

# Please note:

**The following example report is based on personalised reports delivered to schools following the 2023 Smoking, Drinking and Drug Use among Young People in England survey.**

**The format, design and layout of personalised reports are subject to change ahead of the 2025 survey findings being made available.**

# Smoking, Drinking and Drug Use among Young People in England

**2023 Results for:  
EXAMPLE SCHOOL**

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using this report

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# Guidance for using this report

# 01



# About this report

Since 1982, the biennial Smoking, Drinking and Drug Use among Young People in England Study has been conducted in schools, surveying young people on **their experiences and attitudes towards smoking, drinking and drug use.**

The information collected contributes to Official Statistics and is the Government's main source of information on alcohol, drug and tobacco use among young people.

The findings are used to **shape services and regulations** that help to **support and protect young people.**

We hope that this report will assist you and your school in supporting your students.

## About the survey

The findings presented in this report are based on the results from 185 schools that took part in the survey between September 2023 and March 2024.

13,387 students in Years 7 to 11 took part.

# Interpreting the findings

- **This report shows how your school compared to the national average.**  
However, if fewer than 30 students answered any of the questions we use as indicators, we have not shown how your school compares with the national average.\*
- We may have selected atypical class groups, and therefore **the findings may not be representative of all your students.**
- **To protect the anonymity of the young people taking part,** we have not presented percentage findings for each school. Where schools are marked as 'higher' or 'lower', they could be *slightly* higher/lower than average or *much* higher/lower.

A word from the **PSHE Association** who produced lesson plans to support the study:

This report can help you to tailor your PSHE education curriculum to the needs of your students. For example, identifying areas to emphasise, or teaching a topic earlier and revisiting more often. However, the report is not intended for sharing with students. Sharing this data could skew young people's perceptions and normalise less healthy behaviours.

**This report is intended for internal use,** and the findings should not be published. If you are asked to share the findings with parents, please feel free to do so, but bear in mind the limitations described above.

You can find the **NHSE** publication page here:

<https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/areas-of-interest/public-health/smoking-drinking-and-drug-use-among-young-people-in-england>

\*This will be indicated by the phrase 'small sample'.



# Smoking and vaping

# 02



# Smoking: why is this an important agenda for schools?

National average	How your school compares
11% have ever smoked	Similar %
3% current smokers	Higher %
1% regular smokers	Similar %



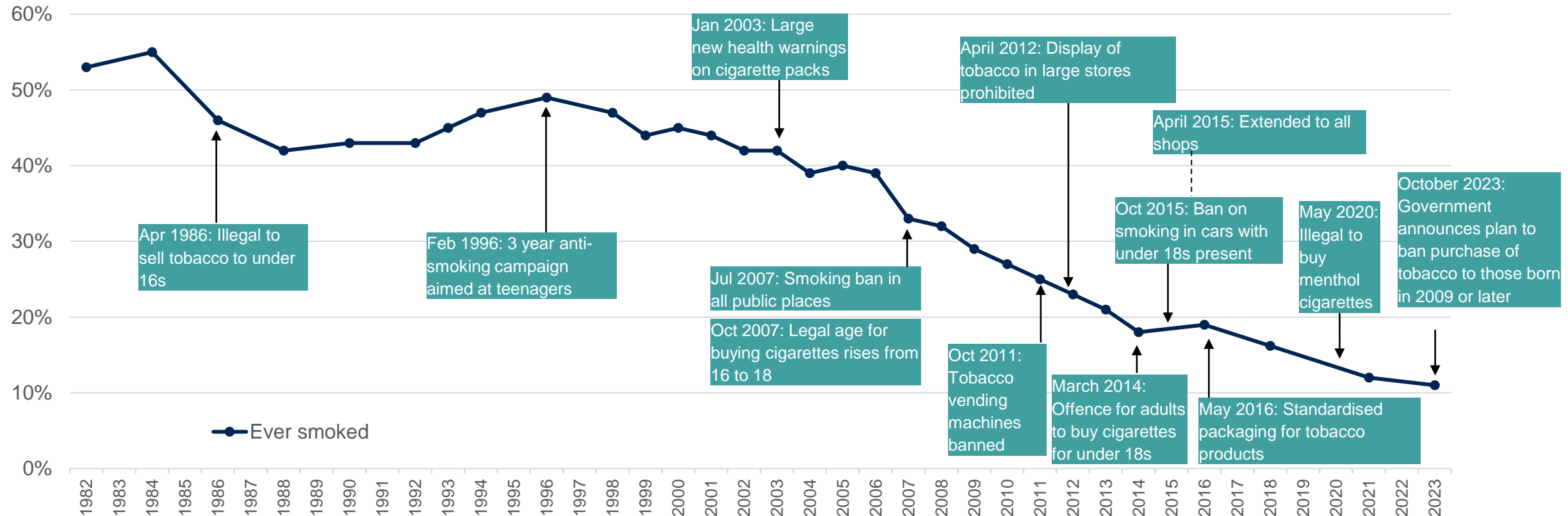
**Smoking is the leading cause of preventable illness and premature death in England.** Creating the first smokefree generation is a priority for government, with legislation proposed to ensure that children born in 2009 or later will never be legally sold tobacco products<sup>1</sup>.

**Most smokers start as teenagers.** Research has shown that the earlier someone tries a cigarette, the more likely they are to become a heavy smoker and find it harder to quit<sup>2</sup>. And smoking doesn't just catch up with you later: it impairs the development of teenage lungs.

**Schools have an important impact on whether young people smoke.** Research has found that a school's social environment, including teacher-student relationships, is associated with the number of its students who smoke<sup>3</sup>.



# Underage smoking prevalence



The chart above shows trends in underage smoking over time and key policy changes that occurred in the same period. In 2023, **11%** of 11-16 year olds had ever smoked. This is a **decline** from 1996, when 49% of young people had smoked at least once.

# Underage vaping prevalence

National average	How your school compares
25% have used vapes on at least one occasion	Similar %
9% current regular vape-users	Lower %

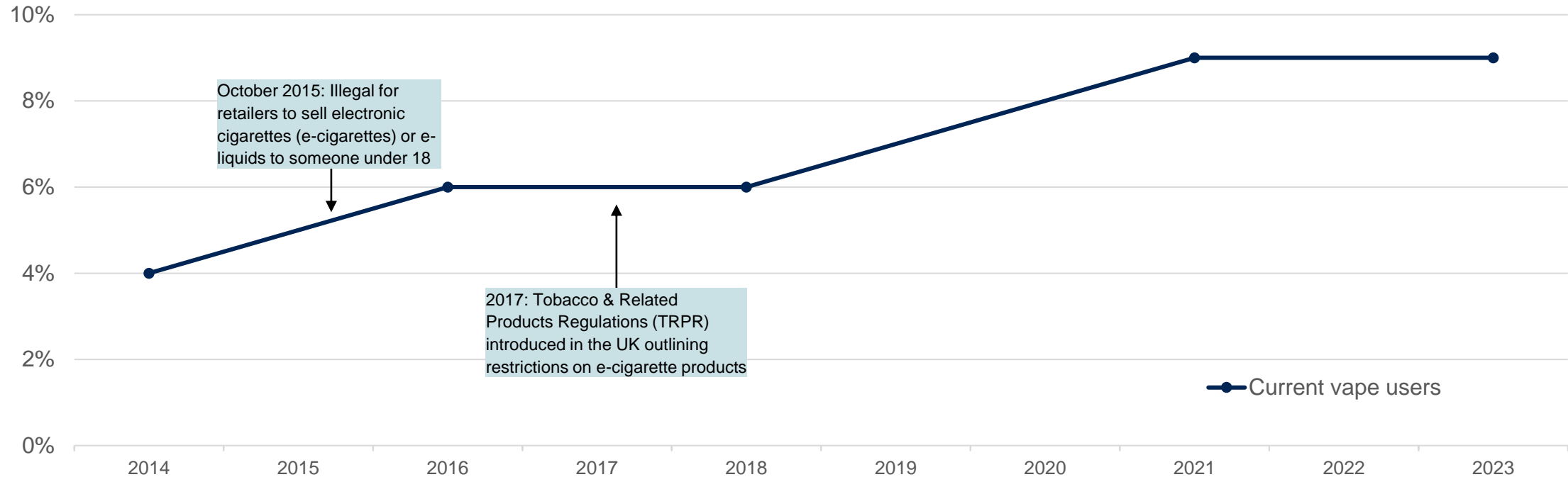


**Vapes, sometimes called electronic or e-cigarettes, allow users to inhale nicotine through a vapour rather than smoke.** They work by heating a solution that typically contains nicotine, propylene glycol or vegetable glycerine, and flavourings.

**The number of children vaping has increased since 2018.** Evidence demonstrates that vaping products are advertised in a style that appeals to young people. The government is proposing ways to reduce the desirability of vapes for young people.<sup>1</sup>

Although not risk free, e-cigarettes are far less harmful than cigarettes. However, vaping is substantially more dangerous for children and young people because their developing brains and lungs are more sensitive to the effects of vaping.<sup>4</sup>

# Underage vaping prevalence



The chart above shows trends in underage e-cigarette use over time and key policy changes that occurred in the same period. In 2023, 9% of 11-16 year old pupils are current vape users. This is an increase from 2014, when questions about vape use were first introduced.

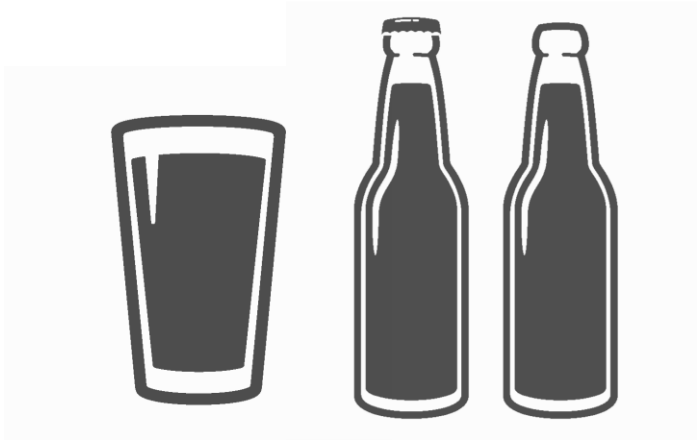
# Drinking

# 03



# Drinking: why is this an important agenda for schools?

National average	How your school compares
37% have ever had an alcoholic drink*	Lower %
16% have ever been drunk	Higher%



**Alcohol contributes to a wide range of problems in the UK**, including violence, traffic accidents and suicide.

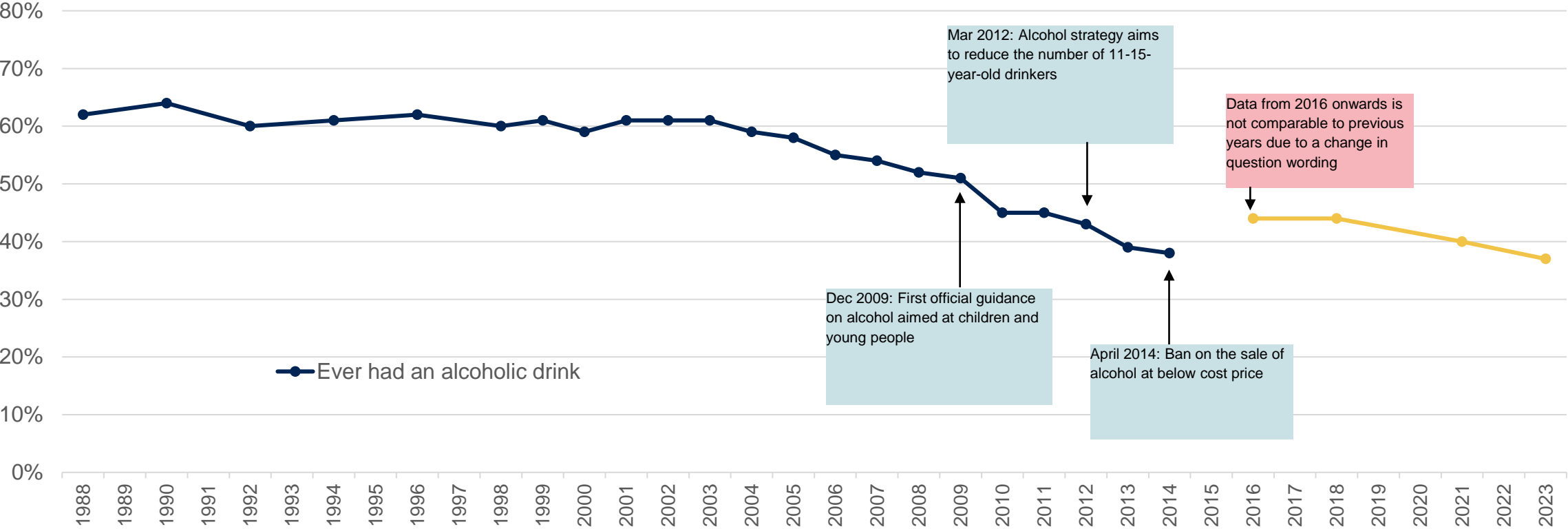
**Alcohol has long and short-term consequences on the body and mind.** Heavy alcohol use in adolescence is associated with mental health problems, sleep disturbance, and negative effects on bone, liver and hormone system development<sup>5</sup>. Early-onset of alcohol use is one of the strongest predictors of later dependence on alcohol<sup>6</sup>

**Binge drinking is associated with other risky behaviours.** These include missing or falling behind at school, antisocial behaviour, and unsafe sexual behaviour.<sup>7</sup> There is an added danger of mixing alcohol and other drugs.

**Less is better.** There is a 'dose-response relationship' for nearly all the diseases that are linked to alcohol consumption, meaning that the more you drink, the greater your risk of disease<sup>8</sup>.

\*a whole drink, not just a sip

# Underage drinking prevalence



The chart above shows trends in underage drinking over time and key policy changes that occurred in the same period. The proportion of young people who had ever drunk an alcoholic drink followed a downward trend between 2003 and 2014. The question wording was changed in 2016, so data is not comparable to earlier years.

# Drug use

# 04





# Drug use: Why is this is an important agenda for schools?

National average	How your school compares
16% have been offered cannabis	Similar %
2% have been offered new psychoactive substances	Similar %
28% have been offered any drugs	Lower %
13% have ever used or taken a drug (even if only once)	Higher %

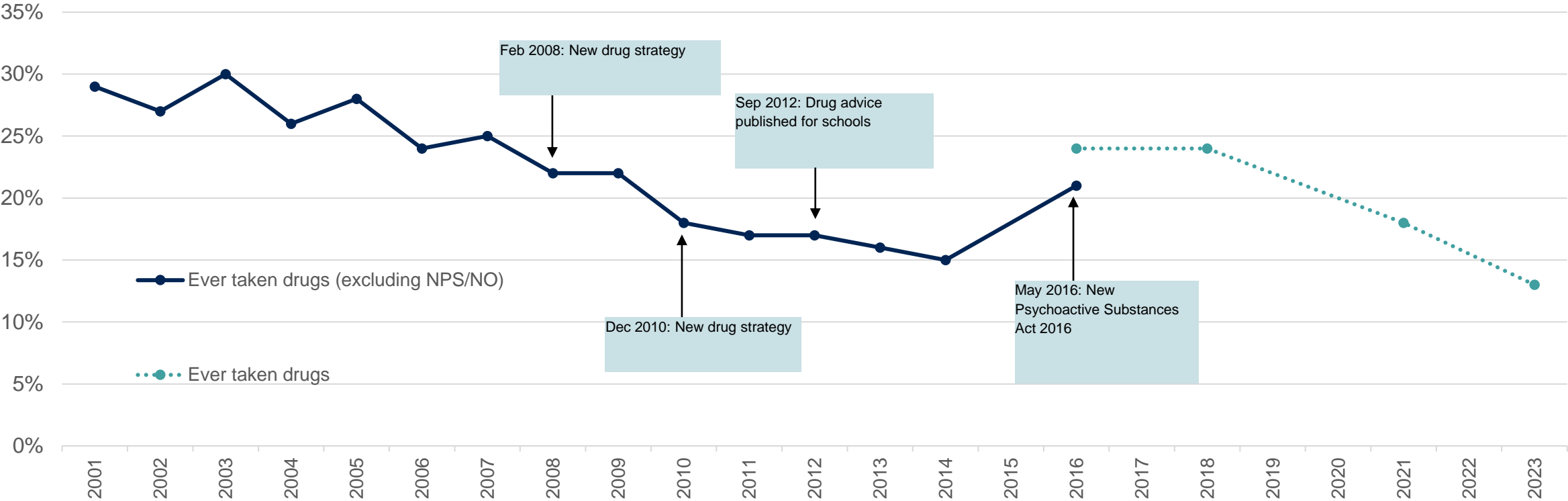


**There are many risks to young people’s health and wellbeing associated with using legal and illegal drugs**  
For example, cannabis can affect concentration, memory and motivation in the short term, and in the longer term has been linked to serious mental health problems<sup>9</sup>.

**Drug use is associated with poorer educational outcomes.**  
A recent meta-analysis of 63 cannabis studies demonstrated that cannabis use in adolescence is likely associated with increases in school absenteeism and dropout; reduced likelihood of obtaining high academic grades, school completion, and university enrolment<sup>10</sup>.

**Schools have an important impact on young people’s drug use.** For example, research in England has found that positive teacher-student relationships reduced the risk of weekly cannabis use by 52%<sup>11</sup>. Understanding young people's lives at school may help us better understand drug use.

# Underage drug use



The chart above shows trends in underage drug use over time and key policy changes that occurred in the same period. There was a large increase in 2016, which may have partly been due to new questions on nitrous oxide (NO) and new psychoactive substances (NPS).



New psychoactive substances (NPS) have emerged in recent years and mimic the effects of established illegal drugs, but have a different molecular structure. As a result, they were not covered by drug laws, making them technically legal until 2016, when the UK-wide Psychoactive Substances Bill<sup>12</sup> was introduced.

# Young people's attitudes

# 05



# Attitudes towards smoking, drinking and drug use

National average	How your school compares
17% say it's ok to try smoking a cigarette to see what it's like	Higher %
29% say it's ok to try using a vape to see what it's like	Lower %
52% say it's ok to try drinking alcohol to see what it's like	Similar%
27% say it's ok to try getting drunk to see what it's like	Similar %
11% say it's ok to try taking Cannabis to see what it's like	Lower %

# Young peoples' attitudes to information provision

Q: Do you think your school has given you enough information on the following topics?

National average	How your school compares
<b>69%</b> say they thought their school had given them enough information on <b>smoking</b> .	Lower %
<b>64%</b> say they thought their school had given them enough information on <b>alcohol</b> .	Lower %
<b>63%</b> say they thought their school had given them enough information on <b>drugs</b> .	Similar %

# References & resources

# 06

# Useful resources

- **NHS Choices** provides health information and support services. Visit <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-body>.
- **Action on Smoking and Health (ASH)** offers information and statistics on smoking. Visit <http://ash.org.uk>.
- **Every mind matters** provides teaching resources. Visit [campaignresources.dhsc.gov.uk/campaigns/school-zone/](https://campaignresources.dhsc.gov.uk/campaigns/school-zone/)
- **Childline** (0800 11 11) a free helpline for young people under 18. For information specific to drugs, alcohol and smoking please visit this page <https://www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/you-your-body/drugs-alcohol-smoking/>
- **Young minds** Can offer support for young people and their mental health <https://www.youngminds.org.uk>
- **FRANK** Can offer information and support on drugs and drug use. Visit <https://www.talktofrank.com/>



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# Thank you for taking part in SDD 2023



Thank you for taking part in the Smoking, Drinking and Drug Use among Young People in England study, carried out by Ipsos on behalf of NHS England.

If you have any feedback or further questions, please contact the survey team at [SDDsurvey@Ipsosresearch.com](mailto:SDDsurvey@Ipsosresearch.com) or visit: [sddsurvey.co.uk](https://sddsurvey.co.uk).