black youth, followed by tobacco and marijuana. By twelfth grade, seven in 10 black secondary students have used alcohol, less than 50% have smoked cigarettes, 25% have used marijuana and less than 2% have used cocaine. Trend data indicate that, although alcohol use has been relatively stable over time, cigarette and marijuana use are increasing. Gender and family structure are significant sociodemographic correlates of drug use, with use being, on average, higher among males than females, and higher among students who do not live with either of their parents than among those who live with at least one of their parents. The relationships between drug use and socioeconomic status, urbanicity and region vary depending on students' grade level and the specific drug in question.

*Conclusions.* These findings provide an important empirical baseline for future research on the epidemiology and etiology of drug use among young black people.