

news from the international study

CONTROL OF ADOLESCENT SMOKING

Parental influences on smoking among Scottish adolescents

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This report examines smoking among Scottish adolescents and their parents. The relationship between parental attitudes towards smoking their children's smoking is also explored. The data were collected in 1998 from a sample of 1,724 fifteen-year-old Scottish secondary school students, as part of the EC-funded project, *Control of Adolescent Smoking (CAS)*.

- ~ Highly significant associations were found between parental smoking and adolescent smoking.
- ~ A highly significant association was found between adolescent smoking (both boys and girls) and the number of smoking parents a young person had. Daily smoking prevalence was highest among both boys and girls if they had two parents who smoked, and lowest among both boys and girls if they had no smoking parents.
- ~ A highly significant association was found between adolescent smoking status and adolescents' perceptions of their parents' approval or disapproval of their smoking. Smokers were more likely than non-smokers to believe their parents would not mind if they smoked in two years time.
- ~ A highly significant association was found between adolescent smoking status and whether or not the adolescent cared what their parents thought about their smoking. Smokers were less likely than non-smokers to care about what their parents think about their smoking.

Introduction

Over the last two decades, a great deal of research on smoking among young people has focused on the social and familial factors associated with smoking initiation and habitual smoking. These factors can be thought of as the influence of family and friends, and the smoking behaviours of these "significant others" has been shown in a number of studies to be strongly related not only to the smoking behaviour of adolescents, but also to their attitudes and beliefs about smoking.^{1,2}

This report will present findings on the relationship between parental smoking (both mothers and fathers) and adolescent smoking. Results will also show the way in which smoking among 15-year-old Scottish adolescents is related to their perceptions of what their parents think about smoking, and whether they care what their parents think. Data were gathered from a nationally representative sample of 15-year-old Scottish

secondary school students as part of the EC-funded *Control of Adolescent Smoking (CAS)* study.

In the tables and graphs shown below, daily smokers are those adolescents who reported smoking every day; occasional smokers are those who reported smoking less often than every day; and non-smokers are those who said they did not smoke.

Parental smoking

Table 1 shows that there was a highly significant association between parental smoking and smoking among Scottish 15-year-olds in 1998. Of those young people who reported having a non-smoking father, only 16.2% were themselves daily smokers. This percentage doubled to 31.0% if their father smoked daily ($p < 0.001$). Similarly, only 17.4% of adolescents with a non-smoking mother were daily smokers, but this percentage increased to 30.9% among adolescents whose mothers smoked daily ($p < 0.001$).

Table 1: Association between parental smoking status, as reported by adolescent, and adolescent's own smoking status.

Adolescent smoking status	Father's smoking status (%)			Mother's smoking status (%)		
	Non-smoker	Occas smoker	Daily smoker	Non-smoker	Occas smoker	Daily smoker
Males						
Non-smoker/occas. smoker [†]	86.2	76.3	72.1	82.7	87.8	75.9
Daily smoker	13.8	23.7	27.9	17.3	12.2	24.1
Total (n)	(464)	(59)	(233)	(510)	(41)	(232)
Significance (p)		***			*	
Females						
Non-smoker/occas. smoker [†]	81.7	76.4	66.3	82.5	76.7	63.6
Daily smoker	18.3	23.6	33.7	17.5	23.3	36.4
Total (n)	(519)	(55)	(267)	(567)	(43)	(280)
Significance (p)		***			***	
Total						
Non-smoker/occas. smoker [†]	83.8	76.3	69.0	82.6	82.1	69.1
Daily smoker	16.2	23.7	31.0	17.4	17.9	30.9
Total (n)	(983)	(114)	(500)	(1077)	(84)	(512)
Significance (p)		***			***	

[†] Because of the small numbers of occasional smokers in some categories, adolescent occasional smokers have been classified together with non-smokers and compared to daily smokers.

* – $p < 0.05$; *** – $p < 0.001$.

There was also a highly significant association between the young person's smoking status and the number of smoking parents the young person had ($p < 0.001$). This was so for both boys and girls (See Figure 1). Only 13.9% of boys and 15.7% of girls with no smoking parents were daily smokers themselves. However, these percentages increased to 29.0% of boys and 38.8% of girls with two smoking parents. Girls were significantly more likely to be daily smokers if one of their parents smoked than if neither parent smoked ($p < 0.01$), and significantly more likely again to be daily smokers if they had two smoking parents than if they had only one parent who smoked ($p < 0.01$). Boys were also significantly more likely to smoke if they had one smoking parent than if they had no smoking parents ($p < 0.05$). However, there was no significant difference in daily smoking between boys with one smoking parent or two smoking parents.

These classifications are based on adolescents' responses to the questions, "Does your father smoke?" and "Does your mother smoke?" Responses to these questions were not dependent on whether the adolescent *lived* with their father or mother.

Perceptions of parental attitudes towards smoking

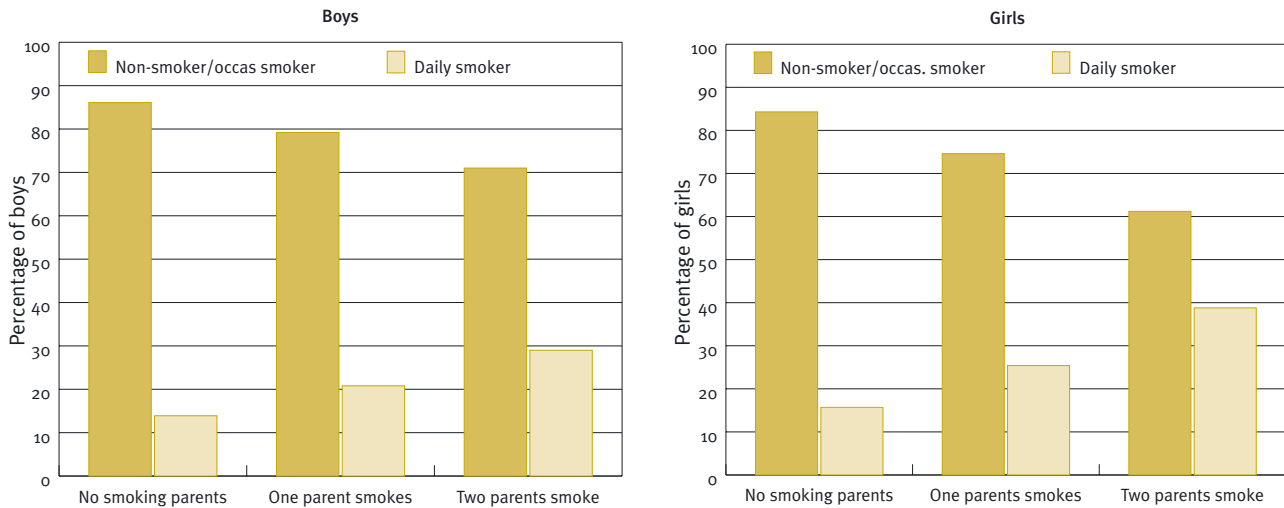
Table 2 shows the relationship between the young person's smoking status and their own perceptions of what their parents would think if they smoked in two years time. Smokers were significantly more likely than non-smokers to believe that their

parents would not mind if they smoked in two years ($p < 0.001$). For example, only 8.6% of non-smokers thought their father would not mind if they smoked in two years, while 11.3% of occasional smokers and 30.0% of daily smokers said the same. Similar patterns were found when young people were asked whether their mother would mind if they smoked ($p < 0.001$).

Table 3, on the back page, shows that female occasional and daily smokers were significantly more likely than male smokers to think that their fathers would mind if they smoked in two years ($p < 0.001$), but there was no significant difference between male and female smokers in whether they thought their mothers would mind.

Table 4 shows the relationship between the young person's smoking status and whether or not they cared what their parents thought about their smoking. While there was no significant difference between boys and girls in their attitudes towards what their parents thought about smoking, there was a difference between smokers and non-smokers. Smokers were significantly less likely than non-smokers to care about what their parents thought about their smoking ($p < 0.001$). Only 11.9% of non-smokers reported not caring what their parents thought about smoking, compared to 20.4% of occasional smokers, and 35.8% of daily smokers.

The significant association between adolescent smoking and perceptions of parental disapproval may partly be explained

Figure 1: Association between adolescent smoking status and number of smoking parents

Because of the small numbers of occasional smokers in some categories, occasional smokers have been categorised together with non-smokers and compared to daily smokers.

Table 2: Association between adolescent smoking status and perceptions of parental disapproval of the adolescent's future smoking behaviour

Adolescent's perception of parental disapproval	Smoking status of adolescent (%)								
	Male			Female			Total		
	Non-smokers	Occas. smokers	Daily smokers	Non-smokers	Occas. smokers	Daily smokers	Non-smokers	Occas. smokers	Daily smokers
Do you think your father would mind if you smoke two years from now?									
Yes	89.3	79.6	62.9	93.5	94.3	75.0	91.4	88.7	70.0
No	10.7	20.4	37.1	6.5	5.7	25.0	8.6	11.3	30.0
Total (n)	(572)	(54)	(143)	(550)	(87)	(204)	(1122)	(141)	(347)
Significance (p)		***			***			***	
Do you think your mother would mind?									
Yes	91.1	85.7	71.4	94.1	88.9	71.8	92.6	87.7	71.7
No	8.9	14.3	28.6	5.9	11.1	28.2	7.4	12.3	28.3
Total (n)	(584)	(56)	(154)	(595)	(90)	(213)	(1179)	(146)	(367)
Significance (p)		***			***			***	

*** – $p < 0.001$

by the association between adolescent smoking and the smoking status of the adolescents' parents. In other words, young people with parents who smoked may be more likely to think that their parents won't disapprove of their smoking. In fact, the association between parental smoking and adolescents' perceptions of their parents' disapproval was highly significant. However, multivariate analysis showed that, even after taking into account parental smoking status and whether or not the young person cared what their parents thought, adolescents who believed that their parents didn't mind about their smoking were at greatest risk of being daily smokers.

References

1. Flay BR, Hu FB, Siddiqui O, Day LE, Hedeker D, Petraitis J, Richardson J and Sussman S (1994) Differential influence of parental smoking and friends' smoking on adolescent initiation and escalation of smoking. *Journal of Health and Social Behaviour*, 35: 248-265.
2. Biglan A, Duncan TE, Ary DV, Smolkowski K (1995) Peer and parental influences on adolescent tobacco use. *Journal of Behavioral Medicine*, 18(4): 315-330.

Table 3: Association between gender and perceptions of parental disapproval among occasional and daily smokers.

Adolescent's perception of parental disapproval	Male (%)	Female (%)
Do you think your father would mind if you smoke two years from now?		
Yes	67.5	80.8
No	32.5	19.2
Total (n)	(197)	(291)
Significance (p)	***	
Do you think your mother would mind?		
Yes	75.2	76.9
No	24.8	23.1
Total (n)	(210)	(303)
Significance (p)	n.s.	

*** – $p < 0.001$ **Table 4: Association between adolescent smoking status and whether the adolescent cares what their parents think about their smoking**

	Smoking status of adolescent (%)								
	Male			Female			Total		
	Non-smokers	Occas. smokers	Daily smokers	Non-smokers	Occas. smokers	Daily smokers	Non-smokers	Occas. smokers	Daily smokers
Will you care (in 2 years time) what your father thinks (about your smoking)?									
Yes	89.6	76.4	60.7	86.5	81.6	66.7	88.1	79.6	64.2
No	10.4	23.6	39.3	13.5	18.4	33.3	11.9	20.4	35.8
Total (n)	(577)	(55)	(145)	(563)	(87)	(210)	(1140)	(142)	(355)
Significance (p)	***			***			***		
Will you care what your mother thinks?									
Yes	91.8	82.1	71.0	92.8	86.8	77.0	92.3	85.0	74.5
No	8.2	17.9	29.0	7.2	13.2	23.0	7.7	15.0	25.5
Total (n)	(585)	(56)	(155)	(596)	(91)	(213)	(1181)	(147)	(368)
Significance (p)	***			***			***		

*** - $p < 0.001$

Credits

This report is taken from a larger report entitled, *Control of Adolescent Smoking in Scotland*. The full report is available from CAHRU at the address shown at right.

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

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