

Johnston, L. D., O'Malley, P. M., & Bachman, J. G. (1987). Psychotherapeutic, licit, and illicit use of drugs among adolescents: An epidemiological perspective. *Journal of Adolescent Health Care*, 8, 36-51.

Abstract

Using data from an ongoing series of large national surveys of American high school seniors, levels and trends in the use of a number of classes of drugs are reported for the decade 1975-1985. Among the classes included are the medically supervised and the illicit use of the major psychotherapeutic drugs; the use of illegal drugs such as marijuana, cocaine, hallucinogens, and heroin; and the use of cigarettes and alcohol. Physicians' prescriptions to adolescents for minor tranquilizers, barbiturates, and amphetamines are found to have changes over the decade, with considerably fewer seniors reporting such prescriptions today. The prevalence of prescribed opiate-type drugs remains unchanged. The illicit use of these psychotherapeutics has changed in similar ways, and the hypothesis that there is some causal connection between medically supervised use and non-medically supervised use is explored and given some substantiation. Nearly all of the illicitly used drugs have shown some decline in popularity during the past five years, with cocaine use being the notable exception. Alcohol use remained stable at high levels until very recently. Cigarette smoking showed some important declines in the middle of the decade but has since leveled out.