

Drug, Alcohol and Tobacco use by young people in Cumbria

A report from the Health Related Behaviour Survey 2006

These results are from a compilation of data collected from a sample of primary pupils aged 10 to 11 and secondary pupils aged 12 to 15 in Cumbria during Summer 2006. This work was commissioned by Cumbria Healthy Schools and the Drug Action Team as a way of collecting robust information about young people's lifestyles.

Teachers were briefed on how to collect the most reliable data and then pupils in Years 6 in the primary schools and Years 8 and 10 in the secondary schools anonymously completed the questionnaire. A total of 2054 pupils took part in 8 secondary schools and 15 primary schools.

Completed questionnaires were then returned to SHEU in Exeter for processing.

LINKS

We are studying the links between different parts of young people's lifestyles, and some of the early findings are given on page 6.

Trends

This survey has been undertaken repeatedly since 1988. An analysis of some of the secondary schools' data over the period is shown on pages 7 and 8.

2054 young people were involved in the survey

School year	Year 6	Year 8	Year 10	Total
Age	10-11	12-13	14-15	
Boys	255	423	342	1020
Girls	223	440	371	1034
Total	478	863	713	2054

Reference Sample

Cumbria data have been compared with a compilation of survey areas that have completed similar versions of the questionnaire:

School year	Year 6	Year 8	Year 10	Total
Age	10-11	12-13	14-15	
Boys	3373	3028	2691	9092
Girls	3336	2664	2651	8651
Total	6709	5692	5342	17743

A selection of some of the statistically significant differences, where the level seen in the Cumbria data is either 5% above or below that in the wider reference data, are given on page 4.

For more details please contact Alan Tarn (Contact details on back page).

Topics include

Drugs, Alcohol and Tobacco

Citizenship

Emotional Health and Well-being

Healthy Eating

Homework

Leisure

Physical Activity

Puberty and Growing Up

Safety

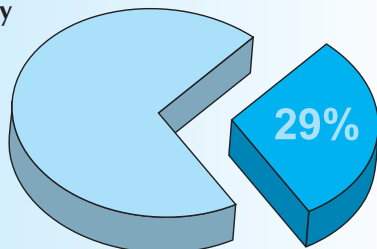
School and Career

Sex and Relationships

Cumbria Primary school pupils in Year 6 (ages 10 and 11)

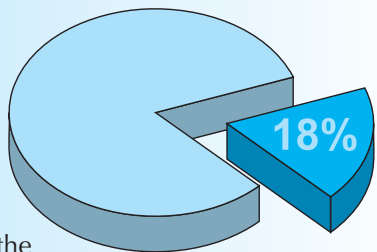
Drugs

- 63% of pupils reported that their parents had talked to them about drugs while 71% said their teachers had.
- 29% say they are 'fairly sure' or 'certain' they know a user of drugs (not medicines).**
- 4% of pupils said they had been offered cannabis. 5% said they had been offered other drugs.



Alcohol

- 18% of the primary school sample had at least one alcoholic drink (more than a sip) in the last week.**
- Greater proportions of the drinkers in Year 6 were boys.
- 5% of pupils reported that they did sometimes drink alcohol without their parents knowing.
- The most popular drinks were beer and pre-mixed spirits and alcopops.



Tobacco

- 7% of pupils reported that they had tried smoking once or twice.
- 3% of Year 6 pupils said they had smoked at least one cigarette during the last 7 days. Of these smokers, 30% smoked 5 or more cigarettes
- 87% said they wouldn't smoke when older, 11% said maybe and 3% think they will smoke when they are older.

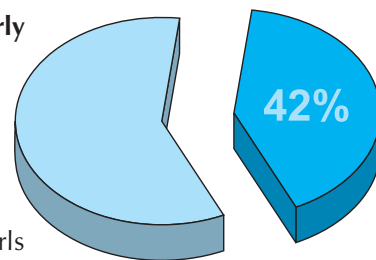


TOBACCO: Cigarette smoking kills more than 120,000 people in Britain every year. Smoking is highly addictive and many of those who take up smoking regularly carry on until the day they die even though they have tried to stop many times. Most smokers take up smoking in their school years. This places schools in the front line of the battle to reduce the massive toll of death and illness caused by this addiction.

Cumbria Secondary school pupils in Year 8 & Year 10 (ages 12-13 and 14-15)

Drugs

- 42% of pupils are 'fairly sure' or 'certain' that they know someone who takes drugs.**
- 37% of Year 10 boys and 39% of Year 10 girls have been offered cannabis.
- When asked if they had ever taken an illegal drug, 24% of year 10 pupils reported that they had. 12% had taken one in the last month.
- 15% of Year 10 boys and 14% of Year 10 girls have taken an illegal drug and alcohol on the same occasion.
- 7% of Year 10 pupils said they had taken more than one type of drug on the same occasion.

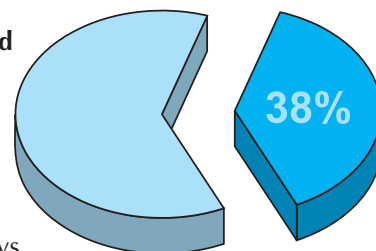


Alcohol

- 39% of pupils had at least one alcoholic drink in the week before the survey.
- Boys: 10% of Year 8 boys and 32% of Year 10 boys drank between 4 and 20 units of alcohol in the seven days before the survey.
- Girls: 12% of Year 8 girls and 27% of Year 10 girls drank between 4 and 20 units of alcohol in the seven days before the survey.
- 15% of Year 10 boys and 8% of Year 10 girls said they drank 21 or more units of alcohol in the seven days before the survey.
- 16% of Year 10 boys and 9% of Year 10 girls were able to buy alcohol from an off-licence that should sell only to over-eighteen's.
- Pre-mixed spirits, beer and spirits were the most popular drinks.

Tobacco

- 38% of pupils reported that there is someone who smokes indoors in their home most days.**
- Boys: 4% of Year 8 boys and 16% of Year 10 boys reported that they smoke occasionally or regularly.
- Girls: 8% of Year 8 girls and 26% of Year 10 girls reported that they smoke occasionally or regularly.
- The greater percentage of female smokers in Year 10 is also reflected in the reference sample.



A summary for the six most common illegal drugs

These drugs have been chosen because they are the six commonest in most surveys. The numbers in the following table(s) are percentages, with figures for the reference sample following in brackets. Figures for illegal drugs were very similar to those seen elsewhere

(Year 10 only, reference data in brackets)

	Know nothing about them	Believe safe if used properly	Have used in last month	Have used
Amphetamines	47 (46)	11 (8)	1 (1)	4 (3)
Cannabis resin/leaf	25 (26)	39 (36)	10 (9)	23 (22)
Cannabis oil	38 (38)	18 (12)	2 (1)	5 (*)
Ecstasy	24 (25)	11 (6)	2 (1)	4 (3)
Synthetic hallucinogens	31 (30)	7 (6)	1 (0)	1 (2)
Solvents	24 (25)	18 (14)	2 (1)	5 (3)

Pyramid data: Questions included in both the primary and secondary versions of the questionnaire

The following is a selection of data relating to the set of questions found in both the primary and secondary versions of the questionnaire. It is always interesting to see how young people change as they grow up but this analysis is also useful because it can raise some important questions for local discussion.

Did you drink alcohol in the last week?

- 18% of primary pupils had at least one alcoholic drink in the last week, this rose to 39% for secondary pupils.
- 4% of primary pupils and 14% of secondary pupils had drunk beer in the last seven days. The proportions drinking pre-mixed spirits and 'alcopops' were 7% of primary pupils and 19% of secondary pupils.

Do you know anybody who uses drugs that are not medicines? Have you used drugs?

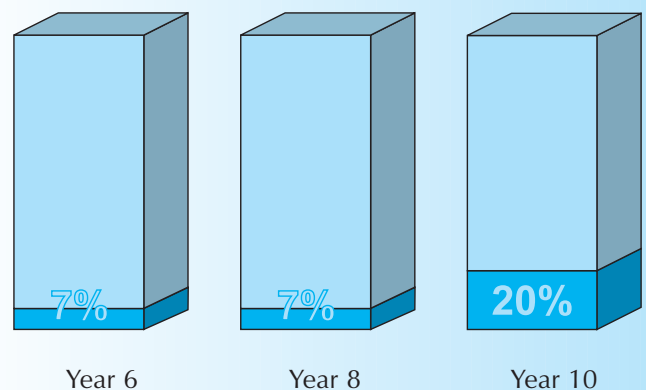
- 29% of primary pupils and 42% of secondary pupils are 'fairly' sure or 'certain' that they know someone who uses drugs that are not medicines.
- 15% of all secondary pupils have taken at least one of the drugs listed in the questionnaire at some point.



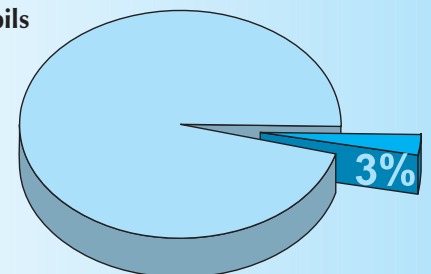
DRUGS: Each drug carries its own short and long term risks whether legally or illegally produced, but the following are particular risk factors involved in using any illicitly manufactured drug: (1) Users can never be sure of exactly what they are taking, (2) Not knowing the strength of what has been bought could lead to an accidental overdose (which may be life-threatening) (3) Users can't be precisely sure of the effect the drug will have, even if they have taken it before.

Have you smoked in the past?

- 7% of primary pupils said they had tried smoking once or twice. This rose to 20% for secondary pupils.



- 3% of primary pupils said they thought they would definitely smoke when older.

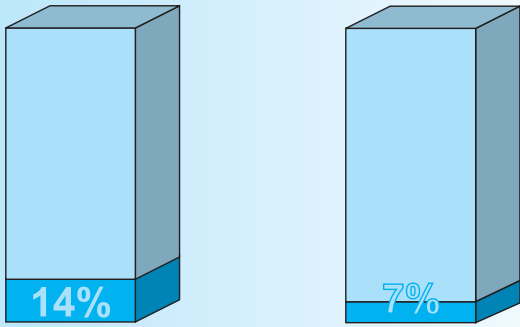


- 7% of secondary pupils said they smoked regularly and want to give up. 2% however smoke regularly *and don't want to give up*.

How normal is Cumbria?

ALCOHOL

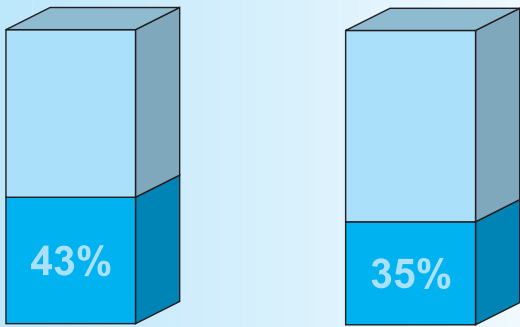
↑ A greater proportion of primary school pupils had at least one drink in the last 7 days: 14% compared with 7% of the reference sample.



Cumbria

Reference sample

↑ A greater proportion of secondary school pupils said they drank alcohol on at least one day in the last week 43% compared with 35% of the reference sample.



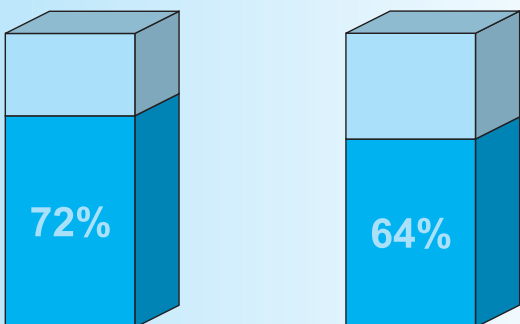
Cumbria

Reference sample

↑ Other measures of alcohol use were higher in Cumbria: 15% of Year 10 boys drank more than 21 units of alcohol in the seven days before the survey compared with 8% of the reference sample. 12% of Year 10 pupils drank alcohol in a pub or a bar compared with 7% of the reference sample.

SMOKING

↑ A greater proportion of Year 8 pupils said they had never smoked, 72% compared with 64% of the reference sample.

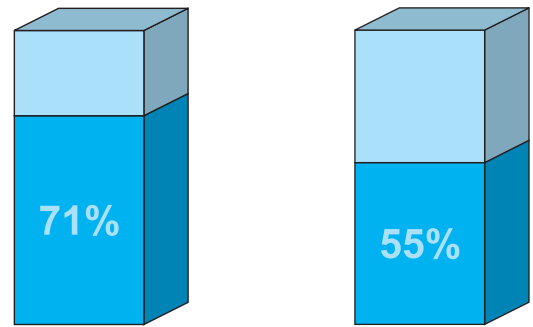


Cumbria

Reference sample

DRUGS

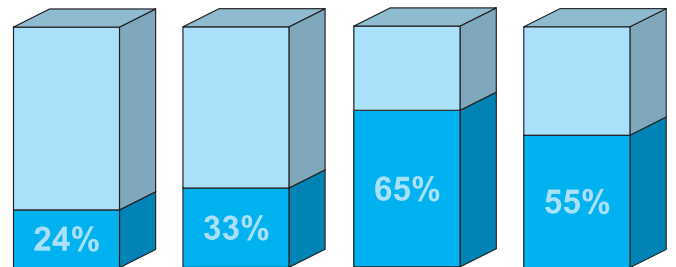
↑ 71% of pupils say that their teachers have talked to them about drugs compared with 55% in the reference sample.



Cumbria

Reference sample

↓ Fewer year 8 pupils thought they knew someone personally who takes drugs, 24% compared with 33% of the reference sample. However, 65% of year 10 pupils thought they knew someone personally who takes drugs, compared with 55% of the reference sample.



Cumbria

Year 8
Reference sample

Cumbria

Year 10
Reference sample

Comments



It seems that patterns of drug use in Cumbria are quite similar to those seen in other parts of the country. This doesn't mean that we think the levels are acceptable.



The work in Cumbria about legal and illegal drugs use for young people includes:

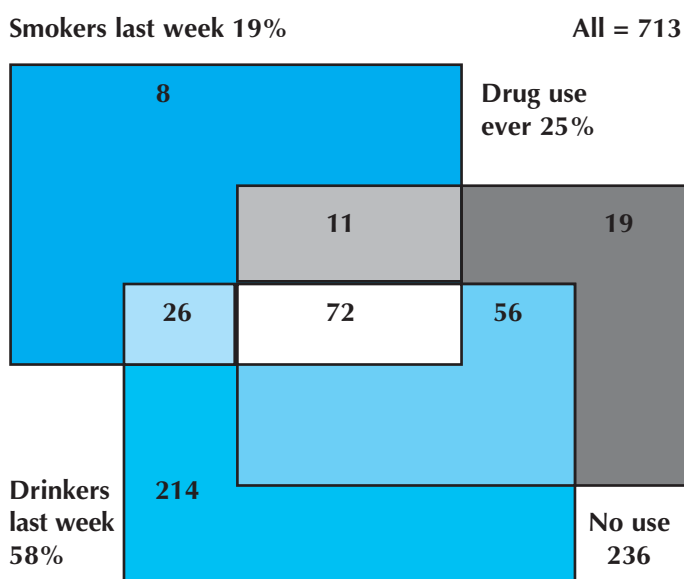
- PSHE Advisory service
- National Healthy School Scheme
- School Drug Advisors
- Services for young people who are drug or alcohol users

Links between smokers last week, drinkers last week and ever used drugs

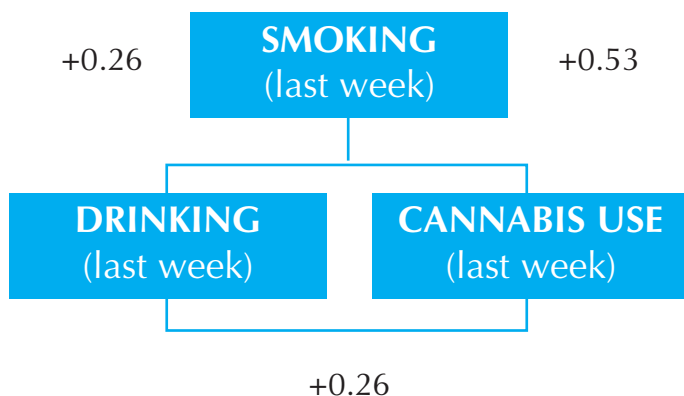
There were 713 Year 10 pupils in the survey.

- 19% of Year 10 pupils smoked last week
- 58% of Year 10 pupils drank last week, and
- 25% of Year 10 pupils have ever tried illegal drugs.

By chance, then, we would expect about 3% of the Year 10 pupils to fit all three categories – which would be just 20 of them. In fact, we find 72 Year 10 pupils fitting all three categories, which means that if you fit one, you are more likely to fit the others. Of 133 smokers, only 8 neither drank last week nor had ever tried other drugs.



Another way of saying this is to say that the three behaviours are *correlated*. If these correlations are given a number between zero and one, the figures for Year 10 females are:

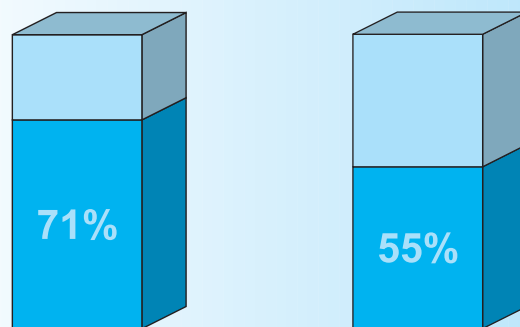


Cannabis attitudes and cannabis use

Attitudes and behaviours are linked. We ask young people about their beliefs about drugs and can show that this is related to what they have done.

Cannabis use among young people in Year 10 with different beliefs about the drug

% cannabis ever used



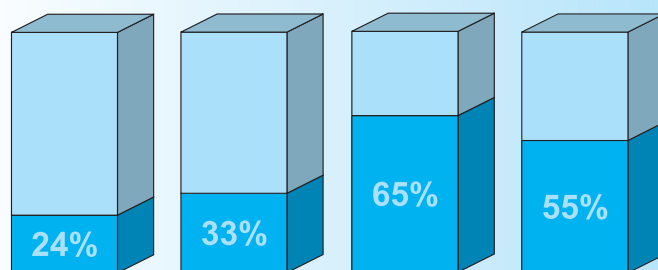
If they think cannabis is safe if used properly

If they think cannabis is always unsafe to use

Constructing the table in this way suggests that people have an attitude that they base their behaviour on, but of course the reverse may be true: experience of the drug (and socialising with other drug users) may lead to a change in attitudes or beliefs.

Beliefs about cannabis among young people in Year 10 with different use of the drug

% who believe cannabis is safe if used properly



Never used cannabis

More than a year ago

Within last year

Within last month

Comments

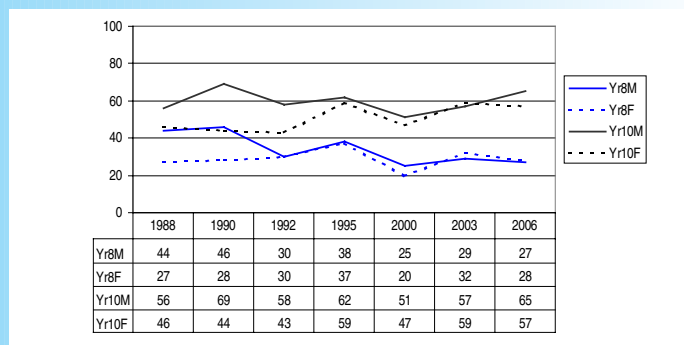


Smoking and drinking and other drug use all can be part of a young person's lifestyle and to some extent are linked. It is probably helpful to consider these different behaviours together.

TRENDS

The HRBQ survey has been undertaken in Secondary school in Cumbria on 7 occasions, 1988, 1990, 1992, 1995, 2000, 2003 and 2006. It has been possible to look at certain questions and analyse the data over the whole period to see if any trends are discernible. Different schools took part in different years and the data shown below therefore needs to be treated with a degree of caution.

Percentage of secondary pupils drinking any alcohol in the last week, 1988-2006.

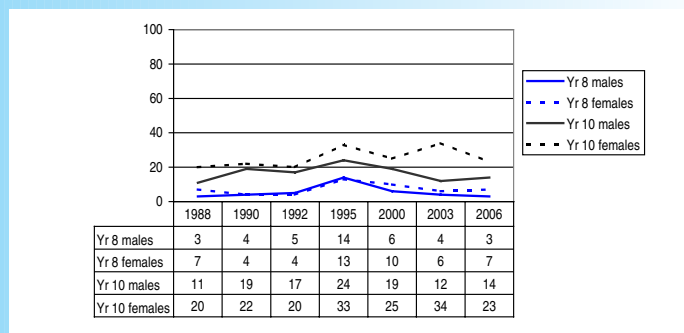


- The amount drunk by drinkers has remained largely stable over the period of the survey
- The proportion of year 8 pupils reporting drinking at all has, if anything, gone down over the years. The picture is less clear with year 10 pupils. There has been increasing proportions of year 10 males reporting drinking over the period 2000-2006, but this has not yet reached 1990 levels. Year 10 females have largely remained stable over the years, though it has been generally higher over the period 1995-2006 than 1988-1992.
- In 1988 and 1990 there was a clear difference between the numbers of males and females reporting drinking, with more boys reporting than girls. Over time, this pattern has changed, with relatively similar proportions of boys and girls reporting drinking.



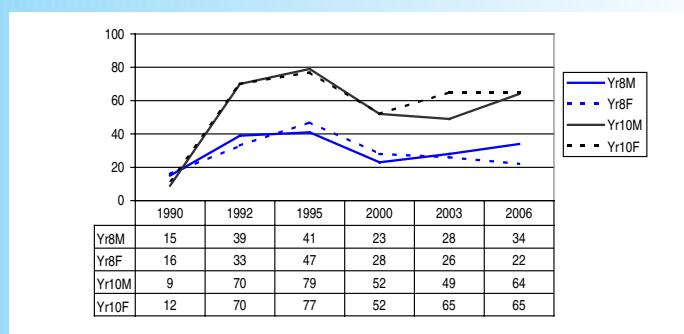
Young people make a very fast transition between drinking very little under adult supervision to drinking independently as adults by the time they are about 16.

Percentage of secondary pupils smoking in the last week, 1988-2006.



- The proportion of pupils who smoke in these Cumbria schools has been quite stable year-on-year, with the exception of a peak in 1995. There has been a drop in the Year 10 female sample for 2006, almost back to pre-1995 levels. The peak in 1995-96 seems also to be present in the databanks of SHEU.
- It is not easy to tell from these figures whether this 1995 peak is due to a behaviour change, or just because the schools involved that year had generally high smoking levels. If we look at the two schools which were present in each of the first four waves of the survey, then we see a rather similar pattern, suggesting that there was indeed a peak in smoking levels among young people in Cumbria in 1995.

Percentage of secondary pupils who know a drug user ('fairly sure' or 'certain'), 1990-2006.

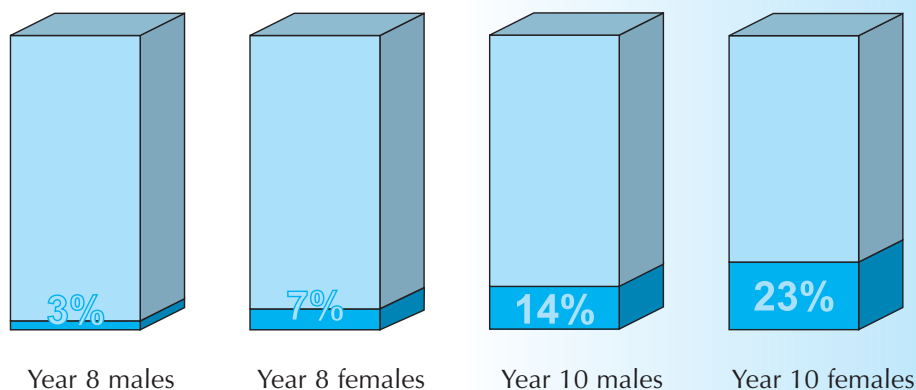


- The proportion reporting knowing a drug user peaked in 1995, a pattern that can be seen both in the Cumbria data and in the reference samples.
- The proportion of Year 6 and year 10 pupils in Cumbria schools who know a drug user is higher than in the reference sample. However, year 8 pupils in Cumbria are less likely to report knowing a drug user.
- This pattern with a peak in 1995 is also seen for experimentation with illicit drugs

* in 1990 there were different answers in the survey, percentage equals those responding 'Yes'

Links between smoking, drinking and cannabis use with other aspects of young people's lifestyles

As part of the study, an analysis was made of smoking, drinking alcohol and experience of illegal drugs. The purpose was to find other aspects of young people's lifestyles that were linked with the target behaviours. There are some very obvious links with age and gender, particularly in smoking:



Other aspects of lifestyle can be linked (correlated) with using tobacco, alcohol or other drugs:

SMOKING among year 10 females was linked with:

- lower self-esteem and less sense of control;
- greater levels of anxiety;
- more spending on socialising;
- fewer 'healthy' food choices;
- poorer engagement with school; lower GCSE hopes; and
- less involvement with sport

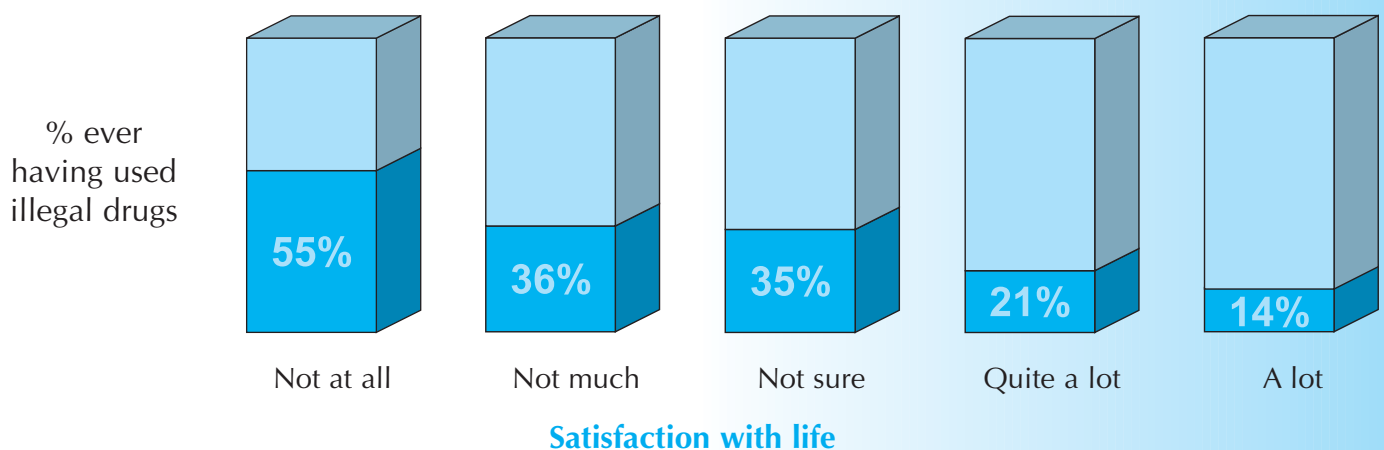
DRINKING in Year 10 females was linked with:

- greater anxiety;
- more spending on socialising;
- more drinking of 'fizzy' drinks;
- and more social activity

EXPERIENCE OF CANNABIS in Year 10 males was linked with:

- poorer satisfaction with life;
- greater levels of anxiety;
- more spending on social life;
- fewer 'healthy' food choices; and
- poorer engagement with school, less likely to want to stay in education

- This work is continuing to build up a clearer picture of the habits of young people and how use of tobacco, alcohol or illegal drugs fit in to the lifestyles of some individuals.
- A picture emerges of cannabis use being found most commonly among males who have active social lives and who are not fully engaged with school; they are also more likely to be anxious about one of a number of issues (but not particularly concerned about healthy eating).
- When we say 'linked', what does that look like? Let's take that statement that *experience of cannabis in year 10 males was linked with poorer satisfaction with life*.
- Overall, 25% of year 10 pupils have ever tried illegal drugs. But this figure is different, depending on how satisfied the young people are with their life: the figures in the chart are from Year 10 (males and females).



What we can see from this chart is that if you are *not at all* satisfied with your life, you are more than three times as likely to have ever used drugs than are classmates who are *a lot* satisfied.

Comments



Just as it is not sensible to view drug use in isolation from the picture we see for smoking and drinking alcohol, it is also useful to see drug use in the context of the whole lifestyle of young people – how satisfied are they with their lives, how they are getting on at school, what sort of spending money they have, and so on. Exactly how the use of tobacco, alcohol and other drugs makes sense in their lives is perhaps something only they can tell us.



Cumbria Drug and Alcohol Service (CADAS) have family support workers county wide who offer pop-ins and support groups to people who are being affected by someone else's drug or alcohol use. They can be contacted on 01228 544 140

The Way Forward – over to you

The work was funded by Children's Services and DAAT.

We are grateful to the teachers, schools, and young people for their time and contributions to this survey. As a result of their work we have excellent data to be used by schools, the Children's Services, the D.A.A.T as well as other statutory and voluntary agencies that support the health of young people in Cumbria. This work will inform action plans for joint working between and within organisations involved in improving the health and well being of pupils in schools.

Our thanks go to the staff and pupils that took part:

Primaries

Appleby Primary School
Bookwell Primary School
Heron Hill School
Inglewood Junior School
Newbarns Primary School
Robert Ferguson Primary School
Roose School
St. Begh's Catholic Junior School
St. Mark's CE School
St. Mary's Catholic Primary School
Shap Endowed CE Primary School
Stanwix Primary School
Thornhill Primary School
Vicarage Park CE Primary School
Yewdale School

Secondaries

Caldew School
Kirkbie Kendal School
North Cumbria Technology College
Parkview School
Queen Elizabeth Grammar School
St. Benedict's RC High School
Trinity School
Wyndham School

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