

Normalisation of recreational drug use among young people: Evidence about accessibility, use and contact with other drug users

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Abstract

There is evidence to suggest that illicit drug use is increasingly a normal part of the lives of many young people in Australia. The normalisation framework has been applied in limited contexts in Australia, and has not been assessed using longitudinal data. This paper uses cross-sectional periodic data collected at the Sydney Big Day Out music festival between 2006 and 2009 to examine several aspects of normalisation among festival patrons. Over the 4-year period high proportions of respondents reported that cannabis and ecstasy were very easy or fairly easy to obtain. In most years, over half the respondents reported any illicit drug use in the past 12 months. A statistically significant relationship was found between recent illicit drug use and degree of contact with other people who use drugs ($F = 64.391$, $df = 4$, $p = 0.001$). Such results suggest that certain aspects of drug use are normalised among festival patrons and that these are particularly concentrated among certain groups of young people. These groups could to be targeted when delivering drug education and prevention activities.

Web link

<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.5172/hesr.2010.19.2.164>

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