

# 5 Legal and Illegal Drugs

Information about the use of drugs, whether legal or illegal, is often sensationalised. It is an area where the teacher may feel handicapped by a lack of knowledge about people's degree of use, and a confidential questionnaire offers the best chance of deriving reliable information. Although tobacco and alcohol are in a general sense 'legalised', some of the questions reveal the extent of under-age purchase of alcoholic beverages. Information about personal and use of 'illegal' drugs is presented, together with the perceived danger associated with their use. 'Young People and Illegal Drugs in 2000' (Balding, 2000) provides a more detailed analysis of the findings. See also 'Trends: Young People and Smoking 1983-2005' and 'Trends-Young People and Alcohol 1983-2005'.



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# 5 Legal and Illegal Drugs



## Question

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# Alcoholic drinks

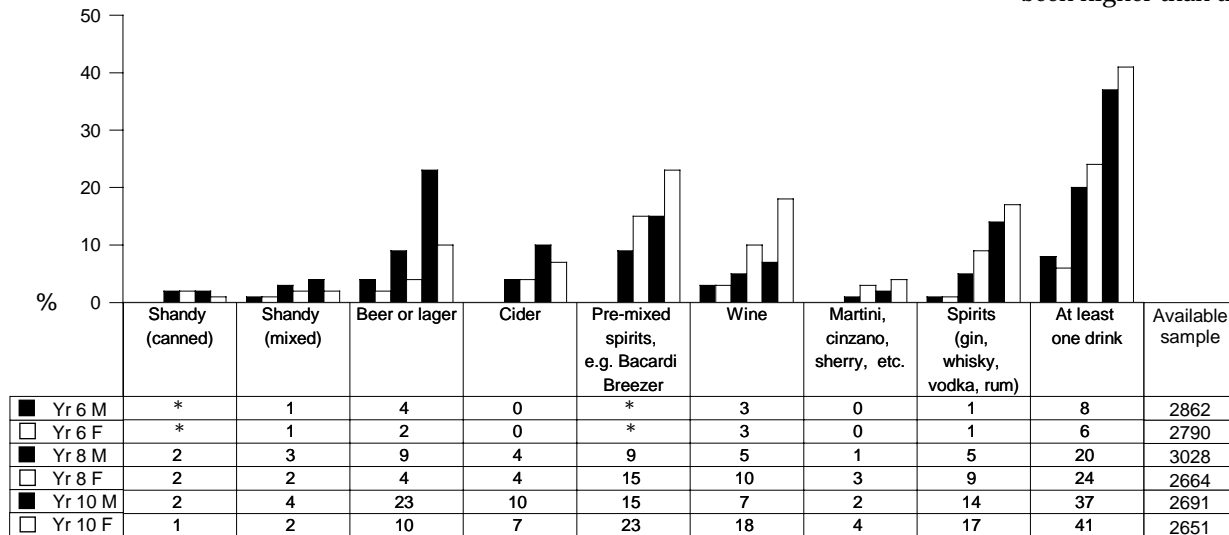
Up to 41% of the Year 10's had consumed *at least one drink*

## During the last 7 days, have you had any of these alcoholic drinks?

### Comments

1. *Pre-mixed spirits* is the most popular drinks group for the females, and beer or lager for the males. The table shows that more than 24% of the Year 8 pupils, and up to 41% of the Year 10 pupils, had consumed at least one of these drinks.
2. The inclusion of figures from Year 6 suggests that alcohol careers are established at an early age.
3. *Pre-mixed spirits* account for 23% and *spirits* account for 17% of the choice from Year 10 females.

1. Canned shandy is barely alcoholic, but is recorded here to distinguish it unambiguously from mixed beer shandy.
2. Low-alcohol drinks have various strengths.
3. We note that more Year 10 females than males drank *pre-mixed spirits*, *wine* and *spirits*.
4. As noted in the introduction, the figures seen in our studies for the proportion of young people using alcohol in the previous week have been higher than those found in other research.



\* Options not available for Year 6

# Canned shandy

A young males' drink

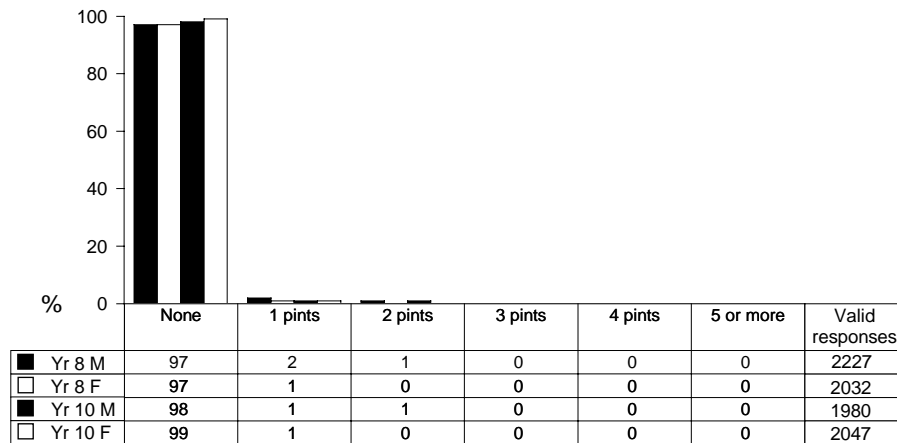
## During the last 7 days, how many pints of canned shandy have you drunk?

One small can is counted as half a pint, and half-pints are rounded up to the next whole pint. Canned shandy is not included in total alcohol intake.

### Comments

1. This drink appeals mainly to Year 8 males.

1. Canned shandy is not very alcoholic, but its associations with 'real' drink may make it appealing. It may also be less sweet than other canned drinks.
2. We have seen a decline in the popularity of both canned and mixed shandy, *Young People in 1998* (Balding, 1999). Have 'alcopops', which appeared at the beginning of shandy's decline, had anything to do with it?



# Mixed shandy

A young males' drink

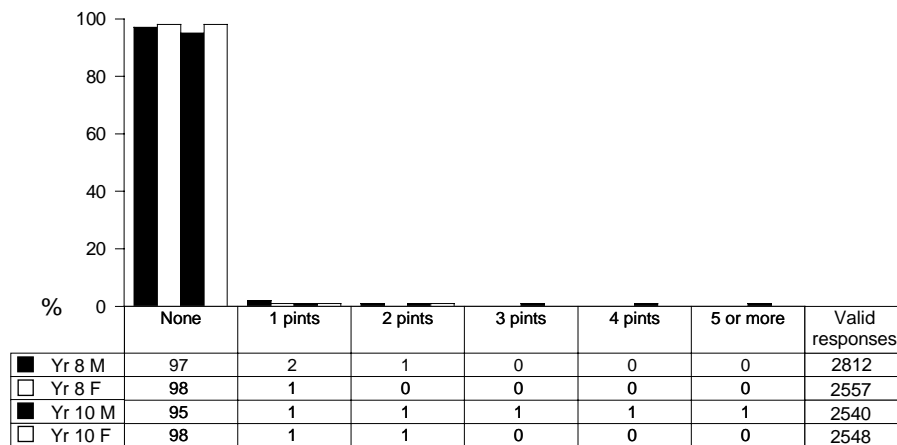
## During the last 7 days, how many pints of mixed shandy have you drunk?

Half-pints are rounded up to the next whole pint. One pint is taken as one unit of alcohol when assessing total alcohol intake.

1. The Year 8 males are the principal drinkers of mixed shandy.
2. It is less popular with the females, and with the older pupils.

### Comments

1. Beer and lemonade are needed to produce a mixed shandy. The message seems to be that the Year 10s are less keen to dilute their beer with lemonade.
2. As suggested previously with canned shandy and supported by the decline with age, the mixing of shandy with lemonade may serve as an introduction to the taste of beer to the younger age group.



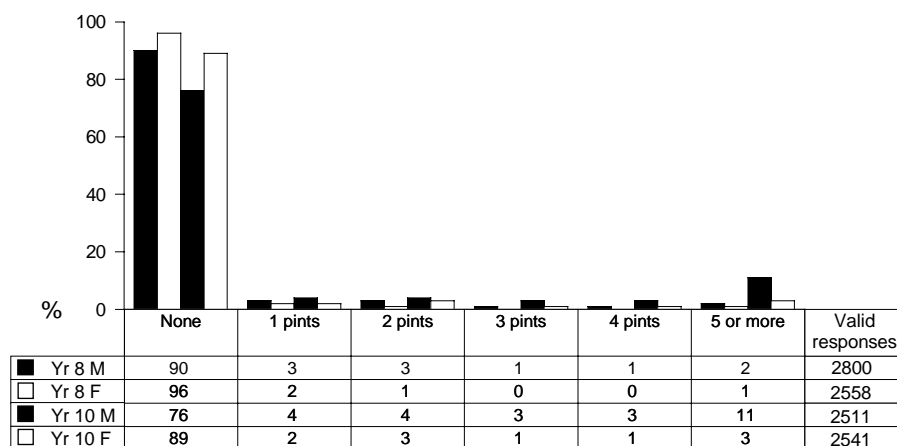
# Beer or lager

24% of the Year 10 males drank at least 1 pint

## During the last 7 days, how many pints of beer or lager have you drunk?

One pint is counted as two units of alcohol when assessing total alcohol intake, and half a pint is counted as one unit.

1. The attraction of beer or lager is much greater to the Year 10s, and to the males in particular, although 11% of the Year 10 females report drinking beer or lager in the last 7 days.



### Comments

1. Beer or lager is a predominantly male type of drink, although in 1995 a quarter of the females had drunk some — we suspect that this may have been lager rather than beer.
2. Data from 1983 (SHEU, 'Trends-Young People and Alcohol. 1983-2005'), show there is an overall downward trend in 12-15 year olds drinking beer or lager 'in the last 7 days'. However, the following table shows a comparison between 1991 and 2005 of those 14-15 year old males that drank at least 1 pint 'in the last 7 days':

During the last 7 days, how many pints of beer or lager have you drunk?	None	1 pint	2 pints	3 pints	4 pints	5 pints+
Males 14-15yrs. (2005)	76%	4%	4%	3%	3%	11% (17%)
Males 14-15yrs. (1991)	66%	16%	7%	4%	2%	4% (12%)

Direct comparisons between years are misleading. However to gauge a trend, the data suggest that fewer report drinking in 2005 (76%). Of those 24% that drank in 2005, 17% are drinking 5 or more units compared with 12% in 1991. It would thus appear that fewer are drinking but 'drinkers' are consuming more.

# Cider

Up to 10% of the Year 10 group drank one or more pints

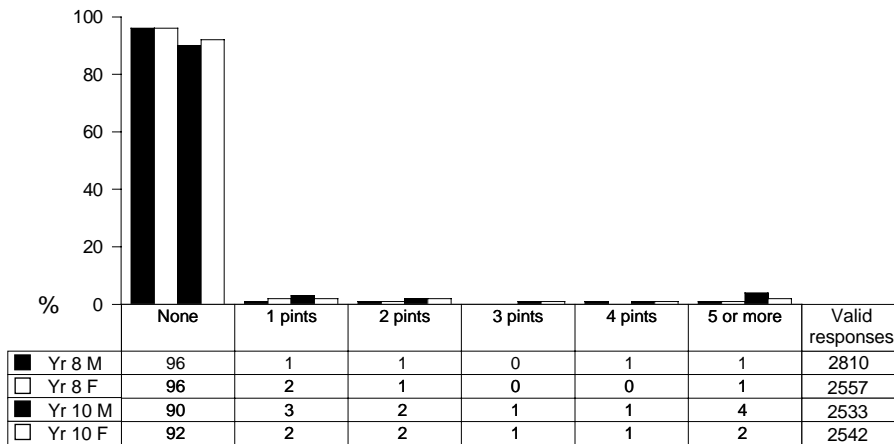
## During the last 7 days, how many pints of cider have you drunk?

One pint is counted as two units of alcohol when assessing total alcohol intake, and half a pint is counted as one unit.

### Comments

1. Cider appeals to both genders.

1. We have noticed from our regional surveys that cider consumption does vary across the UK.



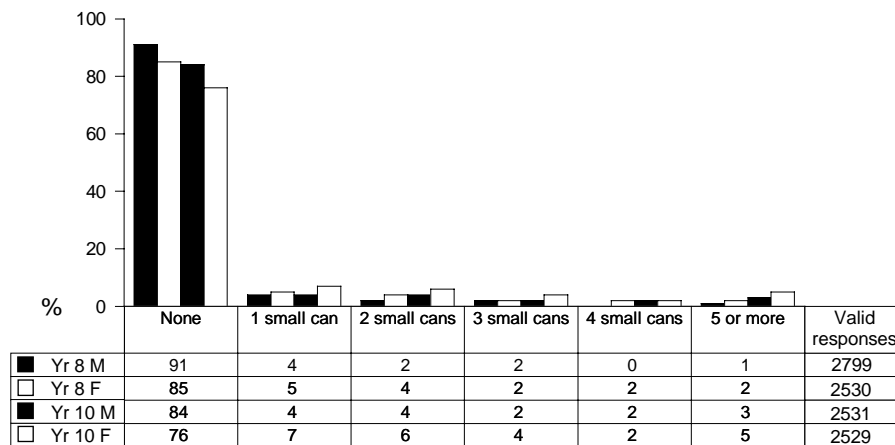
# Pre-mixed spirit drinks

24% of Year 10 females drank at least 1 can/bottle

## During the last 7 days, how many cans/bottles of pre-mixed spirit drinks have you drunk?

One can/bottle is taken as half a pint, and half-pints are rounded up to the next whole pint. One can/bottle is taken as one unit of alcohol when assessing total alcohol intake,

1. Pre-mixed spirit drinks (e.g. Alcopops) have an appeal to Year 10 females and 24% drank at least 1 can/bottle.



### Comments

1. These controversial drinks were launched with a lot of publicity, and were immediately added to the 'Young People...' questionnaire checklist in 1995.
2. A fear was voiced that 'alcopops' would be a gentle way of developing a taste for alcohol, and may have been marketed in part with that intention. In a detailed discussion of the place of 'alcopops' in young people's drinking patterns, ('Young People and Alcohol', Balding, 1997), we concluded that the consumers of alcoholic soft drinks tended also to consume a wider variety of other alcoholic drinks, which did not argue the case either way. However, we also discovered that the 'alcopoppers' were more likely to drink alcohol in places away from home compared with the others.
3. Figures from 1996, for Year 10 females, range from 18% (1998/99) to 31% (2004) see below:

% of Year 10 females drinking at least 1 can/bottle during the last 7 days

	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Yr 10 Females	25%	24%	18%	18%	20%	30%	24%	24%	31%	24%



# Wine

19% of older females drank at least one glass

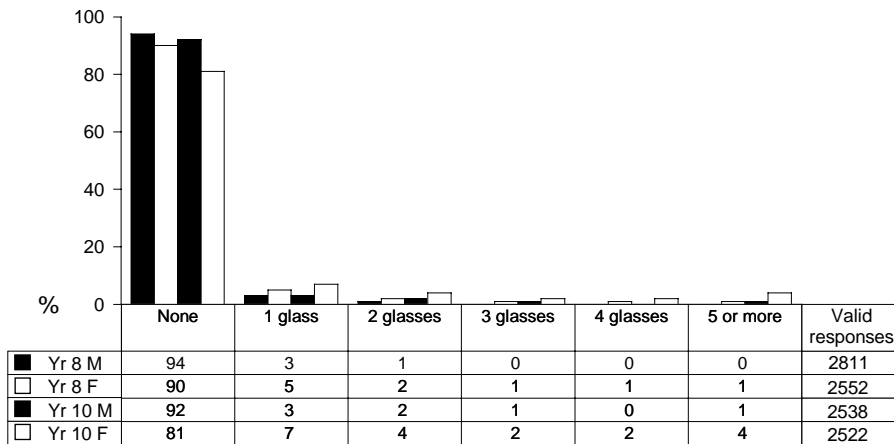
## During the last 7 days, how many glasses of wine have you drunk?

One glass is taken as one unit of alcohol when assessing total alcohol intake.

1. There is little gender difference in Year 8, but in Year 10 significantly more females than males had drunk some wine in the last 7 days.

### Comments

1. Our surveys have usually shown wine to be a 'female' drink'; page 53 shows that it was drunk by more females than males.
2. We suspect that most wine-drinking goes on at home and adults buying wine from supermarkets with the family shopping. Drinking with meals is one way of introducing children to alcohol 'responsibly'.



# Fortified wine

Not much appeal for young people

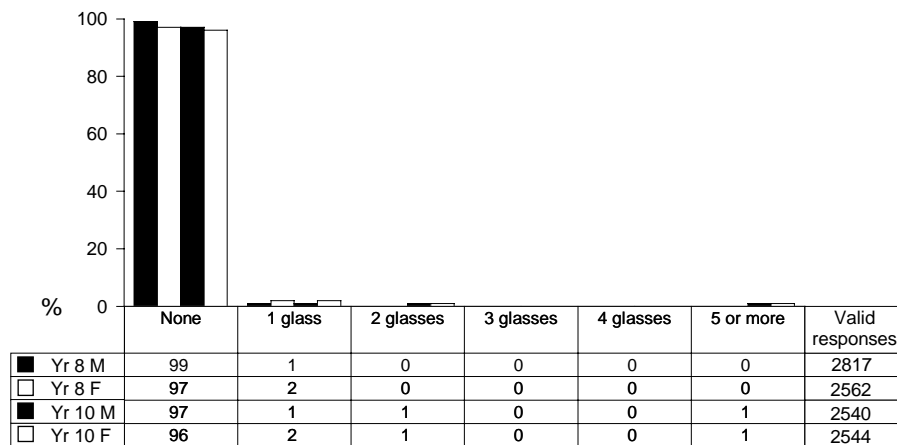
## During the last 7 days, how many glasses of fortified wine have you drunk?

### Comments

One glass is taken as one unit of alcohol when assessing total alcohol intake.

1. Few Year 8 pupils had drunk any fortified wine; it is more popular with the Year 10 females.

1. The questionnaire gives *Martini, Cinzano, Sherry, etc.* as examples of fortified wine.
2. These drinks have generally declined in popularity with the exception of port.



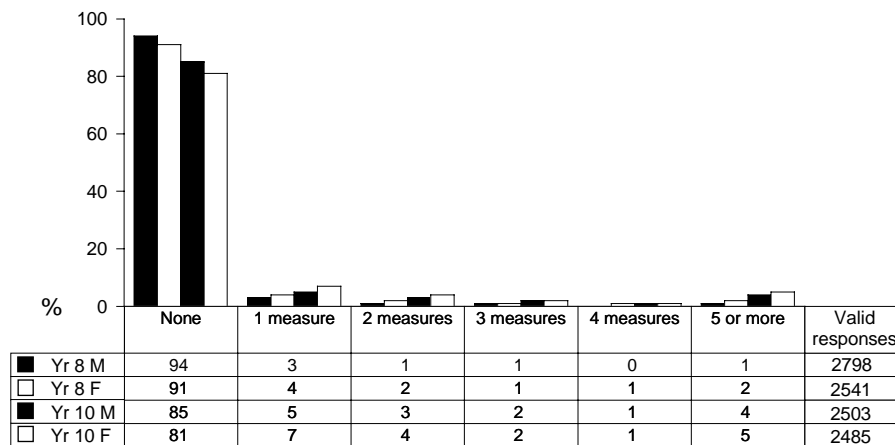
# Spirits

19% of Year 10 females had drunk one or more measures

## During the last 7 days, how many measures of spirits have you drunk?

One measure is taken as one unit of alcohol when assessing total alcohol intake.

1. Very little difference is noticeable between males and females with Year 10 females again consuming more than the males.



### Comments

1. The Year 10 females 'overtook' the males as spirit-drinkers in 1996, although the females have always been behind the males in Year 8. Clearly they develop a taste for strong beverages around the age of 14.
2. We suspect that the amorphous nature of 'alcopops', which now include many spirit-based drinks, have enhanced the recent percentages (see page 58).
3. Data from 1983 (SHEU, 'Trends-Young People and Alcohol. 1983-2005'), show there is no overall downward trend in 12-15 year olds drinking spirits 'in the last 7 days'. However, the following table shows a comparison between 1991 and 2005 of those 14-15 year old females that drank at least 1 measure 'in the last 7 days':

During the last 7 days, how many measures of spirit have you drunk?	None	1	2	3	4	5+
Females 14-15yrs. (2005)	81%	7%	4%	2%	1%	5% (26%)
Females 14-15yrs. (1991)	87%	5%	3%	1%	1%	3% (23%)

In 2005, 19% drank at least 1 measure and, of those, 26% drank 5 or more measures 'in the last 7 days'. It would thus appear that more are drinking spirits and 'drinkers' are consuming more.

# Alcohol units consumed

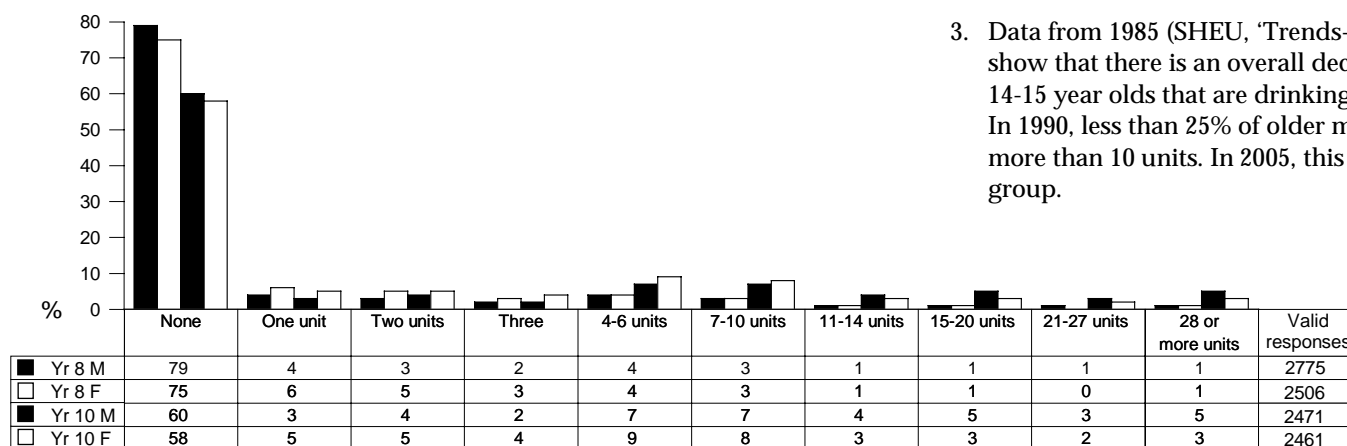
17% of the Year 10 males drank more than 10 units

## The total number of units of alcohol consumed in the last 7 days

1. Slightly more younger males than females, and slightly more older females than males recorded having drunk some alcohol.
2. 13% of Year 10 males drank 15 or more units of alcohol in the previous 7 days compared with 8% of older females.

### Comments

1. On previous pages if the recorded amount of each individual type of drink includes a half measure, this is rounded up to the next whole amount. We feel this is justified in many cases, since glasses of drink poured between friends are likely to contain more liquid than official measures. However, when calculating the units for the table on this page, the original record is referred to.
2. The number of units of alcohol consumed by beer and cider drinkers is also certainly under-estimated, as the lowest alcohol levels (one unit per half-pint) are assumed for all beers and ciders drunk. The fact that young people's 'measures' of wines and spirits may in some cases be generous is another reason why the derived number of units may be on the low side.
3. Data from 1985 (SHEU, 'Trends-Young People and Alcohol. 1983-2005'), show that there is an overall decline in those reporting drinking. Those 14-15 year olds that are drinking are consuming more than they used to. In 1990, less than 25% of older males who drank alcohol 'last week' drank more than 10 units. In 2005, this figure is around 42% of the equivalent group.



# Alcohol frequency

9% of the Year 10 males drank on 3 days or more

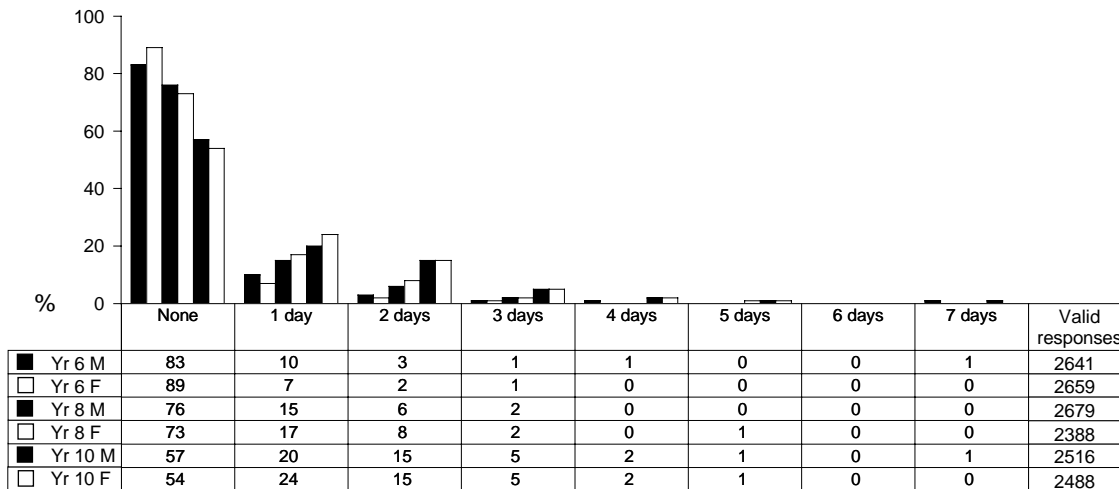
## During the last 7 days, on how many days did you drink alcohol?

### Comments

Canned shandy is not counted as an alcoholic drink.

1. In both year groups, the male drinkers outnumbered the females, and also tended to drink on more days.
2. However, on average more than half the 'drinkers' drank on only one day during the past week.
3. 9% of the Year 10 males and 7% of the Year 10 females drank on three days or more.

1. We see that by Year 8 at least half the potential Year 10 'drinkers' have already acquired some taste for alcohol.
2. Drinking habits of adults in general are quite regular, while that of younger adults in the 18-25 age range is more likely to feature 'binge' drinking. For young drinkers there is evidence to suggest that for some 13 - 16 year olds the figure of at least five alcoholic drinks in one session is not uncommon ('Education and Health', 2002, 20:3:46).



# Sources of alcohol

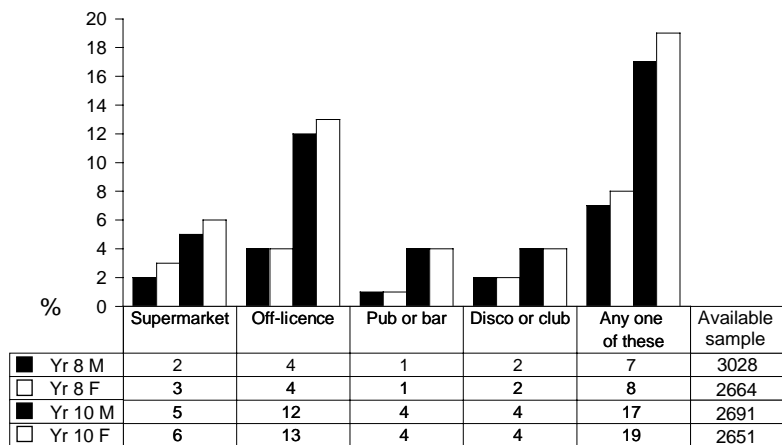
*Off-licences feature strongly*

## Have you bought alcoholic drink at any of these places during the last 7 days?

1. The *off-licence* is clearly a most important source of purchased alcoholic drink, especially for the Year 10s, with the *supermarket/pub or bar* as the next major source of alcohol purchased.
2. About 18% of the Year 10s bought some drink, but from the previous table we discover that around 45% of them drank some.

### Comments

1. The sites for drinking alcohol (whether purchased or not) are given overleaf.
2. It is suspected that alcohol purchased by young people is more likely to be connected to alcohol abuse and public nuisance than alcohol supplied in the home.
3. Purchases of alcoholic drink are age-restricted, and while at 16 you may buy cigarettes, (see page 68) you must be 18 before buying alcohol.

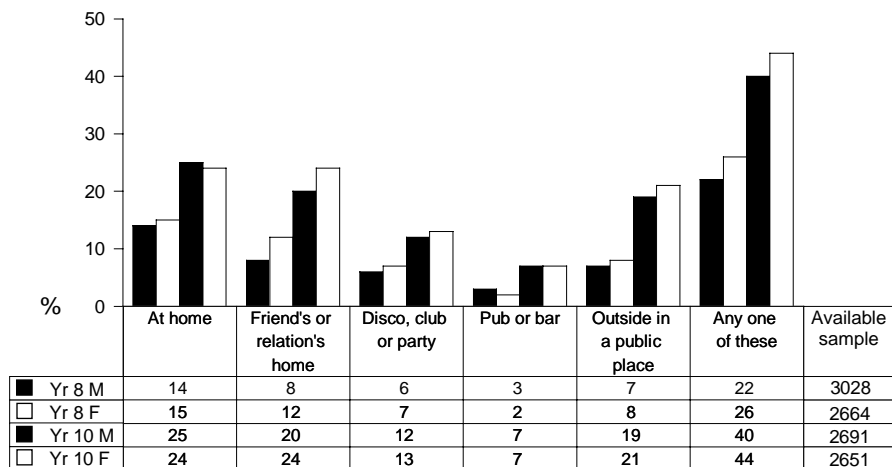


# Drinking venues

More young people consume alcohol at *home* than anywhere else

## Have you had an alcoholic drink in any of these places during the last 7 days?

1. Most 'drinkers' drank at *home*.
2. Substantial numbers of Year 10 'drinkers' used all the listed venues.



### Comments

1. In 1990 we asked if they had been to a pub or bar, even if they didn't drink anything, and found that over 40% of the Year 10s had done so. If this single year was typical, then far more are visiting public houses (perhaps in a family outing) than are buying or being bought drink under-age.
2. Much media attention is paid to young people drinking in public venues, either outside or inside, but the most common places are the family home and relations' homes, where there could be greater control over drinking levels.
3. A review of research also found that the most popular location for drinking alcohol (among underage drinkers) was at home (Coleman & Cater, 2003). It is often observed that the home may be a safe and supportive environment in which to explore the use of alcohol, so that introducing children to alcohol in the home is a responsible thing for parents to do. Thus, we are effectively teaching young people to drink.
4. There is still a colossal burden of damage caused in society by alcohol, so that whatever is being done in the name of health education with children or adults, it has been inadequate to reach the roots of alcohol abuse.

# Drinking at home

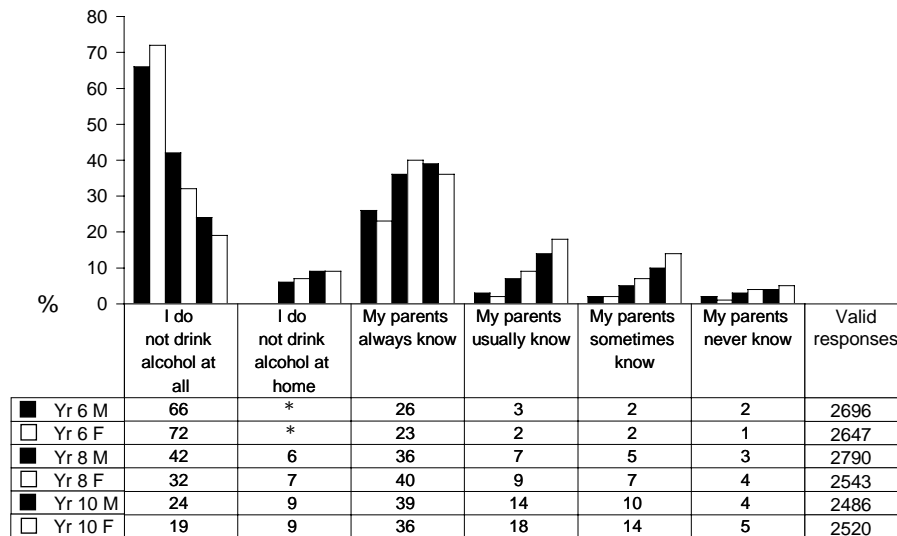
Parents of 14-15 year olds are less likely to know

## If you ever drink alcohol at home, do your parents know?

### Comments

1. Up to 40% say that parents always know.
2. Of those older pupils who do drink at home, about half do so with their parents always knowing about it.

1. The question was added because of interest in the amount of alcohol being drunk during the previous week at home — always the most popular venue. The answer is that there is quite a lot of clandestine drinking going on among the older pupils.
2. The young people who say they do not drink at home may contain a substantial proportion who do not drink currently at all. These figures place an upper limit on the proportion of 'never drinkers', as we have no routinely collected information on drinking attitudes and experience to match that with respect to illegal drugs.



\* Option not available for Year 6



# Cigarettes smoked

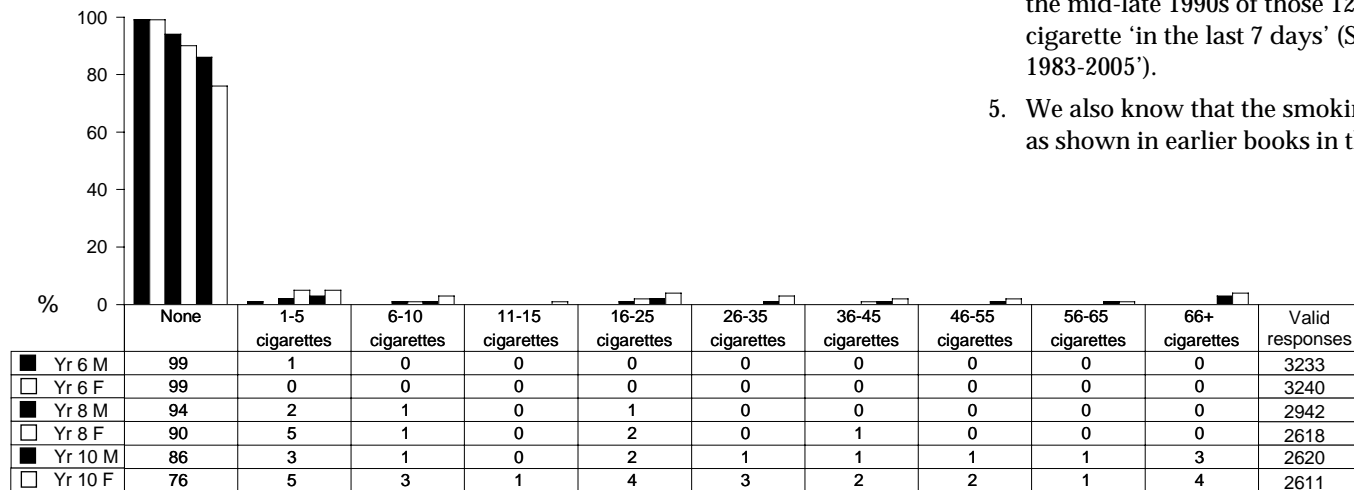
24% of the Year 10 females smoke

## How many cigarettes have you smoked during the last 7 days?

### Comments

1. More Year 8 & 10 females than males had smoked and there were more smokers in Year 10.
2. There is no significant gender difference in those Year 10 pupils reporting smoking more than 25 cigarettes. 24% Year 10 females smoke, 13% smoke up to 25 cigarettes a week.

1. Assuming that many females may be going out with males older than themselves, it is possible that the Year 10s partners have smoking levels similar to the ones seen here.
2. Smoking levels of up to 25 a week are hardly addictive in adults; what is known about young people's addiction levels?
3. Smoking levels have increased rather than decreased since the publication of the 'Health of the Nation' targets in 1992 and 'Our Healthier Nation' in 1999.
4. Data from 1985 show an upward trend which may have peaked around the mid-late 1990s of those 12-15 years olds that report smoking at least 1 cigarette 'in the last 7 days' (SHEU, 'Trends-Young People and Smoking, 1983-2005').
5. We also know that the smoking levels vary widely from school to school, as shown in earlier books in this series.



# Sources of cigarettes

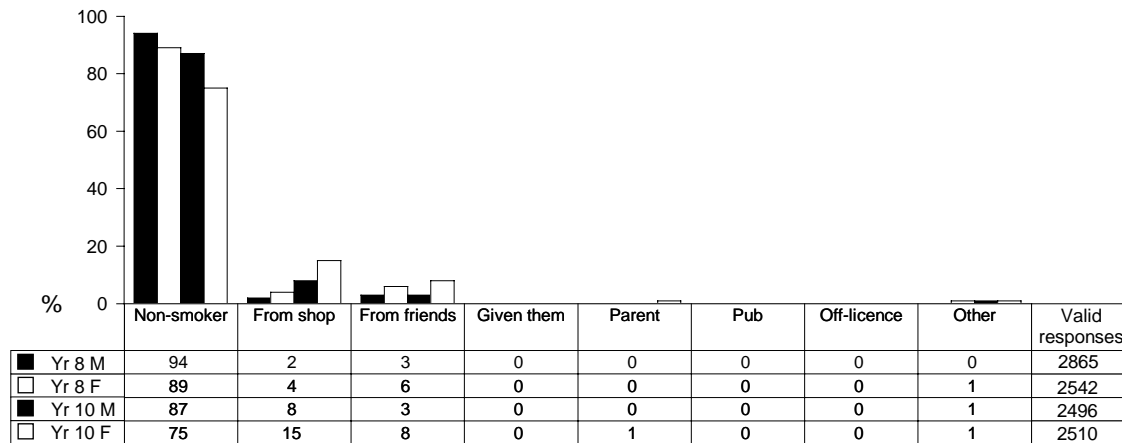
*Shops and friends were the main source*

## If you have smoked recently, where did you get your last cigarettes from?

### Comments

1. For the Year 8 smokers, *friends* were the main source. In Year 10, *shops* were the most important source.

1. Purchases by under-16s are illegal, but our sympathies are with any shop-keeper trying to judge the age of 14-15 year olds; fortunately there are age-verification cards available.
2. The friends that supplied cigarettes to the Year 8 smokers may be older than themselves.
3. The information about cigarette purchases can be related to the question on spending money (page 86). There is a very high degree of overlap — greater than 95%.



# Type of smoker

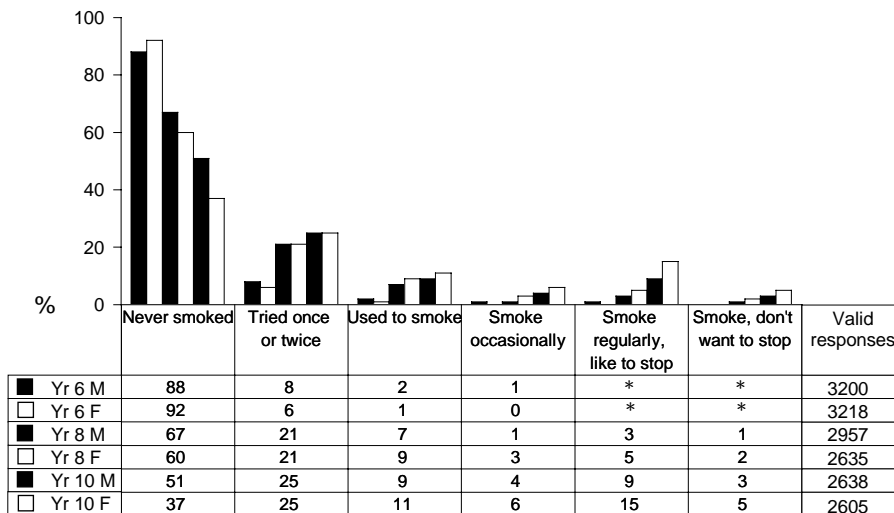
Up to 63% will have smoked by Year 10

## What kind of smoker are you?

1. In Year 6 around 90% report *never smoked*. By Year 10, this number declines to 51% for males and 37% for females.
2. 63% of Year 10 females have smoked.
3. The majority of the current smokers say that they would *like to stop*.

## Comments

1. Two-thirds of smokers want to give up. If addiction is not their problem, can we help them? Raw et al's (1998) publication recommends interventions shown to be effective with adults should be considered for use with young people with the content modified as necessary - this includes stop-smoking groups and the possible use of nicotine replacement therapy.
2. We used to ask *Do we believe the ones who say that they want to give up?* It's an easy claim to make, but it might be offered that if they really wanted to quit they would. We believe them more since we related their level of anxiety about smoking to their desire to give up: those that want to give up are much more worried about smoking than other smokers ('No Worries?' Balding, 1998).
3. Data from 1986 (SHEU, 'Trends-Young People and Smoking, 1983-2005'), show no overall trend in those that report smoking regularly. This steady prevalence is seen very clearly from 1995 onward as around 22% of Year 10 females have reported smoking regularly.
4. By the time young people reach Year 10, the majority will have tried cigarettes. Is it realistic to try to discourage experimentation? The table shows that fewer than half the number of those who have experimented are currently smoking.
5. It has been observed that the children of single or divorced parents are more likely to smoke (Brynin, 1999).



\* Year 6 pupils were not asked about these activities

# Smoker in the family

55% of the Year 10 females have a *close friend* who smokes

## Do any of these people smoke on most days?

1. A *close friend* has become the chief smoking contact for most age groups.
2. Fewer than a third have no close family member or friend that smokes.

## Comments

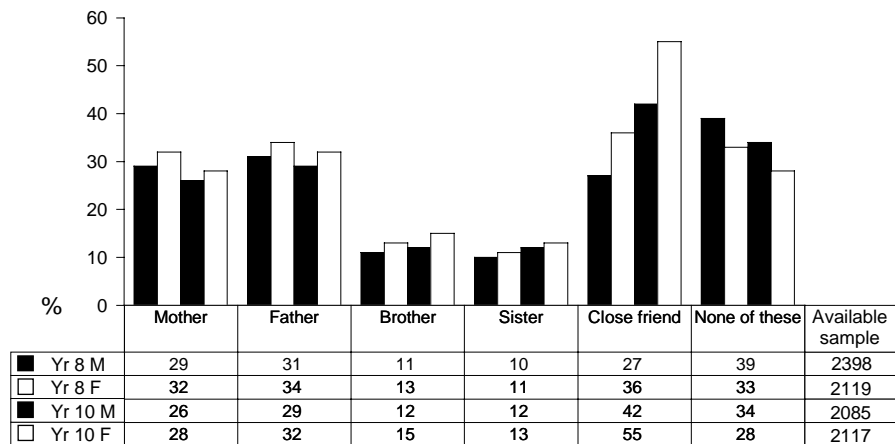
1. The greater the number of people smoking, the greater the incentive to follow suit and the chances of approval (at least from the smokers). We repeat below an analysis first published in 'Young People in 1996' showing powerful links between the smoking habit and smoking by family and friends — especially siblings and close friends.

Percentages smoking among Year 10 females, by smoking among family and friends

Smoking by other?	Mother	Father	Brother	Sister	Friend
No	14%	15%	17%	17%	4%
Yes	37%	31%	38%	46%	38%

The contrast in smoking between females with and without friends who smoke is dramatic, but the highest proportion of all is among females with a smoking sister.

2. On the other hand, since most young people will have both non-smokers and smokers in their immediate circle, it is clear that examples are not irresistible.



# Smokers in the home

Up to 52% live in a 'smoky' home

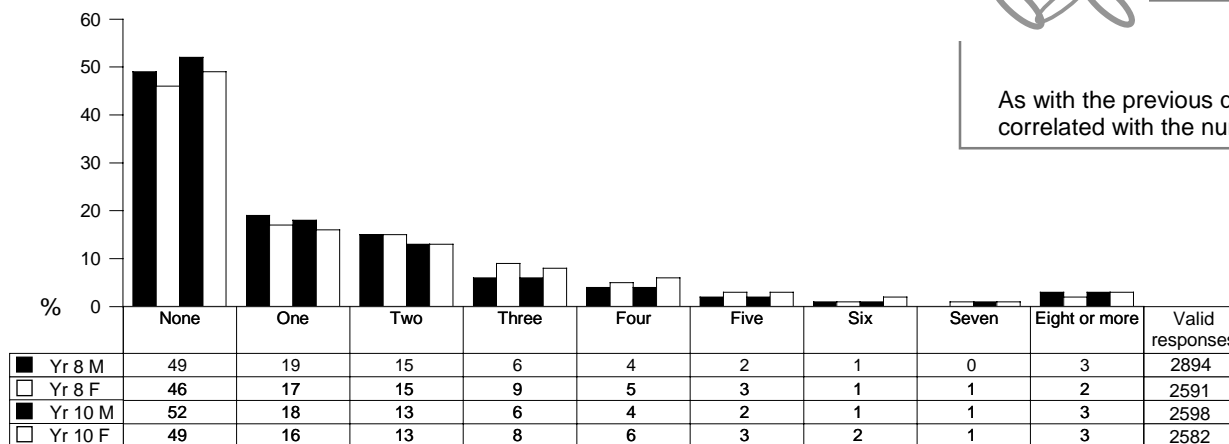
## How many people smoke on most days in your home?

The question asks the respondents to include themselves and regular visitors if they smoke at home.

1. Non-smoking/smoking households are evenly matched.
2. These figures seem to 'clump': smokers are more likely to be found where there is another smoker.

### Comments

1. 'Smoking in the home' does not necessarily mean that the house is smoky. It could be banned from communal rooms, or smokers could even be sent outside.
2. Children in 'smoking' homes may experience approval, rather than just tolerance, of smoking, and are more likely to grow up thinking that it is a normal, even expected, behaviour with important pleasures and rewards.



As with the previous question, young people's own smoking habit is strongly correlated with the number of other people smoking at home.

# Beliefs about drugs

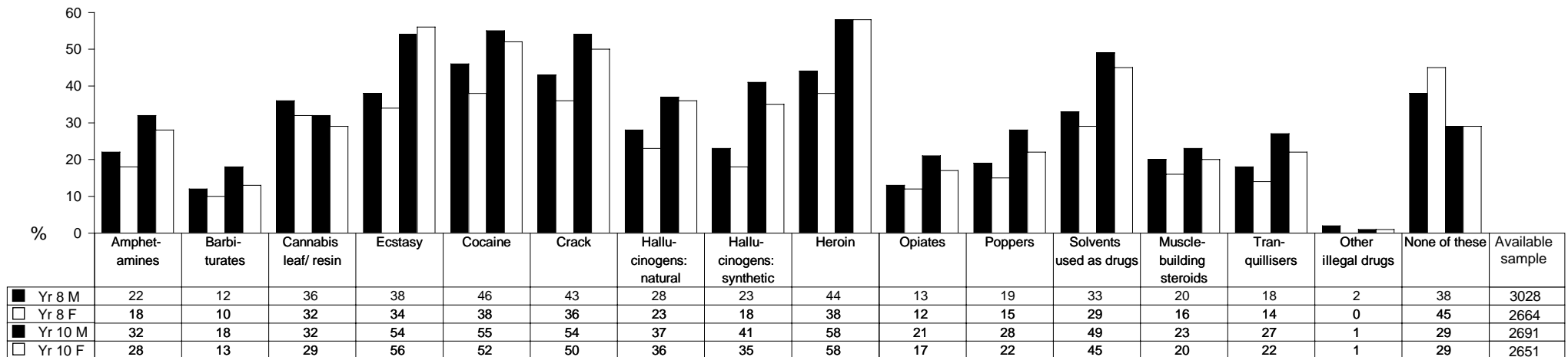
As pupils get older fewer think that cannabis is *always unsafe*

## What do you know about these drugs? Response to 'Always unsafe'

1. There is around a 4% difference between the Year 8s and the Year 10s response to the dangers of cannabis, and, uniquely, it does decline with age. Up to 38% think that cannabis is *always unsafe*.
2. More older females than males think that ecstasy is *always unsafe*.
3. Up to 58% think heroin is *always unsafe*.

### Comments

1. The format of this question has changed in recent years from that used in the past in the following response options: *Never heard of them; Know nothing about them; Safe if used properly*, and *Always unsafe*. Thus it is not easy to say if young people have changed their perceptions of safety of these different drugs, but we are very confident that the response of year 10 pupils are now more complacent than in previous years.
2. We report responses to *Always unsafe* and can say that the relative safety of drugs has not changed with heroin, ecstasy, cocaine and crack being thought most risky.



# Contact with drug users

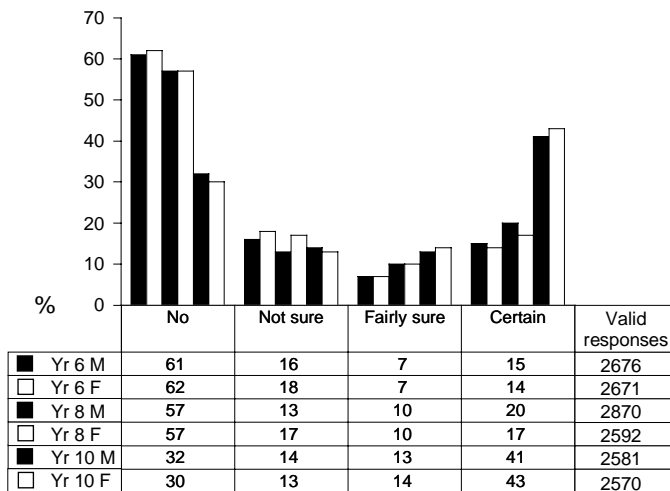
Up to 57% of the 14-15 year olds are *fairly sure* or *certain* that they know a drug user

## Do you know anyone personally who you think takes any of these drugs?

1. Similar numbers of older males and females thought they knew someone.
2. Up to 22% of the Year 6s, up to 30% of the Year 8s, and up to 57% of the Year 10s, claimed to be *fairly sure* or *certain*.

### Comments

1. Since knowledge of other drug users is a key to obtaining drugs, the proportion of Year 6s reporting that they think they know some one who uses at least one of the listed drugs presents concern for the potential future behaviour of these young people.
2. This does not mean that up to 22% of Year 6 pupils take drugs, since 99 pupils in a school could all be thinking of the same one person, who may not even be a school pupil. We emphasise personal knowledge to exclude depictions of drug use in the media, and give a prompt to exclude users of drugs as medicines.



# Experience of drugs

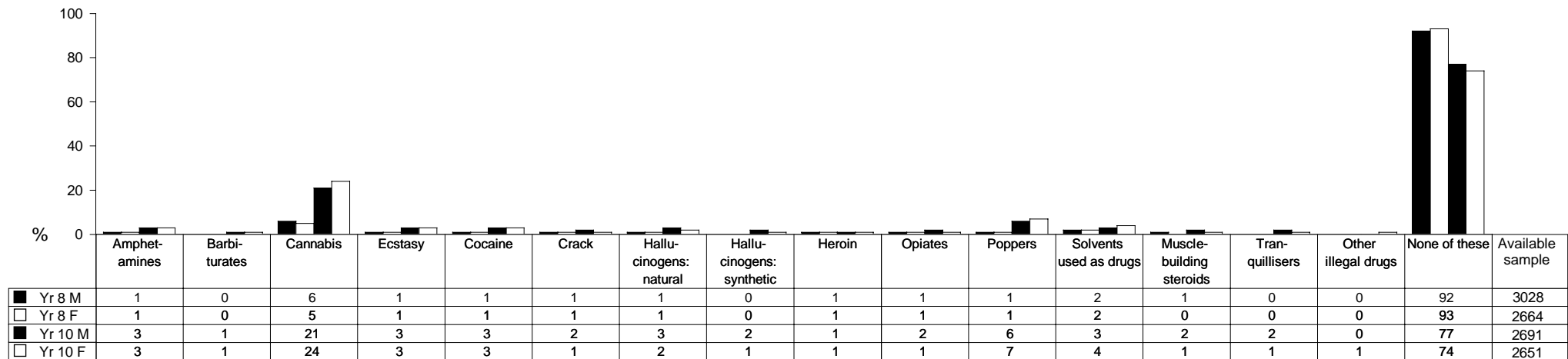
Up to 24% of the Year 10 pupils have taken cannabis

## Have you ever taken any of these drugs?

1. About 1 in 5 pupils in Year 10 — four times as many as in Year 8 — have tried at least one of these drugs.
2. Cannabis is by far the most likely drug to have been tried, with 21% of males and 24% of females in Year 10 reporting having taken it. The percentage for other drugs taken are significantly lower, around 3%, for drugs such as amphetamines, ecstasy, and solvents. The use of poppers is slightly higher being taken by up to 7% of Year 10s.

## Comments

1. We reported in 2000, 'Young People and Illegal Drugs' (Balding, 2000), a steady rise in reports of drug experimentation among Year 10 pupils from 1987-1995/6, levels. This was followed by a drop between 1996 and 1999. From 1999 onwards we have seen a recovery to about the same levels as the peak in 1995/6. For further discussion see page xxv.
2. Clearly the drug careers of young people expand from Year 8 - an indicator of the need to review the timing of drug education within both primary and secondary schools.





# More than one drug

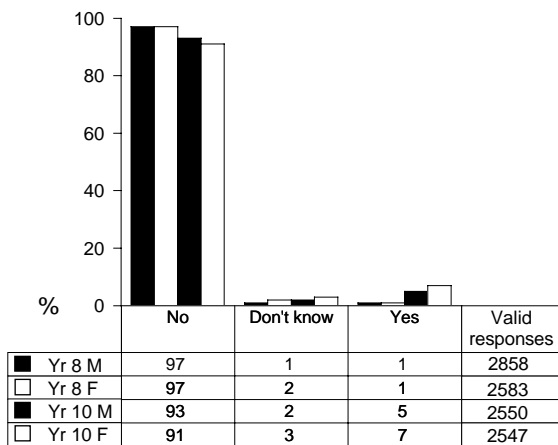
6% of the Year 10 pupils have combined more than one drug

## Have you ever taken more than one type of drug on the same occasion?

### Comments

1. 6% of pupils in Year 10 say they have taken one or more type of drug on the same occasion.
2. The proportion in Year 8 is much smaller.
3. There is no gender difference.

1. This was a new question in 2002 and pupils are referred to the list of drugs printed in the questionnaire. This list excludes alcohol which is the subject of the next question and reported on the following page.
2. This question tries to shift the emphasis from experimentation towards behaviour that is obviously risky.



# Drugs and alcohol

Up to 17% of the Year 10 pupils have mixed drugs and alcohol

## Have you ever taken drugs and alcohol on the same occasion?

### Comments

1. Up to 17% of older pupils have taken drugs and alcohol on the same occasion.
2. 13% of older males and 17% of older females say 'Yes'.
3. The issue is also age related as 3% of the 12-13 year olds report mixing drugs compared with up to 17% of 14-15 year olds.

1. Drug use associated with alcohol use is not uncommon in the experience of young people who have ever taken drugs.
2. Again, we are looking at a behaviour that suggests a less cautious attitude to risk.

