27 July 2017


The latest National Statistics on illicit drug use in England and Wales are released today, based on self reported responses from the 2016/17 Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW).

Key findings:

- Around 1 in 12 (8.5%) adults aged 16 to 59 had taken an illicit drug in the last year. This equated to around 2.8 million people. This level of drug use was similar to the 2015/16 survey (8.4%), but statistically significantly lower than a decade ago (10.1% in the 2006/07 survey). The trend in last year drug use among 16 to 59 year olds has been flat for eight years, since the 2009/10 survey.

![Proportion of 16 to 59 and 16 to 24 year olds taking drugs in the last year, 1996 to 2016/17 CSEW](chart)

- Around 1 in 5 (19.2%) young adults aged 16 to 24 had taken an illicit drug in the last year. This proportion is more than double that of the wider age group, and equates to around 1.2 million people. This level of drug use was similar to the 2015/16 survey (18.0%), but again statistically significantly lower compared with a decade ago (24.2% in the 2006/07 survey).
The use of new psychoactive substances (NPS) among 16 to 59 year olds in the last year has fallen from 0.7% in the 2015/16 survey to 0.4% in the 2016/17 survey, a statistically significant change. Use of NPS in the last year is concentrated among young adults aged 16 to 24, with around 1 in 80 (1.2%) young adults aged 16 to 24 taking an NPS in the last year, which equates to around 77,000 young adults.

As in previous years, cannabis was the most commonly used drug, with 6.6 per cent of adults aged 16 to 59 having used it in the last year (around 2.2 million people), similar to the 2015/16 survey (6.5%), but showing statistically significant falls compared with a decade ago (8.2%) and the start of measurement in 1996 (9.4%).

**Frequency of illicit drug use in the last year**

- Estimates from the 2016/17 CSEW show that **2.0 per cent of all adults aged 16 to 59 were defined as frequent drug users** (having taken any illicit drug more than once a month on average in the last year), a statistically significant fall from 3.3 per cent in the 2015/16 CSEW.

- **Young adults were more likely to be frequent drug users than 16 to 59 year olds.** The proportion of young adults aged 16 to 24 who were classed as frequent drug users was 4.2 per cent.

- Six per cent of adults aged 16 to 59 who reported using drugs in the last year said they had used drugs every day.

Other findings from the 2016/17 CSEW include drug use by personal, household and area characteristics and lifestyle factors.

**Notes**


For all press enquiries, please contact the Home Office Press Office who will liaise with Home Office Crime and Policing Statistics:

Newsdesk - **020 7035 3535**
Monday - Friday: 07:00 – 20:00
Emergency media calls, out-of-hours: 07659 174 240
Please note: the press office deals with enquiries from the media only. Members of the public should phone **020 7035 4848**.