

Motivations for substance use in teens mainly linked to reducing stress, study finds

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The motivations underlying substance use among adolescents are mainly related to reducing stress, according to [research](#) published in the Feb. 8 issue of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*.

Sarah Connolly, Ph.D., from the CDC in Atlanta, and colleagues

examined self-reported motivations for using substances in a cross-sectional study conducted among adolescents being assessed for [substance use](#) disorder treatment in the United States during 2014 to 2022.

The researchers found that "to feel mellow, calm, or relaxed" was the most commonly reported motivation for substance use (73 percent), with other [stress](#)-related motivations also featuring in the top reasons, including "to stop worrying about a problem or forget bad memories" and "to help with depression or anxiety" (44 and 40 percent, respectively). Fifty percent of participants reported substance use "to have fun or experiment." Adolescents mainly reported using substances with friends or alone (81 and 50 percent, respectively).

"Public health action ensuring that youths have access to treatment and support for [mental health concerns](#) and stress could reduce some of the reported motivations for substance use," the authors write.

"These interventions could be implemented on a broad or local scale to improve adolescent well-being and reduce harms related to substance use."

More information: Sarah Connolly et al, Characteristics of Alcohol, Marijuana, and Other Drug Use Among Persons Aged 13–18 Years Being Assessed for Substance Use Disorder Treatment—United States, 2014–2022, *MMWR. Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* (2024). [DOI: 10.15585/mmwr.mm7305a1](https://doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm7305a1)

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