



Smoking, drinking and drug use among young people in England

Findings by region, 2006 to 2008

A survey carried out for the NHS Information Centre
by the National Centre for Social Research
and the National Foundation for Educational Research



Published by The NHS Information Centre for health and social care.

NHS IC Responsible Statistician
Paul Eastwood, Lifestyles Statistics Section Head
Contact via enquiries@ic.nhs.uk, tel: 0845 300 6016

Copyright © 2010, The Health and Social Care Information Centre. All rights reserved.

This new set of statistics has not been formally assessed for compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. However, the Statistics Authority has agreed that, in view of the fact that the statistics are the product of secondary analysis of existing National Statistics, they can be designated as National Statistics. The producer body has confirmed that the new statistics are produced to the same standards as the existing ones.

This work remains the sole and exclusive property of The Health and Social Care Information Centre and may only be reproduced where there is explicit reference to the ownership of The Health and Social Care Information Centre.

This work may only be reproduced in a modified format with the express written permission of The NHS Information Centre.

First published 2010.

ISBN 978-1-84636-378-8

Designed by Davenport Associates

Smoking, drinking and drug use among young people in England

Findings by region, 2006 to 2008

Background

The survey of smoking, drinking and drug use among young people in England (SDD) has been carried out annually by the National Centre for Social Research (NatCen) and the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) since 2000.¹ It is commissioned by the NHS Information Centre, with support from the Home Office; the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) also has an interest in the statistics. Findings are used to inform policy and monitor progress towards government targets.²

The survey uses a two-stage probability sample of schools and pupils, designed to be representative of young people aged between 11 and 15.³ The sample of schools is stratified by sex of intake and school type. Within these strata, the sampling frame is sorted by local authority. This design does not guarantee a representative sample of schools within all regions and so reliable estimates by region cannot currently be derived from any one year's data.⁴

This note presents key survey findings by region, based on data from the three most recent survey years, 2006 to 2008, combined and weighted to be regionally representative. Differences are commented on only if significant at the 95% confidence level.⁵ Details of the weighting methodology can be found at the end of this work.

Smoking

In recent years, the proportions of young people who try smoking and who become regular smokers have declined. In 2006, the proportion of 11 to 15 year olds who said that they had smoked at least once in their lives was 39%; this fell to 33% in 2007 and 32% in 2008. The survey defines regular smoking for this age group as usually smoking at least once a week. The proportion of this age group who were regular smokers was 9% in 2006, and 6% in both 2007 and 2008. Girls are more likely to smoke than boys and there is an increase in the prevalence of regular smoking with age.

Table 1 shows the proportions of 11 to 15 year olds who have ever smoked, by region and sex.⁶ This varies by region from 31% in London to 42% in the North East. In the North East, North West and Yorkshire and Humberside, girls are more likely than boys to have tried smoking. Differences by sex are not significant in other regions.

Table 2 shows the prevalence of regular smoking among 11 to 15 year olds, by region and sex. This varies by region from 5% in London to 10% in the North East. In all regions girls are more likely than boys to be regular smokers.

Drinking alcohol

As with adults, 11 to 15 year olds are more likely to drink alcohol than to smoke. Within this age group, the proportions who have had at least one alcoholic drink varied between 55% in 2006 and 52% in 2008. Over the same period, there was a similar decline in the proportions who had drunk in the last week from 21% to 18%. Boys and girls are equally likely to drink alcohol.

In 2007, SDD, in common with other publicly funded surveys, revised the method of calculating alcohol intake from drinks consumed.⁷ These estimates of alcohol consumption are based on the revised method of calculation. In 2006 to 2008, average consumption for 11 to 15 year olds who had drunk alcohol in the last week was between 13 and 16 units. Among those who have drunk in the last week, boys drink more than girls.

Table 3 shows the proportions of 11 to 15 year olds who have ever had an alcoholic drink, by region and sex. Young people in this age group in London are much less likely to have ever drunk alcohol than those living elsewhere. In London, 39% had ever drunk alcohol; otherwise this proportion varies between regions from 51% in the East Midlands to 63% in the North East.

Table 4 shows the proportions of this age group who drank alcohol in the last week, by region and sex.⁸ Again, young people in London are much less likely than those elsewhere to have had a drink in the last week (12%); elsewhere the proportion varies from 19% in the East Midlands and the South East to 26% in the North East.

The mean consumption (units of alcohol) of those who drank in the last week, by region and sex, is shown in Table 5.⁹ The amount consumed varies by region; it is lowest in London (11.3 units) and highest in the North East (17.7 units).¹⁰

Drug use

The survey asks about awareness, availability and use of 15 named drugs. The prevalence of drug use has declined since 2001. The proportion of 11 to 15 year olds who reported having taken any drugs in the last year was 17% in 2006 and 2007 and 15% in 2008. Similar proportions of boys and girls had taken drugs in the last year.

Table 6 shows the prevalence of drug use in the last year by region and sex. The proportion of 11 to 15 year olds who have taken drugs at least once varies from 15% in the South West to 20% in the North West. Prevalence is similar among boys and girls in all regions.

The most commonly taken drug in this age group is cannabis. In 2006, 10% of 11 to 15 year olds had taken cannabis in the last year; in both 2007 and 2008 9% reported this. Boys are more likely than girls to have taken cannabis.

As Table 7 shows, the prevalence of cannabis use in the last year varies by region from 8% in the North East to 12% in the North West.

Notes and references

- 1 SDD is a continuation of a series of earlier surveys which began with a survey of schoolchildren's smoking in 1982.
- 2 Full reports on the surveys are published by the NHS Information Centre.
Fuller E (ed) Smoking, drinking and drug use among young people in England in 2008. The NHS Information Centre, Leeds, 2009. <http://www.ic.nhs.uk/pubs/sdd08fullreport>
Fuller E (ed) Drug use, smoking and drinking among young people in England in 2007. The NHS Information Centre, Leeds, 2008. <http://www.ic.nhs.uk/pubs/sdd07fullreport>
Fuller E (ed) Smoking, drinking and drug use among young people in England in 2006. The NHS Information Centre, Leeds, 2007. <http://www.ic.nhs.uk/pubs/sdd06fullreport>
- 3 For further information about the survey design, see Fuller E (2009) cited above.
- 4 From 2010, the sample design will change to be representative of the ten English Strategic Health Authorities.
- 5 When referring to differences between regions, the overall pattern of variation across England is described. While significant variations between regions may exist overall, this does not imply that any one region stands out by being significantly different from every other region. Where this is the case, it will be indicated.
- 6 Including those who have only had a puff or two, not a whole cigarette.
- 7 For further information about the change in calculation methods and the rationale behind it, see Fuller E (2007), cited above.

- 8 Defined as a whole drink, not just a sip.
- 9 One unit of alcohol is equivalent to 10ml of pure alcohol.
- 10 Because of small base sizes it is not possible to compare the consumption of boys and girls within regions.

Table 1

The proportions of young people who have ever smoked, by Government Office Region and sex: 2006-2008

11 to 15 year olds

2006-2008

Ever smoked	Government Office Region								
	North East	North West	Yorkshire & the Humber	West Midlands	East Midlands	East of England	London	South East	South West
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Boys	35	34	38	32	34	32	31	33	34
Girls	49	41	42	36	37	35	30	36	35
Total	42	38	40	34	35	33	31	35	34
<i>Unweighted bases</i>									
Boys	585	1760	1037	1195	1672	1424	1238	1832	1246
Girls	537	1777	1105	1125	1593	1332	1435	1683	1064
Total	1122	3537	2142	2320	3265	2756	2673	3515	2310
<i>Weighted bases</i>									
Boys	607	1678	1154	1135	1340	1371	1626	1990	1185
Girls	584	1621	1104	1079	1277	1307	1575	1868	1137
Total	1192	3299	2258	2214	2618	2678	3201	3858	2322

Table 2

Prevalence of regular smoking, by Government Office Region and sex: 2006-2008

11 to 15 year olds

2006-2008

Smokes regularly	Government Office Region								
	North East	North West	Yorkshire & the Humber	West Midlands	East Midlands	East of England	London	South East	South West
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Boys	6	6	8	6	7	6	4	6	5
Girls	14	11	11	8	9	8	6	8	8
Total	10	8	9	7	8	7	5	7	7
<i>Unweighted bases</i>									
Boys	585	1760	1037	1195	1672	1424	1238	1832	1246
Girls	537	1777	1105	1125	1593	1332	1435	1683	1064
Total	1122	3537	2142	2320	3265	2756	2673	3515	2310
<i>Weighted bases</i>									
Boys	607	1678	1154	1135	1340	1371	1626	1990	1185
Girls	584	1621	1104	1079	1277	1307	1575	1868	1137
Total	1192	3299	2258	2214	2618	2678	3201	3858	2322

Table 3

The proportions of young people who have ever drunk alcohol, by Government Office Region and sex: 2006-2008

11 to 15 year olds

2006-2008

Ever drunk alcohol	Government Office Region								
	North East	North West	Yorkshire & the Humber	West Midlands	East Midlands	East of England	London	South East	South West
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Boys	61	56	60	57	50	57	39	54	60
Girls	65	56	60	58	52	55	39	52	56
Total	63	56	60	57	51	56	39	53	58
<i>Unweighted bases</i>									
<i>Boys</i>	570	1713	1009	1167	1638	1383	1204	1777	1209
<i>Girls</i>	529	1724	1082	1108	1578	1309	1415	1651	1037
<i>Total</i>	1099	3437	2091	2275	3216	2692	2619	3428	2246
<i>Weighted bases</i>									
<i>Boys</i>	592	1633	1123	1108	1313	1331	1581	1931	1150
<i>Girls</i>	576	1573	1080	1062	1266	1284	1553	1831	1109
<i>Total</i>	1168	3205	2203	2171	2579	2616	3134	3763	2258

Table 4

Proportions of young people who drank alcohol in the last week, by Government Office Region and sex: 2006-2008

11 to 15 year olds

2006-2008

Drank alcohol in the last week	Government Office Region								
	North East	North West	Yorkshire & the Humber	West Midlands	East Midlands	East of England	London	South East	South West
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Boys	26	21	26	23	18	23	12	20	23
Girls	27	22	25	21	20	21	13	19	20
Total	26	21	25	22	19	22	12	19	21
<i>Unweighted bases</i>									
<i>Boys</i>	570	1713	1009	1167	1638	1383	1204	1777	1209
<i>Girls</i>	529	1724	1082	1108	1578	1309	1415	1651	1037
<i>Total</i>	1099	3437	2091	2275	3216	2692	2619	3428	2246
<i>Weighted bases</i>									
<i>Boys</i>	592	1633	1123	1108	1313	1331	1581	1931	1150
<i>Girls</i>	576	1573	1080	1062	1266	1284	1553	1831	1109
<i>Total</i>	1168	3205	2203	2171	2579	2616	3134	3763	2258

Table 5

Mean consumption of alcohol by young people who drank in the last week, by Government Office Region and sex: 2006-2008

11 to 15 year olds who drank in the last week

2006-2008

Alcohol drunk in the last week	Government Office Region								
	North East	North West	Yorkshire & the Humber	West Midlands	East Midlands	East of England	London	South East	South West
	Units of alcohol								
Boys	20.2	18.2	16.9	14.1	16.5	14.4	11.8	14.8	15.1
Standard error of the mean	2.59	1.12	1.48	1.33	1.35	1.08	1.30	1.17	1.46
Girls	15.5	14.6	15.7	14.2	15.7	11.6	10.8	12.0	13.0
Standard error of the mean	1.73	0.86	1.30	1.27	1.73	0.86	1.19	0.94	1.27
Total	17.7	16.3	16.3	14.2	16.1	13.0	11.3	13.5	14.2
Standard error of the mean	1.70	0.71	1.14	1.03	1.13	0.77	0.90	0.76	0.97
<i>Unweighted bases</i>									
<i>Boys</i>	100	270	193	202	239	230	105	287	221
<i>Girls</i>	112	303	213	203	252	240	139	262	158
<i>Total</i>	212	573	406	405	491	470	244	549	379
<i>Weighted bases</i>									
<i>Boys</i>	112	267	234	194	196	242	143	322	218
<i>Girls</i>	124	281	225	192	210	239	163	300	180
<i>Total</i>	236	548	460	386	406	481	306	622	397

Table 6

Proportions of young people who took drugs in the last year, by Government Office Region and sex: 2006-2008

11 to 15 year olds

2006-2008

Took drugs in the last year	Government Office Region								
	North East	North West	Yorkshire & the Humber	West Midlands	East Midlands	East of England	London	South East	South West
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Boys	16	20	17	18	17	16	17	17	16
Girls	16	19	19	15	15	16	15	16	14
Total	16	20	18	17	16	16	16	16	15
<i>Unweighted bases</i>									
<i>Boys</i>	543	1601	941	1124	1539	1311	1120	1689	1169
<i>Girls</i>	494	1669	1029	1071	1520	1265	1345	1596	1014
<i>Total</i>	1037	3270	1970	2195	3059	2576	2465	3285	2183
<i>Weighted bases</i>									
<i>Boys</i>	565	1529	1052	1068	1235	1265	1473	1837	1112
<i>Girls</i>	539	1523	1030	1027	1220	1242	1478	1772	1085
<i>Total</i>	1104	3052	2082	2095	2455	2508	2951	3610	2197

Table 7

Proportions of young people who took cannabis in the last year, by Government Office Region and sex: 2006-2008

11 to 15 year olds

2006-2008

Took cannabis in the last year	Government Office Region								
	North East	North West	Yorkshire & the Humber	West Midlands	East Midlands	East of England	London	South East	South West
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Boys	9	13	11	11	10	10	10	9	11
Girls	8	11	11	8	8	9	7	9	9
Total	8	12	11	10	9	10	9	9	10
<i>Unweighted bases</i>									
<i>Boys</i>	579	1720	1016	1181	1637	1407	1206	1786	1233
<i>Girls</i>	527	1760	1099	1118	1590	1316	1432	1669	1056
<i>Total</i>	1106	3480	2115	2299	3227	2723	2638	3455	2289
<i>Weighted bases</i>									
<i>Boys</i>	601	1641	1132	1122	1313	1354	1585	1941	1173
<i>Girls</i>	574	1606	1098	1072	1275	1292	1572	1853	1128
<i>Total</i>	1175	3247	2230	2194	2588	2646	3156	3794	2301

Methodology

Data from the 2006, 2007 and 2008 SDD surveys were combined. Weights were constructed taking into account sex, school year, region and survey year; for each subgroup, the population proportion was divided by the sample proportion. The weights were trimmed to three decimal places before being applied to the data set.

Population data was supplied by DCSF, based on school year 2006/2007 (i.e. the mid-year of the three surveys).

School year was used as a weighting variable rather than age. Within schools, the samples of pupils are selected using stratification by school year. The equivalent variable from the population data is based on pupils' ages. These are standardised and so are effectively equivalent to the normal school year (for example, 11 years in the data equates to Year 7). Data on actual school year is not available for all schools in the database (most notably independent schools).

Unweighted and weighted key survey estimates, based on the total sample, are compared below.

Estimate		Prevalence	Base
Regular smokers	unweighted	7.1%	23640
	weighted	7.3%	23639
Drank in last week	unweighted	19.7%	23103
	weighted	20.3%	23096
Mean alcohol consumption in last week (based on the revised method of calculation)	unweighted	14.5 units	3758
	weighted	14.5 units	3871
Took drugs in last year	unweighted	16.3%	22040
	weighted	16.7%	22052

About the National Centre for Social Research

The National Centre for Social Research (NatCen) 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.

