

A2 Scottish Schools Adolescent Lifestyle and Substance Use Survey 2004 (SALSUS)

This chapter is based on the Scottish Schools Adolescent Lifestyle and Substance Use Survey (SALSUS) 2004: Interim Report, prepared by the Child and Adolescent Health Research Unit (CAHRU), The University of Edinburgh. ISD have amended the format of the tables of the 2004 Interim Report presented in this chapter. This has been done for consistency with other sections of the Drug Misuse Statistics Scotland 2004. The chapter covers key results concerning drug misuse and provides brief background information about the survey. The Interim National Report contains a selection of key findings in advance of the full national report to be published in Spring 2005. The Interim Report was released electronically and can be accessed at; http://www.drugmisuse.isdscotland.org/publications/abstracts/salsus_interim04.htm

Key Points

Overview of SALSUS survey

- In 2004, a third (33%) of 13 year olds and nearly two-thirds (63%) of 15 year olds reported that they had ever been offered illicit drugs. (Table A2.1)
- Seven per cent of 13 year olds and 20 per cent of 15 year olds reported that they had used an illicit drug in the month prior to the survey. (Table A2.3)
- Two per cent of 13 year olds and 7 per cent of 15 year olds reported using illicit drugs at least once a week. (Table A2.6)
- At age 13, more boys (36%) than girls (30%) reported having been offered illicit drugs. These gender differences were not apparent at age 15 (boys 63%, girls 63%). (Table A2.1)
- The percentage of young people reporting having used drugs in the last month did not vary by gender (13 year olds, boys 7%, girls 6%; 15 year olds, boys 21% girls 20%). (Table A2.3)
- Nine per cent of 15 year old boys reported using illicit drugs on a weekly basis compared to 5 per cent of girls. There was little difference between reported weekly drug use by boys and girls at age 13 years (boys 3%, girls 2%). (Table A2.6)
- For all 13 year olds who reported using illicit drugs the most frequently reported location was outdoors (street, park etc.): 49 per cent of boys and 45 per cent of girls. This was also the most frequently reported location among 15 year old boys (39%). Among 15 year olds girls, 'someone else's home' (36%) and outdoors (33%) were the most reported locations. (Table A2.7)

Drugs Recorded

- The most frequently reported drug used was cannabis: 6 per cent of all 13 year olds and 19 per cent of all 15 year olds reported that they had used cannabis in the last month. Ever having used cannabis was reported by 12 per cent of all 13 year olds and 34 per cent of all 15 year olds. (Tables A2.4 and A2.5)
- The reported use of drugs other than cannabis was low. The use of stimulants (cocaine, crack, ecstasy, amphetamine, poppers) in the last month was reported by 2 per cent of 13 year olds and 4 per cent of 15 year olds. The use of solvents in the last month was reported by 1 per cent of both 13 year olds and 15 year olds. Use of opiates in the last month was reported by 1 per cent of pupils in both age groups. (Table A2.4)
- The reported lifetime use for solvents was 3 per cent for 13 year olds and 6 per cent for 15 year olds; equivalent figures for opiates were 1 per cent for 13 year olds and 2 per cent for 15 year olds. (Table A2.5)

Trends 1998 - 2004

- Between 1998 and 2004 there has been a reduction in the percentage of both 13 and 15 year olds who report being offered drugs: 13 year olds, 1998 38 per cent, 2004 33 per cent; 15 year olds, 1998 68 per cent, 2004 63 per cent. (Table A2.1)

- In relation to the changes in reported drug use between 2002 and 2004 only the decline in 15 year old boys' drug use in the last month reached statistical significance (24% to 21%). (Table A2.3)

Relationship between drinking, smoking and use of illicit drugs

- Overall 7 per cent of 13 year olds and 20 per cent of 15 year olds had used drugs in the last month. However, among regular smokers, 59 per cent of 13 year olds and 64 per cent of 15 year olds had used drugs in the last month. The prevalence was lower than this among weekly drinkers, but still higher than the overall prevalence, 34 per cent of 13 year olds and 45 per cent of 15 year olds who were weekly drinkers had also used drugs in the last month. (Table A2.8)

Background Information

The survey continues the series of surveys commissioned by the Scottish Executive, begun in 1982, which provides the national estimates of the proportion of young people in school aged under 16 who smoke, drink alcohol and /or use illegal drugs. SALSUS was established by the Scottish Executive to monitor substance use in the context of other lifestyle, health and social factors.

Information on young people's drug use was first collected in this series of surveys in 1998, using a small number of questions to provide estimates of the proportion of pupils who used drugs and had been offered drugs. The same questions were repeated in 2000 and, with one exception, again in 2002 and 2004. When SALSUS was undertaken in 2002 more detailed information was required on sources of drugs, frequency of use, pupils' need for help or information, attitudes towards drugs and drug users and knowledge of drugs, and money spent on drugs.