

Press release – Thursday 27th November 2003

The Scottish Schools Adolescent Lifestyle and Substance Use Survey (SALSUS) National Report

This report presents findings from the first Scottish Schools Adolescent Lifestyle and Substance Use Survey undertaken in 2002 by the Child and Adolescent Health Research Unit (CAHRU), The University of Edinburgh.

Interim key findings from the survey were originally released on the web on December 20th 2002. The National Report published today contains further information on substance use as well as contextual information on other lifestyle and social factors.

Both the Interim Report and the full National Report can be accessed via:

<http://www.drugmisuse.isdscotland.org/publications/abstracts/salsus.htm>

Some selected new information from the National Report includes:

Lifestyle, social and health factors in relation to substance use:

- Pupils who smoked, drank or used drugs were more likely to report having difficulty in talking to their parents about things that really bothered them than pupils who did not smoke drink or use drugs

For example:

- 33% of 13 year olds and 32% of 15 year olds who were regular smokers reported that they had difficulty in talking to their mother about things that really bothered them compared with 17% of 13 year olds and 23% of 15 year olds who were non-smokers
- 27% of 13 year olds and 29% of 15 year olds who drank alcohol in the week before the survey reported that they had difficulty in talking to their mother about things that really bothered them compared with 13% of 13 year olds and 20% of 15 year olds who never drank alcohol
- 39% of 13 year olds and 35% of 15 year olds who used drugs in the month before the survey reported that they had difficulty in talking to their mother about things that really bothered them compared with 16% of 13 year olds and 22% of 15 year olds who never use drugs
- Pupils who smoked, drank or used drugs were more likely to report hanging around the streets in their free time than pupils who did not smoke, drink or use drugs

For example:

- 80% of 13 year olds and 62% of 15 year olds who were regular smokers reported that they 'hang around the streets' most days or every day compared with 37% of 13 year olds and 29% of 15 year olds who were non-smokers

- 64% of 13 year olds and 46% of 15 year olds who drank alcohol in the week before the survey reported that they 'hang around the streets' most days or every day compared with 25% of 13 year olds and 18% of 15 year olds who never drank alcohol
- 78% of 13 year olds and 58% of 15 year olds who used drugs in the month before the survey reported that they 'hang around the streets' most days or every day compared with 36% of 13 year olds and 27% of 15 year olds who never use drugs
- Pupils who smoked, drank alcohol or used drugs were also more likely to have had sexual intercourse than pupils of the same age and gender who were non-smokers, had never drunk alcohol or had never used drugs¹.

For example:

- Among 15 year olds, 68% of girls who were regular smokers and 62% of boys who were regular smokers had had sexual intercourse compared with 22% girls and 22% of boys who were non-smokers
- Among 15 year olds, 50% of girls and 42% of boys who drank in the week before the survey had had sexual intercourse compared with 5% of girls and 11% of boys who had never drunk alcohol
- Among 15 year olds, 67% of girls and 53% of boys who used drugs in the month before the survey had had sexual intercourse compared with 19% girls and 17% of boys who had never used drugs
- Pupils who smoked, drank or used drugs were more likely to report having truanted than pupils who did not smoke drink or use drugs

For example:

- 77% of 15 year old regular smokers reported that they had played truant at least once in the school year compared with 42% of 15 year old non-smokers
- 65% of 15 year olds who drank in the week before the survey reported that they had played truant at least once in the school year compared with 25% of 15 year olds who had never drunk alcohol
- 77% of 15 year olds who used drugs in the month before the survey reported that they had played truant at least once in the school year compared with 39% of 15 year olds who had never used drugs

Availability of cigarettes, alcohol and drugs

- Shops and off-licences were the most frequently reported sources of alcohol purchased by those 15 year olds who had ever drunk alcohol: 24% of 15 year

¹ Questions on sexual health were asked of 15 year old pupils only.

olds reported buying alcohol from shops and 23% reported buying from off-licences

- 63% of 13 year olds and 93% of 15 year olds who were regular smokers bought their cigarettes from shops
- Cannabis was the most commonly reported drug used in the last month: 21% of 15 year olds and 6% of 13 year olds. Very few pupils reported using any other drug.
- Friends were most commonly reported as a source of drugs. Fifteen year olds who had ever used drugs were more likely to report a friend of their own age (43%) than an older friend (29%) as their source. However, 13 year olds who had ever used drugs were just as likely to obtain drugs from older friends (25%) as from a friend of the same age (24%)
- A third (32%) of all 13 year olds and 63% of all 15 year olds felt it would be 'very easy', or 'fairly easy' to get illegal drugs.

Background and Notes to Editors

1. SALSUS 2002 combines, for the first time, the questions from the national biennial series of surveys on substance use in young people, with questions on other lifestyle and social factors. The sample size allows reporting of the findings at a national and local level. Findings from SALSUS concerning associations between substance use and other lifestyle and social factors support earlier research studies and surveys.
2. Due to the cross sectional nature of this survey, any associations found should not be taken to imply any direct or indirect causal relationship.
3. Biennial surveys of secondary school pupils have been commissioned by the Scottish Executive to monitor smoking, drinking and drug use since 1982. Early surveys in the series provided information on smoking prevalence, drinking has been included since 1990 and drug use since 1998.
4. The survey covered over 23,000 13 and 15 year olds in schools across Scotland and provided local as well as national information. Local reports were issued early in 2003.
5. Interim key findings from the survey were originally released on the web on December 20th 2002 and include information on trends in smoking, drinking and drug use among 13 and 15 year old pupils in Scotland, summarised below:
 - While there has been a decline in regular smoking among 15 year old boys since 1996, there has been little change in smoking rates among 15 year old girls and 13 year old boys and girls over previous years
 - The prevalence of drinking in the previous week has increased over the last four years among 15 year old boys and among 13 year old girls

- Drug use among these age groups has not changed significantly since 1998, when information on drug use was first collected.
6. CAHRU is a specialist research unit that focuses on child and adolescent health within the school-aged population (see <http://www.education.ed.ac.uk/cahru>)
 7. ISD Scotland's primary role is to support NHSScotland and other associated organisations on information matters. Within ISD the Drug Misuse and Alcohol Information Teams carry out work on behalf of the Scottish Executive and local drug and alcohol action teams and their constituent organisations.

For further information:

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