

# Study proves that context influences injection drug use among black individuals

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According to a new study by researchers at Emory's Rollins School of Public Health, contextual factors affect patterns of drug use, particularly the prevalence of injection drug use (IDU) among black adolescents and adults.

Led by Hannah Cooper, ScD, associate professor in the Department of Behavioral Sciences and Health Education at the Rollins School of Public Health, the research team used a longitudinal study of 95 US metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs) to determine whether contextual factors shape drug use among [black](#) individuals. Contextual factors included [socioeconomic factors](#), criminal justice activities, and public expenditures on social welfare and policing.

Findings showed modest improvements in the socioeconomic domain. In

the [criminal justice](#) domain scores suggest that while arrest rates declined substantially, incarceration rates increased. The expenditures domain showed an increase in public welfare, health, and policing indicators. Estimates were gathered from surveillance databases from 1993 through 2007 and suggested that Black IDU prevalence declined substantially in 1993 through 2003 and rose slightly thereafter.

"We found that MSAs with higher percentages of Black residents had lower Black IDU prevalence," explains Cooper. "This is a testament to the protective effects of the collective power in Black communities. Internalized, interpersonal, and structural discrimination creates vulnerability to substance use while a positive racial identity can protect against discrimination's harmful effects."

The study also suggested that the low rates in Black communities in MSAs with high proportions of Black residents might be largely due to the communities' development of strong networks of social resources.

According to Coopers, "Our results provide evidence that context does influence IDU. Future research should identify pathways linking economic security and Black collective agency to Black IDU prevalence."

Provided by Emory University

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