

news from the international study

## CONTROL OF ADOLESCENT SMOKING

# Smoking in Scottish schools

Dawn Griesbach and Candace Currie

This report presents findings on smoking policies and smoking behaviour in Scottish schools. In particular, it will show how school smoking policies and restrictions relate to students' perceptions of teachers and other students smoking in these schools. The data come from a representative sample of 15-year-old students and two members of staff in each of 77 Scottish secondary schools. Data were collected in 1998 as part of the EC-funded project, *Control of Adolescent Smoking (CAS)*.

- ~ There was variation among the 77 Scottish schools surveyed in 1998 as to whether they had a written or informal policy on student or teachers smoking. Thirty-three schools had a written policy on student smoking and 40 had a written policy on teacher smoking. Irrespective of policy status, smoking by students was banned in all secondary schools in this study. On the other hand, only 20 schools banned smoking by teachers.
- ~ Smoking in schools, by both students and teachers, was common. Students reported regularly seeing or knowing about teachers smoking in the staff room, in some other parts of the school building, and outdoors on the school premises. Students reported regularly seeing or knowing about other students smoking in the toilets, some other parts of the school building, and outdoors on the school premises.
- ~ In schools where restrictions on student smoking were consistently enforced in the toilets, significantly fewer students reported seeing other students smoking in the toilets every day, compared to schools where restrictions in the toilets were not consistently enforced.
- ~ In schools where teacher smoking was banned on the school premises, significantly fewer students reported seeing teachers smoking in the staff room every day, compared to schools where teacher smoking was not banned.

## Background

In many countries of Europe, smoking in schools is forbidden or restricted on the basis of national legislation on smoking in public buildings.<sup>1</sup> In Scotland, where smoking accounts for one in five deaths annually, no such legislation exists.<sup>2</sup>

Nevertheless, many Scottish local authorities or individual schools have policies on student and teacher smoking. In some cases, these policies have stipulated a complete ban on smoking; in others, the policies have resulted in restrictions on smoking to certain locations within the school building. However, little is presently known about the enforcement of school smoking restrictions or the effectiveness of school-based smoking policies in Scottish schools.

In 1998, a survey was undertaken of 15-year-old students and two staff members in each of 77 Scottish secondary schools using self-completion questionnaires. In each school one of the staff members was the head or another senior administrator at the school. The second staff member was a subject teacher — usually the teacher responsible for health education in the school.

The student survey included questions on school smoking policy and practices, including perceptions of adult smoking at school (whether or not students see/know about teachers and students smoking at school, where smoking occurs, beliefs/attitudes concerning these perceptions). The staff survey included questions on smoking policies and restrictions for students, staff and visitors; how long they have existed;

**Table 1: Smoking policies and restrictions on smoking for students and teachers in Scottish schools, as reported by school staff**

	Total schools		Schools where smoking is banned on school premises		Schools where smoking is permitted in restricted areas	
	(n)	%	(n)	%	(n)	%
<b>Policy status regarding students' smoking</b>						
Written policy	(33)	42.9	(33)	42.9	(0)	0.0
Informal policy	(23)	29.9	(23)	29.9	(0)	0.0
Uncertain policy status	(21)	27.3	(21)	27.3	(0)	0.0
<i>Total</i>	<i>(77)</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>(77)</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>(0)</i>	<i>0.0</i>
<b>Policy status regarding teachers' smoking</b>						
Written policy	(40)	51.9	(16)	80.0	(24)	42.1
Informal policy	(11)	14.3	(1)	5.0	(10)	17.5
Uncertain policy status	(26)	33.8	(3)	15.0	(23)	40.4
<i>Total</i>	<i>(77)</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>(20)</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>(57)†</i>	<i>100.0</i>

† Includes one school for which staff respondents disagreed about whether smoking by staff was permitted on school premises.

where smoking is permitted and what sanctions are employed when restrictions are broken; and factors predisposing, enabling and reinforcing staff adherence to the restrictions.

This report will present findings from some of these data. In particular, it will show how school smoking policies and restrictions relate to students' perceptions of teachers and other students smoking in these schools.

### Smoking policies for students and teachers

Table 1 shows that staff from 33 schools reported that their school had a written policy on student smoking, and staff from 23 schools reported that their school had an informal (unwritten) policy. In 21 schools, there was disagreement between the two staff respondents about the school's policy status regarding student smoking, and therefore, these schools have been classified as having an uncertain policy status.

Concerning teacher smoking, the data showed that 40 schools had a written policy on teacher smoking and eleven schools had an informal policy. There was disagreement between the staff respondents about the school's policy status in 26 schools. Twenty-one (21) schools had written smoking policies for both students and teachers. None of the schools in this study had no policy on teacher or student smoking.

Irrespective of the school's policy status, all schools banned smoking by students on school premises. On the other hand smoking by teachers was banned in only 20 schools. Of these, 16 had a formal written policy on teacher smoking. In the remaining 57 schools, staff smoking was restricted to designated areas such as the staff room or another area within

the school building. These results indicate that schools with written policies on teacher smoking were more likely to *restrict* smoking to designated areas within the school building, than ban smoking altogether. However, the majority of schools that banned teacher smoking had a written policy (80.0%), perhaps suggesting that such bans may require the formality of a written document in order to be implemented.

### Smoking by teachers and students at school

Irrespective of policy status or smoking restrictions, smoking on school premises was reported to be common, both by teachers and students. Table 2 shows the percentage of young people who reported seeing or knowing about teachers smoking at school, either in the building or outdoors on the school premises. The school staff room was the place where students most commonly saw or knew about their teachers smoking. One-fifth of students (20%) reported seeing or knowing about teachers smoking in the staff room "about every day." Only 4.2% reported teachers smoking every day in other parts of the school building (possibly a designated staff smoking room), and 4.7% reported teachers smoking outdoors on the school premises every day.

Table 3 shows the percentage of young people who reported seeing other students smoking at school. Outdoors on the school premises (i.e., the playground) and the school toilets were the sites most frequented by student smokers. For example, 62.9% of students in the study saw or knew about other students smoking outdoors on the school premises every day, and 32.8% saw or knew about other students smoking in the toilets every day.

Table 2: Students' perceptions of teachers smoking at school.

How often do you see or know about teachers smoking...	Places where teacher smoking was reported (%)				
	in the staff room	in other parts of the school bldg	outdoors on school premises	in the corridors	in the canteen
About every day	20.0	4.2	4.7	0.4	0.5
Sometimes	23.5	12.4	10.0	0.6	1.5
Never	18.4	42.7	47.6	76.4	69.1
Don't know	38.0	40.6	37.7	22.6	28.9
Total (n)	(1709)	(1703)	(1703)	(1701)	(1702)

Table 3: Students' perceptions of students smoking at school.

How often do you see or know about other pupils smoking...	Places where student smoking was reported (%)				
	outdoors on school premises	in the toilets	in other parts of the school bldg	in the corridors	in the canteen
About every day	62.9	32.8	19.5	0.8	0.5
Sometimes	23.2	30.9	29.3	5.7	0.8
Never	7.7	24.2	36.6	84	88.8
Don't know	6.3	12.1	14.6	9.5	9.9
Total (n)	(1711)	(1708)	(1703)	(1698)	(1700)

Table 4: Association between enforcement of student smoking restrictions in the school toilets, as reported by staff, and students' perceptions of student smoking in the toilets.

How often do you see or know about students smoking in the toilets/cloakrooms?	Restrictions always enforced in school toilets (37 schools)	Restrictions not always enforced in school toilets (40 schools)
	% of students	% of students
About every day	25.9	38.3
Sometimes	29.8	31.8
Never	30.5	19.2
Don't know	13.7	10.6
Total (n)	(802)	(827)
Significance (p)		***

\*\*\* –  $p < 0.001$ .

### Enforcement of smoking restrictions and student smoking behaviour

There was no significant association between having a policy on student smoking and students' smoking behaviour at school. Students were as likely to see other students smoking in schools where there was a written policy as they were in schools where there was an informal or uncertain policy.

However, where smoking restrictions were consistently enforced, students were significantly less likely to see smoking

by other students every day, and significantly more likely to *never* see other students smoking ( $p < 0.001$ ). For example, Table 4 shows that, in schools where smoking restrictions in the school toilets were *always* enforced, 25.9% of students reported seeing smoking in the toilets about every day. In contrast, in schools where smoking restrictions were *not* always enforced in the toilets, 38.3% of students said they saw smoking in the toilets about every day.

**Table 5: Association between teacher smoking restrictions, as reported by staff, and students' perceptions of teachers smoking in the staff room.**

How often do you see or know about teachers smoking in the staff room?	Teacher smoking banned on school premises (20 schools)	Teacher smoking allowed in restricted areas (57 schools)
	% of students	% of students
About every day	5.7	25.5
Sometimes	10.2	27.0
Never	32.4	14.3
Don't know	51.8	33.2
Total (n)	(423)	(1206)
Significance (p)		***

\*\*\* –  $p < 0.001$ .

### Teacher smoking bans and teacher smoking behaviour

A similar pattern was seen when comparing schools where teacher smoking was banned to those where teacher smoking was allowed in restricted areas. Table 5 shows that significantly fewer students (5.7%) saw or knew about teachers smoking "about every day" in the staff rooms of schools where teacher smoking was banned, compared to schools where teachers were allowed to smoke in restricted areas (25.5%) ( $p < 0.001$ ).

### References

1. Wold B, Holstein B, Griesbach D and Currie C (2000) *Control of Adolescent Smoking. National policies on restriction of smoking at school in eight European countries*. Deliverable I from the EC BIOMED-II grant, BMH4-CT98-3721, University of Edinburgh.
2. Scottish Office (1999) *Towards a Healthier Scotland*. The Stationery Office, Edinburgh.

### Credits

This study was funded by EC BIOMED II grant BMH4-CT98-3721, *Transnational variation in prevalence of adolescent smoking: the role of national tobacco policies and the school and family environments*. Short title: *Control of Adolescent Smoking (CAS)*. Participating countries/regions included Austria, French-speaking Belgium, Denmark, Finland, the German state of North Rhine-Westphalia, Norway, Scotland and Wales. The study was co-ordinated by the Scottish team, Candace Currie and Dawn Griesbach, at the University of Edinburgh. Data collection in Scotland was funded by the Health Education Board for Scotland (HEBS) under the auspices of the Scottish component of the Health Behaviour in School-aged Children: WHO Cross-National Study (HBSC).

### Further information about the CAS study is available from the project co-ordinator:

#### Dr Candace Currie

Child & Adolescent Health Research Unit (CAHRU)  
Department of PE, Sport and Leisure Studies  
University of Edinburgh  
Weir's Land, Holyrood Road  
Edinburgh EH8 8AQ

Tel: +44 131 651 6272

Email: Candace.Currie@ed.ac.uk