

# UNESCO HIV and Health Education Clearinghouse

Thematic brief 3/2015

## Education sector responses to substance use

According to the [2015 World Drug Report](#), an estimated 246 million, or 1 out of 20, people between the ages of 15 and 64 had used an illicit drug in 2013. The annual number of drug-related deaths was estimated at 187,100. 1 out of 10 drug users is considered to be a problem drug user, suffering from drug use disorders or drug dependence. Almost half (12.19 million) of those problem drug users inject drugs, and an estimated 1.65 million of those who inject drugs were living with HIV in 2013. At the global level, men are three times more likely than women to use cannabis, cocaine or amphetamines. Women are more likely than men to misuse prescription drugs, particularly prescription opioids and tranquilizers.

The [2014 Global Status Report on Alcohol and Health](#) estimates that worldwide 16% of drinkers aged 15 and older engage in heavy episodic drinking, and that in 2012, 5.9% of all global deaths were attributable to alcohol consumption. The [2015 Global Report on Trends in Prevalence of Tobacco Smoking](#) estimates that tobacco use is responsible for the death of about six million people each year. The report provides age-specific prevalence estimates by sex for current tobacco smoking for the years 2000, 2010 and 2025.

Available evidence shows that initiation of substance use is most likely to occur during adolescence. According to the UNODC [International Standards on Drug Use Prevention](#), adolescence is a developmental period when youth are exposed to new ideas and behaviours through increased associations with people and organizations, and a time to “try out” adult roles and responsibilities. Substance use amongst young people can be linked to significant mental and physical health risks such as depression, suicide attempts and risky sexual behaviour. It has also been linked to early school dropout, lower educational attainment and anti-social behaviour such as truancy and violence.

Data on substance use amongst young people is limited. School-based surveys can provide useful comparisons across countries, but do not include young people who are not attending school, nor those who have been excluded from school. A recent [Open Society Foundations](#) report found limited surveillance in the

majority of countries, with most of the available data coming from high-income countries in Europe and North America, as well as Australia and New Zealand. Many countries rely on self-reporting by an accessible group of young people which is often school students. Some data on pupil and teacher substance use and dependence is provided by the [Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality \(SACMEQ\)](#) through questions on school heads’ perceptions of pupils’ and teachers’ behavioural problems (in order to construct a perceived school disorder index).

Evidence suggests that school-based programmes to prevent substance use can have positive impacts on improving school attainment and engagement as well as health and well-being in general. According to UNODC, targeting early adolescents may have more positive results than targeting younger or older children. They also suggest that school attendance, attachment to school and the achievement of age-appropriate language and numeracy skills are important protective factors for children, and therefore policies aimed at keeping children in school can play an important role. School policies on substance use may also increase commitment to school participation, encourage positive social relationships and discourage negative behaviours, and thus may reduce drug use and other risky behaviours.

### References

- Barrett, D. 2015. *The impacts of drug policies on children and young people*. New York: Open Society Foundations.
- Saito, M. 2015. *Assessing school climate towards sustainable learning for all in Sub-Saharan Africa: Perspectives from unstable health to school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV)*. SACMEQ Gender Series Contribution, 6.
- UNODC. 2015. *International standards on drug use prevention*. Vienna: UNODC.
- UNODC. 2015. *World drug report 2015*. Vienna: UNODC.
- WHO. 2015. *WHO report on the global tobacco epidemic, 2015: raising taxes on tobacco*. Geneva: WHO.
- WHO. 2014. *Global status report on alcohol and health 2014*. Geneva: WHO.

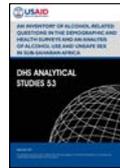
# Evidence and guidelines

A selection of resources on the nature and extent of substance use amongst young people, as well as examples of global, regional and national guidelines and standards for drug education in schools.

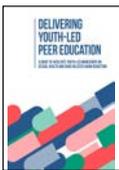
Click on the title to access the document



**Addictive substances: textbook approaches from 16 countries**  
*Carvalho, Graça S. et al., 2014*



**An inventory of alcohol-related questions in the demographic and health surveys and an analysis of alcohol use and unsafe sex in Sub-Saharan Africa**  
*ICF International, 2015*



**Delivering youth-led peer education: a guide to facilitate youth-led workshops on sexual health and drug-related harm reduction**  
*Youth RISE, 2014*



**Life skills-based education for drug use prevention training manual**  
*UNICEF, 2001*



**Las escuelas de educación frente al fenómeno de las drogas en América Latina y el Caribe**  
*Comisión Interamericana para el Control del Abuso de Drogas, 2009*



**School-based drug abuse prevention: promising and successful programs**  
*National Crime Prevention Centre Canada, 2009*



**Global school-based student health surveys (GSHS)**  
*CDC; WHO, ongoing*



**Schools. School-based education for drug abuse prevention**  
*UNODC, 2004*



**HIV and young people who inject drugs. Technical brief**  
*WHO, 2015*



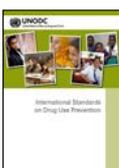
**Situation analysis of the education sector response to HIV, drugs and sexual health in Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Timor-Leste**  
*UNESCO Office Jakarta, 2012*



**The impacts of drug policies on children and young people**  
*OSF, 2015*



**Substance use among students in 36 European countries. The 2011 ESPAD report**  
*Swedish Council for Information on Alcohol and Other Drugs, 2012*



**International standards on drug use prevention**  
*UNODC, 2015*



**Substance use prevention in educational settings: a review of policies and practices**  
*UNESCO Office Moscow, 2015*

# Country responses

Examples of national education sector policies, programmes and practices responding to substance use amongst young people.



## Argentina. Programa nacional de educación y prevención sobre las adicciones y el consumo indebido de drogas

*Ministerio de Educación, 2013*



## Mexico. Orientaciones para la prevención de adicciones en escuelas de educación básica: manual para profesores de secundaria

*Secretaría de Educación Pública; Secretaría de Salud, 2008*



## Brazil. Adolescentes e jovens para a educação entre pares: álcool e outras drogas

*Ministry of Health; Ministry of Education, 2010*



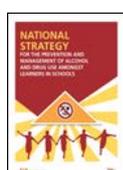
## New Zealand. Alcohol and other drug education programmes. Guide for schools

*Ministry of Education, 2014*



## Canada. Building on our strengths: Canadian standards for school-based youth substance abuse prevention

*Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse, 2010*



## South Africa. National strategy for the prevention and management of alcohol and drug use amongst learners in schools

*Department of Basic Education, 2013*



## Fiji. Ministry of education policy in drugs and substance abuse

*Ministry of Education, National Heritage, Culture and Arts, 2012*



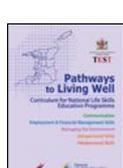
## Switzerland. Alcool et tabac: prévention à l'école

*Addiction Suisse, 2013*



## France. Prévention des conduites addictives : guide d'intervention en milieu scolaire

*Ministère de l'éducation nationale; Mission interministérielle de lutte contre la drogue et la toxicomanie, 2010*



## Trinidad and Tobago. Pathways to living well: curriculum for national life skills education programme

*Ministry of Tertiary Education and Skills Training; National Training Agency, 2013*



## Ireland. Guidelines for developing a school substance use policy

*Department of Education and Science, 2011*



## UK (England). Quality standards for effective alcohol and drug education

*Mentor-ADEPIS, 2015*



## Malta. Guidelines: substance abuse prevention programmes and interventions in state schools

*Ministry for Education and Employment, 2013*



## UK (Northern Ireland). Drugs guidance for schools in Northern Ireland

*Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment, Northern Ireland, 2015*

## To find out more

A selection of projects/sites which provide access to further data and resources.

### European Drug Prevention Quality Standards (EDPQS)



The EDPQS provide a set of principles to help develop and assess the quality of drug prevention and offer a comprehensive resource outlining all the elements of drug prevention activities. They were developed by the European Prevention Standards Partnership from a research project co-funded by the European Union. The Partnership undertook a review and synthesis of existing international and national standards as well as consultations with more than 400 professionals in six European countries to identify what quality standards should apply to drug prevention activities.

More information at: <http://prevention-standards.eu>

### Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children (HBSC)



The HBSC research network is an international alliance of researchers that collaborate on the World Health Organization collaborative cross-national survey of school students: Health Behaviour in School-aged Children. The HBSC collects data every four years on 11-, 13- and 15-year-old boys' and girls' health and well-being, social environments and health behaviours, including substance use (alcohol, tobacco and cannabis). HBSC now includes 44 countries and regions across Europe and North America.

More information at: [www.hbsc.org](http://www.hbsc.org)

### Youth RISE



Youth RISE (Resource. Information. Support. Education) is a youth-led network promoting evidence-based drug policies and harm reduction strategies with the involvement of young people who use drugs and are affected by drug policies. Youth RISE have published a series of briefing and recommendation papers looking at how national drug policy impacts upon young people.

More information at: [www.youthrise.org](http://www.youthrise.org)

### UNGASS on the World Drug Problem



A Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGASS) on the World Drug Problem will be held in New York on 18 April 2016. This Special Session will be an important milestone in achieving the goals set in the policy document of [2009 Political Declaration and Plan of Action on International Cooperation towards an Integrated and Balanced Strategy to Counter the World Drug Problem](#), which defined action to be taken by Member States as well as goals to be achieved by 2019. In March 2014, the Commission on Narcotic Drugs conducted the high-level, mid-term review of the progress made in the implementation of the Political Declaration and Plan of Action, the results of which are included in the [Joint Ministerial Statement](#) adopted. Member States identified achievements, challenges and priorities for further action on the way to the target date of 2019.

More information at: [www.unodc.org/ungass2016](http://www.unodc.org/ungass2016)

### UNESCO-UNODC-WHO joint publication of good policy and practice of education sector responses to the use of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs

A joint UNESCO, UNODC and WHO publication of good policy and practice in education sector responses to the use of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs is currently under development and will be launched during a side event at the upcoming UNGASS. The report has been developed through an international consultation process and will include examples of strategies and approaches that have proven effective for the scaling-up of comprehensive evidence-based national education sector responses to substance use (including the linkage between the education and health sectors), as well as the challenges.

**CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS:** This is our final brief for 2015. We would welcome your suggestions of themes to cover for 2016, as well as your stories, news, events and publications to include in the brief. Contributions can be sent to [hiv-health-clearinghouse@iiep.unesco.org](mailto:hiv-health-clearinghouse@iiep.unesco.org) by 29 February 2015.

The HIV and Health Education Clearinghouse is a knowledge sharing initiative, provided by UNESCO, with contributions from external partners. Through a comprehensive resource library and information exchange service it supports ministries of education, development agencies, civil society, researchers and other education partners, to develop effective HIV&AIDS education, school health and sexuality education policies, programmes and advocacy. To add or remove your name from the distribution list, please contact: [hiv-health-clearinghouse@iiep.unesco.org](mailto:hiv-health-clearinghouse@iiep.unesco.org)

This thematic brief is produced by the UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning

7-9 rue Eugène Delacroix, 75116 Paris, France

