



Fig. 8. Year 9 female smokers in 11 schools within one DHA. The schools are arranged in decreasing order of the percentage of girls that had smoked at least one cigarette during the previous week.

by different social classes (Balding 1995a, Tunstall 1982). They range from broadsheet (Group I) to popular tabloid (Group III). This classification offers a way of examining the degree to which young people's home background affects their smoking behaviour.

Figure 7 shows that the greatest percentage of Year 10 'smokers' (in this case those recording that they smoked at least one cigarette during the last 7 days) come from a Group III household. The social grouping effect is particularly tidy for the girls.

Local variations

In the Introduction to *Young People in 1994* we draw attention to a deliberate cohort study carried out in Yorkshire, in which we comment on the comparability of results between large samples gathered in different parts of the country in the same year.

At the same time, we should mention the wide variation sometimes found between communities (wards) and between schools in the same locality. Figure 8 shows the large variations found between smoking levels in Year 9 girls in 11 schools in one DHA. In these surveys it is the whole population of the year group present on the day the Health Related Behaviour Questionnaire was administered that has responded, not just a sample from it.

We have arranged the schools in order of decreasing percentage of female smokers. Typically, at this age, more girls than boys are 'smokers', and in these surveys within 11 schools, amongst the total populations present, 24.6% of girls were 'smokers' compared with 19.5% of boys.

At this age (13-14 years) it is often observed that the girls are mixing socially with older age-

group boys, where the percentage of boy smokers will be higher.

Clearly, from the display in Figure 8, there are a lot of girls attending schools 18 and 20 that smoke and also select the option that *they smoke and do not want to give it up*. In schools 24 and 29 there are fewer female smokers and noticeably larger proportions of them signalling that *they smoke but would like to give it up*.

The specific detail of these findings, fed back to individual schools, informs local action. The overview of the picture in all 11 schools does not raise this level of interest, purpose, or ownership.

Within any school, amongst the teachers, there is also an awareness about the characteristics of particular year groups. Teachers witness the tracks of 'good' and 'bad' year groups from entry into the school until they leave. Similarly, within a year group, individual classes or tutor groups have a character that informs the way teachers will approach them. This local knowledge is so important in designing education or intervention programmes.

References

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We are planning some future issues around the topics of . . .

**ASPIRATIONS & ENVIRONMENT
DOCTOR & DENTIST
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ALCOHOL**

Please write or telephone the Editor (01392 264720) if you would like to put pen to paper on the subject of young people (primary as well as secondary) and any of these topics.

VIEWPOINT Internet: Go ask Alice

A freelance writer recently rang us up and asked: *Do you know what sort of information is available on the Internet on, say, drugs? And are you worried?*

The answer to the first question was *Don't know*, so the second answer was *Not yet!* Since then we've had a root around, and could now reply *Some* and *Moderately*.

The Internet has two main branches that can be easily accessed: the 'newsgroups' (bulletin boards) where people post messages on different topics, and the World Wide Web, where static documents are placed for general reading via the networks, but each document has links that you can follow to other documents.

There are lots of drug-related newsgroups. Many newsgroups maintain a list of Frequently Asked Questions or FAQs (with answers) for new readers; for example, an alt.hemp FAQ asks *Doesn't marijuana cause brain damage?*

The short answer: No.
The long answer: The reason why you ask this is because you probably heard or read some- where that marijuana damages brain cells, or makes you stupid. These claims are untrue.

The answer goes into further detail and quotes research (but compare Mary Brett's article in *Education and Health* Vol 11 No 5). There are lots of other health-related bits of information on the Web, and you might say that because there is a mixture of 'pro' and 'anti' information, then there's a balance and browsers can make their own minds up. However, I don't think that's necessarily true. Firstly, 'pro' pages have links to other 'pro' pages, and the same goes for the 'antis'. Secondly, not all of the information is equally accessible: when I searched for 'cannabis' and 'marijuana' at the National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information (NCADI) database, which claims to be the world's largest resource for current information and materials, it required quite a bit of network awareness even to get started.

I have heard of a product called NET NANNY, which conjures up a charming image of a kind but firm restraining hand being placed on the keyboard when particular words appear.

But would I pick up everything you wanted, since drug users employ such a rich variety of terms when discussing their hobby?

One of the best-known of all Web sites is the Healthwise page at the University of Columbia — one of the top 5% of most-visited Web sites. (URL: <http://www.columbia.edu/cu/healthwise/>) Here you will find ALICE, a team of professional and peer educators who will answer questions submitted to their computer. Essentially, it's an electronic problem page. Answers are listed and indexed. Currently there are 43 filed under *Drug and alcohol concerns*. For example:

Crystal meth
Dear Alice,
A few of my friends are becoming dependent on crystal meth. I am concerned about their health. Could you please give me information on the drug concerning harmful effects it can have on the body?
Thanks, Alice, from a friend.

Dear Friend,
Crystal meth, or methamphetamine hydrochloride, is an amphetamine or stimulant. The effects of small to moderate doses of crystal meth include increased heart rate, respiration and blood pressure, central nervous system stimulation, increased body temperature, and appetite suppression.
You should be concerned about your friends. What may have started as an all-nighter has the potential to turn into a nightmare.

I find Alice's style and popularity very welcome, and I think that health educators have here an approach that is accessible and frequently accessed.

There is probably no information on Internet that is not available elsewhere, in libraries, on television, or in magazines. I would not feel happy if youngsters had unrestricted access to it upstairs alone in their bedrooms; if parents abandon responsibility for their children's diet of information, then this is as potentially damaging with respect to Internet as anything else. However, if parents do abandon responsibility in this way, then Internet is the least of that family's problems. — *David Regis*.

Dr James Edwards & Co., 100, 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123, 124, 125, 126, 127, 128, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162, 163, 164, 165, 166, 167, 168, 169, 170, 171, 172, 173, 174, 175, 176, 177, 178, 179, 180, 181, 182, 183, 184, 185, 186, 187, 188, 189, 190, 191, 192, 193, 194, 195, 196, 197, 198, 199, 200, 201, 202, 203, 204, 205, 206, 207, 208, 209, 210, 211, 212, 213, 214, 215, 216, 217, 218, 219, 220, 221, 222, 223, 224, 225, 226, 227, 228, 229, 230, 231, 232, 233, 234, 235, 236, 237, 238, 239, 240, 241, 242, 243, 244, 245, 246, 247, 248, 249, 250, 251, 252, 253, 254, 255, 256, 257, 258, 259, 260, 261, 262, 263, 264, 265, 266, 267, 268, 269, 270, 271, 272, 273, 274, 275, 276, 277, 278, 279, 280, 281, 282, 283, 284, 285, 286, 287, 288, 289, 290, 291, 292, 293, 294, 295, 296, 297, 298, 299, 300, 301, 302, 303, 304, 305, 306, 307, 308, 309, 310, 311, 312, 313, 314, 315, 316, 317, 318, 319, 320, 321, 322, 323, 324, 325, 326, 327, 328, 329, 330, 331, 332, 333, 334, 335, 336, 337, 338, 339, 340, 341, 342, 343, 344, 345, 346, 347, 348, 349, 350, 351, 352, 353, 354, 355, 356, 357, 358, 359, 360, 361, 362, 363, 364, 365, 366, 367, 368, 369, 370, 371, 372, 373, 374, 375, 376, 377, 378, 379, 380, 381, 382, 383, 384, 385, 386, 387, 388, 389, 390, 391, 392, 393, 394, 395, 396, 397, 398, 399, 400, 401, 402, 403, 404, 405, 406, 407, 408, 409, 410, 411, 412, 413, 414, 415, 416, 417, 418, 419, 420, 421, 422, 423, 424, 425, 426, 427, 428, 429, 430, 431, 432, 433, 434, 435, 436, 437, 438, 439, 440, 441, 442, 443, 444, 445, 446, 447, 448, 449, 450, 451, 452, 453, 454, 455, 456, 457, 458, 459, 460, 461, 462, 463, 464, 465, 466, 467, 468, 469, 470, 471, 472, 473, 474, 475, 476, 477, 478, 479, 480, 481, 482, 483, 484, 485, 486, 487, 488, 489, 490, 491, 492, 493, 494, 495, 496, 497, 498, 499, 500, 501, 502, 503, 504, 505, 506, 507, 508, 509, 510, 511, 512, 513, 514, 515, 516, 517, 518, 519, 520, 521, 522, 523, 524, 525, 526, 527, 528, 529, 530, 531, 532, 533, 534, 535, 536, 537, 538, 539, 540, 541, 542, 543, 544, 545, 546, 547, 548, 549, 550, 551, 552, 553, 554, 555, 556, 557, 558, 559, 560, 561, 562, 563, 564, 565, 566, 567, 568, 569, 570, 571, 572, 573, 574, 575, 576, 577, 578, 579, 580, 581, 582, 583, 584, 585, 586, 587, 588, 589, 590, 591, 592, 593, 594, 595, 596, 597, 598, 599, 600, 601, 602, 603, 604, 605, 606, 607, 608, 609, 610, 611, 612, 613, 614, 615, 616, 617, 618, 619, 620, 621, 622, 623, 624, 625, 626, 627, 628, 629, 630, 631, 632, 633, 634, 635, 636, 637, 638, 639, 640, 641, 642, 643, 644, 645, 646, 647, 648, 649, 650, 651, 652, 653, 654, 655, 656, 657, 658, 659, 660, 661, 662, 663, 664, 665, 666, 667, 668, 669, 670, 671, 672, 673, 674, 675, 676, 677, 678, 679, 680, 681, 682, 683, 684, 685, 686, 687, 688, 689, 690, 691, 692, 693, 694, 695, 696, 697, 698, 699, 700, 701, 702, 703, 704, 705, 706, 707, 708, 709, 710, 711, 712, 713, 714, 715, 716, 717, 718, 719, 720, 721, 722, 723, 724, 725, 726, 727, 728, 729, 730, 731, 732, 733, 734, 735, 736, 737, 738, 739, 740, 741, 742, 743, 744, 745, 746, 747, 748, 749, 750, 751, 752, 753, 754, 755, 756, 757, 758, 759, 760, 761, 762, 763, 764, 765, 766, 767, 768, 769, 770, 771, 772, 773, 774, 775, 776, 777, 778, 779, 780, 781, 782, 783, 784, 785, 786, 787, 788, 789, 790, 791, 792, 793, 794, 795, 796, 797, 798, 799, 800, 801, 802, 803, 804, 805, 806, 807, 808, 809, 810, 811, 812, 813, 814, 815, 816, 817, 818, 819, 820, 821, 822, 823, 824, 825, 826, 827, 828, 829, 830, 831, 832, 833, 834, 835, 836, 837, 838, 839, 840, 841, 842, 843, 844, 845, 846, 847, 848, 849, 850, 851, 852, 853, 854, 855, 856, 857, 858, 859, 860, 861, 862, 863, 864, 865, 866, 867, 868, 869, 870, 871, 872, 873, 874, 875, 876, 877, 878, 879, 880, 881, 882, 883, 884, 885, 886, 887, 888, 889, 890, 891, 892, 893, 894, 895, 896, 897, 898, 899, 900, 901, 902, 903, 904, 905, 906, 907, 908, 909, 910, 911, 912, 913, 914, 915, 916, 917, 918, 919, 920, 921, 922, 923, 924, 925, 926, 927, 928, 929, 930, 931, 932, 933, 934, 935, 936, 937, 938, 939, 940, 941, 942, 943, 944, 945, 946, 947, 948, 949, 950, 951, 952, 953, 954, 955, 956, 957, 958, 959, 960, 961, 962, 963, 964, 965, 966, 967, 968, 969, 970, 971, 972, 973, 974, 975, 976, 977, 978, 979, 980, 981, 982, 983, 984, 985, 986, 987, 988, 989, 990, 991, 992, 993, 994, 995, 996, 997, 998, 999, 1000.

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