

Drug use, smoking and drinking among young people in England in 2007 – The NHS Information Centre

This survey conducted for the NHS Information Centre is designed to monitor smoking, drinking and drug use among secondary pupils aged 11-15. Information was obtained from 7,831 pupils in 273 secondary schools throughout England in the autumn term of 2007. Below are the volatile substance abuse (VSA) statistics from the report:

- **6% had sniffed in the last year** (2nd only to cannabis) followed by sniffing poppers - 5%. (Page 9)
- **Pupils' first drug use was most likely to be sniffing volatile substances (51%)**. This was most common overall, particularly among pupils who first tried drugs at an early age. Third was poppers at 17%. (Page 17)
- Pupils whose first drug use was sniffing volatile substances reported different reasons and reactions to those who first tried other drugs. Although 'I wanted to see what it was like' was still the most commonly cited reason, the proportion of pupils who chose this was smaller than those whose first drug use was something else. **Pupils were more likely to say that 'it was a dare' (15%)** Only 6% said it was because 'I wanted to get high or feel good.' 23% chose 'other reasons', indicating that sniffing is not necessarily seen in the same way as taking other drugs.¹ (Page 28)
- **Pupils who have sniffed** glue, gas, aerosols or solvents **tend to be younger** than people who have taken other drugs - 4.4% of 11 year olds had sniffed compared with 0.8% who had taken cannabis. (Page 22)
- Much volatile substance abuse is experimental. (Page 9)
- 75% who took volatile substances on the first occasion reported feeling no different. (Page 29)
- **Pupils are more likely to try sniffing volatile substances than other drugs**; 44% reported trying volatile substances only at the age they first tried drugs, compared with 25% who had taken cannabis only. (Page 10)
- 9% of pupils think it's OK to try sniffing once, 4% think it's OK to sniff once a week. (Page 18)
- **Girls were more likely than boys to have sniffed.** (Page 22)
- Although cannabis is the drug pupils are most likely to have taken in the last year (and last month), **pupils are more likely to have tried volatile substance abuse than cannabis**; 13.5% of pupils said they had ever sniffed gas, glue, aerosols or solvents, compared with 11.5% who said they had ever taken cannabis. (Page 23)
- 56% of 11 to 12 year olds who had taken drugs in the last year had only sniffed volatile substances. (Page 23)
- **16% of pupils had been offered volatile substances in 2007** (second only to cannabis) and poppers were 13%. (Page 26)
- Pupils who first took drugs at the age of 11 years or younger were most likely to have sniffed volatile substances at that age (77%) compared with 11% for cannabis. (Page 27)
- Pupils whose first drug was one of the volatile substances were most likely to have obtained it from a friend their own age (49%). 31% of pupils obtained volatile substances recently from someone not listed on the questionnaire.² (Pages 27 & 30)
- The pattern for where pupils who sniffed volatile substances on the last occasion was different. **Pupils were most likely to say they were obtained at school (49%)**, compared with 17% who said they got them on the street, in a park or other outdoor area, and 15% who got them at home. (Page 31)

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- Pupils were more likely to sniff alone than pupils who took cannabis or Class A Drugs. (Page 31)
 - The main reasons given for the most recent occasion of abuse were 'I wanted to see what it was like' (34%) and 'I had nothing better to do' (25%). (Page 31)
 - Most pupils who had only sniffed volatile substances said that they wanted to give up now (67%). Only 8% said that they did not want to give up taking them. (Page 33)
 - 1% of pupils who had only sniffed volatile substances felt like they had at some point needed help or treatment. (Page 33)
 - **Among 11 to 13 year olds, sniffing glue was the most acceptable form of drug use.** (Page 38)
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NOTES

1. Typical examples of other reasons related to volatile substance use include: 'I didn't know it was a drug', 'I was told it smelt good', 'I was little and liked the smell', 'Not on purpose.'
2. Pupils who chose 'someone else' were likely to say they already had the drug or got it from home, school or a shop. Many of these answers clearly related to glue or other volatile substances.