

25th year
of data about young people

Young People into 2011

Chapter 5 **Legal and Illegal Drugs**

5 Legal and Illegal Drugs

25th year

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. See also ‘Young People and Illegal Drugs: Attitudes to and experience of illegal drugs 1987-2008’, ‘Trends: Young People and Smoking 1983-2007’ and ‘Trends-Young People and Alcohol 1983-2001’.

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5 Legal and Illegal Drugs

25th year

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Alcoholic drinks

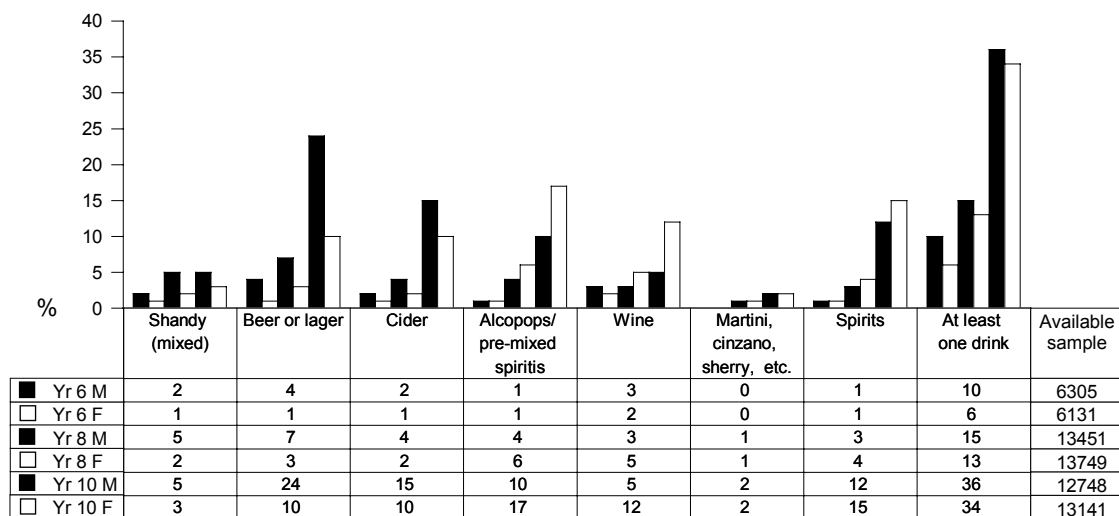
Up to 36% of the Year 10's had consumed *at least one drink*

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

Comments

1. *Alcopops* is the most popular drinks group for the females, and beer or lager for the males. The table shows that up to 36% 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 (Alcopops)* account for 17% and *spirits* account for 15% of the choice from Year 10 females.

1. We note that more Year 10 females than males drank *pre-mixed spirits, wine* and *spirits*.
2. 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.



Mixed shandy

Not a popular drink

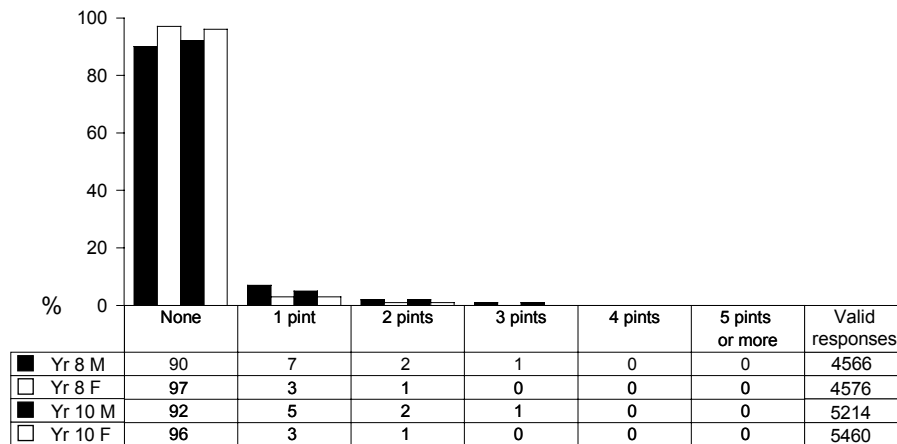
During the last 7 days, how many pints of mixed shandy have you drunk?

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. Not a popular drink.

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 in previous volumes with data about 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.



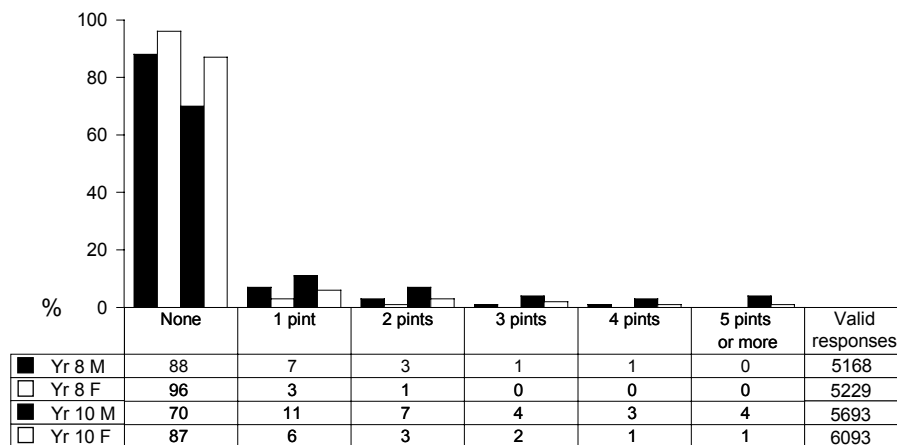
Beer or lager

30% 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 older males in particular, although 13% of the Year 10 females report drinking beer or lager in the last 7 days.



Comments

1. Beer or lager is a predominantly male 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 2010 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. (2010)	70%	11%	7%	4%	3%	4%
Males 14-15yrs. (1991)	66%	16%	7%	4%	2%	4%

Direct comparisons between years are misleading. The data suggest that fewer report no drinking in 2010 (70%) compared with 1991 (66%).

Cider

21% of 14-15 year old males drank one or more pints

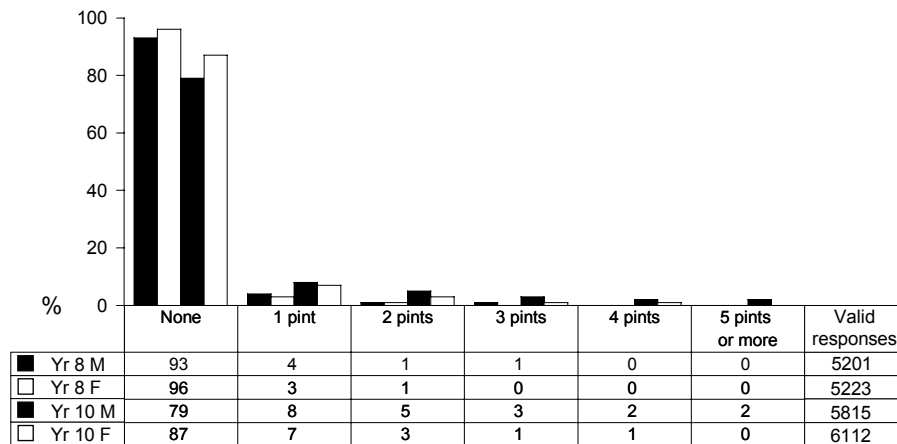
During the last 7 days, how many pints of cider have you drunk?

Comments

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

1. Cider appeals mainly to a small percentage of older males with 21% of 14-15 year old males who reported drinking one or more pints.

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



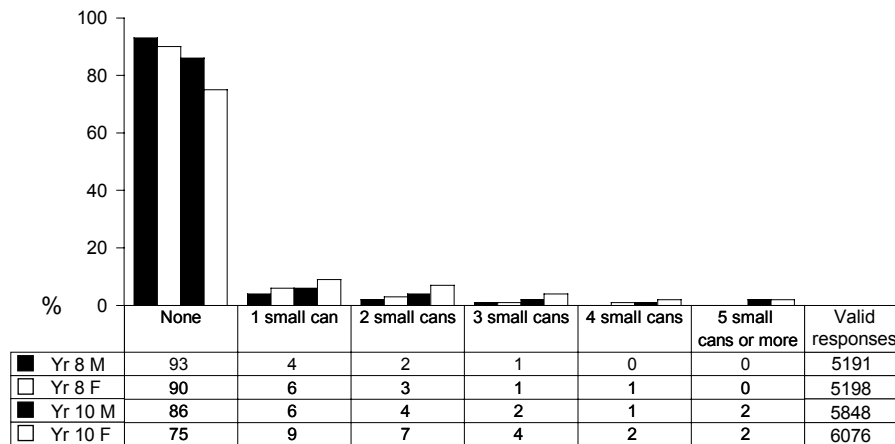
Pre-mixed spirit drinks

25% 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 ('Alcopops') have an appeal to Year 10 females and 25% 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.

Wine

17% of older females drank at least one glass

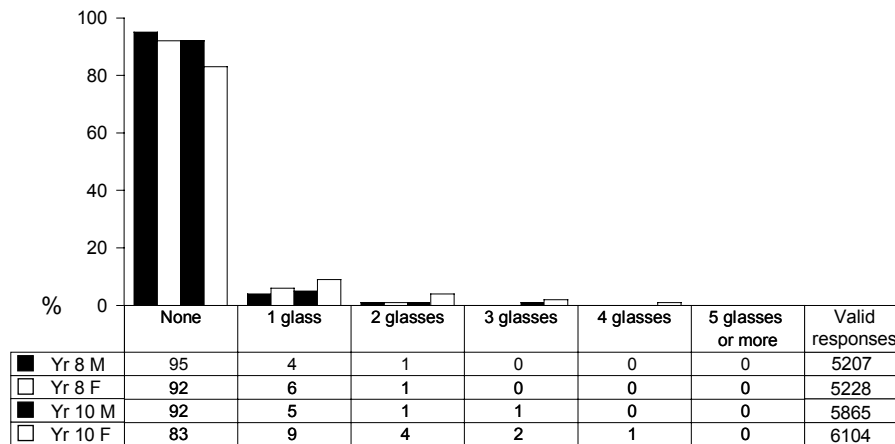
During the last 7 days, how many glasses of wine have you drunk?

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 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 51 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'.
3. Figures from 1996, for Year 10 females, range from 25% (1996) to 15% (2009) drinking at least one glass during the last 7 days.



Fortified wine

Not much appeal for young people

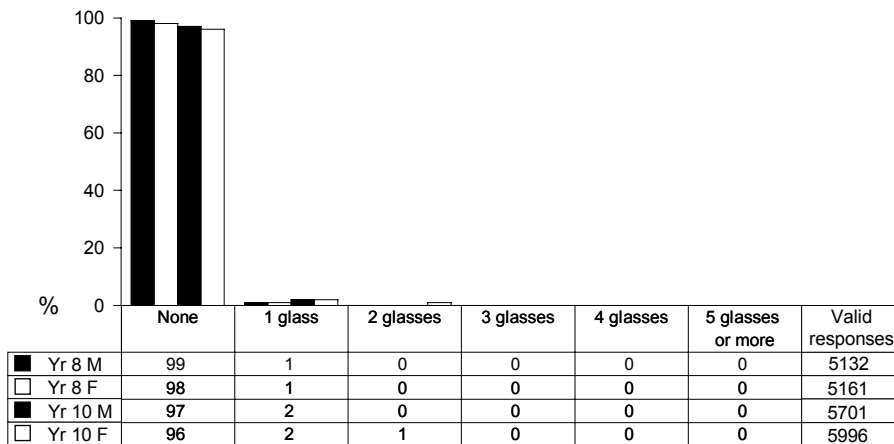
During the last 7 days, how many glasses of fortified wine have you drunk?

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

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

Comments

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.



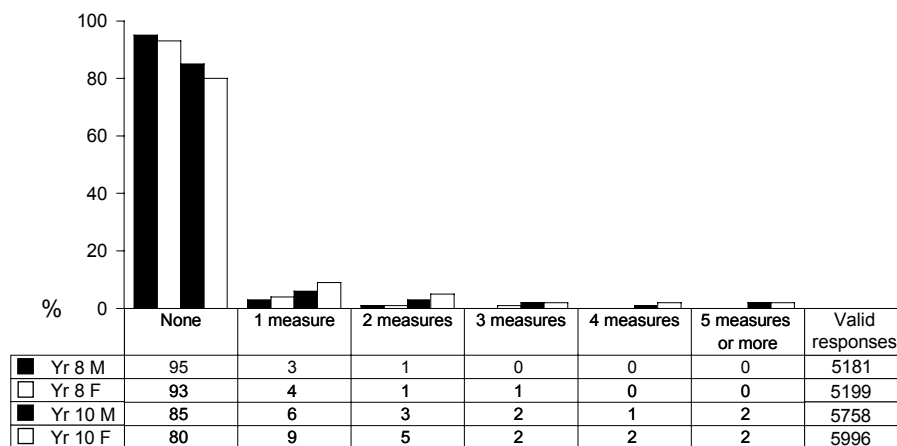
Spirits

20% 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. A small 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 55).
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 2010 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. (2010)	80%	9%	5%	2%	2%	2%
Females 14-15yrs. (1991)	87%	5%	3%	1%	1%	3%

In 2010, 20% drank at least 1 measure (13% in 1991) and a similar percentage drank 5 or more measures 'in the last 7 days'.

Alcohol units consumed

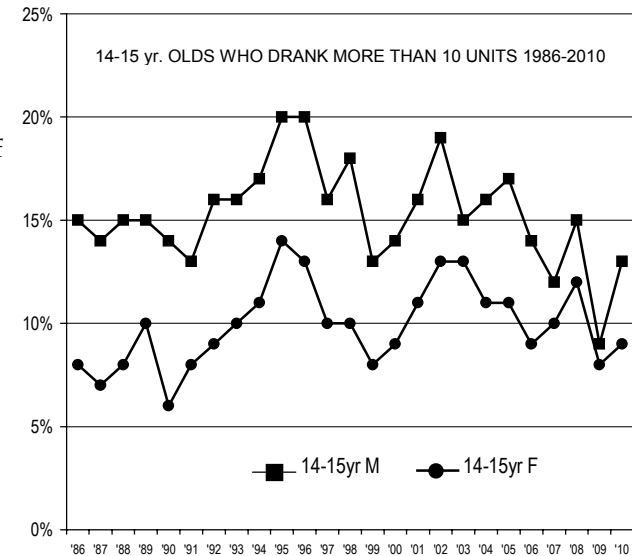
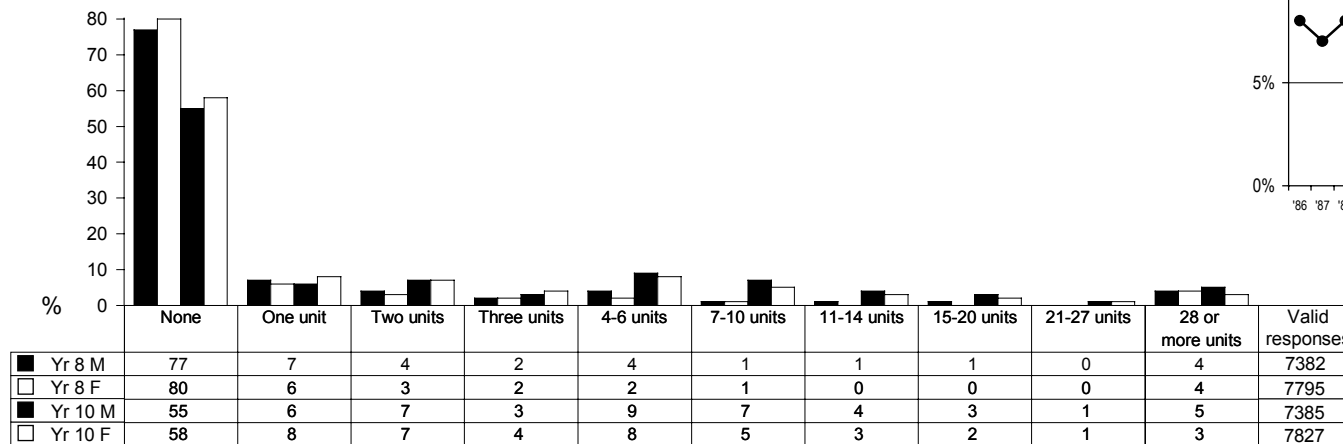
Around 11% of Year 10 pupils drank more than 10 units in the previous 7 days

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

1. Around 11% of Year 10 pupils drank more than 10 units of alcohol in the previous 7 days.

Comments

1. Data from 1986 show the number of 14-15 year olds who reported drinking more than 10 units of alcohol in the last 7 days.



Alcohol: drinking/drunk days

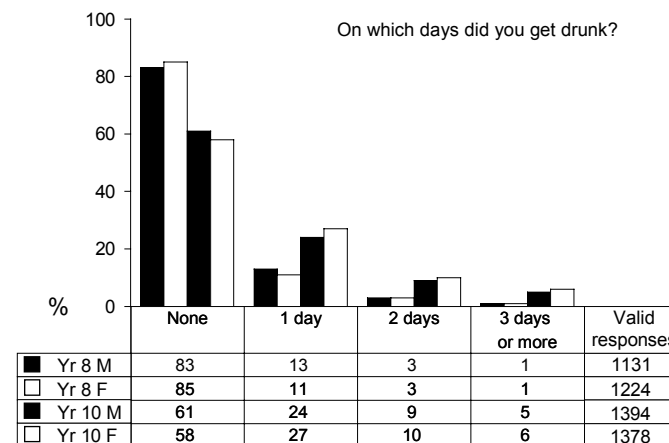
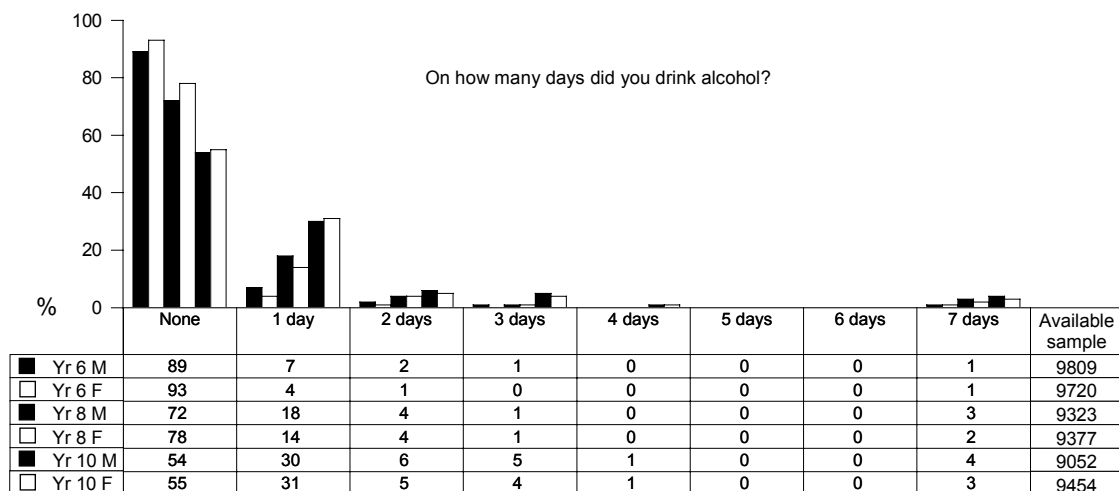
Around 54% of the Year 10 pupils did not drink 'during the last 7 days'

**During the last 7 days, on how many days did you drink alcohol?
During the last 7 days, on which days did you get drunk?**

Comments

1. Around 54% of the Year 10 pupils and around 75% of the Year 8 pupils did not drink 'during the last 7 days'.
2. Of the older female drinkers, 16% got drunk more than two days in the previous week.

1. 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).
2. Most of those who got drunk did so on Friday and Saturday evening.



Sources of alcohol

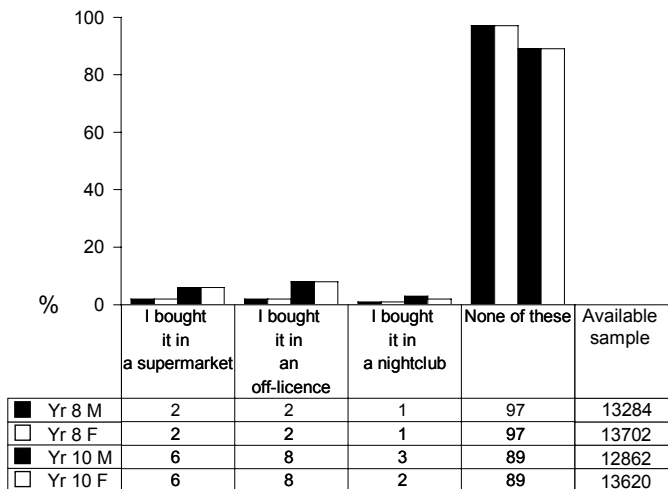
Off-licences and supermarkets are sources for older pupils

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

1. The *off-licence* and *supermarket* are important sources of purchased alcoholic drink, especially for the 14-15 year olds.

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 you must be 18 before buying alcohol.



Drinking venues

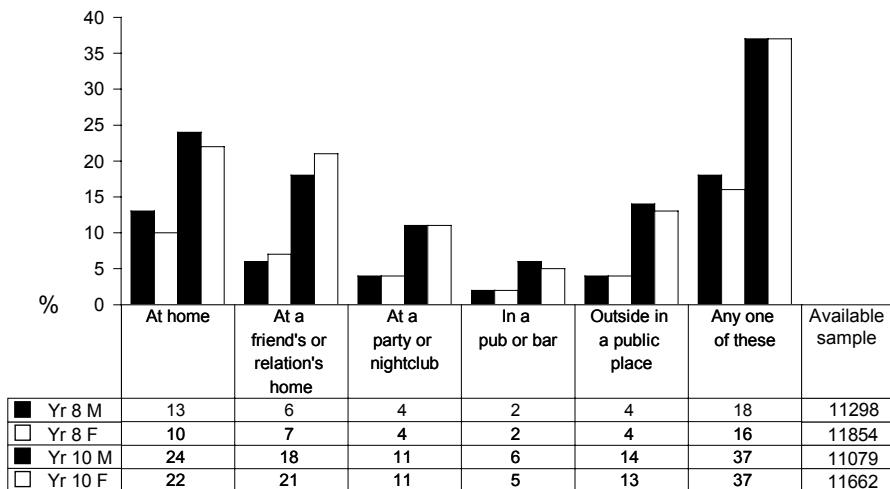
More young people consume alcohol *at home* than anywhere else

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 14-15 year old 'drinkers' used all the listed venues.

Comments

1. Since 1991, around 1/5 of 14-15 year olds consistently report drinking in a friends/relations home.
2. Although drinking in the pupils' own home is a more popular venue the percentages are seen to be on a general decline -around 30%-35% in the 1990s and around 25% in the 2000s.



Drinking at home

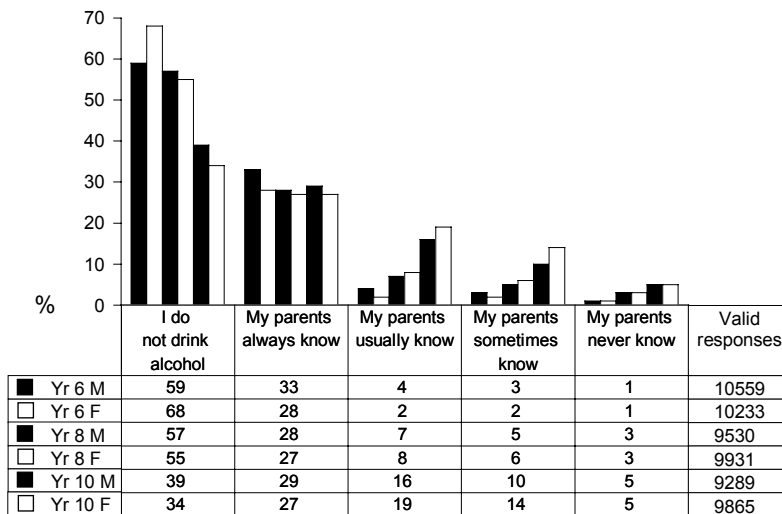
Up to 29% of older pupils say that parents always know

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

1. Up to 29% of older pupils 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.

Comments

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, but also a lot of drinking that is tolerated by parents/carers, if not actively encouraged.
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 not routinely collected information on drinking attitudes and experience to match that with respect to illegal drugs.



Cigarettes smoked

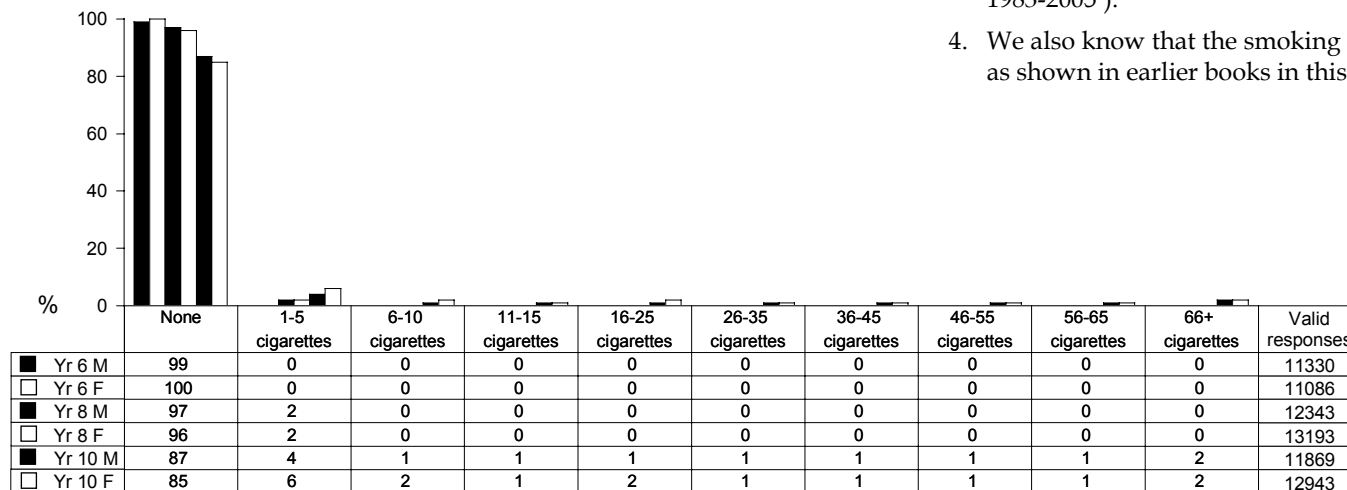
15% of the Year 10 females smoke

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 20 cigarettes.
3. 15% Year 10 females reported smoking.

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 30 a week are not thought addictive in adults; what is known about young people's addiction levels?
3. 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').
4. We also know that the smoking levels vary widely from school to school, as shown in earlier books in this series.

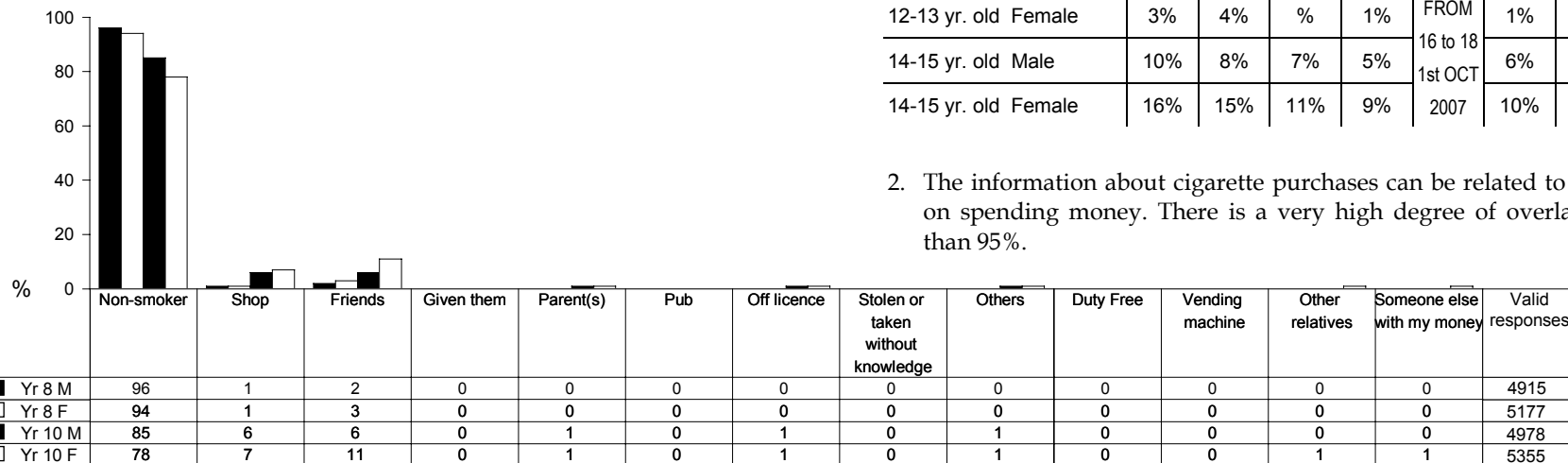


Sources of cigarettes

Shops and friends were the main source

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

1. For both age groups, *friends* were the main source and *shops* for the older pupils.



Comments

1. Purchases by under-18s are illegal. From 1st October 2007 the cigarette buying age was raised from 16 to 18 yrs of age. Table shows percentage of those purchasing cigarettes from shops before and after 2007:

Year of data collection / Purchasing cigarettes from shops by pupils	2004	2005	2006	2007	LEGAL AGE	2008	2009	2010
12-13 yr. old Male	2%	2%	1%	1%	MOVED	1%	1%	1%
12-13 yr. old Female	3%	4%	%	1%	FROM	1%	1%	1%
14-15 yr. old Male	10%	8%	7%	5%	16 to 18	6%	6%	6%
14-15 yr. old Female	16%	15%	11%	9%	1st OCT 2007	10%	9%	7%

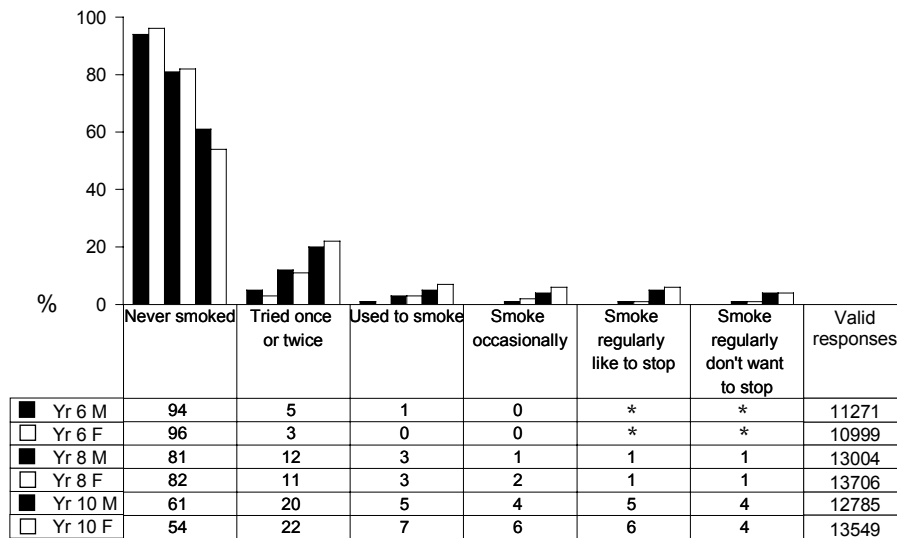
2. The information about cigarette purchases can be related to the question on spending money. There is a very high degree of overlap – greater than 95%.

Type of smoker

Up to 46% will have smoked by Year 10

What kind of smoker are you?

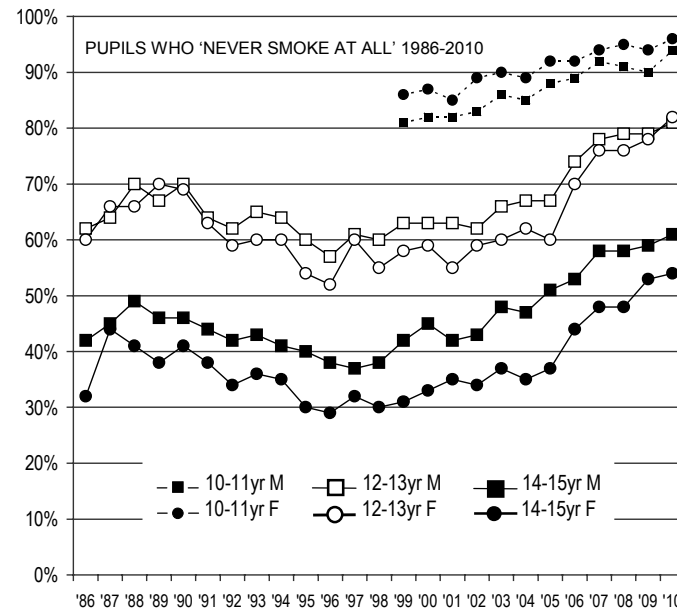
1. In Year 6 around 95% report *never smoked*. By Year 10, this number declines to 61% for males and 54% for females.
4. 46% of Year 10 females have smoked.
5. The majority of the current smokers say that they would *like to stop*.



* Year 6 pupils were not asked about these activities

Comments

1. Two-thirds of smokers want to give up. If addiction is not their problem, can we help them? Raw et al., (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. Data from 1986 show a rising trend, from around the late 1990s, of those pupils who report 'never smoking at all'.



Smokers in the home

Around 40% 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.

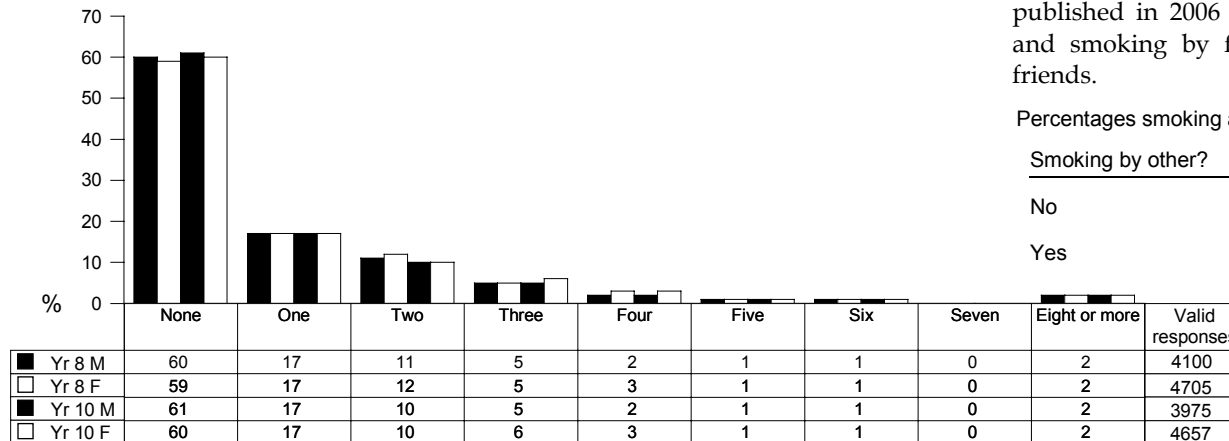
1. Non-smoking/smoking households are evenly matched.
2. These figures seem to 'clump': smokers are more likely to be found where there is another smoker.

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.
3. Young people's own smoking habit is strongly correlated with the number of other people smoking at home. We repeat below an analysis published in 2006 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%



Beliefs about drugs

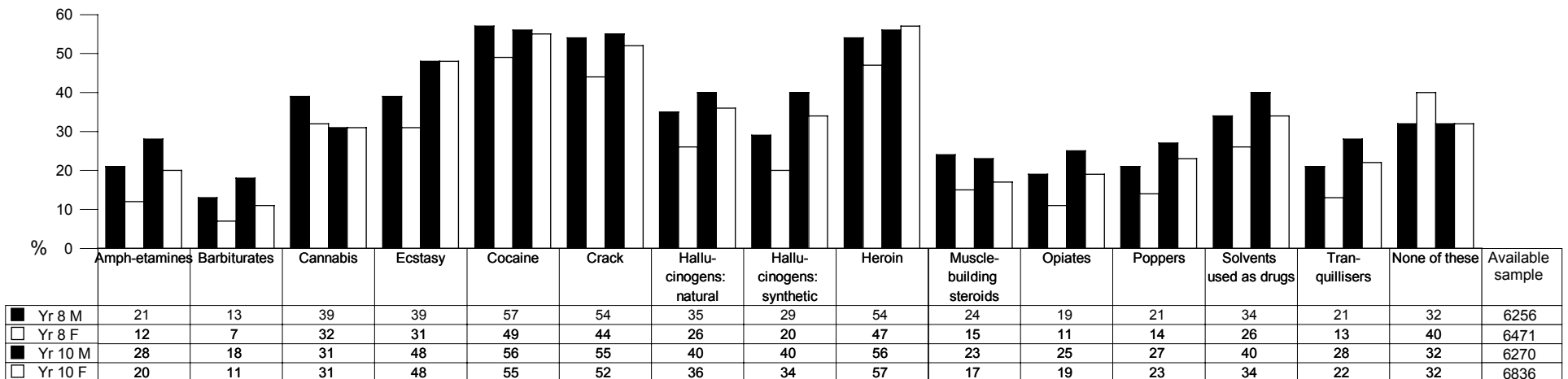
As pupils get older, fewer think that cannabis is *always unsafe*

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

1. There is up to 8% difference between the Year 8s and the Year 10s response to the dangers of cannabis, and, it does decline with age.
2. 31% of older pupils think that cannabis *always unsafe*.
3. Up to 57% 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, cocaine and crack being thought most risky.



Contact with drug users

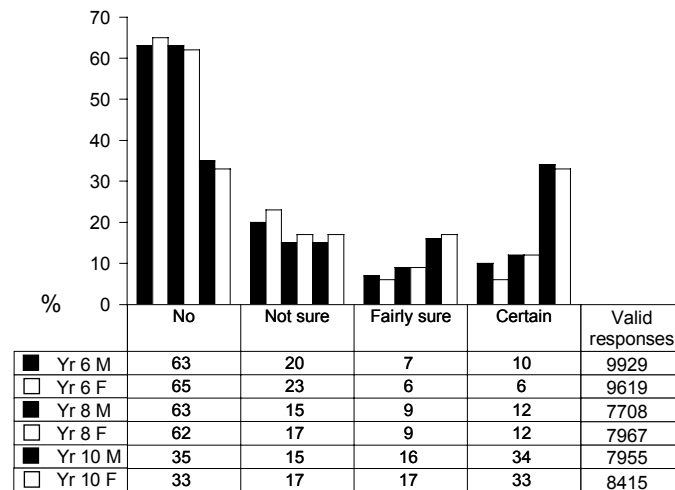
50% of the 14-15 year olds are *fairly sure* or *certain* that they know a drug user

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 17% of the Year 6s, 21% of the Year 8s, and 50% 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 17% 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

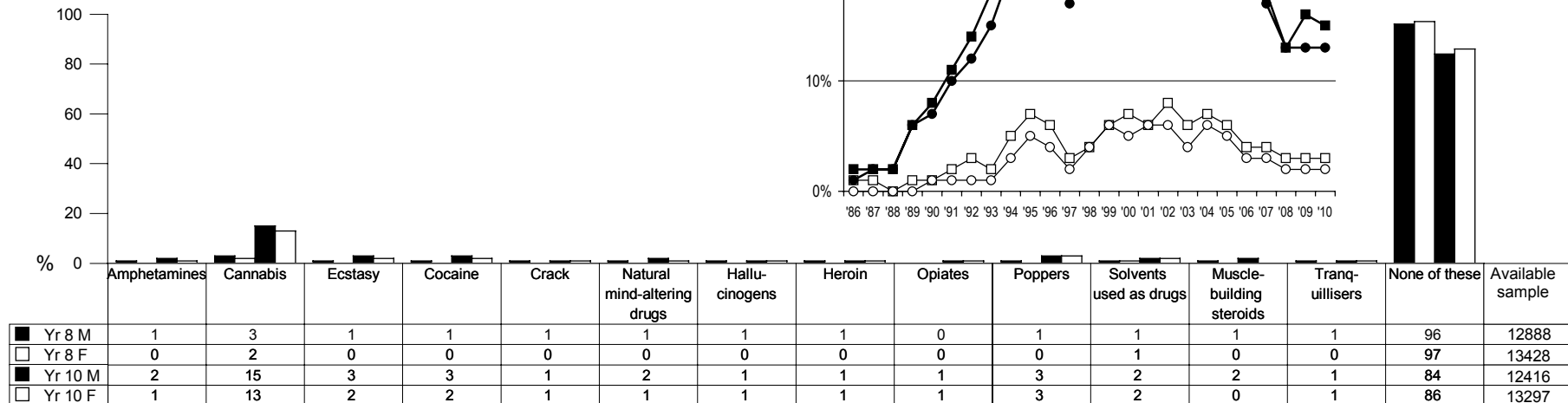
Up to 15% of the Year 10 pupils report taking cannabis

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 15% of males reporting having taken it. The percentage for other drugs classification are significantly lower.

Comments

1. Data from 1986 (below) show those reporting taking cannabis.



More than one drug

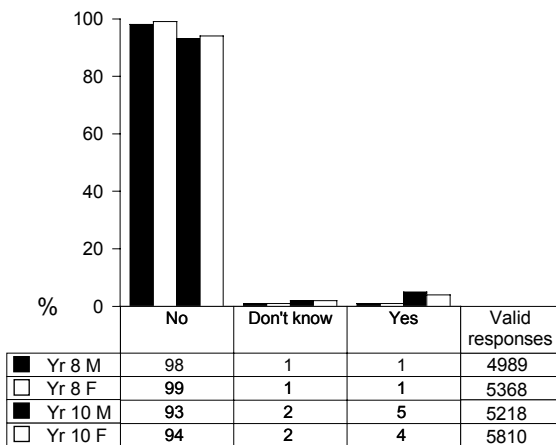
5% of the Year 10 pupils have combined more than one drug

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

Comments

1. 5% 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

11% of the 14-15 year olds have mixed drugs and alcohol

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

Comments

1. 11% of older pupils have taken drugs and alcohol on the same occasion.

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.

