



Source: DrugScope online - 23 July 2009

## **DrugScope responds to new figures on levels of drug use: 'marked increase' in cocaine use among adults and 16-24 year olds**

Today, DrugScope has responded to the publication of two government reports detailing the prevalence of drug use among adults and young people. The Home Office's Drug misuse declared: Findings from the British Crime Survey 2008/09 presents estimates of the prevalence of illegal drug use among 16 to 59 year olds in England and Wales. The NHS Information Centre's Smoking, drinking and drug use among young people in England in 2008 includes data on levels of illegal drug use among 11 to 15 year olds.

In terms of adult drug use, the 2008/09 British Crime Survey found that found that 10.1% of 16 to 59 year olds in England and Wales reported using any illicit drug in the last year, compared to 9.6% in 2007/08.

### **Key trends in the use of individual drugs include:**

3% of 16 to 59 year olds reporting using cocaine powder in the last year, compared to 2.4% in 2007/0;

6.6% of 16 to 24 year olds reported using cocaine powder in the last year, compared to 5.1% in 2007/08;

The percentage of 16 to 24 year olds reporting the use of ketamine in the last year, rose from 0.9% in 2007/08 to 1.9% in 2008/09;

The number of 16 to 59 year olds reporting having used cannabis in the last year increased from 7.6% in 2007/08, to 7.9% in 2008/09. However, it should be noted that the 2008/09 figure is still the second lowest reported level of last year cannabis use in the last eleven years.

Responding to the figures on drug use among adults, Martin Barnes, Chief Executive of DrugScope, said:

"These figures show a marked and worrying increase in the use of cocaine powder, in the adult population as a whole and among 16 to 24 year olds. While this is not necessarily a surprise given the drug's decrease in price and increase in availability over recent years, it is of significant concern, particularly the rise in use among younger people. Cocaine use is now at its highest level among adults since 1996– one in eight 16 to 24 year olds now report having ever used the drug.

"Cocaine is a harmful drug with numerous physical and mental health implications and it is vital that public health messages around the effects of cocaine use remain clear and sustained. Prolonged or regular use can lead to heart problems and the risks posed are increased when the drug is used with alcohol.

"The figures also show that ketamine use has risen, with a significant increase among 16 to 24 year olds. DrugScope highlighted concerns around the drug at the start of the year and would again press for resourcing for clear and sustained public health messages around the risks posed by the substance."

Also published today, The NHS Information Centre's Smoking Drinking and Drug use among young people in England 2008, includes estimates of illegal drug use among 11 to 15 year olds. The findings, which are not directly comparable with the figures on adult drug use due to the differences in methodologies between the two surveys, show that 22% of school pupils reported having ever used drugs, a decrease from 30% in 2003.



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### **Key trends in the use of drugs among school pupils showed:**

Overall 3.6% of pupils had taken any Class A drugs in the last year; down from 4% in 2007;

4.9% of pupils reported using stimulant drugs in the last year, a fall from 6.9% in 2007;

Pupils were most likely to have used cannabis. 9% of pupils reported using cannabis in the last year, down from 13.4% in 2001;

5% of pupils reported the use of glues, gas aerosols or solvents in the last year – the lowest levels of use reported since the survey began in 2001.

In response to the release of data relating to drug use among 11 to 15 year olds, Martin Barnes, Chief Executive of DrugScope, said today:

“The findings show that, overall, drug use in the last year among 11 to 15 year olds has fallen, and the number of pupils who have ever used drugs is at its lowest since 2003. The use of stimulant drugs and Class A drugs is falling among this age group, and rates of cannabis use continue to drop.

“While this is encouraging, compared to other European countries, rates of drug use among young people remain high. Work must continue in drug prevention as well as education, trying to tackle risk factors for substance misuse and ensuring that young people have access not only to specialist treatment and support, but also to early intervention programmes. In delivery of these strategies, we see a role for mainstream services and professionals who can help spot the signs of children who may be at risk.”