

Summary

Annual school surveys concerning the use of alcohol, drugs, tobacco and inhalants have been carried out in Sweden since 1971. The studies were conducted each year in grade six (age 12-13) and grade nine (age 14-15) in compulsory school until 1983. Thereafter grade six participates only every second year.

In the 2001 survey 3 593 students in grade six and 5 569 students in grade nine participated. The dropout rate was 11 and 15 percent respectively.

To be considered as an alcohol-consumer in this study, a very limited consumption is requested (one glass of beer or 2 cl of wine or 2 cl of spirits once a year or less often).

Grade six

The drinking habits among grade six students did not change much during the 1970's. The proportion of alcohol consumers among the boys decreased between 1977 and 1987 from 63 to 42 per cent and among the girls from 56 to 23 per cent. Between 1989 and 1991 this proportion increased to 48 per cent of the boys and 30 per cent of the girls. The share among boys is 45 per cent in 2001 studie, and the share among girls is slightly higher in 2001 compare with 1999 (39 respectively 33%).

The frequency of drinking occasions and the consumed quantities of beer "folköl", strong beer, wine and spirits has been rather unchanged in grade six during recent years. Those who drink to the point of intoxication are also very few in this group of age.

The proportion of smokers increased between 1987 and 1989 from 3 to about 9 per cent among the students. Since then the proportion has decreased and was in 2001 3 per cent among boys and 5 per cent among girls.

Very few of the six-graders have ever tried illicit drugs. In the study of 2001 1 per cent of the boys and less than 1 per cent of the girls reported having drug experience.

The proportion students in grade 6 who have ever used inhalants has been rather stable, with exception of 1995 when it was higher. In the 2001 study 3 per cent among the boys and 1 per cent among the girls have used inhalants at least once.

Grade nine

During the 1970's and early 1980's more students in grade nine were classified as alcohol consumers than later on. In the last years of the 1980's about 75 per cent were classified as alcohol consumers while the average proportion since 1990 has been around 78 per cent.

The proportion of consumers of regular beer (so called folkbeer), strong beer and spirits increased during the first years of the 1990's. Thereafter the proportion of regular beer consumers among the girls has increased until 1995, but has since then decreased some. A similar pattern is shown for strong beer. The proportion of wine consumers among the boys has declined during recent years, while unchanged among the girls. This is the case for spirits as well.

The gender pattern shows that there are more consumers of beer among the boys, while the opposite is true for the wine consumers. Hardly any difference between the sexes has been found in the proportion of consumers of spirits, although during the last years it has been a greater proportion girls than boys.

The proportion of students who has consumed home made liquor during the last 12 months increased from 1991 until 1995 before it stabilised for some years but seems to slightly decrease the last two years (36% 2001).

The estimated average consumption per year of regular beer, strong beer, wine and spirits in cl of pure alcohol (100%) shows that regular beer and spirits make up the major part of the alcohol intake among the nine grade students. The total average alcohol consumption per year has increased some in this year's study, particularly among the girls.

During the 1990's the proportion to report drinking large amounts of regular beer on each drinking occasion has increased among both boys and girls. The equivalent increase for strong beer has though levelled off. The proportion to report drinking large amounts of wine has decreased among the boys but increased among the girls.

Not fully 35 per cent of the students have never been drunk. Another third experienced their first intoxication at the age of 13 or 14. Very few report having been drunk before 13 years of age, especially among the girls.

The proportion of girls who report drinking to the point of intoxication on “each” or “nearly each” drinking occasion has increased, while it has rather stable among boys. The difference that was formerly found between the sexes has now disappeared.

The proportions of students that reported "binge drinking" (frequency of drinking five or more drinks in a row) once a month, or more often, decreased during the 1980's. Between 1989 and 1993 (1995 for the girls) the proportions rose. Thereafter the proportion has been fairly stable among the boys but seems to increase slightly among the girls the two last years.

Smoking was more common during the early 1970's than it has been later on. A decrease then occurred and the proportion of smokers was stable until an increase between 1988 and 1989, from 17 to 23 per cent among the boys and from 24 to 30 per cent among the girls. Since then the number of smokers declined somewhat among both boys and girls (17 and 25% 1997). The question about smoking was rearranged in 1997. During the period 1997-2001, approximately 29 per cent of the boys, and 36 per cent of the girls are smokers. Many of the boys use snuff as a substitute or as a complement to cigarettes. For that reason the total tobacco-consumption rates are higher among the boys compare to the girls (40 respectively 36% 2001).

The proportion of students having ever tried any illicit drug decreased during the period 1971 to the late 1980's. The lowest rate of lifetime prevalence was observed in 1989 when the proportion was 3 per cent. Since then there has been an increase and in 2001 the lifetime prevalence rate was 10 per cent among the boys and 9 per cent among the girls.

Use of inhalants tends to fluctuate over different times and places. In the 1999 study, the proportion of students who had used inhalants rose but since then the numbers have again decreased. 8 per cent of the boys and the girls have used inhalants in 2001.