



Health & Social Care
Information Centre



Smoking, drinking and drug use among young people in England in 2013

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A survey carried out for the Health and Social Care Information Centre
by NatCen Social Research and the
National Foundation for Educational Research

Summary

This survey is the latest in a series designed to monitor smoking, drinking and drug use among secondary school pupils aged 11 to 15. Information was obtained from 5,187 pupils in 174 schools throughout England in the autumn term of 2013.

Drug Use (Part 2)

The prevalence of illegal drug use in 2013 was at similar levels to 2011 and 2012, though considerably lower than in 2001, when the current method of measurement was first used. 16% of pupils had ever taken drugs, 11% had taken them in the last year and 6% in the last month.

Older pupils were more likely than younger ones to take drugs. The prevalence of ever having taken drugs increased with age from 5% of 11 year olds to 30% of 15 year olds. There were similar patterns for drug use in the last year (from 3% to 24%) and in the last month (from 1% to 14%).

Pupils were more likely to have taken cannabis in the last year than any other drug.

In 2013, 28% of pupils reported that they had ever been offered drugs.

The report also includes findings on the use of individual drugs, frequency of taking drugs, drug use by vulnerable pupils and sources of information about drugs that young people find helpful.

Smoking (Part 3)

In 2013, less than a quarter of pupils said that they had smoked at least once. At 22%, this was the lowest level recorded since the survey began in 1982, and continues the decline since 2003, when 42% of pupils had tried smoking.

3% of pupils reported that they smoked at least one cigarette a week, the survey definition of regular smoking. This was also at the lowest level measured since 1982, and considerably below the 9% recorded in 2003.

The prevalence of smoking increased with age. In 2013, less than 0.5% of 11 and 12 year olds said that they smoked at least one cigarette a week, compared with 4% of 14 year olds and 8% of 15 year olds.

This report also includes findings about cigarette smoking in the last week, including the numbers of cigarettes smoked and the days on which pupils smoke.

Drinking alcohol (Part 4)

In 2013, around two-fifths of pupils (39%) had drunk alcohol at least once. Boys and girls were equally likely to have done so. The proportion of pupils who have had an alcoholic drink increased with age from 6% of 11 year olds to 72% of 15 year olds.

Less than one in ten pupils (9%) had drunk alcohol in the last week. This continues the downward trend since 2003, when a quarter (25%) of pupils had drunk alcohol in the last

week. Older pupils were more likely to have drunk alcohol in the last week: the proportion increased from 1% of 11 year olds to 22% of 15 year olds.

Pupils who had drunk in the last week had drunk an average (mean) of 8.2 units, less than in recent years. Boys and girls drank similar amounts.

Most pupils who had drunk alcohol in the last week had consumed more than one type of drink. Beer, lager and cider accounted for the majority of the alcohol boys drank (63%). Among girls, less than a third of the alcohol was drunk as beer, lager or cider (30%). The remainder was likely to be in the form of wine (25%), spirits (22%), or alcopops (20%).

The report also includes findings about pupils' patterns of drinking.

Smoking, drinking and drug use (Part 5)

The estimates from this survey indicate that in England in 2013 around 100,000 pupils aged between 11 and 15 were regular smokers, around 280,000 had drunk alcohol in the past week, around 190,000 had taken drugs in the last month, and around 350,000 had taken drugs in the last year.

Under half (48%) of pupils aged between 11 and 15 said that they had tried smoking, drunk alcohol or taken drugs at least once in their lives. 16% had done one or more of these recently. They were most likely to have drunk alcohol in the last week (9%), rather than smoked in the last week (6%) or taken drugs in the last month (also 6%).

More than half (53%) of pupils thought it was OK for someone of their age to try drinking alcohol, and about a third (31%) thought that it was OK to try smoking. Pupils were much less likely to approve of drug use: 9% thought it was OK for someone to try cannabis, 7% sniffing glue, and just 2% thought that it was OK for someone their age to try cocaine.

Almost all schools reported that they provided pupils with lessons about tobacco, alcohol and legal and illegal drugs, and most schools said that they provided pupils with at least one lesson a year about each of these topics.

Around three in five pupils said that they recalled having lessons about smoking, drinking alcohol or drug use in the last year. Most pupils thought that their school gave them enough information about smoking (73%), drinking (70%) and drug use (66%).

About NatGen Social Research

NatGen Social Research is an independent institute specialising in social survey and qualitative research for the development of public policy. Research is in areas such as health, housing, employment, crime, education and political and social attitudes. Projects include ad hoc, continuous and longitudinal surveys, using face to face, telephone and postal methods; many use advanced applications of computer assisted interviewing.



About the National Foundation for Educational Research

The National Foundation for Educational Research has been engaged in educational research since 1946 and is an independent foundation with charitable status. The Foundation undertakes research and evaluation for local and national agencies, in the government, commercial and charitable sectors. The research programme is concerned with all aspects of education and training, a major part being concerned with the public education system.

